

GLOBALISATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN AFRICA

By

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Abstract

The study explored the nexus between the contemporary globalisation prescriptions and incidence of poverty in Africa. The paper began with the premise that most states in Africa are thoroughly poor, manifesting deep-rooted deprivation, alienation and penury. Worse still, efforts by successive political leaderships to redress the orgy situation rather reproduce vicious cycle of despondent penury. Meanwhile, we based our analysis on conscionable blend of Marxist political economy approach and complex interdependent analysis; and hence noted that the world of man moves on the fulcrum of matter and interdependence of various entities. Thus, globalisation, as a process, impacts on the character and intensity of the productive forces. These further widen inequality among states and peripherised fledgling economies. Indeed, most economies in Africa are peripheral and thus become more stagnated as poverty incidences are further exacerbated. To turn around these economies, we recommended effective autochthonous regionalism rooted in institutionalisation of economic and political freedom, and also in promoting inter and intra regional trade as well as investment opportunities.

Introduction

It is an incontrovertible fact that Africa is thoroughly a poverty-infested region. The structure of global political economy and the attendant imposition of alien development model (various strands of capitalist ethos and ideals) by largely exogenous factors; acting in concert with local collaborators, further exacerbated and complicated development conditions in Africa.

Over the years, successive political leaderships in Africa have been engrossed with the onerous task of enhancing sustainable development. Several strands of development strategies have also been adopted and implemented. These include: Revised Framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa (1975-77); The Monrovia Strategy (1979); Lagos Plan of Action (1980); Structural Adjustment Programme (1985-88); African Alternative Framework to the Structural Adjustment Programme for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) (1989); African Charter for Popular Participation (1990); Conference on Security, Development and

Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA); Global Coalition to Attract Financial and Economic Assistance to Africa; The Everything For All By The Year 2000 Initiative; The 2020 Initiative; Copenhagen Social Summit Framework; The Highly Indebted Poor Countries Framework; The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers; African Economic Community/African Union; The Lome Agreement and presently, the New Partnership for African Development launched in 2001 (Okolie, 2005:291).

However, these strategies failed to transmute the region out of the woods as incidence of poverty persists and in fact continues to deepen to seemingly intractable dimension. Moreover, the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the associated de-ideologisation of the global political economy further threw up stiffer challenges in the task of accelerating development in Africa. Particularly, the monumental global incident changed the character of the productive forces, modified social relations of production and heightened the intensity of social atomisation. The combined impact of these facilitated the emergence of contemporary globalisation process. In fact, globalisation, as a process of evolving a global community that is anchored on shared development values, principles and norms, moves in a spectrum-like dimension and revolves basically around the dominant values of American-styled capitalism.

As a corollary of the above, contemporary globalisation has, as its cardinal plank, liberalisation of trade and international finance. Meanwhile, it is analytically germane to trace the development of contemporary globalisation to the global political and economic changes which occurred in the 1980s. Particularly, the Reagan/Thatcher revolution prescribed that the contemporary growth of global relations should be approached with laissez-faire market economies through privatisation, liberalisation, and deregulation (Scholte, 2002:8). Nevertheless, the collapse of the "Socialist" bloc and the associated de-ideologisation merely lubricated the transformations in the productive process and stimulated the pervasive networks of capitalist values, ideals and principles; rooted in neo-liberal agenda. Primarily, globalisation, in its post-Cold War expression seeks to remove all national and cultural barriers to the free movement of international capital and to secure for it privileged treatment within the economic domain of every country (Khor, 1998:2). The purveyors of contemporary globalisation include: transnational corporations (TNCs), international finance institutions (IFIs); and governments of the industrialised capitalist countries.

Therefore, the present structure of global political economy now promotes competitiveness and extreme individualism rooted in rigid atomisation of social relations. Hence, uncompetitive economies are bound to be marginalised, alienated and further peripherised. This appears to be the fate of fledgling economies situated in Africa. In this study, we shall explore the possible means of maximising the gains of contemporary globalisation packages toward reducing poverty in Africa.

Theoretical Perspective

Studies on globalisation and development are generally elevated to international intellectual discourse. The focus, orientation, ideological content and empirical sensitivity of these studies are influenced so much by developmental objective conditions of the researcher rather than considerations based on value-free scholarship and neutral empiricism. Therefore, most scholars/researchers from developing states largely condemn the whole idea and process of globalisation. They generally associate globalisation to underdevelopment and in attempt to validate their "subjective preferences" appear to forget that globalisation is global development-generated inevitability. Correspondingly, most scholars from the developed world preoccupy their thought processes and writings on eulogising and rationalising globalisation and elevating same to international regime. These scholars regrettably project globalisation, as a process, with distinct development strategies.

