

## Globalization, Socio-Cultural and Economic Imbalance in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Nigerian Example

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#### Abstract:

Despite the much-clamored merits of globalization across the universe, its demerits which have adversely affected Sub-Saharan African states far outweigh its presumed benefits. This chapter argues that, instead of bridging the socio-cultural and economic gap between the global north and global South by way of fostering development, globalization has in addition to creating a polarized universe and engendering underdevelopment, contributed in no small measure in deepening the socio-cultural and economic imbalance in Africa South of Sahara. This work contends that, against social cohesion, cultural exchange, economic integration and development which globalization is supposed to encourage and entrench, what is rather evident in African and the third world today is gross underdevelopment occasioned by socio-cultural and economic imbalance which is a product of Western- hegemonic disposition towards the rest of the world. This work presents evidence from Nigeria and selected parts of African continent to show that the endemic nature of the socio-cultural and economic imbalance bedeviling African continent, points to the fact that the negative impact of globalization is a contributing factor to Africa's socio-cultural and economic underdevelopment.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Socio-Cultural, economic imbalance, Sub-Saharan Africa, development, underdevelopment

#### Introduction

Globalization has been described as an economic phenomenon that involves increasing interaction or integration of national economic systems achievable through the growth and expansion of international trade, investment and flow of capital. As an established economic, social, political and cultural structure, it is aimed at narrowing space and time in trans-border relations among nations of the world thereby encouraging some

form of development. Two ideological approaches to the phenomenon of globalization can be identified. The first is what can be described as *pro-globalization* approach, while the second is known as *anti-globalization approach*. On the one hand, Pro-globalizationists such as Egbule (2018), Giddens (2018), Wood and Foster (1998) among others, defend globalization on the ground that it encourages modern state democracy and development through cooperation and interdependence among independent countries of the world. On the other hand, anti-globalizationists such as Eskor Toyo(2000), Herman(2002: 2-3) and a host of others show in their various works the inimical and debilitating effects of globalization on different economies and nations of the world. According to them, globalization is a western concept and a neo-colonial strategy that continues to under develop Africa and the third world by widening the gap between the global North and global South.

Pitching its tent with the anti-globalizationists, this chapter presents arguments to show that the socio-economic and cultural effects of globalization are lopsided giving rise to underdevelopment in the sub-Saharan region of the world. It contends that the socio-economic imbalance inherent in the Sub-Saharan African countries constitute a major factor in the development challenges facing these countries, and as such the bane of globalization. Therefore, if the socio-economic and cultural imbalance in global social and economic affairs is not revisited, then globalization would have lost its meaning and relevance and would have become an agent of underdevelopment and marginalization.

In order to achieve its aims, the chapter begins with an exposition of the nature and characteristics of globalization. It then proceeds to clarify the sense in which it employs the idea of socio-economic imbalance by showing how globalization has failed in attaining global socio-economic integration, cohesion and development as one of its main goals. Lastly, using examples from Nigeria and some states in Sub-Saharan Africa, the chapter demonstrates that the presence of socio-economic imbalance in global affairs is a reflection of the development challenges of the continent and the bane of globalization.

### **The Nature of Globalization**

Globalization has been defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (Giddens 1990: 64). This implies that globalization is the term used to describe the growing worldwide interdependence of people and countries. In line with this view, S.A Ekanem argues that globalization is an established economic, social, technological, political and cultural structures that involve the processes that emerge from the dynamic character of the production, consumption and trade of goods and assets that make up the base of the international political economy (2004: 17-18).

In other words, from the above definitions, one of the supposed benefits of globalization is that people living around the globe should be linked more deeply, more intensely and more immediately than ever before. This interrelation is expected to foster some forms of development and progress in each of the participating countries. No wonder Marshal McLuhan (1967) reasoned that globalization tends to integrate different societies in the world into “a global village”. The question however, is does globalization actually perform these functions in contemporary times and especially as it relates to the Sub-Saharan African states of which Nigeria is among? This does not seem to be the case. The point is that, one is made to believe that development as well as increased global integration of people and countries is manifested economically, socially, politically, culturally and environmentally through globalization. In reality, it does seem that globalization widens the gap between rich and poor countries of the world, deepens the polarization between the global north and global south, and fosters underdevelopment through socio-economic imbalance in sub-Saharan Africa. This explains

why most scholars conceive globalization as universalization of western culture and an attempt to hegemonize the rest of the world (Stegner 2005:11; Rodney 1974; Chinweizu 1975).

