

An Audit on Globalization – The Nigerian Perspective!

Okoro Benedict. C
dolphite@gmail.com

Abstract

In the 1990's, the UN development index rated Africa poorly in economy, health, education, feeding, clothing, human capital development, access to portable water, shelter, etc. The widening gulf between the global haves and have-nots was starkly revealed by the UN, which announced that while the US was booming in the 1990s more than 50 countries suffered falling living standards. This became the prolegomenon to Africa's version of lost decades. The UN's annual human development report charted increasing poverty for more than a quarter of the world's countries, where a lethal combination of famine, HIV/Aids, conflict and failed economic policies have turned Africa truly black. Highlighting the setbacks endured by sub-Saharan Africa and the countries that emerged from the break-up of the Soviet Union at the end of the cold war, the UN called for urgent action to meet its millennium development goals by 2015. However, a major propeller that drives development remains governance. On this note, globalization was conceived to aid Africa in walking away from its seemingly perpetual backwardness. Despite some sporadic successes such as Ghana and Senegal, there was little hope of Africa meeting the UN's 2015 development goals; on current trends, it would be 2147 before the poorest countries in the poorest continent halved poverty and 2165 before child mortality was cut by two-thirds. Thirty of the 34 countries classified by the UN as "low human development" are in sub-Saharan Africa. Jingles of globalization arose in the quest for a New World Order, and to assist Africa from the dungeon of underdevelopment. The word globalization, as commonly used, is largely a descriptive and not an analytical category. This paper attempts to give the term analytic content. It then focuses on both the positive and normative analysis of globalization, its influence in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Trade, investment, environment, finance, foreign aid, and gender issues receive special attention. A global governance structure based on transparent principles of both economic efficiency and social justice is shown to be a desirable state of affairs. Concomitantly, the present fractured process of globalization in Nigeria seems to expose our natural inclination and ineptitude to conceptualize development either in our local parlance or from borrowed perspectives. Contemporary Nigeria is run like a criminal corporation with complete erosion of structural development. This paper takes into account the dire need of raising hybrids from a desirable generation to salvage Africa from looming eclipse.

Key Words: globalization, Africa, Nigeria

Introduction

Effiong (2001) states, 'In the 1980's the pattern of poverty that characterized the colonial era not only accelerated but also grew progressively worse. During that period dubbed the 'lost decade' for the poor, while the real per capita incomes, living standards, and other indicators grew (with the resulting decline in poverty) in South Asia, and even more markedly in East Asia; in Africa real per capita incomes, living standards, and investments plummeted'. Evidently, Africa faces increasing hunger and accelerating ecological degradation. It is common talk that Africans are generally poorer today than they were 30 years ago. The economic forecast about Africa is quite gloomy. Africa's share of the world's poor will double from 16 – 32%. This horrendous picture of Africa in the global scene changes in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, and more profitable business in Asia (at least until the Asian financial crisis in 1997) have combined to make Africa unimportant to world business leaders and their multinationals. Glaringly, Africa has been handed over to the international financial institutions – the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to handle, as they will. These organizations are pundits of G-7. These analyses are strictly the opinion of Effiong, who see Africa as an apron of the West. Perhaps, Effiong is yet to come to terms with the acidic fact that the African is incapacitated by his thought frame as he conceives every development or policy in a foreign language. The English or French perspective and seldom worries about internalization or indigenization of any concept. The implication is that most Africa language lacks the will power to contain or express innovation. Hence, World Trade Organization, Free Market Economy, Free Trade Zone are alien to the African mind.

The underling landmarks of development are evident in the frontiers for which the West is revered. These frameworks are a process well articulated, condensed and carefully

implemented. Any nation that ignores this raw fact does so at its peril! Nigeria offers mankind hope as a zone where the next paradigm of human civilization will shift to after Asia. The teeming human industry and resources suggests thus. Unfortunately, about 10 years of globalization, Nigeria is an outcast in the global village project; as development wears a weird smile of Cheshire cat on us.

