GLOBALIZATION AND AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract
This paper offers an analysis of globalization in Africa, arguing from the standpoints of slave trade and colonialism to elucidate the fact that Africa was forced into the global order. Deducible from this, then, is the claim that these sets of Euro/Arabian African contact of the 15th century interrupted African development, and has continued to be a common factor for Africa’s unfortunate reputation of extreme poverty, civil strife, and disease, among other shortcomings. In view of this, any serious understanding of current underdevelopment of Africa needs to factor these impacts and their adjoining implications as more direct consequences of these lopsided centuries’ long relationships still continuing behind the label of a mastermind called globalization. The paper aimed to investigate the underdevelopment of Africa as a direct result of its participation in the Global system. Making use of the library research method, the paper concluded that the African culture is being swallowed up by Western values, and this misnomer has so comfortably been perpetuated under the cloak of globalization. As a leeway to escape the dangerous effects of globalization, it was recommended that African States copy the Miracle of the Asian Tigers by slowing down their involvement in the international system and looking within for solutions to the seeming poverty that has ravaged the continent.

Keywords: Africa, Europe, Arab, Globalization, Colonialism, Slave trade, Underdevelopment.

Introduction
Africa is a vast continent richly endowed with human and natural resources. Dowden (2009) believes that Africa is a beautiful continent made up of ‘friendly, gentle and polite people’. He marvels at the level of hospitality one receives in the continent and what he describes as social skills found among African communities. These social skills are inherent in Africans and cannot be unlearned. Some of them he mentions include empathy, courage, socialization and a strong brotherhood. One might then wonder why Africa, despite her enormous potential wealth, peopled with bright, optimistic men and women has had a reputation of civil strife, disease and extreme poverty. More worrisome is the fact that Africa is the world’s poorest region and home to the poorest people on earth, and this poverty appears to be worsening (Hagen, 2002).

The inquiry into the causes of Africa’s underdevelopment and worsening poverty has stimulated a lot of research and literature, and indeed has shown that the problems facing Africa are complex. However, there has been a unity of opinions on the causes of these problems. It has been argued by most African scholars that the forced incorporation of Africa into the global order has caused Africa to remain underdeveloped (e.g. Rodney, 1972). For instance, Ake (1981)
strongly believes that African economies are dominated by the Global North as a result of their forced incorporation into the Western Capitalist System. So, there is a growing disillusionment about globalization among many African scholars. Thus, whenever the term globalization is mentioned, it often strikes a familiar chord amongst African scholars as a crucial tool for imperialism and neo colonialism. Aluko, Akinola & Sola (2004) see globalization as an effort to dominate African economies by the West. They believe that the current state of Africa (the worsening poverty, the failure of the education and health sectors, the poor infrastructural development) points towards the failure of ‘globalization’ in Africa. In the same vein, Uwa, Lanrewaju & Ojeme (2014) call globalization “colonialism in disguise”. Adesina (2012) believes that globalization is just another stage of colonialism. Hagen (2002) observes that inasmuch as African countries have no voice in the decision-making process of international capitalist politics, policies are made by the developed countries and African countries are compelled to abide by such policies. Uwa et al (2014) aver this truth when they opined that although Africa has been intensely involved in international trade from the start of the nineteenth century, the continent has only been on the sidelines of the international system.

This paper is another attempt at offering an extensive investigation into the implications of Africa’s integration into the global system thereby furnishing readers with knowledge sufficient enough to form an opinion on the reasons for Africa’s underdevelopment. More specifically, the paper aims to underscore the evils of globalization in such developing economies as African economies. The paper also seeks to encourage independence amongst African states. The paper will explore documentary evidence from secondary data for this analysis.

