AFRICA IN AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION:
WHAT IS HER FUTURE?

SEVERUS IFEANYI ODOZIOBODO, PhD
Department of Political Science, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria
E-Mail: siodoziobodo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates the validity of the judgment that globalization of Africa into the global economic system has been a disaster to the continent and its people. It notes that the future of Africa in an age of globalization is a precarious one and therefore demonstrates the urgency of the call to respond effectively with keen interest, strong ethical evaluation and viable alternatives to the globalization phenomenon. The paper notes that since no man is an island unto himself, Africans cannot extricate themselves from the global economic system. The paper therefore recommends Africa’s participation in the globalization process with cautious step; participating at terms favourable to them and not at terms that would make them completely subservient and marginalized.

Keywords: Africa, Economy, Globalization, Leadership, IMF, World Bank.

1. INTRODUCTION

“The unexamined life is not worth living”, Popkin & Stroll (1981: xiv). This was the observation of Socrates, one of the greatest of the Greek philosophers at his trial in 399 B.C underscoring the point that there is need for men at all times to examine their presuppositions, to question their beliefs and actions. For it they do not, someone else must think for them. In Africa, we read of a spectacle of millions and millions of people being transformed overnight from a primitive, tribal way of life to aggressive membership in modern society, Gunther, (1955:3). But “thousands of Africans have been uprooted from their old ways, and have not found their place in the new and changing society in which their destinies are now cast”, Palmer & Perkins (1985:503), yet, globalization has made the world a global village and the proponents are preaching total immersion for all peoples of the world into the process whether they are ripe and prepared for its dynamics or not. This is why both Africans and good people of the Western World should ask themselves: What is the future of Africa in an age of globalization?

This is because, since the resurgence to globalization as a concept, a process or whatever, one major problem that has confronted African scholars has been how to relate it to the capacity of African countries towards self-determination.

In exploring this topic, attempt is made to x-ray the problems and challenges which globalization poses for African countries vis-à-vis their capacity to chart a new course and take their destinies in their own hands. The essence of adopting this method of inquiry is that it will help us to establish a nexus between the character of globalization, the direction we are going now and the impact of the dialectics of political, economic and socio-cultural processes within the African continent in relation to the impact of globalization.

In April 1994, the African Catholic Bishops, the fathers of the great African Synod noted: “our common situation without any doubt is that Africa is full of problem. In almost all our nations, there is abject poverty, tragic mismanagement of available scarce resources, political instability and social disorientation. The results stare us in the face! Misery, wars, despairs. In a world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected”, Odey, (1997:85).
Yet, John Gunther (1955:5), notes that “Africa is not only vital for what it already has but is incomparably the greatest potential source of wealth awaiting development in the world”. And Bill Clinton, (1998:8) one time President of America notes: “Yes, Africa remains the world’s greatest development challenge, still plagued in places by poverty, malnutrition, disease, illiteracy and unemployment. Yes, terrible conflicts continue to tear at the heart of the continent…. But from Cape Town to Kampala, from Dar-es-Salaam to Dakar, democracy is gaining strength, business is growing, peace is making progress. We are seeing… an African Renaissance.”

However, today as never before, we are inundated with the impression that globalization will solve the multiple problems of Africa. Globalization means different things to different people. Some see it as the panacea to the economic, political, security and environmental problems of the modern world. The protagonists tend to suggest that globalization would strengthen private accumulation, thus forcing capital to operate more vigorously across borders and consequently redistribute the gain of global capitalism and technology. In this view, it is suggested that through the removal of barriers to investment and capital flow, globalization would usher in global posterity. Some other scholars are opposed to this view. They contend that globalization is synonymous with imperialism and thus, the continued domination, exploitation and marginalization of some parts of the world, by another, the West.

There is no doubt that Africa’s position in the current world order in which globalization is having a field day is a precarious one. This paper is therefore constrained to ask the question: Africa in an age of globalization, what is her future?

