

## GLOBALIZATION AND VALUE SYSTEM

Oseni Taiwo Afisi  
Lagos State University  
Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria  
[oseni.afisi@lasunigeria.org](mailto:oseni.afisi@lasunigeria.org)

### *Abstract*

*The reality of globalization in the world today, and the apparent benefits it has recorded in the sphere of international economics, politics, social, educational liberalization and principally, science and technology are without doubt, overwhelming. But globalization is by no means a full proof error free ideology. Its negative impacts on the economic, political, educational and national cultures and values of most developing nations, particular Africa are of immense proportion. The concern of this paper is to philosophically examine the impact of globalization on African value system. The paper argues that globalization is not a problem but a challenge to Africa. African countries need not cry foul over globalization but need to stand up to the challenges it poses. The paper contends that African countries need to develop policies that are rooted in their cultural heritages, which can also be adopted by other cultures and societies of the world in order to have an encompassing as well as integrative value system in 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa.*

(Key Words: Globalization, Technology, Freed Ideology).

### INTRODUCTION

The place of Africa and where she stands in the world economy, politics and culture is a cause for concern. Today, the world has become a global village, but Africa seems to be worst for it. Advances in information technology, for instance, have made the world a truly global community where interactions of people from one extreme part of the world to the other is just a phone call or few mouse clicks away. The implication of this is that the world is turning into the practice of one market economy, one liberal democracy, and ultimately one Westernized cultural heritage. The irony of all these is that while globalization seems beneficial to the West, the East, Asians and Arabs; Africa seems largely affected negatively. The continent of Africa is still ravaged with poverty, unemployment, ethnic and religious crisis, inter-tribal wars and underdevelopment, which globalization is intended to eradicate. Though, these problems cannot be largely attributed to globalization.

Two basic factors could be identified as a cause of why Africa remains an underdog in this age of globalization. One, the role which globalization has been primarily designed to play in eroding national cultures and values and replacing them with the cultural values of the more technologically and economically advanced countries of the West seems to make Africa least prepared in being an active participant in the globalization process. Second is the inability of Africans themselves to take up the challenges posed by globalization in order to be relevant in contemporary world. It is on the above background that this paper seeks to philosophically examine how these problems can be addressed in contemporary Africa as the globalization process and forces continue to wield influence on all societies.

### **GLOBALISATION BROADLY CONCEPTUALISED**

Since the early 1980s when the concept of globalization first gained popularity and through to the 1990s, the concept has inspired several interpretations and perspectives from different scholars. Principally, globalization is often seen in the area of economic globalization which Jagdish sees as *“the integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration and the spread of technology (Jagdish, 2004:3).”* The limitation of this interpretation is that of restricting globalization to the sphere of economy alone. This may not be farfetched owing to the fact that globalization was originally an economic imperative. In fact, record of history portends that the 19<sup>th</sup> century which is sometimes called “The First Era of Globalization” was a period characterized by rapid growth in international trade and investment between the European imperial powers, their colonies, and, later, the United States (Wikipedia).

Today, however, globalization has manifested itself in various dimensions. Globalization has become a worldwide phenomenon. It has gained worldwide attention regarding the *“integration of the world into global trade relations, economic capitalization, politics, culture, ideology, science, technology for the betterment of human race (Waziri, 2008:65).”* To Ihuah, *“globalization entails mobility of the world economy, interdependence of national cultures and politics, as well as environmental and security concerns. It is a shift of goods, people, information and ideas from one land to another (Ihuah, 2006:36).”* All these are the wide ranging dimensions of globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This multi-dimensional facet of globalization is intended to make the world a single entity where heaven of opportunities boundlessly open in the area of improved health care, access to information and education, wealth creation, human and material welfare and the ability to pursue one single ideology for mankind. It is aimed at making the world a global village. This is why Ramose states that *“globalization is a metaphor for the aspiration and the determination to render an idea or way of life applicable and functional throughout the world (Ramose, 2002:140).”* The pattern at which this definition goes depicts the fact that globalization is a barrier breaking concept. It is a concept which acts beyond national boundaries and also

internationalizes the essentials of national economic, political and cultural dimensions. This clearly states the reason Robinson says “*globalization is a highly dynamic process of growing interdependence among nation states, with the implication that issues are becoming global rather than national, and that they demand global rather than national attention*” (Peter, 1991).

