

A Philosophical Reconstruction Of Globalization: A Foundational Approach To Globalism In Africa

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Abstract:- Globalization and globalism within the African purview are the subject matter of this philosophical investigation. Globalization has become a household name in the contemporary society, thanks to the advances in communication, transportation and information technologies. The economic, political, techno-scientific and cultural linkages that connect individuals, communities, businesses and governments around the world have actually led to the villagization of the world. At face value, it has great advantages to humankind. However, a critical investigation unveils a problem of an increasing shift from globalization to globalism; a situation that portends danger to Africa. Consequently, the negative tendencies of globalization may globalism make the African countries raise an alarm of neo-colonialism with its attendant negative chains. It is in respect of the above situation that this work undertakes a philosophical reconstruction of globalization. This philosophical attitude is geared towards uncovering the situations of crises, problems, failures, confusions, confrontations and criticisms involving globalization, thus reaching to the foundations of the problem with a view of constructing a more reliable approach to globalization. Consequently, this investigation employs the philosophical method of hermeneutics in order to return to the original meaning or bring the inner meaning of globalization into the open. With this approach and method, this work achieves a reconstruction of globalization that will be devoid of globalism.

I. INTRODUCTION

The topic under discussion clearly shows that globalization is in an urgent need of reconstruction for lapsing into globalism. In 2005, globalization which captured the spirit of the times as of 1990s was proclaimed a “post mortem” by Justin Rosenberg.¹ According to him, recent international developments – including the Stymieing of the Kyoto Protocol, the Crippling of the International Criminal Court, and the multiple crises of the international organizations (UN, NATO, EU) in the run-up to the second Iraq War – have been dominated by the very opposite process: a vigorous re-assertion of great power national interests. In a situation where the “big powers” are in power contest, the third world countries become the scape goat. No wonder S.T. Akindele et. al. insisted that “the seeming near-consensus on the agenda of globalization notwithstanding, the unrelenting encouragement of its “uneven thesis” does not give room for comfort as, it is exorbitantly costly to the developing nations.”² So beyond the simplistic analysis of globalization in terms of capital inflows and trade investment, it has been of disastrous consequences to the governments and people of the African Continent.

On a more historic instance, when a total number of 126 participants from eighteen countries of Africa met in Addis Ababa for three days in 2002 to address issues bothering on challenges of globalization and democratic governance in Africa, their findings and recommendations are of great importance to African policy makers and officials of civic organizations. However, after considering the pros and cons of globalization, they were unanimous on the position that the negative consequences of globalization on Africa far out way their positive impact.³ If globalization must retain its relevance for Africa, there is need for a critical revision and construction. This is the essence of the philosophical reconstruction of globalization that this work intends to achieve if globalization must not be a reminiscence of colonialism, slave trade and imperialism; the ancient story of the scramble for Africa!

To achieve the desired goal of globalization, the work begins with the hermeneutics of the philosophical reconstruction using Heidegger’s reconstruction of 2000years of European’s history of Ontology as a paradigm. The result of the philosophical reconstruction is the need for adequate process of globalization that requires equal playing ground and an inclusive, non-domineering participation. This will certainly remove suspicion of Africans in the face of globalization.

II. RECONSTRUCTION AS A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

Ordinarily, reconstruction can be seen as the process of changing or improving the condition of something or the way it works; the process of putting something back into the state it was before. It can equally be seen as the activity of building again something that has been damaged or destroyed. However, as a philosophical approach, it is a manner of explicating and making more explicit the deep generative structures

that give rise to and allow for particular performances, behaviours, and other symbolically pre-structured realities. Jürgen Habermas in his work has tried to give a definition of reconstruction. According to him, reconstruction means: “taking a theory apart and putting it back again in a new form in order to attain more fully the goal it has set for itself. This is the normal way...of dealing with a theory that needs revision in many aspects but whose potential stimulation has still not been exhausted”⁴

A hermeneutics of the word shows that it involves three methodological processes of deconstruction, reduction and construction as indicated in the work of I. Maduakolam Osuagwu.⁵ According to Osuagwu, deconstruction is critically revisionary. A system or theory needs critical revision because something has gone wrong with it, because its original or foundational points have been prejudiced or adulterated; thus, it needs to be purified.⁶ It is in this process that a theory or idea is taken ‘apart’. It is, a moment of detection of errors, failures, problems, confusions, etc.