2. GLOBALIZATION, MEANING AND NATURE:

Globalization as a concept, as a process or even as a movement has come to be associated with everything happening in the world today. It is therefore used rightly and wrongly to explain off events and activities in the field of international relations. This is as a result of its seeming multidisciplinary and multidimensional nature. Thus, in the business circle and in the media, it is employed in a rather loose sense to describe increased internationalization of economic activities or less often political negotiation or even cultural trends. The situation is even aggravated by the tendency of academics to interpret it more narrowly by attaching the word to specific kinds of internationalization-ones that involve the “deepening” rather than first, the “widening” of international linkages.

However, in spite of the vagueness of the concept, what remains constant is that in the vast and expanding literature on globalization, majority of contributions on it seem inclined to focus on the economic dimension. Thus, for Nnoli, (2000:173), globalization is a very complex social phenomenon. It is associated with:

(a) The increasing concentration of power and influence over the world economy by a group of corporations and countries.
(b) The domination of production by multinational or transnational corporations, which are multi-branch and multidivisional enterprise that operates in different parts of the world, and by international financial institution and exchanges.
(c) The supervision of production on a world scale by an increasingly narrow managerial technocratic elite composed of the captains of industry, banks and finance houses located in countries of the North.
(d) An international division of labour which favours the export of technology.
(e) The emergence of a times-space compressed world economy and society which expresses the emerging “global village”.
(f) The emergence and transnationalisation of a new dominant technology associated with the information revolution.
(g) The increasing importance of the knowledge structure for production, culture and economy in general.

Croucher (2004:10) describes globalization as a process that combines economic, technological, socio-cultural and political forces which tend to unify the world into a single functional society. Robertson (1992:8) refers to it as the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole in a way that accelerates a concrete global inter dependence and the consciousness of the whole. Wang (2004:473) is of the view
that globalization involves the integration of national and regional markets which include the exchange of goods, services, capital and labour in accordance with the objective principles applicable to market economics, that is, in a comparatively free environment and limited government intervention confined to the rule of law. The prerequisite of economic globalization is the practice of a market economy by most, if not all members of the international community. And for McGrew (1992:262) globalization is the forging of multiplicity of linkages and interconnectedness between the state and societies which make up the modern world system; the processes by which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world, come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distinct parts of the globe.

From an African perspective, globalization is viewed from the point of view of another colonialism or imperialism. In this vein, Tamuno (2006:33) is of the view that globalization is about exploitation, inequality and polarization in world politics. Iyayi (2004:24) defines globalization as a process of expanding economic practices across the globe on terms and conditions favourable to leading capitalist countries, organizations and institutions. For me, globalization is continued colonization of Africa by the West. It is, in other words, neocolonialism and imperialism.

3. STAGES OF GLOBALISATION IN AFRICA

Africa has experienced globalization in several ways: The first stage was slavery, when global traders for the benefit of Arab, European and American countries, stole the continent’s most precious resources, African men and women.

The second stage was colonialism, when British, French, Belgian, Italian, German and Portuguese interests dictated the way that boundaries were drawn, transportation and communications lines were exploited, religious and cultural patterns were introduced, and political alliances were arranged.

The third stage was neo-colonialism, the form taken by political pressures and economic forces that set trade patterns, investment policies, debt arrangements, technological innovations, political alliances, etc with a hidden advantage for the rest. The fourth stage is now globalization as we know it today, Ike, (2004:8).

4. STRUCTURES OF GLOBALIZATION

In order to understand the import of globalization fully, it is germane to discuss its structures.

The first structure is ideological. According to the Human Development Report of the UNDP (1999:33), “globalization as currently experienced is in its major direction an incarnation of neoliberalism. In its extreme form, this ideology is a kind of “economic fundamentalism” which according to Ike, “puts an absolute value on the operation of the market and subordinates people’s lives, the function of society, the policies of government and the role of the state to this unrestricted market. Neo-liberal policies support economic growth as an end in itself and use macro-economic indicators as the primary measurement of a healthy society. It assumes almost a religious character, as greed becomes a virtue, competition a commandment and profit, a sign of salvation”, Ike, (2004:9).

