Globalisation and Development Inequalities: Challenges and Prospects for ‘A just Development’

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Research Article

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the ramifications of globalisation as a process, ideology and a theory on the embryonic and apparent discrepancies in development status between and within nations. It illuminated on the socio-economic and political forces behind globalisation and the implications of that process on access to resources, exercise of political and economic power in international governance and the resultant asymmetrical relations between nations in the global village. This endeavour was enabled through a multi-perspective approach in which various macro and micro sociological theories defined the lens for analysis some which entails the New International Division of Labour theory and the World Systems’ theory as they were intrinsically a function and agent for the materialisation of the process of globalisation. Methodologically, the paper adopted the qualitative comparative case study approach which perfectly ushered the opportunity to juxtapose intricacies of different events and outcomes of the lopsided international relations on development between nations in the global village. The paper maintained the notion that, globalisation was an ideological apparatus meant to mystify and veil the realities of exploitation dictated by the new world system yet positively skewed to the Industrialised World at the peril of the Developing Countries.

Keywords: Globalisation; Ideology; Development; Exploitation; Inequalities.

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has been comprehended as a process through which the world has been compressed into a single village through the purported elimination of territorial boundaries, increased interdependence of nation states within the realms of politics, socio-economic and technology (Brohman, 1995:16). Its origins owe a lot to the efforts to reunite and reconstruct the war ravaged European countries after the World War II under the auspices of the so-called Marshal Plan (Webster, 1990: 58). It therefore logically stands for one to allege that it was a Western phenomenon whose rationale and credibility was and is still subject to the test of time given the gross variability between its intended objectives and the outcomes, particularly relative to the seemingly valid notion that it could have been a strategic endeavor to sanction the propagation of Western socio-economic and political hegemony. In this respect, it categorically qualifies to be intricately connected to the modernisation paradigm whose origins historically transects with the intentions of the West in creating a family of nations that would exhibit nearly congruent social, political, economic and technological organisation and sophisticated interdependence in new ways than ever before. However, the validity of this claim is disputable. Its main characteristics have included the following: the changing concepts of time and space, an increasing volume of cultural interactions, the community of problems facing all the world inhabitants, growing interconnection and interdependencies, and lastly a network of increasingly powerful transnational actors and organization (Cohen and Kennedy, 2007:20). Castells (2000: 45) observes almost the same traits but adds on the concept of globalisation and the state and explores the idea of informational capitalism and the crisis of the state. Against this backdrop, the main purpose of this paper was to analyze the ramifications of globalisation both as a process and an ideology in aggravating the variation in development between ‘Third World’ and ‘First World’ countries; and how it suffocates or otherwise the prospects for positive social transformation in the developing world. This shall employ an evaluative exercise of the Castells’ articulation of the role of globalisation. Furthermore, Cohen and Kennedy’s conceptualisation of globalisation will be considered. It is the writers’ argument that globalisation was an ideological survival strategy maliciously and deliberately crafted by the West to legitimise the realities of exploitation which are glaringly inherent in the relationship among nations of the global village.
Globalisation’s Salient Tenets and Implications on Development