It is of utmost importance to mention at this juncture that one of the main driving forces behind the wheels of globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the advancements in science and technology. Impact of this could be seen in the area of health care and medicine, in mechanized food production, in generation of energy, in technological construction, in manufacture and design of the means of transportation, in manufacturing industries, in the area of communications technology, and so on. This is largely captured in the words of Ihuah:

*Globalization may be said to be the process of integrating scientific technology across borders with the intent at increasing productivity and high returns. Expectedly, is becoming the society’s main productive force and the decisive factor of the increase in labour and productivity for transnational corporation (TNCs). Thus, globally intertwined and connected, humanity is today living an e-life.... (Ihuah, 2006:37)*

The reality of this is that advancements in science and technology have made more manifests the realization of a global community. Advancement in information technology in particular has aided the ability to send and receive information at the speed of light. Today, information can be sent or received via verbal telephoning, SMS, multi-media messaging and so on from one extreme part of the globe to another. The awareness, in which information technology creates in the ability to know what happens in the world, and where it is happening live, is also a nod for commendation. This is why Elaigwu rightly observes that from the “*coca-colonization of the world, we have arrived at the CNNization of the world* (Elaigwu, 1997).”

Having considered the various positive benefits globalization confers on the world, one may be tempted to say that the concept is ultimately and absolutely valuable. However there is a need for us to look at the other side of its coin. Mazrui recognizes this when he said globalization has both a positive and negative force. To him, globalization is positive when it enhances “*human communication, improves levels of human productivity, enhances our awareness of being inhabitants of a fragile planet, and facilitates empathy between societies across vast distances* (Mazrui, 2002:98).” Mazrui’s perspective on the positive nature of globalization could be said to embrace a humanist approach to the theory and practice of globalization. This perspective makes globalization walks in the footprints of global civilization and its ideals.

The negative force of globalization which Mazrui harps on is that *“it allows itself to be a handmaiden to ruthless capitalism, increases the danger of warfare by remote control, deepens the divide between the haves and have-nots, and accelerates damage to our environment”* (Mazrui, 2002:59). This negative perspective to globalization by Mazrui particularly, as it relates to extreme capitalist economy essentially corroborates Maduagwu’s assertion that *“globalization is only the latest stage of European economic and cultural domination of the rest of the world which started with colonialism, went through imperialism and have now arrived at globalization stage”* (Maduagwu, 1999:65). It is in this sense that globalization can be interpreted as a means of exploiting the resources of the have-nots by the haves and consequently dominating the world. In consonance with this, Wilfred eloquently asserts that:

*Present-day globalization is but a continuation of a long tradition of over five hundred years, the tradition of imperialism. Globalization is only the latest phase and expression of this uninterrupted history of domination and subjugation of peoples, nations and cultures through the conquistadors and colonizers. It is a tradition of political, economic and cultural domination of some nations over others* (Wilfred, 1997:42-43).

The upshot of the above excerpt is that globalization is another form of colonial subjugation. It is the imposition of a particular culture and value system upon other nations with the direct intent of exploitation. And a very good example of this calculated domination over a peoples’ value system is that of Africa. On this note, we may ask, what is the place of Africa in a globalised world?

## **AFRICA’S PLACE IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD**

Anti-globalization movements have had to say that Africa has been the worst hit of the negative effects of globalization. This is, however, not denying the fact that globalization has made tremendous impacts in improving the quality of life of people in the world, but the explosive consequences it portends especially on Africa, seems paradoxical.

It is a commonly perceived opinion that globalization is more of a curse than a blessing for the African continent. What this indicates is that globalization is indeed the engine room for the propagation of neocolonialism and new imperialism on the African soil. While colonialism

has ended, the reality on ground today is that political independence in many African states has not culminated in the much desired economic and cultural freedom. Lamb captures this post-colonial African situation aptly when he asserts that:

*The colonialists left behind some schools and roads, some post offices and bureaucrats. But their cruelest legacy on the African continent was a lingering inferiority complex, a confused sense of identity. After all, when people are told for a century that they are not as clever or capable as their masters, they eventually believe it (Lamb, 1986:140).*

Perhaps the greatest venture upon which the negative impact of globalization on Africa rests primarily is on the erosion of Africa's cultural heritage. Upon this heritage hinges the political, economic, social, educational subjugation of the continent of Africa. The forceful integration of Africa into globalization through slavery and colonialism has led to the problem of personal identity and cultural dilemma for the African. Africa has had to be dependent upon Europe and America ever since for its development. In the words of Maduagwu, "*ever since their experience with colonialism, African countries have been unable to, independently, articulate or chart their own history, culture and identity*" (Maduagwu, 1999:4).