In taking apart a theory for a critical revision, another process is already implicated. This is reduction. This is because deconstruction implies a reaching out to the original constituents of the theory or system that is prejudiced or adulterated. “This getting back to the origins, foundations or fundamentals constitutes the methodological moment of reduction”⁷

The reason behind these processes is not only to reach the original idea but to put the original idea in the proper direction, in a new form so that the proper goal of the theory or system may be fully attained. The moment is creative and implicates the moment of construction. “Comprehensively, historical methodology does not only reconstruct the old, it also constructs the new”⁸.

These three processes of deconstruction, reduction and construction constitute the mega process of reconstruction. These processes complement and complete one another. They are necessary and inevitable coordinates. The total absence of one or more may render the others insufficient or inadequate for a proper and complete execution of historical investigations on the past.

Heidegger applied this process of reconstruction in his historical criticism of the 2000 years of the European history of Metaphysics (Ontology), when he thought that philosophy has misplaced its objectives and therefore, is in need of redemption.

In its deconstructive mode, Heidegger uses the term destruction, which involves a progressive removal and transformation of the various aporiae, lacunae, obfuscation, ignorance, incompleteness, derailment, oblivion concerning the subject-matter.⁹ In its reductive mode, Heidegger traces philosophy back to the origin, foundations and principles. He gives a historical flight back to the pre-Socratics, to the earliest times of history when philosophy was properly the ontology of Being qua Being, prior to its deviations by subsequent histories to the ontology of particular beings, thingly, human and divine beings. In this way he hopes to be able to bracket out incongruencies and establish the truth.

Heidegger was not just satisfied with deconstructing problematical traditional philosophy and leading it back to its past ontological origin. He notably went beyond this level to the constructive mode by updating the past. Consequently, his reconstruction demands a conservation, a tradition, a re-evaluation and a critical hermeneutic which is transformatory, creative, that is, constructive towards the genesis of an authentic philosophy as ontology proper.¹⁰

A look at the process of globalization shows that this process is in dire need of the “methodological reconstruction”. Though the term globalization has become a household name, yet it is most dreaded in many quarters because something has gone wrong with it, its original or foundational points have been adulterated and therefore needs to be purified. In doing so, it has to follow the moments of reconstruction.

III. GLOBALIZATION IN THE RECONSTRUCTIVE PHASES

i. Deconstruction: Definition in aid of deconstruction of Globalization

As already posited, deconstruction is critically revisionary. A system or theory needs critical revision because something has gone wrong with it, because its original or foundational points have been prejudiced or adulterated; thus, it needs to be purified. It is as a result that we will wade into definitions in this phase.

Globalization as a word literally stems from the word “globe”. A globe is a spherical object. Because of the fact that the world has come to be seen as a globe, whatever has a worldwide influence has come to be regarded as “global”. Hence, we hear expressions like global warming, global politics, global village, one world, villagization, etc. Globalization has been defined in many ways and is beset with ambiguities. Yet despite the ambiguities, “the essential nature of globalization is the compression of space and time, so that people from distant areas are able and in fact obliged to interact with one another intensively and in a wide range of areas”¹¹. In its most driving force, it has been defined in reference to the interconnectedness of political entities, economic relationships, or even computer networks. Thus globalization refers primarily to the ways in which economic and industrial institutions (such as industries or corporations) interact in various locations throughout the world, with primacy given to no specific geographic location. In this respect, globalization involves the growth of *multinational corporations* (businesses that have operations or investments in many countries) and

transnational corporations (businesses that see themselves functioning in a global marketplace). The international institutions that oversee world trade and finance play an increasingly important role in this era of globalization.¹²In this most driving force 'globalization involves the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies. Globalization is then seen in primarily economic terms, defining it as primarily integrative structures. With such economic driving force, local and national governments eventually cede control of policy to the global institutions (primarily multinational corporations, but also including non-governmental, regional, or international organizations, such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.)