As a corollary to the foregoing, social science literatures on globalisation and development, especially from developing economies are inundated with strands of thought predicated on vitriolic attacks on the globalisation process. Generally, they anchor their analysis on the dependency persuasion which is fundamentally flawed and attributes their present developmental conditions to factors of colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism. Indeed, dependency theory attempts an understanding and explanations of underdevelopment by focusing on the historical circumstances surrounding underdeveloped states. Some of the proponents include: Prebisch (1950), Baran (1967), Frank (1969), Santos (1970), Amin (1973), Offiong (1980), Emmanuel (1992) etc. Their central thesis remains that under-developed economies were impoverished through exogenous disarticulations and distortions of the economic and political structure of the developed economies. Germane as their arguments were, their emphasis on delinking as a way out of the economic strangulation remains a counterpoise and direct negation of the precept of globalism and laws which emplace natural order; and gregarious instincts in every being.

In addition to the above, dependency theory provokes defeatist and subjective thinking which drives man to look at global order from "a bird's eye view". Meanwhile, attempts by scholars to anchor their studies on the Marxian political economy approach had yielded abundant intellectual returns. It not only provokes dialectical thinking but enhances understanding of human relations from interplay of sub-structural and super-structural forces. However, the emphasis on deterministic role of the sub-structural elements remains empirically questionable in our present world of time and space (a fundamental critique of the argument was aptly done elsewhere in Okolie, 2007:6). One basic strength of the approach is that it integrates analysis of domestic productive structure and relations with international structure, relations and transactions (for more on the basic proposition of the

approach, see Ake, 1981; Lenin, 1976; Dobb (ed.) 1970 etc). It is therefore the contention of the paper that both the substructure and superstructure, in a given economy, influence the intensity of each other's linkages and adjust existing structures and conditions to suit directional policy goals. None determines the character of the other.

However, to improve the validity and analytic strength of the framework, we shall attempt a conscionable blend of the Marxist political economy approach with the basic propositions emanating from complex interdependent theory. The latter, as developed by Robert Keohane, and Joseph Nye, refers to "the various, complex transnational connections (interdependencies) between states and societies (Keohane and Nye, 1977). According to them, such relations particularly economic ones, were increasing while those of military force and power balancing were decreasing (but remained important). In an anticipation of problems of cheating and relative gains, the theorists introduced the concept of "regimes" to mitigate anarchy and facilitate cooperation.

Indeed, the complex interdependent theory provides the platform for understanding the activities of social forces, and actors engaged in the production process. Although the theory recognised the possibility of unequal gains in the production process, it falls short of specifying the cause and implications of this for global governance and stability. This lacuna was however addressed by the Marxist political economy approach. Unequal gains arose from the organisation, production and distribution of global wealth. In fact, a few economic notables, acting under the ambit of the State, appropriate disproportionate share of global wealth and convert same into power directed at further expropriation.

The above largely explains the predicament of developing economies such as Africa. The Region was basically colonised and factors of colonialism and neo-colonialism, combined with other internal factors to subordinate the continent and reduce it to production of raw materials whose prices are determined by international actors; whose primary goal is to institutionalise the *status quo*. Thus, the peripheralisation of African economies is essentially but not exclusively an outcome of global economic forces which lubricate global capitalism. All these forces constantly undermine attempts by African States to form an economic and political union for the primary purpose of alleviating poverty and strengthening domestic economies to enhance its competitiveness. This partly explains why efforts at turning the economic fortunes of African States around had met with meager returns and rather reproduces dependency, underdevelopment and cyclical penury. Perhaps, the intolerable spate of hunger and misery has compelled a few states to recline and begin to promote nationalism and nationalist ideas, even against the principle of openness and free market economy.

Understanding Globalisation

Globalisation basically refers to the universalisation of predominant development values (in this case capitalist values); it is the harmonisation of production and distribution relations; and indeed the intense secularisation of cultures and systematisation of political regimes under one "Leviathan like capitalist regime" (Okolie, 2008:33)

Perhaps the simplest way to define globalisation is to view it as "the phenomenon of increasing integration of nation states through economic exchanges, political configurations, technological advance and cultural influences" (Ike, 2004:7). Similarly, UNDP (1997:91) defines globalisation as:

Liberalisation and intensification of linkages in trade, finance markets, production, research, transportation, energy, medicine, education, politics and culture, that is accelerated by discoveries in micro-electronics information processing, communications and biotechnology; these form of cooperation and linkages have created mutual interdependency in global system.