The second structure of globalization is capital flow which implies the unhindered movement of money across borders. As far as globalization is concerned, intangible money move across borders even before goods and services which are the basic components upon which globalization are traded on. This is the type of money that is managed by institutions for quick returns. This is computer money.

The third structure is free trade. Globalization allows free trade in the world whereby goods from one country can be moved immediately to another country unhindered. This is made more possible by the technological advancement in communication and transportation. According Ike (2004:10), “trade relationships may be “free” but whether or not they are ‘fair’ depends on power, size, experience, skill etc”.

The fourth structure is cultural. In this case, there is inter- flow of values and styles of life. The cultures of dominant forces subsume that of the weaker ones, cultural imperialism. The contemporary process of globalization has been referred to as the birth of the “Mc world” a
cultural integration of fast music (MTV) computers (Macintosh) and fast food (McDonald’s), Mihevc, (1995:21-42).

The fifth structure is political. Globalization is more of an economic process than political. However, it is still politics that propels the economy in the sense that it is through the political aspect that the economic policies and rules of the process are set.

5. TRENDS OF GLOBALIZATION

Globalization has taken various trends to manifest in the world. The United Nations Research Institute, UNRISD, (1995:22) in a study entitled: ‘States of Disarray: The Social effects of Globalization’ lists ‘six key trends’ of globalization as being the spread of liberal democracy; the dominance of market forces; the integration of the global economy; the transformation of production systems and labour markets; the speed of technological change and the media revolution and consumerism.

6. PROMISES OF GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is propagated by its crusaders as a panacea to the many economic problems of nations, especially, the weak economics of Third World countries. The apostles of globalization present it as a major instrument for world development and the only force for peace in the modern world, Barnet and Muller (1974:20). They contend that the only way to achieve success in the global economy is to destroy barriers to international trade and investment. They contend that globalization stimulates unprecedented economic growth, technological progress and raises the income level of consumers as well as help create jobs and raise living standard thereby bringing about material prosperity and lower prices for goods and services for countries involved in the global trading system, Hill, (2001:22).

Liberals also believe that globalization will benefit both the rich and the poor of the world as it would reduce inequality within and among nations. The underlying assumption in this belief is that as a world economy, a global increase in transactions, driven by technology would benefit all. By regulating market and prices, by privatizing of government parastatals, downsizing of states and the liberalization of trade, it is believed that efficiency and welfare would be enhanced in all countries of the world to the benefit of all, Rugumamu, (1999:9). It is for this reason that Calamitsis (2001:10) describes globalization as powerful engine of world prosperity which he predicts is here to stay.

However, Akani (2008:38) notes that the optimistic vision of globalization is challenged by several remarkable facts. First, the gap in per capital income between the world’s poorest and wealthiest population, and between developed and developing geographic regions, has increased continuously since the 1970s. Secondly, most developing countries are experiencing economic decline, stagnation or slower growth than the industrialized nations. Income inequality is increasing not only at a global level but also within many developing nations, and surprisingly, within industrialized countries such as the United Kingdom, and the United States. Third, violent conflicts, famines, and autocratic governments are still common in the Third World. Fourth, the AIDS epidemic has assumed dramatic and unpredicted dimensions in Africa, partly as a consequence of property rights on medical products in developing countries. Finally, international aid is decreasing and recurrent economic crisis have occurred in the semi periphery of world economy, affecting emerging countries such as Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Turkey, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Ecuador.

7. DEMANDS OF GLOBALISATION

Globalization demands that every nation irrespective of the nature of their economies, their level of development, whatever their location in the global economy, must pursue a common set of economic policies. These policies include:

(1) They must permit the free and indiscriminate operation of transnational corporations in their economies.
(2) Open their economies freely and indiscriminately to imports and concentrate on exporting what they are supposed to be good at;
(3) Reduce the role of governments in the economy to that of supporting the market and private enterprise and
(4) Leave the determination of prices of goods, currencies, labour as well as the
allocation of resources to the operation of the market.

8. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF GLOBALISATION

The basic assumption of the globalization theory is that all players, men and women, rich and poor, in short, every nation, will be affected equally. It equally assumes that international trade opportunities are open equally to all kinds of firms, small scale, large scale, infant industries and giant transnational corporations as well as cartels.

It is to be noted that experiences over the years have demonstrated the falsity of these assumptions of the globalization theory and the consequences have been negative on Africa as we shall discuss later.

9. FORCES BEHIND GLOBALISATION

Globalization as a process is propelled by certain forces. Akani (2004:26) believes that globalization may be seen as a process that is driven and coordinated by forces that are recognized, distinct and which, in fact, justify both their roles and interests in the process. In the present era, globalization is driven by the United States using a variety of forces and institutions that include:

1. The international capitalist organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization, WTO, London Club, the G.7 now (G-8), OECD and similar organizations.
2. Large capitalist foundations and institutes such as Ford Foundation, Rock-feller foundation, Westminster Foundation etc.
3. The state security agencies of each advanced capitalist country such as the CIA
4. Large capitalist corporations such as General Motors, IBM, Shell, Chevron etc.

Today, as in the past, the World Bank has become a major force in subordinating the economies of the rest of the world to the needs and interests of globalizing American, European, and Japanese capital. The aim of the World Bank like that of the IMF is to promote the precepts, practices and ways of seeing imperialist America as the common framework for living in the world; in short, the Americanization of the world. Akani, (2004:30). Presently, the IMF and the World Bank which serve as the economic Leviathan now dictate the momentum of economic growth, and set agenda for market driven development which Africa must accept willy-nilly. Hoogvelt (1997:135) points out that it is under the aegis of the hegemonic structure of the American led Breton Wood managed world economy that rules of interstate competition and co-ordination are laid down.

10. STRATEGIES OF GLOBALIZATION

For globalization to achieve its desired objectives, certain strategies have to be employed to propel the different stages. In the earliest stages of globalization, mercantile capitalism employed wage labour and later metamorphosed into imperialism; adopting colonial conquest and plunder. Today, the old strategies have been refined and made more deadly. New ones have also been added.

These strategies include: development in information technology, (IT), mergers, strategic alliances and take-over’s; the attack on the welfare state and state involvement in economic activities; the emphasis on a deregulated and liberalized economy; the attack on working class ideology; the pursuit of world class efficiency at the expense of world class people oriented production systems; the debt entrapment of Third World economies; and the presentation of liberal capitalism as the infinite champions of democracy and freedom, Akani (2004:31). Through these measures, the dynamics of globalization is propelled in the world today.

11. CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBALIZATION

There are conflicting views on the consequences of globalization. Some are on the positive side and can be described as optimists while others are on the negative side and can be described as pessimists.

The optimistic school of thought argues that globalization will lead to a greater integration of developing countries into the global economy, to net benefits and to convergence at the global level. In this regard, it can be argued that globalization has encouraged African states to adopt democracy as a system of government instead of despotism. According to Guy Martin (2000:158) “since early 1990, the winds of change have swept across Africa, signaling the
dawn of a new era, variously referred to as the ‘second independence’, the ‘second liberation’ or the ‘springtime of Africa’. After three decades of authoritarian one-party rule characterized by political repression, nepotism and corruption, democracy is spreading like a bush fire throughout Africa”. Nnoli, (2000:181) collaborates this view when he writes “across Africa, significant political liberalization has occurred in the last ten years, thanks to the intensified struggles of people for freedom and well-being, in alliance with the forces of globalization… Those African leaders that are hostile to democratic practice are forced to pay lip service to it. They must now seek legitimacy through seeming to champion the cause of democracy. Now, freed from repression, organizations are emerging to represent a wide variety of economic and social interests that seek to participate openly in the political arena on behalf of their members and constituencies”.