The point is that globalization can be said to be succeeding electronically or more specifically technologically in uniting the world in which time, space and distance have collapsed. The world is electronically and technologically wired for immediate communication and if need be immediate action. Different equipment which facilitates this type of globalization include cell phones, international radio and satellite T. V stations, fax machines, electronic mails, computers and the internet. Apart from these, there seems to be no more evidence of globalization especially as it concerns the sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the third world. What is rather evident in our world is the imposition of one socio-economic ideology of one given culture on the rest of the world cultures. This is what is described in this work as socio-cultural and economic imbalance which can be rightly conceived as one of the major causes of underdevelopment in Africa. More shall be discussed on this concept in the course of this work.

Meanwhile in an attempt to conceptualize globalization, M. I Edet construes globalization as a process. He believes that globalization may be situated squarely in the nature of man to (a) perpetrate himself and preserve his values (b) to have more of whatever he has and be more than whatever he is (Edet 2005: 3). A careful scrutiny of this conception of the nature of the nature of globalization shows that it is as old as human civilization in the sense that it is a natural, biological, inevitable evolutionary process that began when humans settled on all continents. This is why it is questionable if what we have is still globalization when one culture (western culture) seems to perpetrate itself by universalizing its values at the expense of other world cultures. In our age, the process of globalization unfolds as a surreptitious spreading of ostensibly modern and attractive western cultural influences in economic and political ideologies, music, drinks, fashion, homosexual permissiveness and individual freedom that masquerades as human rights (Edet 2005: 3). The process of globalization further unveils itself in our age through a hegemonic pressure exerted by powerful western states on weaker ones with the aim of imposing on them their political, economic, social and of course cultural systems.

Based on his argument above, Edet (2005: 4) submits that globalization as a process has not really begun. According to him, what the world is currently experiencing is Americanization which is led by United States of America. Indeed, America dominates world thinking, world events and to a large extent monopolizes world economy, the media, technology, world's natural resources and weapons of mass destruction. Edet's position is corroborated by Vinod Sanghal in his *Globalization Linked to Global Terrorism*. Vinod opines that across the globe globalization has become synonymous with Americanization of the world (2003: 141). This opinion stems from his observation that for a long time, the opponents of globalization in developing countries resisted globalization because they felt that globalization would end up under developing them by swamping their cultures and destroying their economic values. To the extent that globalization as a process entrenches western socio-cultural and economic hegemony instead of cultural and socio-economic integration, this work identifies with the views of both Edet and Vinod. The argument here is that western cultural hegemony, domination and determination of the trend of world social and economic affairs, while galvanizing the existing socio-economic imbalance in sub-Sahara Africa in particular and the world at large, also reveals how globalization contributes to the development problems of African states. This shall be demonstrated subsequently.

### **The Idea of Socio-Cultural and Economic Imbalance**

Culture is the totality of a people's way of life. Culture shapes people's attitudes, mode of thinking and responses. Culture also informs and reforms a people's social formation and economic responses. Culture is

also at root of the development or under development of a given nation. It is a people's worldview which determines their thought pattern and how they perceive reality, and reality in this sense is all encompassing. A people's culture can be expressed in their food, dance, art, language, source of income (which constitute their economy) and dressing (Fadahunsi 1999: 17-18, Enyimba 2019a: 2-3, 2019b: 126). In a very significant sense, culture is also an instrument of social integration and development (Abraham 1962: 27). In other words, there can be no social integration and development devoid of the instrumentality of culture. Intrinsic in social integration/development is cultural integration. If culture is construed as those fundamental features or endowments specially given to people of common origin by nature, then it will be reasonable to say that human culture is at the root of every difference experienced by humanity. This point has been expressed in a different form by Daniel A. Oyedola (2014: 1) and Juan D. Delius (2014: 75).

However, instead of engendering economic underdevelopment, domination, conflict, violence and other forms of man's inhumanity to man, this natural root of difference calls for a complementation of the other, only then can each achieve its nature-given essence. This is one major role that globalization ought to play in world affairs. Globalization ought to create room for interdependence of nations through socio-cultural and economic integration among other things. Contrarily, globalization has failed in this respect by enhancing a high level of individualism driven by capitalist economy with a predatory tendency by super powers on the weaker nations in economic, political, technological, social and cultural terms. This has further given rise to the incidence of socio-cultural and economic imbalance.