Meanwhile, Seteolu (2004:6) identified the following, as some of the key elements of globalisation: time-space compression, interdependent world amid polarisation and inequality, bi-polar to uni-polar system, international division of labour and polarised system, global economy through the integration of local economies using the instrument of structural adjustment programme, flow of persons, culture, ideas and finance. Furthermore, some of the basic pre-requisites of globalisation as enunciated by Watkins (2002: 24 -28 and cited in Ogbeide and Aghahowa, 2004:348 9) include:

- development of a coordinated trade policy, especially renewed commitment to liberalising domestic markets and fostering increased openness;
- formulation of prudent macroeconomic stability;
- better co-coordinate international technical and financial assistance;
- investment in people and building capacity in line with the international development goals, etc.

Meanwhile, scholars have variously debated on the potency of these pre-requisites in enhancing development in Africa and indeed developing economies. However, while Daoas (2001:4); Ajayi, (2001:20); Watkins, (2001:12-25), etc., had argued that globalisation agenda would further increase global inequality; Aminat (2002:4-6) and others argued on the contrary. Indeed we shall not be consumed by this debate. Some basic facts to note about globalisation are as follows:

- (a) It is a process and part of the world movement of history.
- (b) It has been with mankind starting from even primitive communal era to our present time and space. Thus those multiple communal wars were minute incidences of the surging globalisation; and empire wars, annexations and domination recorded were clear examples. Indeed, slavery, colonialism and raging imperialism are all manifestations of globalisation. It is thus neither an exclusive cold war nor a post-cold war phenomenon. None the less, the intensity, character and networks are largely products of the level of development of the productive forces, and level of social atomisation.

Therefore, the present character, manifestation and intensity are largely products of the revolution recorded in the technological and communication spheres. And these revolutions were made possible by high level of sophistication of the productive forces which equally finds expression in the social relations of production. The task facing us therefore is to appreciate the above as a time-tested reality and explore ways of maximising the inherent gains and possibilities.

Incidence of Poverty in Africa

Poverty is not specifically synonymous with inequality. As correctly noted by Offiong (2001:97), "where as poverty is concerned with the absolute standard of living of a part of society, that is, the poor, inequality is the relative living standards across the whole of society." Fundamentally, poverty affects both the physical and psychological dimensions of man's existential conditions. Primarily, it disparages the mental apparatus and psychic motor and reverberates on the levels of attitudinal and behavioural patterns. It demeans innate values of man and dehumanises him to a level of near irrelevance.

Meanwhile, two models of poverty exist in the literature, they include, absolute and relative poverty. The former concerns economic deprivation in terms of an objective, fixed standard. As stated by Offiong (2001:96) "this implies a level of income that imposes real physical suffering on people in hunger, disease and the massacre of innocent children". Moreover, absolute poverty refers to the inability of people to maintain psychical survival on a long-term basis. By relative poverty, we mean the suffering that stems from inequality; it is thus the situation of being economically deprived compared to some other particular groups (Bryjak and Soroka, 1992:185).

Indeed, poverty can be measured in various ways. Ogboi (2003:19) identified four criteria viz:

- Economic criteria measured in terms of income, expenditure and welfare;
- Sociological criteria measured in terms of ethnicity, minority group, religion and social status;

Characteristics of household head measured in terms of occupation or employment status; or in terms of the sex of the household head;
Locational criteria divide an area or region to capture the spatial pattern of inequality and poverty and the effect of public anti-poverty policies.

However, these measures fall into a boiling pot which reduces poverty to a synonym of comparatively low standard of living. Nonetheless, the above criteria are not collectively exhaustive and mutually exclusive. There exists a double standard in the “scientific” measurement of poverty. For instance, the World Bank's one dollar a day criterion applies only to developing States; and in fact both the Bank and the UNDP fail to acknowledge the existence of poverty in Western Europe and North America. In fact, they base their measurement of poverty in the West on minimum levels of household spending required to meet essential expenditure on food, clothing, shelter, health and education (See, Chossudovsky, 2002:7 for extension of the argument). Moreover, the use of \$1 a day had long come under criticism for seeming arbitrary and using poor quality and limited data thus risking an underestimate of poverty. The \$1.25 a day level is also accompanied with some additional explanations and reasoning, including that it is a common level found amongst the poorest countries and that \$2.50 represents a typical poverty level amongst many more developing countries (Shah, 2009).

