

Globalization, An Opportunity or A Threat: A Critical Commentary

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Abstract

Commentators on contemporary issues are divided on the meaning and impact of globalization, which is the process of integrating the world community into a common system either economical or social. Globalization is a hot topic for many of people, especially educated professionals whose work focuses on global thinking and interaction. This is made possible through the increasing linkages among countries and the resultant direct investments, technological development and advancement in telecommunication which have increased global welfare and transformed the world into a global village. Consequently, more and more people are taking an increasingly critical view of this world-wide phenomenon called 'globalization; not that they are against constructive cooperation among sovereign nations of the world on common goals but rather they reject its present model. This paper therefore offers a critical commentary on the state of this world-wide phenomenon in its various dimensions. Backed by data, it posits that globalization because of the monstrous proportion it has assumed in the world, is more favourable to the developed nations of the world, and a threat to less developed nations. Ways by which this phenomenon can be made more equitable are also suggested.

1. Introduction

According to the holy book "Bible", there is certainly a time for everything. Fortunately or unfortunately, globalization has become the dominant paradigm of the 20th or 21st century that has had its own history of socio-

political and economic interpretation as scholars of multidisciplinary perspectives attempt to give meaning to globalization as they give to human activities.

Therefore, globalization which connotes different things to different people has taken the centre stage of most political and economic discourse in recent times. It is one of the most talked all encompassing phenomenon. It is not a new concept in literature. The resurgence of the concept is like putting “old wine” in new bottle. This is because the international contacts and exchanges through travels, religion, trade and migration had been taking place since the history of mankind. The history of missionary activities over the globe, trade merchants, the colonialists, the Islamic crusaders, the imperialists, etc. are all about globalization. For example, after the 15th century, the various explorations, trading and colonizing groups of the west traversed East Indies, North America, South America and Africa in search of economic gains at the expense of those with whom they made contact, conquered or colonized (Aluko, 2003). Similarly, the partition of Africa among themselves by the European powers through the 1884 Berlin (German) Conference is another case in point. Its earlier dominant perspective had tilted in favour of economic institutionalization, which relates to greater integration and interdependence. The benefits of globalization have been taunted. However, how much the developing nations of the world have benefited vis-à-vis the developed nations cannot be quantified. This paper takes a critical look at globalization as to determine whether it is an opportunity or a threat. The paper has five segments. The first is introduction. The second is conceptualizing globalization. The third examines globalization as an opportunity. Globalization as a threat is discussed in the fourth segment. The final section proffers suggestions and conclusion.

2. Conceptualizing Globalization

Globalization is a historical process that started centuries ago. It is characterized by greater integration of the world in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres, etc. It is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon, which means different things to different people across countries, regions and time. This is by no means a simple issue because the different dimensions of the processes of globalization have ensured that definitional imprecision and problems of synthesis confront the scholars or readers all at once. As Teeple (2000:9) perceptively reminds us,

Despite the rapidly growing body of literature on the topic of globalization and its implications, there is disagreement about how to conceptualize what is happening. Although the term is widely used to characterize the profound changes unfolding in the world, the nature of these shifts and what they mean remain debated questions.

It is also a phenomenon that has generated a lot of controversy, attested to by this quote by Held and McGrew (2000:ix):

Few contemporary phenomena elicit such political and academic controversy as globalization. Some consider it the fundamental dynamic of our epoch, a process of change which is to be promoted, managed or resisted; by contrast, others consider it the great myth of our times, a notion which misrepresents and misconstrues the real forces which shape our lives. In the public sphere especially, the idea of globalization is creating a new political faultline around which politicians and political parties of all persuasions seek to mobilize public opinion. From the “globalization” of the radical right to the more adaptive strategies found in Third Way politics, globalization has become the rationale for diverse political projects. In the process, the idea of globalization has often become debased and confused.

According to Tandon (2000:57):

... within this broad sweep of history, there are shorter movements. The colonial conquest of most of what we call the Third World by the West was one such short movement of history. Within this particular movement, there have been several stages. From slavery, which cost Africa 20 million lives, there was a movement to trading in commodities followed by the export of capital and the direct appropriation of the labour and natural resources of the countries in the South.