Socio-cultural and economic imbalance is a condition where a given society, culture or economic power dominates, influences and controls other cultures or societies and their economic activities to the point of under developing them. It is a situation in which one society or culture is seen penetrating other societies and cultures to the point of eroding the social, economic and cultural values and identities of these other societies or cultures. Socio-cultural and economic imbalance arises where in a community of nations or cultures, one nation or culture presents itself as superior, as a model and as a prototype for the rest of the nations and cultures. It is a situation where no country is seen as developed if it does not yet follow the development paradigm and orientation of this particular given nation. Socio-cultural and economic imbalance is closely related to Edwin Etieyibo's idea of cultural imperialism (2015: 147-170). According to him, cultural imperialism refers to the creation and maintenance of unequal relationships between cultural civilizations in ways that promote or favor one of such civilizations over the other. Considering the link between a people's culture and their economic development, Etieyibo's definition better describes a condition of economic imperialism. The challenge with Etieyibo's idea of cultural imperialism is the fact that it appears to be an unintentional act, a form of natural coincidence that occurs in the interactions between world civilizations. Meanwhile, socio-cultural and economic imbalance which this work refers to is an underdevelopment strategy intentionally, purposefully and well calculated by the global north (Euro-American Structure) precisely to lord over the rest of world's social, cultural and economic values in a manner that annihilates and wipes off any trace of their indigenous contributions to global socio-economic affairs. Where globalization is alive and real, this condition would not be the case.

The idea of socio-cultural and economic imbalance is inspired by the idea of epistemic injustice espoused by Miranda Fricker in which she argues that epistemic type of injustice is a situation in which someone is wronged especially in their capacity as a knower (2007: 2). It is a situation where one is not believed for prejudicial reasons. Similarly, socio-cultural and economic imbalance is a situation in which someone or a nation-state is wronged, subjugated, discriminated against, under developed, controlled and used or taken advantage of in their capacity as a social, cultural and economic being or entity. Socio-cultural and economic imbalance manifests under the social, cultural and economic dimensions of globalization. Socio-cultural and

economic imbalance is dehumanizing, discriminatory, prejudicial, and deceitful and annihilates a people's socio-cultural values and identity as well as their economic rights. It is a western construct perpetrated through the propagation of the flowering words of globalization. In what follows the work shall show how globalization entrenches under development through socio-cultural and economic imbalance in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Globalization, Socio-Cultural and Economic Imbalance in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Africa south of Sahara includes such countries as Nigeria, Burundi, Ghana, Burkina Faso etcetera. They belong to the third world often described as developing countries. These are part of the nation-states that globalization is supposed to benefit by reducing their poverty rate, expanding their trade alliance with foreign countries, receiving of financial aids from world bank and other international financial agencies, integrating their cultural, social and economic values with that of the rest of the world and so on. Under the guise of providing Sub-Sahara African states with these development benefits, their economic rights, socio-cultural values, ideals and identity are denied, denigrated, deconstructed and destroyed. Sub-Saharan African states tend to play a subservient role to the global north in matters of trade and economic activities across the globe by trading their precious raw materials for the progress and enrichment of Euro-American economy, and to its detriment and underdevelopment. This is in addition to abandoning their cultural values for western cultures all in the name of globalization. This is evident in the type of economic policies embarked on by most African countries such as Nigeria which encourages constant borrowing from western dominated economic organizations such as IMF, World Bank and others. This particular economic policy by many African leaders is a major factor to the under developed state of the continent. Nigeria is good example in this case. Other evidence of socio-cultural domination by the Euro-American system can be found in their mode of dressing, language, music and dance, food and behavioral pattern. Globalization seems to be pulling virtually all identity groups out of their various degrees of isolation, pushing them into currents of the ecumene and thereby obligating them to redefine themselves to global trends. Underneath this is a socio-cultural and economic domination.

According to Ebye Sunday, socio-cultural and *economic* globalization exist where there is the proliferation of individual social and economic values, originally western, to larger parts of the world. According to him, these values are expressed in the form of human and economic rights, identities and the adoption of western practices (2008: 99). The point made here is that, instead of the interpenetration of societies, cultures and economies on the global platform, what is evident are the transmission, propagation and presentation of a single society's social, cultural and economic values and orientation to the rest of the world as absolute and universal. This is not globalization but socio-cultural and economic imbalance antithetical to development. Globalization is supposed to encourage a balanced world economy by creating a platform where elements of each society's social-cultural and economic values are to be found in every other society through interactions and interpenetration of these societies, not a lopsided socio-cultural and economic diffusion. Not only does this type of scenario generate socio-economic imbalance, but more importantly it impoverishes and underdevelops sub-Saharan African states by weakening their economy. In the words of W.O Alli;

The increase in social and political unrest has exposed African states of their inadequacies and worsens their economic condition thereby degenerating into conflicts. Countries such as Nigeria, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Cote d' Ivoire, Rwanda, Angola etc., have experienced widespread and intense international conflicts which has open up the myth of national solidarity, undermining the socio-cultural fabrics of these states and seriously affected their cultural identity and economy negatively (2006: 329).