While Nigeria was awash with preparations for her 49th Independent Day celebration on Oct 1, 2009; the world watched in awe. Nigerians took the ample time to assess their fatherland by themselves. This self-assessment was done with utmost study of various factors and indices of development. The October 5, 2009 edition of the *Newswatch* magazine was a *Special Independence Edition*. It is a critical review of the state of Nigeria at 49 years of self-rule. The cover title of that magazine is *A Nation in Crisis*. The Prologue, written by Bala Dan Abu on page nine of the magazine is titled, *A Journey to Uncertain Future*. In that article, the author recalled when October 1 meant a lot for Nigerians. It was a historic day that gingered our hope for a blissful future. But today, he said, it has become a tale of dashed hopes because “the country has stopped moving. Younger nations came, caught up with us and subsequently left us behind.” Kazeem Akintunde wrote about the rot in the nation’s educational sector under the title, *Citadels of Decay*. In the article, the author rightly pointed out that the sorry state of the education sector in Nigeria is aptly captured by the absence of any Nigerian universities on the list of the top 500 universities worldwide. He lamented: “As things stand now, there is no hope that the nation’s education sector would soon be put in proper shape.” Chris Ajaero wrote about the decay in the power sector under the title, *Victim of Neglect*. In the article, he said: “From the days of ECN, NEPA and now PHCN, the energy problem remained unabated.” Anthony Akaeze wrote something concerning the assurances given to us by our leaders that they would reform the

nation's electoral process to ensure a true and stable democracy. He wrote that under the title, *Motion without Movement*. In the article, he said: "Nigerian leaders promised electoral reforms and a review of the constitution to check the weaknesses of the electoral process but no significant progress has been made so far." Modupe Ogunbayo reviewed the nation's manufacturing sector under the title *The Fall of the Giant*. In the article, the author said: "The manufacturing sector in Nigeria, hitherto one of the largest in Africa, is now a huge shadow of its glorious past." Dike Onwuamaeze reviewed the decay in the nation's banks. He gave an exposition of how the banks that were not able to meet their maturing obligations turned round the Nigerian way, the way of brisk and corrupt business, to defraud the nation and have their way through. He wrote, "As is being made clear now, most of the claims of over-subscription were a ruse." Maureen Chigbo wrote about what is happening in the Oil-Producing areas of the country under the title, *What the 'Creek Boys' Did to Golden Goose*. In the article, the author drew our attention to the danger posed to the country by the criminal neglect of the people whose land produces the wealth on which Nigeria thrives and the resultant militant activities of the disinherited in an attempt to reclaim their birthright. Danusa Ocholi wrote something about the bloodcurdling insecurity in the country under the title, *Anarchy Is Its Other Name*. In the article, the author said: "Security agencies are helpless as kidnapers, assassins and robbers reign supreme in virtually all parts of the country."

Lastly, about the state of our nation at 49, Yinka Odumakin, the National Publicity Secretary Afenifere Renewal Group wrote: "At 49, 76% of our populace are classified stark poor, 300 of 1000 children born in our country do not celebrate their first birthday, the life expectancy for males is 45 and 48 for females, over \$300 billion out of \$800 billion we have generated since independence have been stolen by leaders and the sixth largest producer of oil in

the world ranks among the last 20 in virtually all international indices for 148 countries. Above all we are classified among the 15 countries whose failure is imminent.”

The Land Of No Tomorrow

According to Maier (2001), Nigeria is a land of no tomorrow. Karl Maier, a renowned American journalist, published his thought-provoking book, *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*. As hard as it may be for us to accept the verdict of that book, the truth remains that it is about the truest book that has ever been written about the continental tragedy that Nigeria, the much-vaunted giant of Africa, has turned out to be. I wish to make a brief review of that book here to help those who have not read it become aware of it and to help those who have read it to relive some of the gut feelings they had while reading the book for the first time. Beginning with Port Harcourt, which the author described as “the unofficial capital of black Africa’s biggest oil industry”, he told a story of his driver’s scuffle with the police in the hurly-burly of Port Harcourt’s streets. The driver’s name is John. Popularly acclaimed as the president of the Airport Drivers’ Association, John was himself a no mean driver among his colleagues. Trapped by the usual heavy traffic jam that is characteristic of Port Harcourt roads, a policeman had dared John by slapping him when he failed to do the impossible – to move on when he was trapped on all sides by other vehicles. In the long run, the scuffle that ensued needed the intervention of some soldiers to save John from being dragged to the police station even though he was not at fault. Having recalled similar scenes in Lagos and other places in Nigeria, where the police took the laws into their hands and treated fellow Nigerians as if they were mere dogs, Karl Maier declared: “As minutes passed, I could sense John’s resentment of his own powerlessness, of the utter arbitrariness of life. He could just as easily have been gunned down in the middle of the road. Shootings of civilians by police and soldiers, as well as of police by soldiers and soldiers