To put it in context, what is most revealing is that some critics even accept that globalization, notwithstanding how one conceives or rationalizes it, is reality (Held, et al, 1999).

What then is globalization? Is it an opportunity or a threat? To the extent that a core of common understanding of globalization it can be gleaned from the work of different scholars and authorities writing from different disciplinary background. Held, et al, (2000:55) define globalization as “a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions- assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact- generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power”.

For Petras and Veltmeyer (2001:11), globalization refers to the widening and deepening of the international flow of trade, capital technology and information within a single integrated market. Similarly, the point has been made that “globalization represents the shifts of the main venue of capital accumulation from the national to the supranational or global level” (Teepel, 2000:9). This view also finds cogent expression in Ohmae (1995:15) when he adopts the position that “the basic fact of linkage to global flows is a – perhaps, the- central distinguishing fact of our moment in history”.

What these definitions seem to suggest is the long reach of the new globalizing logic of the market and capital. It is viewed as a process(es) that not only is reconstituting and restructuring national economies but is breaking down national borders and integrating the world economy into a single system. This integrative aspect of the process of globalization is captured in Hurrell and Wood’s (1995:447-448) definition thus:

The term “globalization” is often involved to describe the process of increasing interdependence and global enmeshment which occurs as money, people, images, values, and ideas flow ever more swiftly and smoothly across national boundaries. It is assumed to be a process driven by technological advance which will lead to a more and more homogenous and interconnected world. In the new globalized world economy, it is argued, states will cooperate more and international institutions will flourish.

But UNDP (2001:12) defined globalization as a multidimensional process of unprecedented rapid and revolutionary growth in the exclusiveness of intensity of interconnection on a purely global scale. This manifests in various forms such as in the globalization of democracy, global ideological shift, global revolution particularly through information and communication, technologies, globalization of culture and the environment and above all, globalization of the economy. Yet from the above, to suggest that globalization is a unidimensional process about the world economy is to miss out on its various facets. Indeed, the evidence suggests the contrary. Rather than a single process, globalization has come to be seen as a multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon with wide-ranging effect the political, economic, social, cultural, and technological spheres. It is a process (or processes) that is transforming and restructuring the nature of global, national, and local politics, economies, society, and cultures. This is the nub of Norris's (2000:155) claim that "...globalization is understood as a process that erodes national boundaries, integrating national economies, cultures, technologies, and governance, producing complex relations of mutual interdependence". To buttress this point further, Falk (1997:125) refers to this transformation as "a new alignment of forces that is being crystallized by a constellation of market, technological, ideological and civilizational developments".

But globalization's earlier dominant perspective had tilted in favour of economic institutionalization which relates to greater integration and interdependence. Such background informs the European Commission's (EC) (1997:45) definition of globalization as cited in Onu (2003:84) as:

The process by which markets and production in different countries are becoming increasingly interdependent due to the dynamics of trade in goods and services and flows of capital and technology. It is not a new phenomenon but the continuation of developments that have been in train for some considerable time.

Based on the above, Uwatt (2003) pointed out that globalization is the economic dimension that is perceived to constitute the heart or hallmark of globalization. In its simplest form, economic globalization refers to the integration of the domestic economies with the world economy and the inevitable consequential increase in the economic interdependence of the

countries through trade, financial and investment flows, freer factor movements and exchange of technology and information. Also IMF (1997) perceived globalization in terms of growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transaction in goods and services and of international capital flow and also through the more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology. Arguing along the same vein, Obadan and Obioma (1999) perceived the concept, globalization, as the international integration of markets for goods, services and capital, and is the process of change towards greater international economic integration through trade, financial flows, exchange of technology and information and movement of people.

But to Ake (1995:23), globalization

...is about growing structural differentiation and functional integration in the world economy; it is growing interdependence across the globe; it is about the nation state coming under pressure from the surge of transnational phenomena; it is about the emergence of a global mass culture driven by mass advertising and technical advances in mass communication.

