

***The Impact of Globalization on the U.S. and Nigeria:
A Comparative Perspective***

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July 26, 2004

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Foreword

Globalization is a trend that impacts everyone more and more each day. Many corporations are now multinational. They have factories and subsidiaries in different countries. Companies do not even have to be large corporations in order to contend in the global marketplace. However, globalization has both its critics and its supporters. Some interpret it as a way of countries losing their cultural identities and becoming "Americanized." Others see it as a way to reduce costs and to increase profits and efficiency.

Thesis Statement

The scope of this research paper is to discuss and compare the impact of globalization in the United States and Nigeria.

Introduction

For centuries, globalization has progressively knitted together the world and created unity out of great diversity. Coca Cola, Disney and McDonald's symbolize the process, along with Sony, Shell Oil and IBM. They are products well entrenched in the international market and consumed from Ulan Bator to Little Rock. They are also powerful companies that provide the impetus to globalization, enacting new laws, new business practices, novel ways to eat and drink, fresh hopes and aspirations

Globalization – A topic for debate

Globalization has transformed into a "buzzword." It is reckoned as the reason of many of the world's problems as well as a solution. The debate over globalization is perceptible in demonstrations against the WTO in Seattle in the fall of 1999, against the Summit meetings in Quebec and Genoa and against several annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank (Bordo, 2002).

Optimists look forward to a global village, linked together by the Internet, and profited from ever-increasing material well being (Dunning, 1999).

Globalization has numerous detractors. Their contentions range from environmental interests to cultural concerns. Some organizations and even government officials adjudge outright that the World Trade Organization is anti-democratic (Dunning, 1999).

Globalization in USA and Nigeria: Myth and Realities

Globalization in the US

Overall, it seems that Americans sense that globalization has a mixture of positive and negative impacts, with the positive ones moderately outweighing the negative ones. A slight majority or plurality sees globalization in general as more positive than negative; though a strong majority is optimistic that globalization will be positive in the future. A strong majority construes globalization as quite positive for the economy, American business, and consumers, but attitudes are more mixed for American jobs and the environment (Dunning, 1999). Apparently, only a select few defy the process of globalization. The public seems to be growing more familiar with the concept of globalization. Globalization is seen not just as an economic process, but also as a process of the world becoming increasingly interconnected and also as one in which values are becoming more oriented to a global context, and international institutions are playing a more key role.

Globalization in Nigeria

Globalization, in the cast of colonial legacy, came along in the eighties as a "liberating" force opposed to military politics and its corruptive influences. Its pervasive impact was felt even more strongly in the nineties, as information technology turned the world into a global village and revolutionized people's identity paradigms and played up western political systems as models for Nigeria (Bigman, 2002). The military caved in, but post-military politics contributed in its wake awkward forms of identity politics that went from local and traditional alignments to global issues of human rights and obligations.

Today, Nigeria, in a socio-political flux qualified by mixed signals coming from an indigenous cultural heritage of ethnic alignments (Bigman, 2002). On the other side, a global force of colonial origin in favor of capitalism and democratic rule, is seeking a new socio-political arrangement based on conflict resolution and the reconciliation of the various cultural identities of its peoples.

How did US and Nigeria Respond to Globalization?

Politics

Concerns about the impact of globalization on the environment, human rights, and other issues are also important elements of the politics of globalization (Dunning, 1999). The workers perceptions about globalization appear to be in accord with the labor-market pressures from the phenomenon. It is this connection between policy liberalization, worker interests, and individual opinions that seems to form the foundation for the US public's skepticism about further trade liberalization at this point in time.

It is a fact to note that none of the current political parties in Nigeria can be said to represent the interests of Nigerians. The process of party formation is monopolized by the wealthy few who command access to power. The interests of the working class and the poor are ejected by implications. Even the middle class in Nigeria has been rendered obsolete and moribund. This dislocation of the middle class and the growing impoverishment of the vast majority of Nigerians have escalated the exploitative grip on power by the wealthy few (Bigman, 2002). Even in the areas of articulating capitalist ideological policies, the ruling parties have evidenced gross ineptitude. The primary direction of Nigerian political leaders has been the promoting of their respective ethnic interests. The emphasis is not on evolving economic infrastructures that will benefit the entire country, but rather it is on which ethnic group will produce the next president. Defined in this context, therefore, the construct of political alliance and alignment in Nigeria is driven by inter-ethnic coalition, and not by any reasoned ideological framework that cuts across ethnic divide (Bigman, 2002) As a rule, when people of diverse ethnic groups establish their respective political parties, the motivation has been on how to embezzle public funds and further the underdevelopment of the country.