by police, were common. But given the level of tension in the society, I often felt surprised that confrontations were not more frequent (Maier, 2001).”

That was an informative prelude to a book that would place all the good, the bad and the ugly about Nigeria in the reader’s palms. When the bedlam and the accompanying anger on both sides calmed down, John drove off on his way to Bobo Brown, the Shell Public Relations man, with whom Maier had fixed the next appointment. Their meeting was at the Shell Club, a place where the Shell personnel and community elites enjoy their heaven here on earth at the expense of the masses of the people on account of whom the Adaka Boros, the Ken Saro Wiwas and the Asari Dokubos have been badly bruised by the rough edges of Nigeria’s senseless and oppressive governments. As they strolled around the club, Bobo Brown gruffly remarked to Maier: “You see Shell spends a lot of money to build all this, so that for a while we can forget that the rest of Nigeria is out there. But of course Nigeria is always there.” (Ibid) If my guess is right, the beauty and splendour of the oil club reminds one of the biblical Temple and its dismal end: “When some people were talking about the Temple, remarking how it was adorned with fine stonework and votive offerings, Jesus said, ‘All these things you are staring at now, the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another: everything will be destroyed.’ (Luke 21:5-6).

While they enjoyed some bowls of pepper soup and some bottles of Gulder, Maier told Bobo about John’s encounter with the police in the hustle and bustle of Port Harcourt Street. Bobo’s reaction to that incident, said Maier, suggested that Nigeria was suffering from a sort of national psychosis whereby corruption and crime were seen as a legitimate avenue for progress. Confronted with this unfortunate scenario, those who search for solutions often consciously or unconsciously revert to ethnic prejudice and religious bigotry. According to Maier, this is Bobo’s diagnosis of our nation’s socio-political paralysis: “There is a complete split between power and

moral right, and unless you have access to power, you have nothing. Everyone is seeking instant gratification. No one is prepared to think of the future. Nigeria is the land of no tomorrow.”ⁱ

Like many other authors, Karl Maier traced this ill fortune of the country to British colonialism and military occupation. He wrote: “Designed by alien occupiers and abused by army rule for three quarters of its brief life span, the Nigerian state is like a battered and bruised elephant staggering toward an abyss with the ground crumbling under its feet.”ⁱⁱ He continued: “Colonial Nigeria was designed in 1914 to serve the British Empire, and the independent state serves as a tool of plunder by the country’s modern rulers. Nigerians spend a good part of their lives trying to get the better of the government for their own benefit or that of their family, their village, or their region. Rare is the head of state who acts on behalf of the entire nation. The people are not so much governed as ruled. It is as if they live in a criminally mismanaged corporation where the bosses are armed and have barricaded themselves inside the company safe. Nigeria’s leaders, like the colonialists before them, have sucked out billions of dollars and stashed them in Western banks.” (Ibid)

A Nation on Trial

Over there in Port Harcourt, while the local elites in the oil-producing areas who colluded with the British and the Dutch oil interests to destroy the land and the people enjoyed and praised the beauty of their club and many other goodies associated with the oil wealth, Kenule Benson Saro-Wiwa, author, environmental and human rights activist and an unwavering defender of minority rights, kept on weeping and calling on them to correct the devastation and the social imbalance that had degraded and enslaved his people in their own land. But instead of listening to him and hearkening to his plea, in November 1995 the aggressors teamed up with Sani Abacha and executed Saro Wiwa and eight others on politically motivated charges of incitement