The globalist approach to the study of globalization equally tends to conceptualize globalization as a progressive process of market interconnectedness that is ushering in a radically 'globalized' era in human history. This new global epoch is constituted by a systematic breakdown of economic barriers, of sovereign borders, denationalization and of traditional ideological disagreements involving economics and politics. From this 'globalized' ontology, most globalists view the process of globalization as a positive expansion of the global market, which is supported by an exponential growth in economic transactions, trade, foreign investment, labour mobility and the growth of multinational corporations. What is common within the globalist position is the conceptualization of globalization as an economically driven process that is moving humanity closer to a more unified world, one in which the disparities between borders, markets, economies and cultures are radically reduced in favour of a more common global condition.

Even though the term globalization typically refers to economic phenomenon, there are ripple effects that make the impact of globalization much broader socially and culturally. Ideas, customs, and cultural movements all follow closely after the exchange of goods across national boundaries leading to cultural, social and religious integration. For example, international trade has been the vehicle by which most religions have spread. However, methodologically, there has been a tendency for scholars of globalization to focus largely on macro-level quantitative research in order to illustrate how the world is becoming more or less interconnected. These macro-level models are largely preoccupied with the analysis of economic trends, usually ignoring other key aspects involved with the processes of globalization. They also suffer the limitation of being stylized regressions which may (or may not) inform us of the causal direction of the correlates under investigation, and little about how the effects of these trends are distributed within national populations. Although macro-level methods remain useful for locating many interconnected networks involved with globalization, they are weak in explaining how these processes are experienced or understood by those involved, bypassing idiosyncratic interfacings that take place between the global and the local.¹³

The protagonists of the global ideology have made concerted efforts to convince those countries that are suspicious of the programme to join the global race because of its numerous benefits. They affirm with ruthless certitude, just as the colonial masters did in the past, that globalization is meant to favour the so-called third world countries in need of development. According to them, globalization is synonymous with economic, social and political progress for all and sundry, especially the poor countries and is not hinged on the exploitation of workers from these countries. They try to convince the rest of the world that globalization does not entail either Americanization or Europeanization, or even the hegemony of any one culture, political, economic or social ideology of one or few countries over others.

No doubt, we have good sides of globalization. At first, it was called "making the world a global village". Everybody rejoiced at the fast communication and info-technological facilities that have made it possible to reach any corner of the world from any corner in seconds. Thus, destroying the barriers between places, races, peoples and countries. Globalization has come to bring many good tidings: there are very rapid response outfits and organizations set up worldwide to aid warring nations, to promote organization against anti-human trends and to save the world from epidemics.

Among other things, Alhaji Ahmadu Ibrahim, calls to mind the positive impact of globalization on democracy in Africa, information on how other countries are governed and the freedoms and rights their people enjoy and opening African countries to intense external scrutiny and exercised pressure for greater transparency, openness and accountability in Africa¹⁴.

With multi-national companies, globalization has also led to global investments, development and creation of employment opportunities by multinational companies. This is confirmed, for example, by the powerful presence of the Coca-Cola Company, Julius Berger, Guinness, UAC, Nestle, Nokia, Shell, Agip, Mobil, etc. We can conveniently say that Globalization has led to the extension of market and technology and the diffusion of knowledge, and consequently reduction of poverty. There are many more advantages of globalization.

Reduction: Globalism, the Result of Deconstruction

Despite the good sides of globalization, not everyone is in full support it, as is evidenced by the December, 1999 riots at the World Trade Organization in Seattle. Opponents have argued that globalization

creates further poverty, destroys the environment, and ultimately favours the interests of multinationals over national interests, or WTO rules encroaching on domestic regulations, as a result of incompatible interests. In Africa, suspicion surrounds globalization. Concretely put, the planetary phenomenon of globalisation is nothing but a new order of marginalisation of the African continent. Its universalization of communication, mass production, market exchanges and redistribution, rather than engendering new ideas and developmental orientation in Africa, subverts its autonomy and powers of self-determination. It is rather by design than by accident that poverty has become a major institution in Africa despite this continent's stupendous resources. Indeed, the developing countries/world burden of external debt has sky-rocked to trillions of dollars. In the process, it has enlivened the venomous potency of mass poverty and, its accompanying multidimensional depravity of the citizenry of all the requisite essence of meaningful living. It has disintegrated or disarticulated the industrial sector of most, if not all polities in Africa. This has been particularly evident in the areas of cost of production which has become uncomfortably high in most of the developing countries (e.g. Nigeria); also in the lack of government's incentives to encourage local production; subversion of local products through high importation, currency devaluation; and depletion of foreign reserves. This clearly raises the problems of marginalization which is in reality, the dynamics of under development - the development of under development by the agents of development¹⁵.