Culture

A majority of Americans has a favorable perspective of American popular culture. Even though a large minority of the public is pessimistic about the quality of US movies and television and has mixed emotions about the globalization of US commercial culture, only a small minority considers the dominance of US culture a threat to other cultures. A very strong majority of Americans opines the US has had a lot of impact on popular culture in the rest of the world, and a majority thinks it will have even more impact in the future. A strong majority also thinks the globalization of the economy makes the discernment of other cultures even more important than in the past.

Ethnicity

From time immemorial, ethnic identity has defined the scope of political intercourse in pluralistic societies. Nigeria exemplifies such a society. In each of these societies, including Nigeria, a critical element of the conflict is the treatment of minority groups by the majority groups. Thus, the majority-minority relationship lends itself as one of the conceptual frameworks for analyzing the problems of plural societies, including Nigeria (Bigman, 2002). The others are ideology, religious affiliation, etc. Each level of analysis addresses specific problems of the relationship. Ideologically, as argued by Marxists, the ruling class determines the form and content of the means of production as well as the distribution and consumption of national wealth (Bigman, 2002). Marxists argue that it is the ruling class that controls state power. In Nigeria, however, the debate over this phenomenon has regrettably acquired an ethnic flavor because of the concentration of state power in the hands of a specific group, the Hausa-Fulani. Territorial disputes, access to power and wealth, to employment and education, and to social services and resource control are some of the causes of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. In the absence of a national, ideologically oriented party representing concrete class interests of Nigerians across the ethnic divide, ethnic based political movements have filled the void to challenge the present distribution of power and wealth, demanding a restructuring of the political system in such a way that will grant them equitable access to these properties (Bigman, 2002).

Religion

Popular images of "globalization" stress its economic and political character, especially the global reach of transnational corporations that are shifting power away from states' – and thus from citizens' – efforts to control their own fates. In these images, religious organizations respond to globalization, sometimes by supporting anti-global movements (e.g.: anti-WTO protests, North/South economic justice efforts, neo-fundamentalisms, etc.) and sometimes by piggybacking their mission efforts on new technologies and new market penetrations (e.g.: the Protestant evangelization of Latin America). A second commonly noted attribute of globalization is increased migration, which has also had religious consequences. As proponents of the supply-side approach to religion have noted, at least part of the growth of new religious movements in the U.S. since the 1960s can be traced to changes in immigration laws that admitted Eastern "missionaries" to the heathen Americans (Dunning, 1999). There has also been considerable research on "new immigrant congregations," which appear to serve both as a means of assimilation and as a way of deepening community in a new land (Dunning, 1999).

Competing religious values further complicate the conduct of politics in a multi ethnic polity. While Islam predominates in the northern states, Christianity predominates in the south. While the majority of the ethnic groups in the south are Christians, the greater population of the North is Muslim. These demographics underline the north-south polarization of Nigeria along ethnic and religious boundaries (Bigman, 2002). The clash of religious values is a potent force of de stabilization of any polity. Given the history of Islam, its conquest of parts of Africa and the militancy of its conversion strategies, it is highly unlikely that it can co-exist peacefully with any other religion under the bowel of the same State. Unlike Christianity, Islam has a political manifesto, which makes it difficult for most Muslims to accept the governance of "non believers." This contempt for "non believers" is evident in the Muslim stratagem to Islamize Nigeria from the Sahara to the Atlantic (Bigman, 2002).

Economy

In principle, a majority of Americans supports the growth of international trade, especially when the removal of trade barriers is clearly reciprocal. However, Americans are lukewarm about the actual net benefits of trade for most sectors of society, except for the business community. A majority believes trade widens the gap between rich and poor. A strong majority feels trade has not grown in a way that adequately incorporates concerns for American workers, international labor standards and the environment. Support for fast track is low, apparently because it signifies the increase of trade without incorporating these concerns. Most Americans perceive poor countries as not acquiring a net benefit from international trade, and they support giving preferential trade treatment to poor countries. Very strong majorities believe that the US has a moral obligation to promote development in poor countries and that doing so ultimately would serve US economic interests. A more-modest majority supports trade with low-wage countries that are not necessarily poor, but a strong majority believes it serves US interests for the economies of developing countries to grow.

To address global problems, a very strong majority supports increased international cooperation and stronger international institutions that may even intervene in the internal affairs of countries. Support is strong for international institutions stepping in when: there is regional economic instability; to deal with terrorism or environmental issues; and when a country is committing atrocities. Majorities favor strengthening the UN, the World Court and the WTO, though only a plurality favors strengthening the IMF. A strong majority favors an International Criminal Court, and a modest majority supports a standing UN peacekeeping force. A strong majority feels the US should abide by WTO decisions when these decisions go against the US, and a majority favors the US accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of the World Court.

