GLOBALIZATION AND NATIONAL POLICY MAKING IN THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies globalization and national policy making among the least developed countries. It evaluated the impacts of globalization on policy and policy-making in third world countries. Third World countries are usually susceptible to global events, issues, actions and have come to rely profoundly on the global community for aids and technical support. Accordingly, national policies are intertwined with international issues. It has been argued that because Third World countries largely have frail and feeble systems of accountability, with scanty independent institutions and little control to counterbalance any influence exerted by the central government, foreign institutions and agencies are likely the key political players, capable of wielding considerable influence. On this basis, the purpose of this paper is to study globalization in general and its effects on the national policy regime and policy making in the Third World countries. The paper studied some global issues that have some significant roles in national policy-making such as environment, poverty, migration and population growth, aids, drugs, trade and industry, privatization and terrorism. Data generation for this study was done through secondary sources. The researcher discovered that the making of national policy in different African states is heavily influenced by the globalization process. The theoretical framework used was the theory of Post-Colonial State developed by Hamza Alavi. The paper recommends that one possible way out of the menace of globalization and its devastating effects is the subordination of exterior relations to the logic of domestic development.

KEYWORDS Globalization, National Policy Making, Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

INTRODUCTION

Policy-making and formulation is an exceedingly logical and political process which involves a multifaceted set of forces. It begins with the ideas of the populace or interest groups have about the actions they want the government to take. In other words, these are the demands or proposals made by interest groups or by other actors upon the political system for actions or inactions on some perceived problems. Public policies are being largely determined everywhere by the external environment. Tilly, (1995:95) opined that it is impossible to separate the external environmental factors, as they customarily influence, and continue to dictate the path in which Third World countries must take in decision making.

OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this study is to account for the economic implications of globalization in the less developed countries; while, the specific objectives are:

1.   To identify the impacts of globalization on the national policy making in third world countries.

2.   To examine how best the least developed countries, LDCs, can benefit from the web of globalization which they have inadvertently found themselves.

THE CONCEPT OF GLOBALIZATION

Globalization refers to the process of integrating and strengthening of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international borders. It is aimed at eliminating all known barriers that hinder free movements of people, knowledge, idea, trade, commerce and industry. According to Fafowora (1998:5), it deals with the increasing breakdown of trade barriers and the increasing integration of world market As Ohuabunwa (1999:20)

This is obvious from its drive towards free-market economy, liberal democracy, good governance, equality in gender and sustainability of the environment, among other general principles it has enunciated for the governments and citizens of member states. Within the confines of the foregoing, globalization could be rightly explained from the institutional point of view as the offspring and spread of capitalism (MacEwan, 1990). Nevertheless, it is relevant to explain that the disintegration of the former USSR in the late 1980s and dawn of 1990s led to the appearance and ascendancy of a new world economy that is principally structured and controlled by the national interests of the Western powerful nations, thus, easing the amalgamation of most economies into the international capitalist market.

One of the main features of globalization is that it enhances the quantity of international trade and investment, which is a reflection of the global prototype of specialization, in other words, globalization enhances the international division of labour. Although there is an enlarged volume of goods and services amongst nations, intercontinental trade continues to be fundamentally determined by the developed countries. In other words, trade continues to exist and grow between economies at similar levels of economic development.

It is crystal clear that globalization is one of the most exigent occurrences in the world history today. As Tandon (1982:2) once argued, globalization in its most generic and broad sense is part of the movement of history. It therefore stands to reason that, globalization, which is an imperial strategy and the final conquest of capitalist over the rest of the world, is deeply rooted in the history and can be explained within the framework of the one armed banditry and the exploitative tendencies of capitalism which, by its inherent nature cannot subsist without parasitic expansion.

From the foregoing, one can posit that going by the varying faces of and phases of globalization, its incontrovertible focal point and basic focus is to exploit African resources, disintegrate the least developed economies and slot them into the global capitalist economy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Economic crisis, no doubt, is one of the persistent problems confronting most third world countries. Inevitably, the problem requires state intervention. Monetarist adjustment and the mechanism of

globalization have been strategies adopted by most Sub-Saharan African countries as a panacea to the enduring economic crisis. Thus, in analyzing the problem at stake, this paper adopted the theory of post-colonial state which was developed by Alavi (1972), and later was popularized by socialist scholars like Ake (1985), Ekekwe (1985). The most unique characteristic of the theory is its assumption that the post-colonial state is a creation of imperialism, as such; it has followed a developmental strategy dictated by the interests of the imperialists and their local allies, not by those of the majority of indigenous population.