After the gathering of 126 participants from eighteen countries in Addis Ababa in 2002 to discuss the issue of globalization and related problems, they were unanimous in enumerating the negative impact of globalization in Africa. Some of the areas touched include: In the political sphere, the most important consequence is the erosion of sovereignty, especially on economic and financial matters, as a result of the imposition of models, strategies and policies of development on African countries by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. On another note, globalization promises democratic governance and transparency but it seems this positive development is negated by the fact that these principles of democratic governance and transparency tend to be applied selectively and subjectively. More important is the fact that globalization for the most part does not facilitate the establishment of the economic conditions necessary for genuine democracy and good governance to take solid roots and thrive.

Economically, globalization has, on the whole, reinforced the economic marginalization of

African economies and their dependence on a few primary goods for which demand and prices are externally determined. This has, in turn, accentuated poverty and economic inequality as well as the ability of the vast number of Africans to participate meaningfully in the social and political life of their countries. Economic and social stagnation has also triggered a substantial brain- drain from Africa, further weakening the ability of African countries to manage their economies efficiently and effectively. This situation reminds Africans of the era of colonialism and imperialism. The economic changes imposed by the colonial state were never designed or intended to promote genuine liberal economies or the consolidation of nation-states. Instead, the colonial powers created economies that functioned as appendages of their economies, and heavily laden with preferences for their economic groups and interests. Culturally, African countries are rapidly losing their cultural identity in the name of globalization and therefore their ability to interact with other cultures on an equal and autonomous basis, borrowing from other cultures only those aspects that meet its requirements and needs.

More so, while the scientific and technological forces unleashed by globalization have facilitated to some extent access by Africans to advanced technology and information, this has been at the expense of stultifying the indigenous development of technology and distorting patterns of production in Africa, notably by utilizing capital as against labor intensive methods of production, which in turn increases unemployment and poverty.

After his investigation, Alhaji Ahmadu Ibrahim has equally observed that: the scientific and technological forces unleashed by globalization have facilitated the extinction of the indigenous development of technology and distorting patterns of production in Africa; globalization on the whole impacts negatively on the development and consolidation of democratic governance. One form of this is the reduction of the capacity of governments to determine and control events in their countries, and thus their accountability and responsiveness to their people, given the fact that the context, institutions and processes by which these decisions are taken are far from democratic. Globalization introduces anti-developmentalism by declaring the state irrelevant or marginal to the developmental effort. Development strategies and policies that focus on stabilization and privatization, rather than growth, development and poverty eradication, are pushed by external donors, leading to greater poverty and inequality and undermining the ability of the people to participate effectively in the political and social processes in their countries. Welfare and other programs intended to meet the basic needs of the majority of the population are transferred from governments to non-governmental organizations that begin to replace governments making them to lose the little authority and legitimacy they have. By imposing economic specialization based on the needs and interests of external forces and transforming the economies of African countries into series of enslaved economies linked to the outside but with very little linkages among them,

Democracy, with its emphasis on tolerance and compromise, can hardly thrive in such an environment (Rodrik 1994).¹⁶ Globalization has encouraged illicit trade in drugs, prostitution, pornography, human smuggling, etc. Recently, it is becoming the issue of globalizing same-sex union. All these lead to erosion of culture that is authentically African. Overall therefore, the negative consequences of globalization on Africa far out way their positive impact. These negative impacts, crises, failures, etc., in respect of globalization have constituted “globalism”. Behind this globalism is the driving force which can be summarized from the view of Ray Kiely when he wrote: “globalization can thus be regarded as a new period of capitalism (and imperialism), closely linked to neo-liberalism but not necessarily supportive of it.”¹⁷ In the light of the above critical issues and more, Justin Rosenberg declared globalization theory a “post mortem”. According to him, 'Globalization' was the *Zeitgeist* of the 1990s. In the social sciences, it gave rise to the claim that deepening interconnectedness was fundamentally transforming the nature of human society, and was replacing the sovereign state system with a multi-layered, multilateral system of 'global governance'. A decade later, however, these expectations appear already falsified by the course of world affairs. The idea of 'globalization' no longer captures the 'spirit of the times': the 'age of globalization' is unexpectedly over.¹⁸ The reductive stage of globalization, therefore, reminds Africans of the ugly experiences of enslavement, colonialism, imperialism, exploitation and the like. This ugly situation found via the phases of deconstruction and reduction demands a construction, if globalization must remain relevant to Africans.