The gains are heavily loaded in favor of the very highly industrialized societies like the G8 while the nations still scrambling with incipient industrialization and only have crumbs falling from the table of leading nations in a globalized economy (Bigman, 2002). Nigeria as example of a

disadvantaged country under globalization: Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings are highly dependent on the export of crude oil to the tune of over 90% of our national revenue. Given the slight variations for export demand of this raw but precious commodity, Nigeria is said to earn about forty million dollars per day. Nigeria is the world's sixth largest oil exporter with a daily output of some two million barrels. Shell, with 870,000 barrels, accounts for almost half of the West African country's total output. The strike, which had begun on August 27 over fears that a planned globalization policy could lead to drastic job cuts, caused jitters on the international oil market over a possible rise in world oil prices. The union wanted Shell to abandon the restructuring plan; to halt a rise in the number of expatriates brought in to work in Nigeria and to return to Nigeria a computer system recently moved to The Hague. The international oil market has been jittery in the past days as a result of the Nigerian strike amid worries that it could force up world prices (Bigman, 2002). The white-collar strike is one of a series of crises to rock Nigeria's oil industry and worry the markets this year, as ethnic warfare and a rash of pirate attacks and kidnappings rattled the oil-rich southern Niger Delta. With Nigeria's non-oil export accounting for only 0.05%, virtually nothing is gained in favor of its economy. In fact, Nigeria is nowhere in terms of competitive advantage in the globalized market in this regard. And, this is why Nigerians are still scrambling to cope with the negative effects of the fifth increase in the petroleum pump price since 1999 when the current democratic experiment commenced.

Language

As the world becomes a smaller place because of the global economy, language and how it is learned will become key to the United States growing as a world leader.

This world is fast becoming a global village, and language plays an important role in the drive for inclusion into the global village. Since independence, Nigeria has spent more years under military rule, a dispensation that was largely characterized by the language of dictatorship, and an ambience of isolation (Bigman, 2002). However, the recent rebirth of democracy in Nigeria has, in many ways than one unfolded the country up to investment from within and outside Africa, thus making way for

globalization. The language of negotiation being expended by the present post-military democratic dispensation in accomplishing their goals of benefiting maximally from the current globalization trends is a substantial departure from the past.

The following points reveal the impact of globalization on the language front:

1. There is a language of globalization with the objective of making a positive Nigerian identity that will enhance the country's image globally. It is characterized (in this context) by the use of several language codes (English, Yoruba, and Nigerian Pidgin).
2. Within the context, language operates as an identity indicator for membership into a group who share the same aspects on Nigeria's repositioning drive.
3. It is a means of negotiation with the ultimate goal of accomplishing cooperation amongst the stakeholders.
4. The language of globalization educes a positive response from the stakeholders.
5. The radical departure from the language of dictatorship, which characterized the military era is an indication that language does ascertain how far the country can go in her efforts for inclusion in the global village.

Judiciary

Critics may complain that judges will not interpret the foreign or international law in a brief; they may not know where to find these foreign cases to verify them; they may have access only to translations that blur legal nuance. But these are solvable problems that have to do with improving law libraries and online database access to foreign law, and the quality of legal translation. Meanwhile, critics may also quetch that the decisions themselves may be inapplicable to the American system, for they may be based in different political and legal frameworks. They may also simply be bad decisions that the U.S. should not adopt. But of course, there is no reason judges cannot take into account these factors when they consider how much weight, if any, to give to the decisions.

Nigeria has not been unique, among Third World countries, in its employment of the death penalty as a weapon to break proletarian resistance to the austerity measures and expropriations required by globalization. A review of the map of the Third World countries subjected to the IMF-World Bank regime would deliver a austere image of the deterioration of human rights following adjustment, and the increase in the number of executions, always organized with a maximum of spectacle to terrorize the population. In late 1989, Roger Hood, an expert on the international aspects of the death penalty, noted a trend towards the expansion of the scope of the death penalty throughout the first decade of structural adjustment to include economic crimes and drug trafficking (Bigman, 2002). This trend was especially apparent in African, Asian and Middle Eastern countries where the application of structural alteration was buttressed with the adoption of Sharia Law (Islamic Law) as, for example, the Sudan and Pakistan.

Conclusion

Obviously, to address so many issues at once puts great demands on policymaker's demands that are likely to even grow further as Americans become more aware of the world and more attuned to the connections between distant events and their interests and values. This does not mean that policies, which pursue some goals but do not address others, are likely to meet with majority resistance. Rather, the public is more likely to respond in a divided and ambivalent manner. But to engender true consensus, policies that address the issues of globalization must address the varied issues and the correspondingly varied human motivations holistically.

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