Changing Concepts of Space and Time

According to Cohen and Kennedy (2007: 22), globalisation is characterised by changing of the concept of space and time. This is evidenced by the fact that globalisation has accelerated levels of interaction in various activities that take place around the world, in which case people from different parts of the world are now able to work together regardless of the spatial distance and geographical location. This process was outlined by Robertson as the “compression of the world” (Cohen and Kennedy, 2007:24). This seeming negation of the restrictions of territorial boundaries and the protectionism has been superseded by the computerised networks that operationally influence communication and interaction regardless of the spatiality of human location. Brohman (1995:19) has referred to this concept as “globalisation of citizenship”, that is, the creation of global citizens, whose mobility is not distracted by space and time. Furthermore, Cohen and Kennedy (2007:26) believe that globalisation has opened doors of free movement of people. This has been achieved through the irresistible forces of globalisation which have unlocked territorial boundaries. For example, tourists from developed countries can simply flow to developing countries without any restriction. However, one is justified to refute the notion of “free movement” as is believed by Cohen and Kennedy. The free movement seems to be rhetorical as it is unidirectional, from developed to developing countries only, insofar as movement from developing countries to these developed countries has been characterized with numerous restrictions and exclusivist regulations in the form of expensive visas for people to go to Europe and other developed countries. As such, it is logical to note that, insofar as globalisation can be credited for eliminating the limitations posed by space and time in people’s movement in the global village, this has been to the benefit of First World countries since the trend of the mobility has exhibited notions of unidirectional migration which logically translates to unidirectional profiteering since there is no freedom for Third World citizens to move First World countries. These segregatory notions are the same sentiments exhibited in foreign policies of these developed countries towards developing countries in their quest to affirm their political and socio-economic hegemony. For instance, one can be convinced that USA’s Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) passed in 2000, is a classic case of a draconian foreign policy which embodied similar disparaging sentiments congruent to the exclusivist tendencies enshrined in the regulation of migration, which was used as a framework for the legitimisation of the much purported illegal sanctions which were notoriously cited as a catalyst to the stagnation of the Zimbabwean economy. It is this anomaly which tends to qualify the tenability of our argument that, the discourse and dispensation of globalisation was an ideological indoctrination meant to blanket the unlimited opportunities that the process itself accorded to ‘First World’ countries. This would in turn account for the discrepancy in terms of wealth between these two worlds since the structural relationship in a way spells inequitable access to opportunities for transformation and advancement.

Increasing Cultural Interaction

Indeed globalisation has sanctioned cultural interaction particularly through mass media especially television and internet. This is complemented by Castells (2000:53) who echoes that, “under these global conditions, cultures come under threat since it is difficult now to identify distinct cultures”. Cohen and Kennedy (2007:27) augment this observation by reiterating that, “the cultural interactions arising from increased contact between people have gradually exposed all human beings to the growing flows of cultural meaning and knowledge coming from other societies”. Therefore, taken in this context one can assert that, globalisation has accelerated the explosion of lifestyle, symbols, signs, beliefs, tastes, as well as imagery of one society to another. In which case, this has made the world to be pluralist and multicultural especially through global tourism. Thus, from a perspective of those apologetic to globalisation, has been assumed to be a positive attribute of this process of the ‘villagization’ of the world. For example, Castells (2000:53) illustrates that, “Buddhist religion, Japanese martial arts, Indian Kama suta, to name but three have all spread across the world”. This can also be evidenced in the context of dressing, music, food and consumption patterns. In spite of such a seeming cultural enrichment, it is the writers’ opinion that, apart from the above observation, this global cultural concoction has exposed Third World cultures to the vulnerability of extinction particularly if the dement of the polarization effect of globalisation are to be taken into consideration. We argue that Western culture embodies with it the same values which are glorified by capitalism, which are, competition and individualism, traits which have promoted organic solidarity which repudiates collectivism and mutuality, traits which are characteristic of mechanical solidarity as would be envisaged Durkheim envisage. These Western cultural values were a strategic ploy to camouflage their exploitative motive in as much as their proliferation latently eroded African traditional cultural values which celebrated communalism as enshrined in such notions (of umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu or munhu munhu nevanhu) which means a person is person because of others. This is qualified by Chiome and Gambahaya (2000:15) who observe that, culture is an elementary ingredient in development in that it contains all the aspirations, sentiments and social organization of a people from which they determine parameters to forcefully move forward. This consequently concretizes the argument that globalisation is a Western brainchild which was methodologically meant to obscure and legitimize Western cultural imperialism, from which its hegemony...
precipitates. This could have been the discourse or basis from which the Modernisation theory erroneously prescribed the repudiation of ‘Third World’ cultures as impediments to positive social transformation. The fact that this model of development was premised on such negative perceptions drawn from the effects of globalisation, justifies the ill effects of this process on ‘Third World’ countries especially in influencing imposition of alien models of development.