Concept Clarification

Globalization

Some have argued that ‘globalization’ defines the present age. It has become a very popular concept that has found its way into the political cum socio economic diction but remains a very ambiguous term. It is a complex concept that has always generated controversy especially regarding whose interest it serves best (Adesina, 2012). The fact that it lacks a universal definition has even deepened the controversy the subject generates (Acosta and Gonzalez, 2010). The term ‘globalization’ was first mentioned by The Economist in 1959 to refer to ‘quotas of car imports’. Following this was in 1962 when an article in The Spectator referred to it as a ‘staggering concept’ (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). The concept has been labelled to mean many things including definitions that suggest a ‘global village’ to other definitions that imply neocolonialism and imperialism (Sumner, 2008). Some have defined it in economic terms as strengthening of international flow of capital, labour and technology, while some others define it in socio-cultural terms as the internationalization of cultures across the globe (Oni, 2015). Adesina (2012) reiterates that globalization is not restricted to the economic sphere alone. It also has social, political, cultural, religious dimensions. This is reflected in Schirato and Webb’s (2003) definition that globalization also involves the integration of cultures, technologies, societies and economies also. Adesina (2012), defines the concept as the spread of cultures and
commerce of countries of the world in order to bring about ‘homogenization’. Majekodunmi and Adejuwon (2012) aver that globalization is the acceleration and intensification of interaction and integration among the people, companies and governments of different nations. Globalization conjures a picture of a borderless world more often than not facilitated by the convergence of information and communication technologies. Although it is a concept that means different things to different people, it essentially means the growing increase in interconnectedness and interdependence among the world’s regions, nations, governments, businesses and institutions. Majekodunmi and Adejuwon (2012) note that it is a process which engenders free flow of ideas, people, goods, services and capital thereby fostering integration of economies and societies. Thus, for Nnoli, (2000), globalization is a very complex social phenomenon.

It is associated with: (a) The increasing concentration of power and influence over the world economy by a group of corporations and countries. (b) The domination of production by multinational or transnational corporations, which are multi-branch and multidivisional enterprise that operates in different parts of the world, and by international financial institution and exchanges. (c) The supervision of production on a world scale by an increasingly narrow managerial technocratic elite composed of the captains of industry, banks and finance houses located in countries of the North. (d) An international division of labour which favours the export of technology. (e) The emergence of a times-space compressed world economy and society which expresses the emerging “global village”. (f) The emergence and transnationalisation of a new dominant technology associated with the information revolution. (g) The increasing importance of the knowledge structure for production, culture and economy in general (Nnoli, 2000:30).

In the light of these then, it is clearly understandable therefore that the debate about globalization has created two distinct schools of thought largely identified as the liberal school and the radical school. The liberals paint globalization in a positive light, adumbrating that globalization ensures economic efficiency and is needed to compress the world into a single society totally compliant with the dictates of liberal democracy (Clark, 2000). The radical Scholars are vehemently apprehensive of globalization. For instance, Asobie (2002) believes that globalization is essentially the internationalization of capitalism. Onuoha (2004) opines that radical scholars regard globalization with hostility, and some with fear believing that it increases inequality within and between nations, threatens employment and living standards and thwarts social progress. Radical scholars sum the concept of globalization up as a new form of imperialism.

**Development**

Development on its own is an ambiguous term that has expectedly interested social scientists overtime. The concept is complex, ramifying and varying. Development has proven to remain a subjective term, in that different people interpret the concept from different perceptions. Seers (1969), rightly points out that there is a wave of fantasy encircled around the concept of
development. However, the underlying word in all the explanations of underdevelopment is progress.

Development is a whole process that involves the progression of any human society. Development can be interpreted to mean the improvement of the quantity and quality of available resources (Pearson, 1992). Rodney (1972) contends that development entails increased capability, increased skill, greater freedom, self-discipline and responsibility. Abuiyada (2018) describes development as the advancement of a society towards combating such ills as poverty, unemployment, inequality and the assurance of human rights. To talk about development means to ask questions about poverty, about unemployment and about inequality (Seers, 1969). For development to take place, people must be involved and it must be facilitated by others in order to achieve the set goals (Ake, 1981).