Available indices validly demonstrate that Africa is not only the poorest region in the world, but it is also the only major developing region with negative growth in income per capital during 1980-2000 (Sachs et al 2004:117). Perhaps the three pictures below summarise socio-economic indicators of poverty level in Africa:



Picture 1 above shows that water is a scarce resource in major parts of Africa. The picture shows a child washing with animal urine.



Picture 2 above shows a child searching for food in the anus of cow as a practical demonstration of food scarcity and prevalence of starvation and poverty.



Picture 3 is most pathetic and indeed reflects the general prevailing condition of people in the region. It shows Kevin Carter's 1994 Pulitzer prize-winning photo of a vulture waiting for a poverty-stricken child to die, so that it will eat it. The child was crawling towards an UN food camp located kilometers away. This largely epitomises not only the hunger crises in Sudan but also in the whole of Africa.

Furthermore tables 1-2 below remarkably captured the deepening incidence of poverty in Africa. Table 1 for instance presented regional breakdown of number of people living on less than \$1 and \$2 per day for five different years.

Table 1: Regional breakdown of number of people living on less than \$1 and \$2 per day, 1990, 1999 and 2015

Region	1990	1991	2015	1990	1999	2015
East Asia and the Pacific	452	260	59	1,084	849	284
(excluding China)	92	46	6	285	236	93
Europe and Central Asia	7	17	4	44	91	42
Latin America and the Caribbean	74	77	60	167	168	146
Middle East and North Africa	6	7	6	59	87	65
South Asia	495	490	279	976	1,098	1,098
Sub-Saharan Africa	242	300	345	388	484	597
Total	1,276	1,151	753	2,718	2,777	2,230
(excluding China)	916	936	700	1,919	2,164	2,040

Source: World Development Index (2008) 'Key Indicators'. Retrieved on 24 August 2009 from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/reg.wdi.pdf>.

Similarly, table 2 below presented population of people living under 1.25 and 2 dollar (PPP) a day for selected African states.

Table 2: Population living under 1.25 and 2 dollar (PPP) a day (2) for selected African states

Country	\$1.25<	\$2<
Angola	54.3	70.2
Benin	47.3	75.3
Botswana	31.2	49.4
Burundi	81.3	93.4
Cameroon	32.8	57.7
Central African Republic	62.4	81.9
Chad	61.9	83.3
CDR	59.2	79.5
Egypt	<2	18.4
Ethiopia	39	77.5
Gabon	4.8	19.6
Ghana	30	53.6
Guinea	70.1	87.2
Kenya	19.7	39.9
Liberia	83.7	94.8
Malawi	73.9	90.4
Morocco	2.5	14
Mozambique	74.7	90
Niger	65.9	85.6
Nigeria	64.4	83.9

Source: Wikipedia (2008) list of countries by percentage of population living in poverty. Retrieved on August 25, 2009.

The above analysis vividly points to the fact that poverty is endemic in Africa. It therefore remains to be seen how gains and benefits derivable from contemporary trade and investment practices have addressed this hydra-headed cankerworm.

Globalisation and Obstacles to Poverty Reduction

The protagonists of globalisation have persistently argued and/or advocated that it will among boost income and help raise living standards especially in developing countries. According to them globalisation is characterised by intensive cross border trade and increased financial and foreign direct investment flows, promoted by rapid liberalisation and advancement in information technology and has the potency of accelerating sustainable development across the globe.

However, empirical indicators have demonstrated otherwise. By emphasising extreme social atomisation, contemporary globalisation practices have vitiated organic solidarity and destroyed traditional collegiate solidarity. Moreover, by favouring competitive economies, globalisation further peripherised the economies of most states in Africa, widened the gap between the rich and the poor countries and unleashed unmitigated frustration, aggression behaviour and thirst for terrorist implosion, hence the proliferation of light weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

Furthermore, Zurn (1996:71) remarked that globalisation created induced environmental damage caused largely by industrial production and the life-style of the industrial countries in the northern hemisphere. These include: depletion of the ozone layer; the green house effect, etc. He also stated that poverty-induced environmental/ecological damages in terms of felling down trees and extermination of wild life are now prevalent.

More importantly, industrial countries protectionism in the agricultural sector is particularly harmful to Africa. This discourages imports of higher value added products from Africa. As noted by Sharer (2001:114) "the industrial countries erected many non-tariff barrier in the form of price support, subsidies and special marketing arrangements that keep out agricultural product from Africa".