The theory indicates that one of the cardinal goals of the post-colonial state is to fashion out conditions in which accumulation of capital by the imperial bourgeoisie in collusion with the local ruling elite will thrive. To this effect, Ekekwe (1985:56) noted that the post-colonial state rests on the foundation of the colonial state, which in turn, had incorporated some important rudimentary state structures. As a result, the major objective of the post-colonial state was to establish a conducive environment wherein accumulation of capital by the imperialist bourgeoisie would take place through the exploitation of domestic human and other natural resources. The post-colonial state, it is argued, emerged on this basis.

IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON NATIONAL POLICY AGENDA

Developing countries and Sub-Saharan African states are principally susceptible to international events and actions and have come to rely essentially on the global community for financial and technical assistance. As a result, national policies are interconnected with international issues. As Landell and Serageldin (1991) state, because poor countries usually have weak political systems and fragile systems of accountability, with few independent institutions and little power to offset that exercised by the central government, foreign agencies are possibly chief political players, capable of exercising considerable influence. The borders of individual political systems are no longer impregnable to external pressures and influences. Public policy now takes place in a world system as well as in national political systems. Harrop (1992) posits that the global milieu now constitutes much of the context of a state's policy-making background. Supranational organizations such as the EU also form an increasingly significant part of the context of national policy-making. The policy agenda is also becoming international.

As multinational corporations and international institutions come to exert a great degree of influence, so the capacity of national policymakers to frame their own agenda is reduced. National issues, such as social welfare, environment, crimes, drugs and trade, are items on the national policy agenda which have become global issues. This has closely been followed by escalating worldwide collaboration and cooperation. National policy agenda in a sub-saharan African country is hitherto made bare to the Western countries. This is because, with the advent of globalization, there is a wider range of dealings among nation-states. A State has now come to exercise much lesser control on its own policy agenda than it was in the second half of the Twentieth Century. From the state's point of view, this implies that the policy agenda may be national, but the policy-making and implementation remain global. Consequently, there is a new regime of relationship between multinational companies and the national and world economies.

Global issues interact with national issues, which, in turn, interact with the domestic level. Globalization contends that these levels are even becoming more interactive and less impermeable

and that a new paradigm shift is on the horizon. For instance, in the European perspective, a new policy level is emerging in terms of "Europeification" of national policy-making. Europe's common currency (the Euro, issued by the European Central Bank from 1 January 2002) has now opened the way to a closer political union among European nations.

Similarly, most third world countries have adopted policies relevant to liberalization of their trade regimes during the late 1980s and the 1990s cutting down tariffs considerably, slashing non-tariff blockades to trade, and privatizing public enterprises under the influence of the World Bank, European Union and World Trade Organization, WTO.

THE NEED FOR A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Lasswell (1951) contended that policy sciences account for global tendencies and issues when considering the context of policy problems. He argued that one of the major responsibilities of the policy science today was to follow in detail the processes of social invention, diffusion, and restriction all through the world for the sake of estimating the consequence of particular events. Furthermore, Lasswell (1968) maintained that as the world shrinks into interdependence, relying essentially more on science and technology, the policy sciences increase in relevance. Interdependence means that every participant and every item in the social process is influenced by the context in which it occurs.

In the same way, Amytai Etzioni (1968) observed that there was an increasing level of interdependence between nation-states and economies. But he also felt that amazingly, many social scientists tend to overemphasize states as the units of analysis and underplay supranational bonds and controls; above all they tend to take the nationalistic moral community as the community of values.

DETERMINANTS OF GLOBALIZATION

This paper has already established that a country's "political system" also operates within the "international system". The precincts of the political system are no longer impervious to the external pressures, forces and influences. The world has become a single monolithic social system as a result of expanding ties of interdependence. The point is that there is a new type of interaction between multinational corporations, the national and world economies.

Globalization as a term has achieved a worldwide awareness and attention. To Albrow (1990:9), globalization refers to all those processes by which the people of the world community are integrated and assimilated into a single world society: international society. He further says that globalism is one of the forces which assists in the development of globalization. The consequences of the notion of globalization are that policy-makers must put into consideration that agenda or policy formation and problem definition are now extended further to encompass a global context. The policymakers in each country share a policy context formed by the international economic cycle of prosperity, recession, depression and recovery.

POLICY AGENDA IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

It is essential for policy-makers to recognize certain global issues when considering the context of policy problems in national setting:

ENVIRONMENT

Air and water pollution, destruction of forest and loss of fertile soil are becoming critical problems with dire implications for health, food production, productivity, and perhaps even the ability of the earth to support human life. Protection and improvement of the quality of the environment has assumed a global issue since 1980s.