This is one of the greatest things that has happened to Africa in recent years, the enthronement of democratic rule and it was engendered by the globalization process. Not only that, globalization has imposed some minimum level of good governance standard on many African states. It has aided the observance of the principles of good governance and responsibility on African states who must comply with these requirements to get any kind of assistance.

Akinterinwa, (2007:13) observes that globalization created a complex web of interaction and interdependence between societies, nations and institutions. Consequently, problems previously regarded as domestic to states such as civil unrest, war, refugees, famine, disease, crime, flood, etc have now began to assume international dimensions. The magnitude of such global and domestic problem is often beyond the scope of single states and requires the cooperation of and support of other states and international organizations. Africa has gained from globalization in this aspect. It does seem that Africa has had a greater share of the world’s problems in such areas as civil unrest, war, refugees, famine, disease, flood, HIV/ AIDS, etc. The world has always rallied round Africa whenever these cases arise. To that extent, Africa has gained from the globalization process.

There is also a positive side to globalization in the spread of cultural pluralism, the development of science and technology, development of productive forces, the global awareness of the underlying unity of humankind and more recently, the partial return to nature as an inherent part of life in its many forms. Civilization has come with much improvement in the living standard of all human beings including people of Africa.

Much as there is a positive side to globalization with regard to Africa as enumerated above, it must be noted that the negative outweighs the positive. The positive sides have been pointed out for balanced analysis, for it will amount to academic dishonesty to claim that Africa has absolutely nothing to gain from the globalization process sweeping all over the world.

The pessimists on the other hand see globalization as being largely confined to the North and widening existing inequalities and further marginalizing the vast majority of developing countries – a process of divergence which is set to stay, O’Neill (1997:27).

The greatest of the pessimist is perhaps, Laster Thurow who claims that since the fall of communism, the capitalist system no longer has a competitor to curb its excesses, especially the tendency of the new technologies to lead to job losses and cause downward pressure on the wages of the unskilled. Many companies are ‘ripping up the implicit social contract’, Thurow (1996:7). He sees growing inequalities between the rich and poor both inside and between countries, large-scale unemployment, increased homelessness and breakdown of the family leading to a vicious circle of individual disaffection, social disorganization and a consequent slowdown spiral, Thurow, (1996:7). According to O’Neill (1997:28), Thurow warns that the very poor will become socially excluded and will retreat into religious fundamentalism or extremism. As a result, capitalism itself is doomed.

Kapstein (1996:16-18), is another pessimist who claims that the post-war bargain has been broken and the global economy is leaving millions of disaffected workers in its train and inequality, unemployment and endemic poverty have become its handmaidens. The ill wind blowing against the fortunes of workers is occasioned by the structure of today’s global
economy with its open and increasingly fierce competition on the one hand and fiscally conservative units – states – on the other. The ‘weak’ working people of the world are now left on their own as governments can no longer protect them from the vagaries of the world economy. This poses a challenge not just to policy makers but to modern economics as well, notes Kapestin, (1996:16-18), who fears that the world is “moving inexorably towards one of those tragic moments that will lead future historians to ask, why was nothing done in time”.

The United Nations Development Programme, UNDP (1996:59), sees globalization as a two-edged sword… with winners and losers. It notes that income inequality is clearly on the rise in many countries that have opened their economies, even when some developing regions owe their current prosperity and human development to international trade. But others have been vulnerable to its vagaries, UNDP (1996:103). The UNDP fears that the risk is not just that the benefits of globalization will bypass these nations. The risk is that these counties will become increasingly marginalized as their shares of world trade and international capital flows continue to decline.