According to Nnoli (2000:173), as a complex social phenomenon, globalization interfaces with various elements of social life and is suffused with ambiguities, variations, uncertainties and incompatibilities; its core is the inevitable expansion of capitalism worldwide including the spread of its values.

From another perspective, globalization has been described as neo-liberal ideology which tries to elevate the role of the market as an instrument of nurturing and encouraging innovation among social actors and as an instrument also for rationalization in the distribution of the planet's resources (Hamouda, 2000:31). This is why Toyo (2002:17) defines it as capitalist and imperialist economic revolution. But to Boutros-Ghali (1996) as cited in Offiong (2001:3) globalization is seen as creating a world that is increasingly interconnected in which national boundaries are less important and it is generating both possibilities and problems. He asserts that globalization is largely economic, that is, a phenomenon characterized by ever increasing integration of national economies into expanding international markets.

From this perspective, globalization raises key questions and draws attention to issues of economic and technological change, cultural and

societal aspects of life, and the political. Recognizing the multidimensional aspects of globalization also allows us to move beyond the confines of economic reductionism and highlights the unprecedented effect of these processes brought under the rubric of globalization.

Globalization is thus seen as a myth with deceptive intent (Hirst and Thompson, 2000). Held and McGrew (2000) draws attention to the fact that there is nothing global in globalization since its intention is to foster the interest of western capital, the final beneficiaries are the United States and its cohorts. Mann (2000) is very cynical about the fate of other nation-states in a globalized economy because of the problems resultant from globalization namely- erosion of the sovereignty of nations, dismantling of national boundaries, emasculation of state institutions, dominance of foreign cultures and hence the diminishing or dilution of local culture, uneven distribution of benefits and many other side effects. Even if globalization in the final analysis were to benefit all countries, developing countries, argues Aremu (2006), would stand no chance to gain as the prospects of their economic growth have dwindled in recent years as a result of the impact of globalization on the economies.

Perhaps, a template that reinforces the essential aspects of globalization is appropriate at this juncture. This is the core of Kacowicz's (1999:529) claim that globalization means many different things for different people. Kacowicz articulates such a template to summarize the key points in the existing literature on globalization thus:

- Intensification of economic, political, social, and cultural relations across borders.
- The historical period (or historical epoch) launched since the end of the Cold War.
- The transformation of the world economy epitomized by the anarchy (literally defined) of the financial markets.
- The triumph of U.S. values, through the combined agenda of neo liberalism in economics and political democracy.
- An ideology and an orthodoxy about the logical and inevitable culmination of the powerful tendencies of the market at work.
- A technological revolution, with social implications.
- The inability of nation-states to cope with global problems that require global solutions, such as demography, ecology, human rights, and nuclear proliferation.

From the foregoing, therefore of change unleashed by this restructuring of the contemporary global economy and the attendant

economic, cultural, social and political implications, the hegemonic discourse of globalization have generated wide-spread debate and disagreement. Advocates of globalization paint rosy pictures and are euphoric about its effects and contribution to global welfare. Critics, on the other hand, are unimpressed and are quick to point to the debilitating effects, with a central focus on the inequalities it engenders and its disempowering consequences.

3. Globalization as an Opportunity

The orthodox supporters' view is that globalization is a positive process that generates growth and economic efficiency and universalizes the quest for development defined as modernity. As Cox (1997:2) explains it, this conservative observers' faith in the efficiency and efficacy of globalization is predicated on its ability to subject "workers and state to a new discipline; eliminating waste, reducing the power of the state, and so opening up new vistas of individual freedom and opportunity".

Globalization has also led to the internationalization of liberal democracy and integrated market economy, society and culture. Impediments on the world expansion of trade in goods and services, flow of capital and technology, foreign investment and tourism and internationalization of production have been some of the benefits of globalization. Globalization process did open up the political space allowing more organized civil society groups to become more active and bolder in the contest for political power and influence. As noted by Aina (1997:44), civil society activists have come to constitute significant actors in the restructuring introduced by globalization and the consequent ongoing struggles that this generates. In addition, these movements have articulated more than just interests and concern of democracy. They have shown through resistance, collaboration and political struggles, the linkage between the forces of globalization and the wider question of democracy and social transformation.