Besides, emphasis on competition and application of hi-tech equipment in production create structural unemployment in developing countries. While the inability of the developed economies to resolve the contradiction arising there from led to global economic meltdown, the situation in most African states lead to frustration and aggression as several unemployed and hapless people resorted to militancy, criminality and vicious armed robbery as means of survival. Perhaps the deplorable state of living in Africa made Madovo (2005: 1-2) to state as follows:

While Africa is home to only 10% of the World Population, roughly 30% of the world's poor are Africans. Since the mid-1980s the number of poor in Africa has doubled to some 300 million and is expected to climb as high as

400 million by 2015. Thus Africa is the only region of the World where poverty is increasing in stark contrast to the dramatic gains in the fight against poverty that are seen elsewhere, most notably in Asia.

Meanwhile, in the years following the dismantling of Soviet bloc, most states in Africa refocused their development strategies along devaluation, deregulation, privatisation, commercialisation, monetisation and other neo-liberal reforms. These reform agenda are largely predicated on liberalisation of trade, finance and foreign investment. Indeed several states had recorded remarkable investments into their economies. However, when we look at world FDI inflows, for the period 1986-2001 we shall observe, among others, that Africa's share of global inward FDI flows fell from 1.8% in the period 1986-90 to 0.87 over the period 1999-2000. Indeed these figures are well below the developing countries average of 17.5% and 17.9% over the same period.

Again, 25 of 26 countries ranked low in human development index in 2008 are in Africa (HDI, 2008:49-50). In addition, following the remarkable liberalisation of African economies, the continent's share of world trade declined from 3.5 % in the 1970s to 1.5% by 2005. Madavo (2005:2) remarked that "the decline is equivalent to an annual loss of approximately \$70 billion. When compared with the \$25 billion that come to Africa each year in the form of overseas development assistance, the significance of Africa's declining participation in international trade becomes clear." Therefore, at a time when globalisation is integrating the world economy and contributing to growth in many least developed countries, Africa remains marginalized; hence the persistence of vicious circle of poverty.

To stem the tide of declining economic fortunes, African leaders in 2001 adopted the New Economic Partnership for African development (NEPAD). However, NEPAD like other preceding developing programmes in Africa are destined to fail because:

- (a) the initiative as foisted largely by exogenous factors, did not take into account endogenous factors in the planning and execution;
- (b) the prevalence of corruption and visionless governance in most of these states;
- (c) the present structure of global political economy promotes liberalisation of trade and financial investment and at the same time supports regionalism and protectionism which counteracts the liberalisation agenda and stagnates peripheral capitalist economies to the status of "hewer of wood and drawer of water."
- (d) the tendency by meet of the political leaders in Africa to executive development programme before planning;
- (e) the tendency by most of the political leaders to implement received development strategies that primarily deviates traditional social structure and hence promote social atomisation of alien productive forces.

Indeed the way out of the woods lies in enthroning political and economic freedom that will guarantee the emergence of strong and traditionally supported regional blocs that will plan and executive development strategies that blend western development model with autochthonous development conditions.

Conclusion

The study explores the link between globalisation in its present practices and escalation of poverty in Africa. We based our analysis on a conscionable blend of some basic propositions/assumptions emanating from the Marxist political economy paradigm and complex interdependent analytic framework. We explored the meaning and manifestations of globalisation and then unfolded the emerging incidence of globalisation; and then interrogated globalisation and obstacles to poverty reduction in Africa.

Among others, we highlighted the primary reasons why preceding development strategies failed to stimulate sustainable development in Africa. Regrettably we noted that the debilitating factors are still prevalent and hence will equally undermine the success of NEPAD as panacea to development crises and poverty alleviation in Africa. Moreover, the emphasis of the contemporary globalisation on competitiveness and globalisation agenda will further peripherise African economies.

To redress the situation and hence evolve a potent poverty reduction development strategy, we advocated for revival of nationalistic zeal and for consolidated efforts toward institutionalisation and preservation of political and economic rights. These *inter alia*, will facilitate the emergence of visionary and responsive leadership that will establish effective regional economic blocs that will enhance trade and investment practices between and among African states. The leadership will also articulate and implement autochthonous development strategies that will reposition the region on the trajectory of sustainable human and material development. Anything on the contrary will reproduce vicious cycle of need - saddled and poverty stricken citizenry.

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