Towards Constructing an Inclusive Globalization

While this article may not favour the extinction of globalization, it is surely in an urgent need of construction to guarantee an equal playing ground especially as it affects Africa. Part of this construction is to de-emphasize the fact that globalization is all about economics. Globalization must concern itself with fundamental values and virtues commonly shared by all the inhabitants of the globe. The driving force of globalization should be the basic human values, needs and wants that bring the awareness of our common humanity. In the words of Kwame Gyekye, “globalization ought to be conceived as comprehending all the spheres of human activity, spheres that cannot simply be telescoped into the economic.”¹⁹ With this in mind, Africans should inject their cultural values, practice and institutions in such a manner that they become so attractive and influential as to win the embrace of the rest of the peoples and cultures of the world. This is how globalization ought to be.

However, on the part of the economic driving force of globalization, there is need for Africans to introduce far-reaching changes in the assumptions, values and objectives of the existing states, so as to transform them into truly developmental states that are strong without being authoritarian. This is so because strong governments play an important role in stimulating economic growth, addressing the imperfections of purely market forces, and ensuring that the economic process promotes social and political stability and the achievement of non-economic goals highly desired by society. The nation-states must not incline to the reduction of the capacity of governments to determine and control events in their countries. Globalization is not equal to erosion of sovereignty neither is it equal to erosion of culture. An improved and honest democratization process is required in African where they get involved in the taking of decisions and policies that concern them and not an imposition of decisions from globalization players like World Bank, IMF, the World Trade Organization, etc., where America plays a leading role. This gives impression that globalization is Americanization. Africa must watch against fragmentation of national economies, politics, societies and cultures that are triggered by globalization. Such trend weakens national consciousness and cohesion, leading to divisiveness and instability. The second is to diversify African economies away from dependence on a few primary commodities, especially depleting natural resources which constitute enclaves in the overall economy, ensure a balance between agriculture and manufacturing, and increase the competitiveness of African goods in the world market. The achievement of these goals would require energetic and concerted action by governments, civil society, other stakeholders, and society at large, with active and sustained support from the international community. This honest support from international community is important as sometimes it becomes agent of sabotage.

Authentic globalization requires an equal playing ground or better put an inclusive, non-domineering involvement. An economy or politics of exclusion and inequality kills globalization. Neo-colonialism that leaves entire groups of people or nation-states as nothing but suppliers, impeding their ability to grow and develop is inimical. Pope Francis noted that “the new colonialism takes on different faces. At times it appears as the anonymous influence of mammon: corporations, loan agencies, certain ‘free trade’ treaties, and the imposition of measures of ‘austerity’ which always tighten the belt of workers and the poor”²⁰. No doubt, any globalization in these directions sacrifices the essential nature of globalization of compressing time and space, so that people and nations of the globe can interact with each other in every phase of life with primacy given to no specific geographic location. The questions of equal playing ground and an inclusive, non-domineering attitude to globalization remain open questions which must be addressed for a constructed globalization.

IV. CONCLUSION

Following the trend of events, it would not be very rational to clamour for the death of globalization. When it is well-structured for the good of all the world countries, without any parasitic imperialism, it portends great asset to the world's unity and the ultimate world's villagization. To achieve this, an equal playing ground and an inclusive non-domineering attitude are suggested in the process of globalization. However, to what extent, these variables play along in the process of globalization remains an open question. Are the "big" countries ready to concede a favourable position to the "small" countries? Are the "small" countries ready to rise in standard to match the "big" countries? In this process, primacy must not be given to any specific geographic location lest globalization becomes "Americanization", "Europeanization", "Asianization", "Oceanianization" or even "Africanization".

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