Globalization has also made possible innovations in technology, communications and capital which according to Ghai and Cynthia cited in Onu (2003) have provided fresh stimulus for capital, enterprises, technology and skills to move across national frontiers. Globalization has some geographical impacts. It has provide some countries and regions with opportunities for accelerated growth, innovations in technology especially in mass communication and bioscience have made possible the introduction of new products, services and new management and organizational process.

Ghai and Cynthia write that:

Technological breakthroughs transform work relations, destroy existing jobs and create new ones, and alter patterns of consumption and leisure activity. They have drastically reduced the importance of economic activities and made global communication both relatively inexpensive and virtually instantaneous. Thus they affect the distribution of power among different social groups, between government and civic society and among stages.

Through globalization, media has impact on culture, social relations and institutions. This has influenced behaviours and opinions across the world, leading to the creation of global centers, understanding and solidarity and enhancing knowledge globally. The invasion of foreign influences through films, music, television and videos has acted to undermine the traditional value system of societies.

Still other issues brought out more forcefully by globalization include the gender relation of domination and exploitation, human rights and citizenship rights. As a result of globalization and seeming openness and intensity of media coverage which it promotes and the activism of civic society groups, these issues have been brought into the open political sphere generating confrontation. In Nigeria, Niger Delta women have become more active in the struggle on environmental and other critical social economic and political issues (Alli, 2005).

It also enables countries to concentrate production in sectors where they have comparative advantage resulting in a more efficient allocation of resources. It provides an opportunity for poor countries to have access to foreign exchange needed for imports of intermediate goods used in domestic industries (Osakwe and Osakwe, 2005). It is worth stressing that other potential benefits accruing through globalization are financial integration through an increase in foreign direct investments (FDI), as opposed to short-term capital flows. FDI can provide benefits to host countries through many channels. It therefore, promotes market efficiency through competition and the division of labour- the specialization that allows people and economies to focus on what they do best. Global markets offer greater opportunities for people to tap into more and larger markets around the world. It means that they can have access to more capital flows, technology, cheaper imports and larger export markets. But markets do not necessarily ensure that the benefits

of increased efficiency are shared by all. Countries must be prepared to embrace the policies needed, and in the case of the poorest countries may need the support of the international community as they do so.

Another positive aspect of globalization according to Hirst and Thompson (2000), they argue that globalization is after all, not a new phenomenon since the internationalization of business entrepreneurs dates back to the middle ages. Aspects of globalization such as trade migration in international labour market, economic integration, openness and interdependence in world economy etc. are all economic development in the global economy.

The UNDP Report 1999 (2000) makes a case for globalization by pointing out that it provides great opportunities for human advances because of the enormous benefits associated with the process. For example, international markets, global technology, global ideas and global solidarity can enrich the lives of people everywhere, greatly expanding their choices. The growing interdependence of people's lives call for shared values and a shared commitment to human development (UNDP Report 1999, 2000:341). Globalization according to its proponents therefore seeks to simplify international business conduct by closing the gaps hitherto imposed by national boundaries, laws and regulations.

No matter the notion attached to globalization, what is clear and must be borne in mind is that the canon of globalization miniaturizes the role of individual nation-states in the global economic spectrum. As political and economic interconnectedness among actors in the globe's economy, breakdown restrictions hitherto imposed by various national laws leaves international business terrain bare for competing interest geared towards capital accumulation. Thus this softens the process of economic relations amongst nations and international business concern and invariably results in the emergence of widespread network in economic, social, cultural and political ties.

4. Globalization as a Threat

To the critics however, globalization has engendered widespread adverse effects on social welfare, the environment and human rights. It has also engendered inequalities and widened "poverty within and between states" and has unleashed an attack on the welfare state. Hence the critics unimpressed therefore see globalization as an exploitative phenomenon that sharpens inequalities within and between states, increases poverty and attacks the social welfare foundations of states.