The commonality of problems

Through globalisation people of the world are now experiencing the common problems despite geographical location. This situation is most influenced by the fact that globalisation has reduced the world into one village which tend to be affected by common problems. As stated by Cohen and Kennedy (2007:28) “globalisation have long brought the events and crises taking place in near and distant locations into our living room on daily and hourly basis”. This provides evidence that, globalisation facilitates the sharing of problems amongst nations, since different problems taking place at different locations of the world can simply be shared. This is evident for instance in the global warming, which is more influenced by these industrialised countries, yet the climate change consequences have been felt in the non-industrialised countries in the form of new patterns of weather conditions, such as, change in rainfall seasons and patterns and rise in temperature which have accounted for successive droughts in Zimbabwe for instance and other developing countries. However, other problems in the south are not found or pronounced at least to say in the developed World for example diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, cholera, famine and hunger. This situation tries to contrast the idea that since the world is now a global village both ‘First’ and ‘Third World’ countries can experience the common problems; however, it is vice-versa since developing countries have some extreme problems that are not as pronounced in developed countries which have been exacerbated by globalisation without immediate salvage for instance the negative consequences of climate change in which the developed world technically deny responsibility yet they pillage rendering the environment uninhabitable.

Growing interconnection and structural interdependences

It is true that globalisation has perpetuated the increase of interconnection and interdependence. Cohen and Kennedy (2007: 31) show how nation states have been bonded into networks that span almost all continents. For example “capital is now simply managed, whereby billions of dollars transaction taking place within a second in electronic circuits throughout the globe” (Castells, 2000:59). He further explains that this form of world interconnection is more facilitated by “new information system and communication technology”. Furthermore, many countries have been participating in numerous international conventions, joined to international bodies such as United Nations and World Trade Organization. These bodies in one way or another tend to control the ways in which individual nation states operate for example, UN Security Council which exercise veto power in determining which country requires military intervention on the basis of the extent of its crisis (Global Policy Forum, 2005). However, the word ‘interdependence’ is not in the strict sense of the meaning of the word, which in any case should carry connotations of mutual reciprocity. It appears the globalisation process has legitimatized a nature of relationship where developing countries perpetually depend on developed countries, for example, price variations especially in agricultural products. Nevertheless, globalisation through interconnection has increased inequality between ‘First’ and ‘Third World’ countries due to imbalance on trade liberalisation where the rich gain highly than the poor. This in a way qualifies Giddens Structuration (1984:5) theory which recognizes the constraining and enabling effect of structures upon the ‘agents’, in which case the operational structures that have been proffered by globalisation have enabled ‘First World’ countries to benefit from the unequal relationships fostered by the structures inherent in globalisation. On the contrary, ‘Third World’ countries have been constrained by these very structures therefore querying the credibility notion of ‘interdependence’.

Contrary to modernisation’s micro-analysis, globalisation adopted the notion of the macro-analysis, the world as the basic unit of analysis rather than individual countries or economies (Graff and Vender, 2001:19). The adoption of this broad analysis indeed aids in the comprehension of development from a macro scale given the irresistible compulsion of globalisation. For instance, it becomes easy to come to terms with the reality of how industrialised nations have systematically forged mechanisms to sustain dependence through suffocating the development of modern manufacturing industries, a deliberation which would ensure continuous reliance on exportation of cash crops such as coffee and rubber as in the case of Brazil as Giddens (1993:112) notes. We argue that, this submission is subjective if it was offered as justification to rebut the modernisation’s preoccupation with micro analysis, particularly relative to pragmatic policy implications. This seemingly appears so because, the prevalent global structures that are functional in accentuating the inequalities, for instance capitalism and the proliferation of Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in third world countries, has proven to be invincible if ‘third world’ nations’ economic capacity to resist these parasitic international relations is put into consideration. Put simply, the macro analysis inherent in globalisation theorizing has neither informed international development policies nor strategies that are attainable for ‘third world’ positive social transformation, except for the continuity of unfair trading terms. For example, in the global world system, peripheral countries have remained without veto power within the World Trade Organization since
they excessively rely on exporting unprocessed products (Cohen and Kennedy, 2007:35). The negative effects of policies informed by globalisation’s macro orientation such as ZIDERA for example, have indirectly hinted on the need for alternative development paradigms which are context specific such as People Centered Development (PCD) and its prescriptions for development at a micro or local scale. This has informed formulation of local strategies that are compatible with locally attainable social transformation in developing countries, such as diversification of livelihoods in most Third World rural areas.