Arguably, globalization is purely an attempt to spread Western culture with its attendant capitalist socio-economic political nuances. Waters captures this thus:

*Globalization is the direct consequence of the expansion of European culture across the planet via settlement, colonization and cultural mimesis. It is also bound up intrinsically with the pattern of capitalist developments as it has ramified through political and cultural arenas (Waters, 1995:3).*

Waters descriptions depicts that the Western culture has become the measuring yardstick in which all other world cultures must be viewed or standardized. In his words, "every set of social arrangements must establish its position in relation to the capitalist West (Waters, 1995:3)."

The apparent display of Westernized cultures and values in Africa by Africans is a testimony to the erosion of African cultures and values. The traditional African cultural values are fast going into extinction; no thanks to the direct consequences of globalization. The African values of politics and economies are fast degenerating owing to their replacement with the

cultural values of the more technologically and economically advanced Western countries. In the words of Elaigwu, *“the Western values, politics and business culture are being powerfully transmitted across nations; while their concepts of democracy, human rights, market economy and life styles are being disseminated around the world as models (Elaigwu, 1997:7).”* The assessment of Ike Odimegwu asserts more contemporaneously the direct effects of the instruments of globalization on Africa. According to him, *“with the use of technologies like satellite radio and television, the internet and telecommunication tools like cellular and mobile phones, the traditional concepts and notions of space, time and distance have been drastically affected, reduced and redefined (Odimegwu, 2006:23).”*

More vividly is the extreme individualism that globalised capitalism is spreading right across all nations and cultures. This is antithetical to the communal life the African social order is said to be structured. The high esteem in which Western individualism is held and transported into all other cultures through capitalism and liberal form of democracy, justice and rule of law stands as aberration to the concepts of brotherhood, co-operation and collectivism that defined traditional Africa. Africa communalism teaches the appreciation of human equality and intrinsic worth of a person as a member of the community. Ejanam recaptures the nostalgic feeling of traditional African communalism and what role this can play in societal development:

*With this prevalent sense of community amongst the people, all forms of greedy tendencies are shunned. Cohesion is enhanced and ensured as well as the being of the individuals through greetings, friendship, hospitality, brotherhood and co-operation. As communalism takes root in any society, justice is accorded its right place, life becomes peaceful, and the individual develops in appropriate ways in the community, (Ejanam 2007:399).*

One can therefore say that African communalism entails the concern of man and his wellbeing in ardent relations to other members of his community. This thus presupposes that everyone in the community is his/her brother/sister's keeper. The idea of the individual person is ultimately tied to the idea of the community. This therefore characterizes the life of the community where there is ultimate personal interaction among all members. This is as opposed to *“the recently impersonal modern urban set-up where everyone minds his or her own business”* (Edeh, 1985:56). Although, it can be argued against that all these cultural values are not unique to Africa, but are features common to all societies at a particular stage of their developments. However, the facts need to be told that these values still embody the African even

in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, unlike in Europe and America where individualism has taken over the principle of collectivism.

It can be seen that the contending issues raised against globalization as it relates to the preservation of African value systems run counter to the underlying principles of world Westernization, barrier breaking and uniting people across boundaries which globalization portends. The benefits this should have been for Africa is rubbished by the potential damage it portends to have on the erosion of African cultures and values. The successes globalization would have recorded in Africa are rubbished by the reality of extreme poverty and technological underdevelopment of the continent, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the large-scale conflicts, political instability and so on. These problems, therefore, are making it impossible for Africa to reap the benefits of globalization.

Based on this fact, it will be fool hardy to advocate a total eradication of globalization in Africa given the reality of it's immerse benefits at the global stage. The challenge therefore is how Africa can preserve its cultural heritage in the light of globalization. How can Africa make its impact felt positively at the world arena? How can the traditional African value system, which is believed to be glorious in, education, politics, economy, be integrated into the global arena in order to make Africa, too, a point of reference?

## **TOWARDS AN INTERGRATED AND GLOBALIZED AFRICAN VALUE SYSTEM**

Undoubtedly, the values of brotherhood, social cohesion and social order which characterized traditional African communalism are affected owing to Western civilization, modernity, urbanization and above all globalization. In other words, the traditional African value system and the sense of cultural identity have given way to multi-ethnic and multi-cultural interactions.