Indeed, a UNDP report 1999 confirms the widening gap between rich and poor states as well as between people in this new globalized economy. Because these critiques serve as the basis for Richard Falk's challenge to globalization, it is worthwhile providing the reader with a detailed sampling of this position. Cox (1998:452) refers to its defining elements as its anarchic and competitive character. For Poku (2000:39) discourse on the inequalities associated with globalization is illustrative of the critiques of globalization. In clear terms, he represents an analysis that exposes the limits of globalization:

While there is some question as to whether globalization represents the end, or the fulfillment, of a Eurocentric modernization, there is little question about its differential impact on people and societies across the globe. Yet, in the literature, the euphoria over the process has served to disguise the very real social and economic inequalities that are not merely leftovers from the past, but are products of the new developments. Most obviously, poverty, mass unemployment and inequality have grown alongside advancements in technological developments, rapid expansion of trade, investments and commerce.

Continuing on this trend of establishing the limits of globalization through the use of a critical lens, the critics confront the issue of inequalities in unequivocal terms. Thus, Kofman and Youngs (1996:4) demonstrate that "far from offering positive possibilities to all, globalization signals new forms of oppression for many... that globalization represents changes in the operation of global capitalism which, if anything, has expanded its potential for producing inequalities". The subtleties of these analyses are forcefully reinforced and emphasized by what Scholte (1996:53) refers to as the "worrying circumstances" of globalization as a prelude to articulating a critical counter response:

To date, globalization has often perpetuated poverty, widened material inequalities, increased ecological degradation, sustained militarism, fragmented communities, marginalized subordinated groups, fed intolerance and deepened crises of democracy... Across most of the world, pressures of global capitalism have

brought a major deterioration in working conditions and social protection. In spite of the impressive rise of transnational feminism, women have borne by far the greater brunt of global restructuring, and global governance has generally been little less patriarchal than sovereign statehood... Not only do democratic institutions continue to be quite precarious in many countries, but few mechanisms are in place to ensure participation, representativeness, debate, transparency, constitutionality and accountability.

By exposing the limits of the discourses and processes of globalization, critics are able to set the stage for articulating a new political response. These accounts of the inequalities engendered by globalization are also vital in providing a springboard for Richard Falk's challenge. According to Falk (1999), "it is the cumulative adverse effects of these moves on human well-being that accounts for the title (of his book) *Predatory Globalization*. In this way, Falk underlines the effect of analyzing globalization in terms of inequality and power.

Falk's central argument about contesting globalization is cast in terms beyond the state. From his perspective, the exclusionary practices of the process of globalization-from-above need to be located in the grassroots response of globalization-from-below. Here is a sampling of Falk's (1999:1) main ideals:

The historical unfolding of economic globalization in recent decades has been accompanied by the ascendancy of a group of ideas associated with the world picture of "neo-liberalism". This ideological outlook is often somewhat coyly referred to as "the Washington Consensus", which accurately highlights the "made in the USA" packaging of the neo-liberal scheme of things. This neo-liberal scheme points in the general direction of autonomous markets and facilitative states.

Furthermore, Falk (1999:130) is at pains to point out that:

these ideological and operational aspects of globalization are associated with the way in which

transnational market forces dominate the policy scene, including the significant co-optation of state power. This pattern of development is identified here as “globalization-from-above”, a set of forces and legitimating ideas that is in many respects located beyond the effective reach of territorial authority and that has enlisted most governments as tacit partners.

Elsewhere, Falk (1999:130) begins to lay out the framework for his critique by pointing out thus:

But globalization, so conceived, has generated criticism and resistance, both of a local, grass-roots variety, based on the concreteness of the specifics of time and place- for example, the siting of a dam or a nuclear power plant or the destruction of a forest- and on a transnational basis, involving the linking of knowledge and political action in hundreds of civil initiatives. It is this latter aggregate of phenomena that is described here under the rubric of “globalization-from-below”.