Moreover, in Castells’ (2000:56) articulation of the effect of globalisation and the crisis of the state, observes that, as a consequence of globalisation, there has been creation of global economic networks which have excluded significant sections of the world’s populations. This can best be noted on the ways in which globalisation has elbowed out most Third World countries from the loop of the global economy to the peripheral positions where an anticipation of economic rejuvenation remains a mirage, which he refers to as the “black hole”. In this case, these developing countries are entangled in a structural position which is difficult to escape. This is complimentary to Brohman’s (1995:16) acknowledgement that, “the paradox of globalisation is that developing countries have suffered a lot, yet delinking from it is equally impossible”. As a result, Castells (2000:57) argues that, these affected developing countries “...are no longer even part of the Third World, they have become the Fourth World”. This therefore questions the credibility of the evolutionist leg of Modernisation theory in which Parsons spoke of the inevitability of transformation through his stages of evolution because, the conditions for Third World countries are aggravating to the extent that to envisage a possibility of a leap forward remains a mere anticipation if these structural imbalances that are catalyzed by globalisation are not averted.

A network of increasingly powerful transnational actors and organization

Globalisation has facilitated the increase of internationalization of capital and formulation of different organization across the world. It has also contributed to the emergence of reorganization of manufacturing, trade and service within globally surrounding system through TNCs, which organize their entire production and sales with the aim of being able to operate worldwide (Martinussen, 1997:120). Furthermore, Cohen and Kennedy (2007:71) consider TNCs as a special force in crafting global economic activities with central role of connecting national economies. This connection of the national economies is more achieved through internationalization or subdivision of the production. Caldwell (2000:128) summarizes that international division of production is a clear illustration of the extent to which the spread of capitalism has been propelled by globalisation via direct and indirect agents. This substantiates the argument that globalisation has facilitated the shrinking of the world economic system into a single world economy. For example the spread of Anglo-American companies and car manufacturing industries in most of third world countries through new international division of labor whereby majorities of people have been employed in these industries. This should not withstand the negative effects of these TNCs in the deindustrialization, massive retrenchments and ultimately poverty in most ‘Third World’ countries since the local industries could not stand competition from these well-established corporations.

Castells’ take on Globalisation and its effects on Asian Economy

Castells (2000:66) also blames international trade and finance institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, for their often unwarranted intervention in situations of global crisis. Their intervention, mainly based on the neo-liberal policies have culminated in gross damage than the intended remedy, if one takes the case of East Asia into consideration. The conditions they set for South Korea and other countries failed to bail out the country from the economic quagmire. In the same vain, Castells argues that China had limited integration in the global economy, particularly in terms of financial market. In 1998 the Yuan was not fully convertible, so it was better protected from speculative attack than currencies traded on the open markets (Ibid: 68). Due to tight controls on foreign lending, Chinese banks were not entangled and strangled by short term foreign debt, the source of the financial crisis as compared to the rest of East Asian countries (Ibid: 69). In addition, Castells points out that in spite of the fact that some banks borrowed foreign money through Hong Kong based banks, the Hong Kong ‘bumper’ prevented in China the kind of financial panic that struck Indonesia and South Korea. Thus the government’s control of the links between Chinese financial system and global markets provided cushion to resist the wild movements of financial flows around the world (Ibid: 69). This characteristic of Asian economic circus indeed qualifies the visible demerits of globalisation particularly in the economic realm.