In the economic sector, globalization has done more harm than good to African nations. Instead of promoting the economic growth of African nations, it has rather killed the economy and plunged the continent into more debt and untold hardship by killing the state control of the economy. Before the advancement of free economic activity on the national, regional and global levels as required by globalization, most of the African economies were regulated by the state. The state controlled what came into the country in form of imports and what go out in form of exports by the instrumentality of such import and export restrictive business practices as import and export licensing, increased export duties, taxes or foreign exchange quotas and other sundry prohibitions. This forced the promotion of locally manufactured goods produced from local materials. However, the system has now been replaced with IMF/World Bank deregulation, economic liberalization and privatization of the national economic activities. The effect is that the market is now open to competition among Africa and advanced industrialized worlds. Africa cannot compete favourably with these economies since she does not have the wherewithal technologically, etc.

The basic assumption of the globalization theory is that all players in the global economic system will be affected equally. It also assumes that international trade opportunities are open equally to all kinds of firms, small scale, large scale, infant industries and giant transnational corporations as well as cartels. However, experiences with globalization over the years have demonstrated the falsity of the globalization theory and its consequences have been negative for African nations.

Experiences of a stalled state control of the economy and an open market system have seen established and large transnational corporations bringing into African nations their finished goods unhindered at much cheaper rates than goods manufactured locally, thus forcing many local industries to close shop since they cannot compete. The after effect is that people have lost their jobs in their thousands and the earning power of Africans has reduced drastically and standards of living of the people have plummeted. As a result of globalization, Africa has become a dumping ground for all kinds of goods from developed countries of the West in the name of free trade. Foreign investors have taken over every aspect of the economy in majority of African nations as a result. The effects are obvious, lowering of the standard of living of the people.

It is worthy to note that Africa came into the world economic system from a disadvantaged position. She came in as a weakened continent having been depopulated by a process of slave trading that went on for over three hundred years before colonization. This was bound to have an impact on its future development. The continent has found itself increasingly marginalized and the vast majority of the people have consequently become impoverished as globalization has proceeded, Nabudere, (2000:32-3).

Globalization has created an international division of labour and power sharing that has placed advanced nations at higher advantage while remaining substantially unfavourable to developing nations including Africa. Some of the teething problem areas include issues of trade liberalization amidst unbridled international
competition between economically unequal nations; enhanced freedom of multinationals and their reckless business practices in developing economies, government subsidies with its wealth creation advantages in developed nations and its poverty generation tendencies in developing nations, resulting from the prescription by IMF and the World Bank; demands to create, conducive conditions for foreign capital that subjugates political and economic outputs of governments of developing nations to the interest of such capitals rather than local needs; control and management of vital international organizations such as IMF, World Bank and the UN that determine both economic and political rules in the international arena. These and more subtly, and technically limits the ability of developing nations including Africa to exercise sovereignty in the determination of their own affairs in a world community to which they are bound by the forces of globalization.

The roles of the IMF and the World Bank which are the propellers of the globalization process are detrimental to Africa. They insist on removal of government subsidies and wanton privatization of public utilities in favour of private capital. This hurts African nations severely as it affords the developed nations the competitive advantage over local competitors as well as subjugates government policies of African nations to the interest of foreign capital. These multinational institutions serve the interest of globalization, making Ajayi (2006) to equate globalization with colonialism and imperialism. Kema (2005:1) describes it simply as economic terrorism.

Owuga (2004:119) is at a loss as to whether globalization serves the interest of members of the international community equally as globalization claims. This doubt is occasioned by the discrepancies arising from policies of the IMF and the World Bank which are always in favour of the developed nations and detrimental to the economic growth of African nations. These bodies do claim to represent the interest of all states in the international community, but their modes of operation have suggested that they clearly formulate policies that put Africa and other developing nations at a comparative disadvantage in international relations.

In short, the world order created by the so called free world democracies is not itself democratic. All the countries of Africa are members of the United Nations, and yet no African country has a veto power in the Security Council, the real power house of the system. They are also members of the IMF, the World Bank and GATT, but in none of these global bodies do African countries individually or collectively have a significant voice, Bing (1991:64). How can African nations continue to participate in the globalization process in the face of all these inequities?