These are crucially important, given the disproportionate adverse effect as well as effects of globalization on the Third World in general and Africa in particular. In its Human Development Report 1999, the UNDP (1999:3) provides evidence to show that “people living in the highest-income countries had 86% of world GDP- the bottom fifth just 1%... The world’s 200 richest people more than doubled their net worth in the four years to 1998, to more than \$1 trillion. The assets of the top three billionaires are more than the combined GNP of all least developed countries and their 600 million people”

In the case of Africa, Ajulu (2001:27) provides further insights into the effect of globalization on the continent in terms of its “lack of capacity and possibly, the will to influence the global market” in very stark terms:

Incorporated into the global economy towards the end of the 19th century as a junior partner, and predominantly as a producer of primary products, Africa was largely destined to be a marginal player in the world market... Already weakened by the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), it was inevitable that globalization

should intensify the marginalization of African economies. It is not surprising, therefore, that African countries are now among the weakest members of the international trading system. As globalization has proceeded, Africa has become further marginalized from the mainstream of the global economic activities... Not only has its economic growth lagged behind other economies, its share of global flows of foreign investments has fallen sharply, not to mention the fact that many economies on the continent remain heavily indebted. Yet economies in sub-Saharan Africa are deeply integrated into world trade even if predominantly still as exporters of primary products... Africa not only suffers from economic relegation, it is further marginalized from institutions of global governance.

The result of this marginalization is reinforced in Poku's (2000:40) perceptive observation that

it is possible to identify at least two ways in which the process of globalization has contributed to the continent's predicament. First, the process of globalization has impacted adversely on sovereign statehood on the continent, and as a result, states in the continent are weak, fragmented and unrepresentative. Second, because globalization causes inequality, the process is further marginalizing an already marginal continent.

And, Mazur (2000:81-82), the president of the Union of Needle-trades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE) and chair of the AFL-CIO International Affairs Committee in the United States, tellingly says the following:

Increased trade has not resulted in anything near uniform growth. Only 33 countries managed to sustain 3 percent annual GDP growth on a per capita basis between 1980 and 1996; in 59 countries, per capita GDP declined. Eighty countries have lower per capita

incomes today than they did a decade or more ago. And contrary to conventional wisdom, those left behind are often the most integrated into global trade. For example, sub-Saharan Africa has a high-export-to-GDP ratio than Latin America, but its exports are mainly primary commodities, leaving those nations vulnerable to the volatility of those markets... Millions of workers are losing out in a global economy that disrupts traditional economies and weakens the ability of their governments to assist them. They are left to fend for themselves within failed states against destitution, famine, and plagues. They are forced to migrate, offer their labour at wages below subsistence, sacrifice their children, and cash in their natural environments and often their personal health- all in a desperate struggle to survive.

The globalization process is considered to have become the major sources of economic, political and social or cultural conflicts in Africa. In past two decades globalization has disarticulated the fragile governmental system in Africa and significantly undermined the developmental state. Importantly as argued by Nnoli (2000:182), it is with the national state that democratic intensity is greatest. It has become a sinister framework for recognizing African society in that on one hand the SAP inspired to restructuring, destroyed the fabric of the fragile African economy while on the other hand globalization marginalized the content.

The evidence of policy failure in Africa is considerable. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita growth since 1980 has been lower than in the preceding 20 years. Yet it was during this period where Africa privatized, liberalized and brought down deficits and inflation. Nellis (2003) describes the case of Zambia. In what the World Bank in 1998 hailed as the most successful privatization programme in Africa, Zambia sold 90% of its state owned enterprises. Since then, in just over a decade, Zambia has had one of the largest reductions in industrial capacity ever observed. Factories have closed down, unemployment has risen and poverty is pervasive.

The Zambian case is not atypical. The general conclusion from his study of privatization in Africa has been that where the regulatory capacity is weak, institutions immature and markets thin and where governments lack the capacity to manage complex contracts, privatization can worsen the economic environment, not strengthen it. The sequencing of policy reforms

has not been given sufficient attention. Nevertheless, the multilateral financial institutions still focus on privatization instead of building regulatory and institutional capacity and more appropriate sequencing (Manuel, 2004:2-8).

A further striking feature of these impacts of globalization is the very fact that social change is expressed in a multiplicity of transitions occurring simultaneously at several and in some cases mutually contradicting levels (Aina, 1997:67). As a result, least rooted states- less developed states have suffered most from these developments, leading to widespread “collapsed state” syndrome (Longhorne, 2002:3). In the same vein, Rodrick (1997:8) argues that:

In societies where there are deep social cleavages and the institutions of conflict management are weak, the economic costs of exogenous shocks- such as deterioration in terms of trade- are magnified by distributional conflicts that are triggered.