Some writers equate development with modernization, that is, provision of good roads, electricity, portable water, etc. This is however, faulty as development does not only focus on infrastructure. Development is people centered. Man is the epi center of development. The main aim of development is to improve the quality of human life. According to Owens (1987), development ensures advancement of people, not of things.

The World Bank appropriately sums up the concept of development as ‘living a long and healthy life, being educated, and having a decent standard of living’ (Kegley & Blanton, 2011). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) opines that development means ‘access to income, participation in decisions and enjoyment of human, political and economic liberties’ (UNDP, 1991)

From the forgoing we may understand that a beautiful street adorned with colorful street lights and ribbons, but filled with hungry, out-of-school children and unemployed parents can never be said to be developed. Development must focus of the welfare of the people. How well fed are the people? How educated are they? Are there roofs over their heads? How gainfully employed are they?

Development, therefore, is a holistic phenomenon that involves all the segments of the society, such as the political, economic, religious, social, cultural aspects of any society. What this means is that the concept of development is multi-dimensional and ramifying.

Africa and the Globalization Process

The history of globalization in Africa (Sub-Saharan Africa) can be traced to the era of slave trade. Africa participated in the global economy via the supply of slave labour. According to Green (2001), the coming of colonialism intensified these relations and affected Africa even more. Uwa et al (2014) have asserted that Africa has been severely dealt with, considering the actions of competing capitalist powers attempting to expand the terrestrial borders of capital. Starting with the slave trade of 1650 and continuing under colonial rule after the Berlin Conference of 1884, the continent has been heavily drawn into the centers of capitalist accumulation but always as a subordinate partner with the primary purpose of contributing to the development of the metropolitan power. Omotola (2010) observed that the Euro African contact
interrupted African development mainly by depopulating Africa through the trading on slaves. Unfortunately, it was an adventure that was rather too disastrous and ruinous as 11,641,000 Africans were sold in the process (Fage, 1997). The impact of slave trade on the continent is mostly reflected in its massive depopulation of the African continent, with a heavy toll on development. Consequently, Africa was already emotionally and physically devastated when the next European attack in the guise of colonialism commenced (Uwa et al, 2014). This was because it had almost lost the will to fight after some 425 years of continuous depopulation (Onimode 2000).

In a similar vein, Oni (2015) writes that the phenomenon of globalization did not come to Africa for the first time just in the last century as it is generally thought. Offering a detailed account of the historical evolution of the globalization process in Africa, Dowden (2009) writes thus:

back at the beginning of human history, Africa north of the Sahara was part of the Persian and early European worlds, linked easily by trade across the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. It was as much part of the Roman Empire as Britain or Germany. That link was cut by the Arab expansion in the Middle East and into the Maghreb in the eighth century. Africa was cut off from other traders and influences for 700 years. Asians were the first to come with a visitation by the Chinese fleet to the East African Coast in 1405 and in subsequent years. But they went again and never returned. A mere fifty years later the Europeans first arrived in sub Saharan Africa, working their way down the West coast. Unlike the Chinese, they were aggressive, destroying existing trade routes and taking what they wanted by force. They came in greater and greater numbers and they settled. From the early days of trading, through the slave trade centuries and the imperial take-over at the end of the nineteenth century right through to today, Europe dominated Africa (Dowden 2009:14).