Their study shows how the issue has involved the development of new levels of interactions among states to form a "global environmental regime". As a result of a rising global environmental stress, there is an unrelenting pressure on state policy-makers to alter or adjust their policy positions. This is a true reflection of the current trend in the shared ecosystems and in "the global commons: those parts of the planet that fall outside national jurisdictions". Industrial revolution has placed considerable pressures on the national policy-makers to avert and control pollution. International accords on methods to manage pollution and close ties between environmental activists have offered an exchange of information that modifies the policy agenda. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, Brazil in June 1992 enacted treaties to control global warming and protect the diversity of species. The conference produced the Rio Declaration, setting forth wide range principles of environmental preservation and sustainable development, and Agenda, a detailed plan for fighting various environmental problems. In sectors, such as land, fresh water, forest, biodiversity and climate, the 1997 UN assessment found that conditions either were no better than in 1992 or had worsened.

POVERTY AND POPULATION GROWTH

Sub-Saharan African countries are facing increasingly serious population growth and poverty problems. In addition to higher poverty rates, the number of poor people has correspondingly increased largely because of population growth in developing countries, as well as uneven development, and rising concentration of wealth.

Almost half of the world's population (approximately 2.5 billion) lives on less than $2 a day, and one fifth of the world's population (approximately 1.4 billion) lives on less than $1.25 a day. This disproportionate and absolute poverty level persists despite extraordinary increase in global wealth in the past century. As the 21st century begins, increasing number of people and rising levels of consumption per capital have added impetus to other dimensions of poverty. Poverty and population growth have now become a worldwide issues. The World Bank's new strategy recommends, for instance, a system to fighting poverty. The three-pronged approaches of the World Bank focus on enlarging opportunities for people, helping their empowerment and enhancing their security. Policy-makers and activists now principally agree that efforts to decrease poverty and population growth and to achieve better standards of living can be closely linked and are mutually reinforcing. The policy agenda at the international stage is now slowing the rapid growth in population and combating poverty at all levels.

As diseases have no barriers, there is the need for global cooperation and national political action by turning statements of principle into specific policies and actions throughout the world. Family planning is now seen as one of the strategies to reduce population growth. The 1993 International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) programme of actions state that the objective of

family planning programmes must be to enable couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children with a view to reducing population size. Governments and nations that sign international documents of principles make concerted efforts to act on these principles.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS as a communicable disease has become a serious concern to the international community. AIDS has already killed more than 20 million people, and today 35 million people are living with HIV/AIDS, 23 million of them alone are living in Sub-Saharan Africa. Every day, another 7,000 people are infected, and around the world, the epidemic is having a huge effect on Gross National Product, GNP. Since it is a global health issue, the policy analyst must find a global solution involving a coordinated international cooperation and national political action. Iohnatan Mann, the Director of the World Health Organisation's AIDS Programme, stressed that AIDS has been bringing about a new paradigm of health, because of four factors: It is a global problem; it is understood and spoken as a global problem; and it is known worldwide; and AIDS is combated at the truly global level, (Toyo, 2000).

DRUG ABUSE

The use of drugs has become an equally global concern. Earlier, it was seen as a social problem and the focus was on seeking a national policy. However, since 1980s drug abuse and usage have constituted a serious menace to the international community and it requires a global cooperation and action. According to Toyo (2000), the international concern has addressed the supply and transportation of drugs from the producer nations, such as Thailand, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Columbia, Peru and Bolivia to the Western metropolis where they are abused. It is interesting to note that the focus has truly shifted from seeing drug abuse as an entirely national problem requiring national solution to the global stage where a coordinated effort from is elicited to confront the menace.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Changes have occurred in industry as a result of global changes and shifts. The major sources of global shift are transnational corporations which organize production on a world-wide scale, the policies pursued by national government and the enabling technologies of transport, communication and production. This has largely weakened the latitude which national governments hitherto enjoyed to make policies independently. Dicken (1988) observes the following: the well-being of nations, regions, cities and other communities to a reasonable extent depend basically not purely on events in their own backyards but on what happens at a much larger geographical scale. In other words, national policy making ability requires a global perspective.

Yet nearly 80 countries comprising a third of the world's population are being increasingly marginalized, and in the past 20 years, developing countries' share of global trade feel from 0.8 to 0.4 percent. The fact is that 2.5 billion people live on less than $2 a day, and 1.4 billion live on less than $1.25 a day. In this way, international development cannot be achieved; terrorism and insurgent groups will always rise as there is deep sense of deprivation, alienation and inequality in the distribution and access to the commonwealth by the third world countries.

However, national policy-makers have the task of formulating policies which help create business climate. So, that capacity of the national policy-makers to frame and set their own agenda is considerably reduced.