Attempt by the people to seek greater access to economic resources have led many social upheavals, including industrial disputes and strikes across the continent and also in several cases, conflicts between the people and the government and sometimes between the different ethnic groups fighting for political position of influence, a crucial instrument and platform for accumulation in Africa.

In Angola, the right to extract oil was a major reason for the continuation of the civil war between the government and UNITA forces after the cold war; the so-called second Angola Civil War. The DRC’s rich endowment in various minerals has been a major factor in the civil wars which ravaged the country (Garfinkel, et al, 2004:1). The same can be said of the conflict demands of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Solomon Lar, former Chairman of Nigeria’s ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) from 1998, observed that globalization had landed poor nations on slippery ground because democracy has been hard for them to accept and practice (Lar, 2001:3). And as succinctly put by Nnoli, the global historical record suggests that political liberation is difficult to sustain under condition of mass economic privation and great inequalities of wealth within a society (Nnoli, 2000:181).

Still, other issues brought out more forcefully by globalization are that the African position in the international division of labour is now more

precarious. African countries are also beset by the debilitating problem of huge debt crisis. In response governments have to increase the cost of their social service, education, health and infrastructure, while the pricing essential of commodities like food items, petroleum and kerosene, used for cooking by the poor, went up as it was deregulated like in Nigeria, Ghana and Zimbabwe.

As a result of globalization, trans-border production, markets, monies and business readily evade political controls that are attempted through the state. This is reinforced by the privileging of the market over the state by the forces of globalization. Some of the consequences have been various forms of criminality, which impose insecurity in Africa. For example, the weakness of regulations of international arms flow from South Africa, France, Eastern Europe, China, North Korea and the USA, together with the unwillingness of arms trading nations to enforce certification regulation stringently, and the mushrooming of private militias have made it difficult to control and regulate the proliferation and use of arms in Central Africa (Nnoli, 2006:99), hence, leading arms and light weapon (SALW) throughout Africa. Those involved in SALW trade are often militias that support or oppose ordinary civilians who are apprehensive of the increasing inability of the State to provide them with security. Government and rebel movements have in turn increased their military stockpiles, recruited mercenaries or private security companies and created their own militia to confront their rivals. These individuals, companies and States are essentially involved in activities of plunder and pillage. They thrive under the condition of relative anarchy with little or no government control over licensing or taxation. High but quick returns are their goals. They prey upon States in collaboration with arms dealers (Nnoli, 2006:100).

As a consequence of globalization, the world has become more polarized and the gap between the poor and the rich has widened further. Elbadawi and Hegre (2003:3) have found a relationship between low or negative growth and a high risk of civil war or armed conflict because of unemployment and the decrease in the opportunity cost for rebels.

Smith (1992) had observed the very close relationship between economic crisis and conflict, noting that fifty percent of the twenty five most indebted Third World countries were at war in 1990 or early 1991. This argument has been further advanced by Brown (1995), who pointed out that only four countries- Niger, Sao tome, Senegal and Tanzania- of Africa's thirty-three most indebted and economically distressed countries have so far not been engulfed by conflict and wars.

Way back in 1990, the UN Under-Secretary General for Public Information, Theresa Savigny (1990) noted that:

Deepening poverty is already leading to mounting instability. The widespread unrest, turmoil and violence which is now afflicting an unprecedented number of countries is linked by one common thread of growing economic malaise, regardless of the ethnic and political guises it adopts. In Liberia, Rwanda, the Horn of Africa, poverty is the tinder which ignites the resentments and fears that all people and communities harbour.