When the Europeans suddenly decided to take over Africa’s hinterland at the end of the nineteenth century, they scrambled for African societies amongst each other. It was the German leader at the time, Otto Von Bischmark that called for a conference in Berlin in 1884 and agreed to partition Africa into states. Dowden (2009) explains that “Europeans drew lines on maps and carved up Africa. In some areas white explorers had not even set foot on the ground where they now drew borders. Most states were formed from the ports and forts that European traders had secured on the coasts of the continent over almost four centuries”. So, in the beginning, the Europeans wanted slaves and raw materials, now they wanted the land. In drawing these artificial maps, ethnic groups, local identities, and even natural borders such as rivers and mountains were ignored. The colonial powers then sent in frontier forces to crush resistance and establish their rule. Dowden (2009) notes that the Europeans penetrated Africa “in the name of Christianity, Civilization and Commerce”. The colonial authorities vehemently opposed the African forms of religion, politics and business. These were replaced with European forms of religion, Western education and culture (Scupin, 2000). Traditional forms of socialization and education was not only aimed at producing skilled Africans who could work in the bureaucracy of a colonial state.
but it was also a deliberate colonial maneuver of cultural transformation with the ultimate aim of westernizing young Africans. They made sure that Africans learn how to behave Western, think Western, believe Western, eat Western, dress Western and dance Western. Green (2001) agrees that the colonial venture had already caused much harm when African countries started getting independent and this damage is stiff felt in present day. We then wonder if the imperial powers could have brought Christianity without the eradication of the beliefs and culture of ancient societies. Could they have brought ‘civilization’ without the destruction of social and political structures? Could it have been possible for commerce to benefit Africans without reducing Africans to laborers for the imperial powers? We all know that in fact, the Europeans, thinking that they were superior beings, imposed their systems of trade, belief and finally rule with devastating violence. Dowden (2009) accentuated this fact when he sadly pointed out that “with the missionaries and colonial governors came the destruction of Africa’s political systems, its culture, its dignity and self-worth”. Elaborating the economic implications of colonialism, Rodney (1972) opined that during colonialism, Europe organized herself, accumulated capital gained from her colonies in Africa, shrewdly invested the surplus in productive economy, steadfastly increasing national wealth and riches for its people. So, Africa was introduced into the World System as slaves, later as subjects of imperial powers and till today African states have stuck with the label of the fetchers of water and the hewers of wood in the international system. Africa came into the international system merely as an onlooker having suffered the disastrous implications of slave trade for over three hundred years. Africa has continued to suffer extreme poverty, disease and strife even as globalization proceeds (Nabudere, 2000). Odoziobodo (2014) agrees that globalization has created an international division of labour and power sharing that has placed advanced nations at a higher advantage while remaining substantially unfavorable to developing nations including Africa. Obuoforibo (2010) asserts that Africa would definitely not benefit from the World Order created by the Global North. This is predicated on the fact that through the mechanism of their policies and the activities of Multinational Corporations, the Global North has succeeded in pocketing the leaders of Africa. Palmer and Perkins (1985) accentuate this fact when they opine that globalization uprooted thousands of Africans from their old ways and have not found their place in the new and changing society in which their destinies are now cast. Independence officially restored power to Africans, but the countries created and the systems that the Europeans imposed on Africa as they left were not rooted in African culture or experience and not strong enough to contain social and ethnic pressures that lay immediately beneath the surface. European influence since then has remained strong in Africa. Dowden (2009) corroborates this assertion when he wrote that after colonization, the “new African presidents inherited total power from the colonial rulers, but the states they ruled were made up of old African societies, once self-governing and still held together by their own networks of power and influence. Trying to use the tools of a Western-style state to control these rooted societies was like trying to herd cats with a dog training manual”. Painting a clear picture of the evil of colonialism, Dowden (2009) continues, ‘imagine, if after two World Wars, that have slaughtered some 90 million people, America and the Soviet
Union, exasperated by tribal warfare in Europe, create a single country called Europe. They impose it from above, creating provinces by drawing lines on maps with no regard for the identity of the people living there. Today, a Slovene President is trying to broker a border dispute between the provinces of France and Germany – the Germans are all Muslims by the way. Meanwhile, the ancient tribal hatreds still cause frequent massacres among Greeks and Turks, Basques and Spanish, and in parts of north London where football tribes called Arsenal and Tottenham are clashing in streets. Up until today, as shown by its attributes of dependence, legitimacy crisis, underdevelopment, Africa remains a continent of crisis and contradiction (Onimode, 1983). Africa’s growth performance since gaining independence from colonial rule in the 1960s has been quite disappointing (Sundaram et al, 2011). All efforts to address the situation by African leaders have so far been futile because the neo-colonial environment has been ably accommodated and enhanced by the enduring legacies of colonialism. This explains why today, Africa remains at the very nadir of development. Available statistics show that Africa is really in a deep crisis of development. As the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development’s Least Developed Countries 2002 report has shown, the proportion of people in 29 countries living below $2 per day increased from 82% in the late 1960s to 87.5% in the 1990s. For those in extreme poverty (under $1 per day), the increase was from 55.8% to 64.9%. In absolute figure, the number of Africans living in extreme poverty rose from 89.6 million to 233.5 million over the same period. Also, of the 49 countries classified as least developed countries, 33 of them are in sub-Saharan Africa (Ogwu, 2002). Besides, about 186 million people are chronically undernourished, while one out of every three Africans suffers extreme poverty (Oni, 2015). Yet, Africa’s per capita income is lower than it was in the 1960s. With the exception of South Africa, average per capital income in 1997 was $315; making Africa the poorest part of the world. The total GDP of all 48 countries on the continent combined came to little more than the income of Belgium. The average GDP of sub Saharan African countries (excluding South Africa) is at about $2 billion, no more than the output of a town of 60,000 people in a rich country (Uwa et al, 2014). Oyeleran-Oyeyinka (2004) in a similar paper argues that “African countries have not succeeded in acquiring technology effectively and subsequently have failed to achieve sustainable industrialization. Subsequently, the region has suffered the loss of competitiveness in traditional commodity exports. Loss of opportunities in global trade and technology exchange has meant that African countries have marginally benefitted from globalization”. Illustrating this point, Oyeleran-Oyeyinka (2004) continues, “two proxy measures of globalization, FDI and export of traditional products and manufactures, are used to illustrate the point. For most sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries, manufactured exports, which remain a small proportion of global exports, had declined over the years while SSA has realized some increase in manufactured exports, this has been due to, in part, the effects of reduction in the prices of commodities relative to manufactures in the last 20 years. Oil and non-oil commodities constitute more than 80% of Africa’s exports. More disturbing is the decline in the exports of traditional exports. Africa’s exports of palm nuts and kernels accounted for 91% of $75 million world total. Exports fell to $3 million by 1999 while global market share was less than 10% of
1960s. Also, global market shares for groundnuts, palm kernel oil and palm oil were between 51 to 83 % but have now fallen to only between 2 to 3 %, with the combined exports of these products now much lower than it was four decades ago. If Africa had maintained its 1960 global share of markets, current exports will be about $7.7 billion higher than current export value”.