PRIVATIZATION

The dawn of the 1990s witnessed a marked privatization of industries thereby placing allowing individuals and bigger corporations to run the show instead of government control. Since then, there has been a renewed emphasis on privatization and competition throughout the world. Governments of most countries, both developed and developing, have enacted policies of (1) transferring government – controlled enterprises to private sectors; and (2) opening up a large number of industries to the private sector to encourage competition. Privatization is now fashionable in European Union, South and North America, Australia, Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and it is gaining popularity in Eastern Europe. The concept of privatization is ambiguous, as it may imply severe reductions in the size of the public space and a drastic shrinkage of public ownership of key industries.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is another global problem, which is spreading like a harmattan wild fire. All over the world, Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Revolutionary Armed forces of Colombia, Ansar al-Sunnah Army, Boko Haram, AQIM, Basque Fatherhood and Freedom, etc, are operating as terrorist organizations with global reach. Attacks on the attack on Islamic Republic Party office in Iran on 1 October 1982, World Trade Centre and Pentagon in the United States on 11 September, 2001, bombings of three subway trains and one bus in the UK on 7 July 2005 and on India's Parliament on 13 December in 2011 are among the four important events that made the entire world realize that terrorism had challenged the world community.

Sabharwal (2005) observed that our main enemy in the Twenty-First Century will be terrorism. Terrorist organizations or countries using them as fronts could cause a chain reaction and bring the world to the brink of destruction. There were several wars in the last century, including two World Wars, but the first decade of this century has seen a radically different scenario – desperately motivated and organized groups of individuals staging ferocious attacks on nation-states and their interests. The shadowy figure of the terrorist has loomed large both at the domestic and global levels, menacingly. Now, it has become imperative for a coordinated global collaboration for fighting terrorism worldwide. For this purpose, in September 2006, the UN General Assembly initiated the Global Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF). Today, countries more than any other time have concluded that they cannot stand alone to fight against this phenomenon. Therefore, more and more are encouraged to international cooperation. An example of such international cooperation is Iran's recent cooperation with Argentina about identifying the perpetrators of terrorist explosions in the AMIA Trade Center.

CONCLUSION

As the world is gradually shrinking into a global village, it is now inevitable to live in isolation; hence, globalization has become one phenomenon that cannot be wished away. Nevertheless, it has equally become imperative that Africa and developing nations must have some cushions to insulate them from the devastating effects of a globalised world. It is therefore, the position of this paper that,

there is need for appropriate responses and frameworks to emanate from Africa and other emerging nations with a view to understanding the dynamics that will reduce or ameliorate the devastating effects of globalization. Indeed, the least developed countries are in a dilemma of globalization. Africa is already entangled in a stultifying entrapment and the process of delinking is not going to be easy. Its dependency on the western powers and its systems is already well celebrated. And with her weak institutions, a mindset of dependency and rent-seeking governments, they are not likely to extract a fair deal in the contemporary structure.

It is largely felt that in developing democratic countries, policy agenda is determined by global forces. Problems arise in a context in which economic and social conditions take the centre stage in shaping opinions and political strategies. For example, the economies that stuck with the planning model experienced slow growth, stagnation. This has become the lot of least developed and developing states. Suffice it to state that since the collapse of the socialist economies most economic models, planning and structural adjustment programmes dished out by the Bretton Wood institutions have more often than not, failed Africa flat. For instance, the much talked about privatization of public enterprises has not helped the populace rather it has made government to abdicate their cardinal responsibilities to the citizenry and by so doing, African governments have further alienated themselves from their people.

There is, therefore, an apprehension between the spillover, which may be said to be taking place at the global level and the reality of the maintenance of national sovereignty. A common issue within a global milieu may be increasingly identified in international terms, but decision-making and execution still remain principally within nation states. The global socio-economic framework interacts with the political processes and policies pursued by governments of nation states. The success of nation states in policy performances will diverge notwithstanding the convergence of the global policy concern.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper upholds that for third world countries to extricate themselves from the menace of globalization and its devastating effects, they must make efforts to empower themselves to the responses of their own developmental needs. There is urgent need to rebuild their battered national images, fight corruption and entrench internal democracy. Also, institutions that strengthen democratic governance and respect of rule of law should be encouraged. It is equally essential that third world countries must enlarge the political space to accommodate more women and the youth.
Furthermore, Africa and the third world generally must embrace productivity and modern production mode. Any nation that depends on importation of finished goods from outside of its borders cannot shake off the allurement and harsh realities of globalization. To experience sound development and enduring economic growth, the current attitudes of most African states of rent-seeking must necessarily come to a halt.

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