This explains why M. I Edet calls for a globalization with human face. Indeed, globalization must be practiced with a human face, with a sense of morality, fairness and equity and not purely and principally from the point of view of market and profit and the universalization of western culture. As Ekanem rightly observes, African belief system has been abolished by Africans and the western notion of virtually all things permeates the African way of life (2004: 20). The truth is that Africans remain basically Africans in terms of race and color, but spiritually, intellectually, socially and culturally is westernized. Africa has suffered this subjugation over the years through western education, science and most recently globalization which are all instruments of exploration, exploitation, colonialism, imperialism and underdevelopment. It is on the basis of this that some scholars are of the view that globalization is a tool for the re-colonization of Africa (Herman 2002: 1-3). The reason for this position is that during the colonial era, the west partitioned, exploited and plundered Africa, taking all that were vital to the continent to their industries following the industrial Revolution in Europe (Rodney 1974; Fanon 1965; Chinweizu 1974).

As I have observed earlier, one of the major inflows of product and activity of globalization is technology. Technology involves the way of life of the mother nation originating it. The way of life of a people constitutes their social, cultural and economic values such that any importation or transfer of technology implies the importation and transfer of other country's social, cultural and economic values into another country. Africa tends to depend on technologies nurtured from the west and so have been allowing these technologies into the continent. As a result, the social, cultural and economic values of Africans have been greatly affected, altered and in most cases completely eroded or wiped off, thereby destroying and under developing the socio-cultural fibers of the African society (Ekanem 2004: 25). For instance, the internet plays a prominent role in globalization as one can buy and sell without any physical contact with one's clients. The same internet and computer use has helped to expose Africans especially the youths to foreign cultural influences and different forms of cybercrimes and internet economic frauds. Most of our youths now have unrestricted access to some websites like the playboy which contents provoke a lot of ethical questions which is against the African cultural notion of sex. This has led to the high level of promiscuity that is prevalent in Sub-Saharan African societies or countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon, South Africa, Liberia, and Ghana among others.

Again, the African cultural sense of dressing has been greatly affected as a result of globalization. African women especially the younger ones no longer see the African wrapper and long gowns as socially relevant. Our societies as reflected in higher institutions of learning like the universities are replete with a fashion sense that is completely alien to African social and cultural values. Most of our girls, ladies and women do not have any wrapper in their wardrobes (Ekanem 2004: 25). Rather what is in vogue are trousers, mini-skirts, body-hugs and such stylish dresses that barely cover the women. As a result of the influence of western culture through globalization, nudeness seems to be the order of the day, as most African women seem not to respect their nakedness anymore, which has become an object for public eye. All these which are against African social and cultural values are products of globalization. Furthermore, the culture of violence ravaging African states today is a product of the transmission of negative western socio-cultural values to the African soil through the instrumentality of globalization. Africans were known to be their brother's keepers, generous and hospitable. Life was seen as sacred and shedding of another person's blood was seen as a taboo and against cultural tenets. But globalization has brought in a strange culture of violence where the sanctity of human life is no longer sacrosanct. This violent nature of our society as can be seen in the case of political thuggery, violence, armed robbery, cultism etcetera could be traced to globalization. This is because most of the arms used in these activities are products of foreign economic cultures. It is pertinent to state that this form of undervaluing and cultural imposition is what would eventually destroy globalization if not checked.

## Conclusion

The argument in the foregoing pages has been that globalization has instituted underdevelopment through social, cultural and economic deprivation and imbalance across the globe, especially in Sub-Saharan African states. This work has shown that through economic domination, deprivation, technology transfer and other marginalizing strategies, globalization has elevated western culture above other world cultures thereby posing a major challenge to the development strides of most sub-Saharan states. This was shown to be contrary to the many goals of globalization, such as socio-economic integration and development, socio-cultural integration, among others. This form of subjugation is what has been described in this work as socio-cultural and economic imbalance which is sine qua non to underdevelopment. This is actually the bane of globalization which unmasks it as an agent of underdevelopment and undervaluing of non-western countries.

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