The thesis of this paper herein lies in the statement that the current underdevelopment of Africa is a direct consequence of its centuries’ long participation in the globalization process masterminded by the Global North. Hence the development of Europe can be viewed as part of the same dialectical processes that underdeveloped Africa. In other words, the domination of Europe over Africa retarded the economic development of the continent (Rodney, 1972). If Africa had been allowed to embrace globalization under its own terms and its own pace, the continent would have been better off. The solution therefore to Africa’s woes lies in the possibility of taking a break from the globalization process. As utopian as this might sound, it seems to be the only way out for Africa. Casting our minds back to the bloody Nigeria-Biafra Civil War (1967-1970), available literature points to the fact that the Nigerian government frustrated all efforts of the Biafrans to purchase weapons of war from outside. The Biafran government was left with no choice than to produce weapons of war themselves. Hence, isolated from the international community, the Biafran government commissioned a body of indigenous scientists and physicists drawn from the defunct Biafran Republic to produce weapons of warfare. This group was called the Research and Production (RAP) Unit of the Biafran government. Eventually, the Unit invented a local bomb, the ogbunigwe. The weapon was indeed very lethal and war veterans recount that to a very large extent the enemy forces were repelled in many fronts. The ogbunigwe proved very useful and powerful during the war. The weapon was a locally improvised explosive device that had devastating consequences. However, after the war, the weapon and its technology were forgotten. And the Nigerian government once again continued relying on super powers for military equipment. The ogbunigwe technology if harnessed may have prompted Nigeria into the manufacture of military equipment, hence the Nigerian military would have been self-sufficient. But this is the bane of Africa, reliance on the West for material and financial support every now and then. And this has been so carefully designed and perpetrated by the West as they benefit more from the exchange. Over the years, scholars and students alike have asserted that the solution to Africa’s woes lies in a more formidable and proactive leadership style. This assertion, of course is true as most African presidents are mere stooges for the West. But then again, the world has woken up to gory stories of the assassinations of proactive Anti West African leaders. Leaders such as Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, Murtala Mohammed of Nigeria and most recently Muammar Gadafi of Libya whom the West incited his people against. So, we argue that the problem herein lies not in the lack of a proactive leader, but the perilous intervention of the West in regime changes in Africa. Sadly, Oni (2015) observes that the future of Africa in an age of globalization is a precarious one.
Conclusion