12. THE FUTURE OF AFRICA IN AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

Life is a learning process and individuals, corporate bodies and nation states could learn from the experiences of others. In this vein, it is instructive to note that; “The meltdown of the once modeled East Asian economies which began in October 1997, has once again brought to focus the issue of globalization and what it means in concrete terms. The Asian crisis is a good place to understand this phenomenon. Almost overnight, the thriving economies of Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and the most dramatic of all, South Korea, more or less collapsed. Of course, collapse does not mean death. No economies die terminally. What normally happens is a massive transfer of wealth from one section of society to another, or as in the present situation, a massive transfer of assets from nationals of one country to international corporate capital”, Yash Tandon (2000:56). We are conversant with the story of the economic performance of the Four East Asian countries which according to Owuga, (2002:124) “was so impressive and unprecedented that it was described as a miracle”. It has been noted that not only did they have the best economic growth but the benefits were also widely distributed among the populace. Besides, they experienced an unprecedented increase in income, a high standard of living and an impressive record of poverty reduction, Stilgitz, (2002:92); Mansour, (1999:23-24).

The questions are: what happened? What is the cause of this collapse? Yash Tandon (2000:56) answers: “the IMF moved into these countries to administer its usual austerity measures, and to impose further conditions of liberalization on their economies. This has resulted in a decreasing national control and an increasing control over the economy by outside players, most significantly
foreign banks. This really is what is meant by globalization”. If this could happen to these Asian countries that had performed economic miracles, the fate of African nations in an age of globalization becomes evident.

Globalization has created an international division of labour and power sharing whereby African nations have been assigned the role of producing primary products by virtue of what they can do better while the advanced countries of Europe and America by virtue of their advanced technology have the role of producing and supplying manufactured goods to the international market. This arrangement is unfavourable to African nations.

In the real world of international political economy, there are major differences in the bargaining position of manufacturers and of primary producers in the world market. In this regard, Barrat-Brown, (1993:42-3) emphasizes the following:

(a) Many food products are perishable and cannot, therefore, be held off the market (hoarding ) as manufactured goods can, to prevail a fall in price;
(b) developing countries producers do not have the facilities for processing, packaging and storing, so as to get a better price and add value to their basic products;
(c) many of the smaller European colonies were allocated the production of a single crop or at most two or three crops, and this meant that they became totally dependent on the fluctuation in demand for their one or two products;
(d) While the number of manufacturing companies in the world can be counted in their thousands, and the number is reduced with every year in the process of concentration and centralization of capital and production, there are literally millions of peasant households engaged in primary production throughout the world. The manufacturers can and do form combines and cartels to keep up prices; for the primary producers to reach commodity agreements is very difficult, indeed;
(e) compared with manufacturers, the application of machinery to the production process has been relatively negligible in primary production, and as a consequence, labour productivity in the case of the former has not radically improved while productivity in manufacturing has seen incredible advances in micro-and bio-technology
(f) the major technological advances and relatively easy availability of capital for investment for increased labour productivity are in the hands of major capitalist producers in the North while developing countries must find their capital and equipment at unaffordable prices from outside their frontiers or borrow at high interest rates from the financial institutions in the West; and
(g) these unequal trading relations between manufacturers and primary producers have become incorporated in the operations of very large global corporations, whose size and importance have steadily increased over years and most rapidly in the 1980s.

The above has shown how vulnerable African nations as producers of primary products are in the economic equation of the global economy.