No doubt, a part of this paper shows that globalization is yet another form of imperialist subjugation, but the need for an integration of African value system stems from the fact that globalization in our world today is a reality and has come to stay. It is an incontrovertible fact that colonialism existed on the continent of Africa. But now that it has ended what Africa need do is to synthesis the good legacies it left behind with the indigenou value system in order to have an integration of the two for the benefits of Africa.

Thus, the challenges posed by globalization to Africa are those that can easily be overcome when Africans take the bull by the horn. A proper integration of everything African could be harnessed and be made to conform to the international standard. This attempt, it is believed, would make Africa not solely a dependent continent but also a player in the globalization process.

Granted that Africa is poor in terms of the advancements in science and technology, but nothing much is wrong in borrowing technology and adapting it to suit the immediate needs of the African. Of course, there are variants of benefits in scientific technological advancement but the caution Africans can take is to ensure that the technology that is borrowed or adopted does not erode its traditional African values. A cue can be taken from the Asian countries who embraced Western technology but at the same time keep their cultural heritage. The path at which this reasoning is going is that Africans should evaluate themselves and identify where their strongholds are. It is important that African countries should maintain a delicate balance by working globally in terms of ways of selling the African cultures to the outside world. One could be in the area of African fashion and the development of tourism. In fact, there is a growing demand of international tourism for places with a cultural heritage. This sector can be developed and resources harnessed for the development of the continent.

The international media is also an avenue to exploit to boom Africa to the outside world. African drama and music which portrays the rich African cultural heritage with a fusion of contemporary modernity can be made to be seen by international audiences. Efforts are however been made in this area by the fast growing entertainment industry in Nigeria, particularly the evolution of Nollywood as the third largest movie producer in the world. If properly harnessed and sponsored by the government and private organizations, Nollywood could become an international revenue generation spinner. This is notably the drive behind the American Hollywood and the Indian Bollywood which makes them internationally recognized. The import of cultures these two carry along and their effects in the world today are undoubtedly innumerable.

Underpinning the concept of globalization is the commitment to economic capitalism and liberal democracy. Africans should not take uncritical dispositions toward the economic, political and cultural ideology of the West in the disguise of globalization. African intellectuals, stakeholders and political leaders can revisit the basic principles underlying the traditional African communal economy and politics in an attempt to integrate these principles with what is obtainable in today's Africa. Since the Western market capitalism and liberal democracy have not helped Africa out of extreme poverty and underdevelopment, Africans could look inward to integrate their value systems which hinge on communalism with the under-current globalization. In actual fact, the fate of Africa, as it stands, in the global economic order is uncertain. In the words of Maduagwu, "*Africa seems to have no place in the globalizing New World Order* (Maduagwu, 1999:6)." The solution lies essentially in globalizing communal economic system for Africa.

The indigenization of African educational system is also another way of retaining Africa's cultural heritage and integrating this effort into the Western formal educational system

as it is practiced wholesomely in Africa. Ayandele berates policy makers in the education sector in Africa:

*The truth that should ring incessantly in the ears of ... educated reformers is that ... to date, the greatest disservice of the misleaders and misbuilders of the African edifice is their (failure) to recognize the cornerstone status of Africa's cultural heritage ... For the soul of a nation, its pride, its quintessence and distinctiveness, is its cultural heritage, its birthright and self identity. It is that nation's only badge of respectability, the essence of its being, the mainspring of its spirituality, the past to merge with the present and the future; the transcendental corporate achievement of a peoples through which continuity is transmitted from generation to generation. It is the trump card in their delivers with other peoples and the primary reason for their being respectable by truly educated unprejudiced non-Africans (Ayandele, 1999).*

Recognizing the importance of education as affecting national development efforts should be made to identify with the varied idiosyncrasies of different cultures for policy implementations. In the traditional African education system, great importance is attached to character training. According to Fafunwa, “*physical education, vocational training, religious education, respect for elders and co-operative community efforts are considered necessary for the development of 'good character (Fafunwa, 1974:34).*”

This glorious description of traditional African education system stands contrary to the contemporary education system with its attendant individualistic trend. This trend could be regarded as one of the contributory factors to the decline of education standards in Africa today. Christy Odimegwu largely describes the characteristic features of the current trends in contemporary education system:

*This individualistic trend has permeated all levels of the educational system with many wholesome consequences. At the various levels of education particularly the secondary and tertiary institutions teachers and pupils, lecturers and students engage in various forms of corrupt practices which negate the communal spirit and are detrimental to the goals which education ought to achieve. Such evils as admission racketeering, examination malpractice, sexual harassment of students by lecturers or vice versa, sale of marks, lack of sense of duty, indifference to social*

*responsibilities and public property, indecent dressing and general decay of the moral sense, all culminating in abysmally low performance of students are now common features of most secondary and tertiary educational institutions (Odimegwu, 2007:357).*

The effort at integration in this respect is to bring this positive aspect of traditional education into contemporary education. Co-operative teaching methods and practices which upholds communalist spirit of teamwork can be inculcated into the contemporary education system in Africa. This is possibly why the Nigerian national policy on education stipulates that teaching should seek to “*inculcate community spirit in the students through projects and group action research (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004:34).*”

## CONCLUSION

The challenges globalization pose to Africa are nothing more than challenges for Africans to adopt development policies that are rooted in their cultural value systems. They are challenges that can make Africans develop their own model of contemporary African global realities. They are challenges that should make Africans take seriously the development of policies that would eradicate poverty and underdevelopment in the continent. They are challenges that should make Africans globalize their cultures in the face of increasing globalised Western cultures. These challenges when met with fierce determination would reduce the level of dependency of African countries on Western countries, but would facilitate and strengthen interdependence among nations. This would make Africa a force to reckon with in the competitive global environment.

-----

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ayandele E.A. (1999). “African Renaissance: The Cultural Dimension” (An unpublished paper presented at the symposium on the African Renaissance to celebrate the Eightieth birthday of President Nelson Mandela, 1998, quoted from Michael O. Maduagwu, “Globalisation and its challenges to National Cultures and Values: A Perspective from Sub-saharan Africa” being a paper presented at the international Roundtable on the challenges of Globalisation, University of Munish, 18-19 March.

- Edeh, E.M.P. (1985) *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics*, Chicago, Loyola University press.
- Ejanam Stephen. (2007). "Relevance of Pantaleon Iroegbu's Communalism in our times" in Ike Odimegwu (ed), *Perspectives on African Communalism*, Canada, Trafford publishing.
- Elaigwu Isawa J. (1997). "From Might to Money: The Challenging Dimensions of Global Transition to the 21<sup>st</sup> century", (1995 NIPSS Distinguished Annual Lecture), Kuru: National Institute.
- Fafunwa A.B. (1974). *History of Education in Nigeria*, London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2004). *National Policy on Education*, Lagos, NERDC publication.
- Ihuah Alloy S. (2006). "Scientific Technology and Globalisation" *Lasu Journal of Humanities*, Vol 4, No 1, 36-52.
- Jagdish Bhagwati. (2004). *In Defence of Globalization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lamb, D. (1986). *The African: Encounters from the Sudan to the Cape*, London, Longman Press.
- Maduagwu O. Michael. (1999). "Globalization and its challenges to National Cultures and Values: A Perspective from Sub-saharan Africa" being a paper presented at the International Roundtable on the challenges of Globalization, University of Munish, 18-19 March.
- Mazrui Ali. A. (2002). "Nkrumanizm and the Triple Heritage in the Shadow of Globalisation" being a paper presented at the Aggrey-Fraser-Guggisberg Memorila lectures, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra.
- Odimegwu Ike. (2006). "Globalisation and the African Identity: Towards a Universalist Reconceptualisation" in M. Asiegbu, J. Agbakogba (eds). *Philosophy and Praxis*, Ibadan, Hope Publishers.
- Odimegwu Christy. (2007). "Communalism and contemporary African Education: Enhancing Integration, in Ike Odimegwu (ed), *Perspectives on African Communalism*, Canada, Trafford publishing.

Ramose, M.B. (2002). *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu*, Harare: Mond Books,.

Robinson Peter, in *Futures*, quoted from Michael O. Maduagwu. (1999). "Globalisation and its challenges to National Cultures and Values: A Perspective from Sub-saharan Africa" being a paper presented at the international Roundtable on the challenges of Globalisation, University of Munish, 18-19 March.

Waters Malcom. (1995). *Globalization*, London: Rutledge.

Waziri Babatunde Adisa. (2008). "Westernisation, Neo-Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Africa:

Implications for the Degeneration of African Social Values" *LASU Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol 7, No1, 50-74

Wilfred Felix. (1997). "Globalisation and Cultures- The Other Voice", *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*,

Vol.9, No 1-2, 12-19.