The globalization, modernization and capitalism interface

Capitalism, an economic ideology characteristically based on the notion of free enterprise and profit accumulation seemed to be the driving force behind modernization. It was meant to be sustained by globalization and the neoliberal ideology which glorified privatization and deregulation of the economy as a solution for ‘sustainable’ economic development. Kanyenze (2004: 89) opines that, the prescription and imposition of Structural Adjustment Programs on most African countries and Economic Adjustment Structural Program on Zimbabwe by the IMF and the World Bank owes a lot to the Western nations’ zeal to penetrate new Third World markets for
their economic benefit. In Zimbabwe, the main objective of this neoliberal economic package was to achieve GDP growth of 5 per cent during 1991-1995; raise savings and investment to 25 per cent of GDP; achieve export growth of 9 per cent per annum; reduce budget deficit from 10 percent to 5 percent by 1995 and reduce inflation from 17.7 per cent to 10 percent by 1995 (Kanyenze, 2004: 96). The government liberalized trade and the financial and labor markets in line with the prescriptions of the World Bank and the IMF, price controls, subsidies and other regulations were abandoned. Pathetically, the achievements were dialectically opposed to the targets, a deliberation which Kanyenze (2004:124) attribute to the fact that, “there was no broad based consultation on ESAP: it was largely imposed from the above and so there was no national ownership of the program”. The writers maintain that this was a neoliberal device which was meant to cripple local industries, such that the establishment of Multinational Corporations in ‘Third World’ countries in general would be vindicated in the name of Foreign Direct Investment, a situation which would rejuvenation the economically asymmetrical power relations of the colonial era. This therefore refutes the tenability of the modernization theory’s assumption that it is a progressive and transformative process, and the functionalist belief of ‘interdependent parts’ with each contributing beneficially to the greater whole, a relationship which the World Systems Theory vehemently denies in its analysis of the global economic relations between industrialized countries and developing countries. Rather, it qualifies the observation that it is a strategic plan to effect undue control of the world economy by developed nations and cannot therefore be a fair ideal model for just development in light of its implications on developing countries.

However, it would be unjust to negate the positive contributions of globalisation in bringing about significant social and economic transformation. For instance, the Republic of India has been said to be the world’s most populous electoral democracy and has one of the fastest economic growth rates in the world; 8.9 per cent GDP increase in 2007, the second fastest major economy in the world after China (Kummah, 2011: 68). This has been said to owe a lot to the liberalization of the economy, privatization as were the prescriptions of modernization and its twin puppy, globalization, which culminated in a number of significant developments such as, rapid growth of industries and services, banking and finance sector, external trade and investment as well as FDI. Notwithstanding this observation, Hendriodt’s (2011: 59) acknowledgement needs to be considered. He notes that, the environmental crisis of India has reached dangerous levels in several cities and districts. Unplanned urbanization, concentrated industries, deforestation, chaotic transportation, population pressure due to massive rural to urban migration and lack of infrastructure are the major factors that have combined to produce a serious environmental crisis in India. It is therefore our opinion that globalization and all its accomplices can be hazardous if adopted without considering the internal social and environmental variables that can act as obstacles to the fruition of the efforts of globalising or modernising. A cost and benefit analysis of the effects does not only allude to the negative consequences of importing development policies, but, points to the need for developing countries to at most formulate development strategies that are compatible with their social realities or at least modify these borrowed and imposed, alien policies to suit their social, economic and environmental circumstances lest this sanctions unjust development outcomes as a global dogma.

**New International Division of Labour (NIDL) as a prolongation of globalisation and capitalism**

The process of the sub-division of production as hallowed in the NIDL theory has been alleged to be an indirect scheme of ensuring the perpetuation of globalisation and capitalism and its exploitative nature. In confirmation of this observation, Giddens (1993:56) notes that, “Firms which buy and sell goods at a profit – the very rationale for their existence – would be foolish to confine their operations to one country. The more they seek to expand, the more it makes sense to look for sources of profitable investment wherever…” This remark squarely refutes the assumption that this relocation of industries from industrialised countries to Third World countries, was meant to catalyze development in developing countries. It is our argument that this process does not only qualify the Rostowian observation that ‘discovery of new continents’ would mark the take-off stage in the road to modernisation and development, but goes a long way in demonstrating the insatiability that characterized industrialised nations’ in their zeal to dominate. If the relocation of MNCs to ‘Third World’ countries was part of the discovery of new continents, in economic terms this cements the Dependency theory’s castigation of the capitalist system as exploitative. In as much as this relocation was a strategy to save MNCs from the unfavorable economic conditions of the 1970s, this has facilitated the uninterrupted propagation of capitalism in ‘Third World’ countries and ultimately maintained a relationship of exploitation since profit made in developing countries, is siphoned to industrialised countries to the detriment of ‘Third World’ development insofar as they were incapacitated. Despite the qualification of NIDL theory being an ideological chicanery to sustain globalisation, it is pathetic to realize that, in women this respect have been major victims of this global industrial restructuring.