The future of Africa in an age of globalization can also be gleaned from the operations of transnational corporations. Globalization allows the free and unhindered operation of these corporations in the global economy. As Buthelezi, (2000:192) notes, the dominant position of the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) throughout the developing countries economies, with their control over buying and selling of the goods entering international trade provides the final explanation of the weakness of the millions of small “Third world” producers. Institutionally, TNCs are much better situated to deal with the complexity and a vast requirement of the world trade regime than relatively small-scale export firms in developing countries. The TNCs operate on a scale that allows specialization in diversity in information gathering in the management of legal and institutional procedures :in relation to national and local government and, where necessary, in the location of production facilities to minimize what are perceived to be economically impending forces. The developing nations do not have large-scale enterprise or trading companies that can operate in this way, Helleiner, (1980:70).

Moreover, in so far as the World Bank and the IMF continue to “lend” a helping hand to African nations, Africa’s future in an age globalization is bleak .What if one surveys the immense social catastrophes of IMF and the World Bank sponsored “stabilization” policies on the
continent? It can be argued that there is little material basis, if any, to expect significant improvements in Africa’s economic-political relationships in the world economy in the foreseeable future, Frank, (1991:29). According to Buthelezi, (2000:202), “in much of Africa, it has been observed that governments have increasingly ceded sovereignty to supranational institutions (IMF and the World Bank) while losing the capacity to manage domestic affairs on their own. In this particular conjecture, the diminished power of the African State decreases their willingness and ability to cope with the expanding social crisis at home. According to this conception, as the state loses competence to deliver, it also loses the ability to manage more complex issues of the day. More significantly, the state also loses an important ingredient in development, that of public support. As a result, we are witnessing a shift in the balance of power from the state to civil society, Cheru, (1994:8).

Of course, the future of Africa in an age of globalization will depend to a large extent on the kind of leadership in the different nations of the continent. If the leadership should read the handwriting on the wall and close ranks to deal cautiously with the apostles of globalization, then Africa will emerge a little healthier. But if the leadership is the gullible types who do not know themselves and cannot stand on their own relatively, then Africa is doomed. If this happens, a stage will reach when the hardship imposed by the globalization process will become too much for the people to bear and a mass action will ensue. Of course, the leaders will be the first victims.

13. CONCLUSION

This paper explored the globalization process in relation to its impact and consequences for Africa. It looked at the different stages which globalization has undergone in Africa, the structure of globalization and its promise as well as the propellers. It explored the positive consequences as well as the negative consequences of globalization on the economies and peoples of the African continent. The paper discovered that the future of Africa in an age of globalization is a bleak one and even though it cannot be recommended for African nations to pull out of the globalization process, they should tread with caution in swallowing the prescriptions of globalization propellers hook, line and sinker.

We conclude with Yash Tandon (2000:72) that: “Anybody with any degree of intellectual integrity would see that the integration of Africa into the global economy from the days of slavery to the contemporary period of capital-led integration has on balance of costs and benefits been a disaster for Africa. The World Bank and IMF officials who see wrong only in the policies of African governments choose to forget that they have been part and parcel of the various policy documents upon which African “development” has been based. It is also a measure of their intellectual dishonesty or ideological brainwashing, that they cannot see the connection between globalization and Africa’s poverty. A consequence of this ideological blind spot and refusal to accept the evidence of history is that whilst capital-led globalization is at the root of Africa’s crisis, it is also, miraculously, suggested as the solution”.

Based on this, I would conclude that Africa has no future in so far as it embraces globalization as it is today. Africans cannot extricate themselves completely form the global economic system because “no man is an Island unto himself” but they should participate in the global economic system at terms that are favourable to them not at terms that make them completely subservient and marginalized. Nobody engages in any venture that is counterproductive. African leaders should borrow the courage of the lion, the shrewdness of the tortoise and the Wisdom of Solomon in following the IMF and the World Bank, the propellers of the globalization process, else; these bodies would plunge them into such crisis that would likely produce mass action of which they themselves and their people would be the losers.

The daunting problems besieging Africa could serve as rallying point for African renaissance if Africans and world leaders should look at globalization from an ethical point of view and pursue it with a renewed sense of solidarity among nations of the world based not on racism or prejudices, but on the universal and intrinsic bond of the human community.

REFERENCES


47