to murder despite international protests from human rights organizations. But before they killed him, Saro Wiwa left the following note for the world to read: My Lord, we all stand before history, I am a man of peace, of ideas. appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly endowed land, distressed by their political marginalization and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, their ultimate heritage, anxious to preserve their right to life and to a decent living, and determined to usher to this country as a whole, a fair and just democratic system, which protects everyone and every ethnic group and gives us all a valid claim to human civilization, I have devoted my intellectual and material resources, my very life, to a cause, no matter the trials and tribulations which I and those who believe with me may encounter on our journey. Nor imprisonment nor death can stop our ultimate victory. I and my colleagues are not the only ones on trial. On trial also is the Nigerian nation, its present rulers and those who assist them. Any nation which can do to the weak and the disadvantaged, what the Nigerian nation has done to the Ogoni, loses a claim to independence and to freedom from outside influence. We all stand on trial, my Lord, for by our actions we have denigrated our country and jeopardized the future of our children. As we subscribe to the sub-normal and accept double standards, as we lie and cheat openly, as we protect injustice and oppression, we empty our classrooms, denigrate our hospitals, fill our stomachs with hunger and elect to make ourselves the slaves of those who ascribe to higher standards, pursue the truth, honour justice, freedom and hard work. I predict that the scene here will be played and replayed by generations yet unborn. I predict that the denouement of the riddle of the Niger Delta will soon come. The agenda is being set at this trial. Whether the peaceful ways I have favoured will prevail depends on what the oppressor decides, what signals it sends out to the waiting public. Shortly before he was executed, Saro Wiwa won the 1995 Goldman Environmental prize for campaigning against oil companies' environmental destruction in Ogoniland. After receiving

the news he sent the following message from the prison: “The environment is man’s right. Without a safe environment, man cannot exist to claim other rights, be they political, social, or economic.” Today, Saro Wiwa is dead and gone. But his spirit lives. Today, there is no peace in the city of Port Harcourt. There is no peace in the whole of the oil-producing area of the country. There is no peace in Abuja, the seat of the nation’s power. There is no peace anywhere in Nigeria. Everybody is afraid of everybody else. Killing Saro Wiwa did not put an end to the people’s struggle for survival in the oil-producing area of the country. It rather exacerbated it as the nonviolent Saro Wiwa resurrected in the violent Asari Dokubo and his apostles to demand that their tormentors should let his people free. When shall we learn our lesson and correct the anomalies that have combined to make this country a living hell for both the guilty and the innocent?

Conclusion

Opinions about globalization by African scholars abound; to some it is advanced capitalism, others hold that it is recolonization in disguise aimed at sustaining Africa as a perpetual Western underdog. Glaring economic indices attest that Africa is today the last moral test to the West. Over \$300b out of \$800b of Nigeria’s crude sold since the oil boom has been siphoned to Western strong banks in connivance with their overlords.

Femi Falana, a Nigerian based Civil Right Activist, exclaimed that what is today called aids, loans are nothing, but African looted treasury being given to us with interests; with the flagrant fanfare and taints of help. The prevalence and preference to loot Africa blind by its purported leaders stem from an incredible banking system that has been allowed to thrive in Switzerland, where fortunes meant for Africa’s next generation have been starched with

incomprehensible machinations. The inability of Europe to call to an end this practice shows the state of their conscience in the realm of “business”.

Indeed, the main force propelling the world at the end of the 20th century is globalization which is the aggravation of ‘global interconnectedness’ in details. Globalization emphasizes the ‘multiplicity of linkages and interconnectedness’ that surpasses the nation – states which together constitute the modern world system. Barely three years away from the timeline set by globalization to achieve this; the term is being abused and touted as a conduit pipe for further enslavement of the peoples’ senses in Nigeria. Much as we may blame Europe, we deserve the leaders we have got. We choose them ourselves. A desired change is the change from within. However, the inability of the younger generation of Nigerians to rise against unjust structures stem from their impoverished educational standing. Hence, the onus of sound of education lies with the West to HONESTLY equip vibrant and young African scholars for a reconstruction of the continent.

References

Effiong, Daniel. (2001). *Globalization: Post Neodependency & Poverty in Africa*.

Maier, Karl. (2001). *This House Has Fallen*. New York: Penguin Books, p. xvii.

Newswatch Magazine. (2009). P. 50.