**Globalization and the Feminisation of poverty**

The relocation of industries in the globalisation process has culminated in the entrenchment of already existing inequalities. Webster (1990:19) notes that, proportionally, more women than men staffed these manufacturing industries in ‘Third World’ countries. These women were unskilled migrants from rural areas and were traditional
in their views. Consequently, they could not resist patriarchal hegemony because they were reluctant to unionize and this would precipitate into skewed working relations in which low wages for women were the order of the day. As a result, their already existing precarious position that was sanctioned by the cultural expectation of subordination was reaffirmed, but in this instance with devastating effects of economic deprivation given the fact that the cash economy had banished the subsistence production. This perhaps justifies why the Modernisation theory envisaged for the repudiation of traditional cultures, as they were an ‘obstacle’ to development. Although this is subjective, NIDL theory, an agent of globalisation helps in revealing the negative effects of the industrial relocation in exacerbating social inequalities at a micro scale and explains the economic inequalities between nations at a macro scale. These are the same sentiments echoed by the dependency theory in its repudiation of the spread of global capitalist economy, which was the driving force behind global restructuring of industries.

Deindustrialization and the enclave-development rhetoric

The presupposition that the development of the core would have a spillover effect on peripheral countries is disqualified if the process of industrial relocation is critically examined. Webster (1990:22) acknowledges that, many of these MNCs were strategically situated in export processing zones (EPZs). These were areas specifically designated by ‘Third World’ governments for the establishment of manufacturing plants. It was advantageous for companies to invest in these areas since they enjoyed tax reduction, reduced import tariffs, regulation on the activities of trade unions and rebates on a wide range of investment (Webster, 1990:22). This validly demonstrates a situation of unfair advantage enjoyed by these foreign corporations, particularly if the effects on small local industries are considered. The consequence was massive folding back of ‘third world’ emerging industries. Harold-Berry (2004: 116) notes that, in Zimbabwe de-industrialization manifested itself in the visible significant numbers of employees who were retrenched. He further notes that, in Zambia during the 1990s, emerging tyre manufacturing companies crumbled in the hands of these foreign corporations which enjoyed absolutely all the benefits without equally returning the profits to the country either economically or socially. This could have been the motive behind the modernisation theory’s advocating for deregulation of the economy in developing countries. That being the case, one is justifiably meant to understand that, the international division of labour did not only culminate in the gross crippling of ‘third world’ emerging industries, but, as the dependency theory had noted, there was insignificant spillover effect into local economies. This, therefore exhibits the double-faced nature of globalisation and its global industrial relocation in that, insofar as it was said to create employment and improve per capita GDP at face value, in real terms it created a time-bomb for the stagnation of most ‘Third world’ economies as is the case now, by preventing the growth of local industries thus sustaining economic dependence. Hence, it should be credited for analytically complementing the observed exploitative nature of the economic dynamics that spell the relationship between industrialised countries and developing nations.

CONCLUSION

Having said that, it is paramount to acknowledge that Castells was advocating for the regulation of the world economic system as dictated by globalisation, if its economic demerits on developing countries are to be avoided, basing in particular on the need for an equitable share in the global village as a premises for just development. From a broader perspective the paper has noted the same since globalisation as a process has only facilitated the exploitation of Third World countries by the industrialised nations. Besides, it has been exposed that, globalisation is the apparition of its predecessors, colonialism and modernisation since their motive were and still are to lure and stupefy other global players, particularly ‘Third Word’ countries into an irrevocable snare of the industrialised countries’ political, socio-cultural and economic hegimony in which beneficiation was and is unjust. The outcome of the research has shown that, globalisation has been found to be opium for the consolation of the poverty stricken nations to be optimistic, yet in reality it is the catalyst for exploitation. As such, we maintain that, if the parasitic relationship fostered by this seeming inevitable process proceeds unchecked, the looming rift in terms of wealth and development between the developing and the developed world will perennially widen. It is therefore imperative to note that as a theory, globalisation does not squarely befit a cogent model of just development particularly with regard to its ‘legitimation’ of the growing discrepancy between developing and developed countries. Rather, lessons for pragmatic strategies and models of development should take into account the demerits of such complex phenomenon such as globalisation, if a just and positive social transformation in Third world countries is to be attainable.

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