This is the explanation that can be offered for the many conflicts which have ravaged Africa since the end of the 1980s. From Somalia to Liberia, from the genocidal conflict of Rwanda to the diamond conflicts of Sierra Leone, DRC, and several other countries, the conflicts are traceable to serious economic dislocation caused by the impact of globalization and made worse by the high level of unemployment and widespread poverty. Economic crises which manifest in layoffs, retrenchments, lack of jobs for young school leavers and graduates always intensify distributional conflicts and economic contestations. But this is usually obfuscated by vested political interests and reactionary elements exploiting ethnic or religious sentiments, thus giving such conflicts a different colour.

5. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that the present models of globalization as practiced cannot guarantee a quality peaceful international relations/cooperation in the world. Yet peace and equality of nation-States remain an important factor in any worldwide project or phenomenon. Rather than continue with the dangerous experiments and world deceit which globalization portrays and we are used to, let us re-think the basis of global unity and accept the urgency of broad based body to review and fine tune the intension of the worldwide phenomenon “globalization” as to make it more even and equitable. However, the following measures should be adopted to make globalization more friendly, responsible, and hence an equitable process:

First, the financial flows that take place across the borders should be regulated, especially when they tend to flow from poor countries to

developed nations. Such flows have played havoc with local economies, reducing real wages, eroding credibility in local currency, increasing unemployment levels, etc. The private sector investment flows and commercial loan flows should have minimum lock-in periods, which discourage the speculative intent in currency trading.

Second, the international trade regime should recognize more clearly the poverty enhancing impact of certain practices that are in vogue and strictly enforce the regulations on non-tariff barriers to the advantage of developing countries. The exports from developing countries, both of primary products and labour-intensive manufactured goods should be allowed to be traded without tariff or non-tariff barriers. If developed countries suffer local employment and industry problems, they should take care of it by redesigning their social safety net and welfare programmes rather than requiring poor nations to adjust.

Third, technologies which can help the poor either in their production systems, communication or health should be made available at reasonable costs- not at high prices. The recent price cuts of HIV drugs is a case in point. Labour displacing technologies should not be brought into poor countries which reduce jobs except in industries which are high risk, or highly inefficient in resource use. A moderate level of inefficiency in resource use due to labour intensity, is an acceptable trade-off for maintaining livelihoods.

Fourth, each initiative taken to take poorer nations along the globalization path should be accompanied by a safety-net, to minimize the impact on the poor. If for example, public utilities are to be privatized, then modalities of providing the utility service to the poor at low prices should be worked out and put in place. If financial sector is reformed, then they should be mandated to lend for activities carried out by the poor to the extent that the poor's access to finance is made difficult. MNCs when allowed to operate, should be asked to subscribe to a national charter of fair practices, involvement of local labour, adequate concern for people likely to be affected by their operations and compensation for clean up if they distort the environment (remember the Bhopal gas tragedy).

Fifth, all multi-lateral lending programmes should have capacity building components and social sector components that seek to raise education and skill levels of disadvantaged people. No project that does not contain a social impact analysis and measures to counter the negative effect on the poor should be sanctioned or allowed to be implemented.

Sixth, local governments' arms should not be twisted to make them agree to adopt policies which are not in the best interest of their people.

Shifting of environmentally dangerous industries, disposal of hazardous wastes, etc to developing countries are examples.

Seventh, sales of arms and ammunition from one country to another should be stopped forthwith. Regardless of the nobility of the cause and loftiness of principles, there can be no excuse to help one take the life of another. The moneys spent on training and equipping militia and fighting wars could go into improving lives, through education, social infrastructure, etc.

Eight, treat market as what it is- a mechanism of exchange. Do not invest it with more magical powers than it can actually take in. It cannot work in favour of the poor by itself. Do not design it to redistribute incomes or wealth as it can never do so. But with knowledge explosion we have started to look for complicated solutions, overlooking the obvious. A commonly shared objective of globalization does not exist between nations. This is the reason why we have differences in the way we define, design, implement and evaluate its different manifestations. Given the narrow national interests which masquerade as values and principles, it would be difficult to arrive at a shared vision of what globalization means. We may have to compromise and find ways of appealing to the collective conscience of those who still feel that wealth creation and profits are not the only important outcomes to pursue but distribution of incomes is also an equally important issue.

The immediate implementation of the above measures, it is hoped, will go a long way towards addressing the major challenges facing globalization.

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