In this paper, we have advanced arguments that ultimately point to the fact that the underdevelopment of Africa is a direct consequence of its contact with Europe in the 16th century. Having argued that the implications of slave trade and colonialism were indeed disastrous, we conclude that the implications have continued to hunt Africa even in recent times. The outright compression of age long African societies to form ‘artificial states’ has been the major cause of current day tribalism and ethnocentrism, hence labelling Africa as the continent with the most civil wars since 1960. We therefore, conclude here that the current trend that has been labelled as globalization does not in fact portend an exchange of cultures and ideas but a swallowing up of a people’s cultures and ideas by Western norms and standards.

Globalization and The Way Forward for Africa’s Development: Recommendations

Having identified the evils of globalization and the dangers such evils portend for Africa, one then wonders what the possible solutions for African development are. If one wishes to be sincere with oneself, one will understand that the future is indeed bleak for Africa. Unfortunately, globalization has come to stay and African leaders must devise means through which Africa can also benefit from this phenomenon.

From the foregoing discourse, it is understandable that Africa has since been relegated to the role of the fetchers of water and the hewers of wood in the international system. How then can Africa become a major stake holder in the Global Order? How can African countries gain relevance in the comity of nations? How can globalization aid Africa’s development? These questions become essential in the discourse about Africa and its development and have dominated the writings of many African scholars.

The miracle of the Asian Tigers easily comes to mind when one attempts to answer the questions above. The Asian Tigers are the developed economies of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea. The Asian Tigers at a time became almost self-sufficient and eventually started exporting materials to rich nations. In 1993, the World Bank carried out a study on the Asian Tigers in order to ascertain the efforts that spurred their development. The World Bank found out that all the Asian Tiger economies embraced trade, and especially exports and some of the economies actually cut down on Foreign Direct Investments (FDI). With the cut down on FDI, these countries grew their technology by ‘seeking the acquisition of foreign expertise through imported technology or licensing to a greater extent than did other developing countries’ (World Bank, 1993). What this means is that the East Asian countries tactically disengaged themselves, over a period of time, from the international exchange called globalization and when they bounced back, they did so from a vantage position, exporting their products to the World. The popular thinking in Africa is that proper development cannot be achieved without the infusion of foreign capitals into African economies. This notion is most responsible for Africa’s woes. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this paper, the defunct Biafran government, having been shut out of the international community was able to achieve self-reliance by locally producing weapons of war. We recommend therefore in this paper that the way forward for Africa in the face of globalization is to look within and emulate the efforts
of the Asian Tigers in order to replicate such a success story in Africa. Blessed with abundant human and natural resources, African leaders should be able to replicate the East Asian miracle in Africa.

Recently the Nigerian government closed its land borders to discourage import and encourage local production and this is a very germane move to look within the continent for possible solutions. But in another breath the members of the House of Representatives rejected the proposal to purchase the locally assembled Innoson cars and instead opted for imported Japanese made Toyota cars, further accentuating our inordinate desires for foreign products. And this is the major threat to African economies. Local entrepreneurship should be adequately encouraged and indigenous businesses should be supported. Doing these will ensure employment, increase exports, reduce imports and help to accumulate capital for the development of African economies.

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