

**GLOBALIZATION IS IMPERIALISM:
PEERING AT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF
GLOBALISATION ON AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

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ABSTRACT

Africanist scholars have posited that globalization is a form of imperialism. Along with the invasiveness of western goods and companies, globalisation is seen as the equivalent of international aggression. On the other hand, proponents of globalisation argue that, claiming globalisation is imperialistic is like claiming that liberating slaves imposes a particular lifestyle on the former slaves and therefore, globalisation cannot be imperialistic. They further argue that globalisation, in its principled application, removed any restraint on trade. Thus, the central focus of this paper is to interrogate how globalization has been imperialistic to the southern hemisphere. The rely on based on the theory of Marxism, and applying the historical method of data collection. The work found that although, globalisation has been imperialistic to African countries, Africans are also contributing factors. The paper recommends that, rather than given in cheaply to the concept of global village, Africa should look within and utilize her own resources for her own people.

Key words: Globalisation, Imperialism, Marxist, Colonialism and Africanist Scholars.



INTRODUCTION

Globalization has been described as a process by which the globe is increasingly interconnected due to expanded trade and ethos. It accelerates the production of goods and the provision of services. As a result of Globalisation, the most important companies are no longer national companies, but international companies with branches all around the world. With globalization, the economy is moving faster and faster, goods and services can be enjoyed around the world.¹

Thus, globalization has led to an open flow of information, technology, and goods between countries and consumers. It is further asserted that, this openness occurs through a variety of relationships, from business, geopolitics, and technology to tourism, culture, and the media,² it has made life easy and comfortable.

However, Africanist scholars are of the opinion that Globalisation in the southern hemisphere is imperialistic. They claim that, the process, which has affected many areas of human life, especially the people of Africa, has been controversial. They assert that, the economic trappings of African countries are not enough to ensure they survive when they face the rest of the world due to certain important areas and weak conditions. Conceivably the most important weakness is the foundation laid by western nations in their interaction with Africa in the past. They believe that, Africa's underdevelopment is as a result of its interaction with the western world, hence Africa would have fared better without the rest of the world.

The above assertion by Africanist scholars, although, seem to have some point, is not completely true because just as no man is an island, no group of people or nation is an island. And as the western world needs Africa for survival, Africa also need them for survival. Besides, the basic reality of survival, Africa is not the only continent to had contact or interacted with people. Also, Africa is not the only continent to have be colonized. The American



continent was colonized. The United States of America, the greatest country in the planet earth was colonized, Canada was colonized and Australia was also colonized, yet, today, they are the most powerful country, even more powerful than Britain that was their colonial master. So, why the constant cry of external contact or interaction among Africanist scholars to be the cause of the continents underdevelopment?

The work analyses the concept of globalisation, history of globalisation with specific reference to Africa, the challenge of globalisation for the African continent. While it is true that globalisation although, has been with man depending on the peculiarities of the time and period, the current phase has changed the physiognomy of global politics, economy and social configuration. It precisely emphasises on its challenges, consequences and implications for Africa particularly, the role of the western countries and their agents and that of the internal collaborators.

Background to Globalization in Africa

The era of slave trade marked an obvious era of globalisation in Africa. The slave trade was part of the Atlantic trade, which at the time was probably the most important and lucrative trade in the world. Ships from Europe would carry cargo for commercial goods to Africa where they get slaves. They sold slave goods for export to the United States, where they sold slaves and took loads of agricultural products, usually produced by slave labor, to Europe. The value of this trade route was that the ship could make a lot of money on each leg of the voyage. The route was also designed to take full advantage of existing winds and currents: a trip from the West Indies or the southern U.S. to Europe will be assisted by the Gulf Stream; a trip abroad from Europe to Africa would not be hampered by the same tide.³

Walter Rodney stated that in every other continent from the 15th century onwards, the population showed a constant and



sometimes spectacular natural increase; while it is striking that the same did not apply to Africa. He gave figures of the population as given by a European scholar following estimates of the world population (in millions) according to continents:

Table 1: Population of Continents in Millions During the Era of Slave Trade

Continent	1650	1750	1850	1900
Africa	100	100	100	120
Europe	103	144	274	423
Asia	257	437	656	857

Source: *Walter Rodney. How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, London and Tanzanian Publishing House, Dar-Es-Salaam 1973.*

The table shows that, while the population of other continents increased, that of Africa remain static. Between the period of 1650 to 1850, a period of 200 years, the population of Africa remain pitifully 100 million while Europe increased from 103 million to 274 million and that of Asia increased from 257 to 656 million. It was only in 1900, a period when the slave trade had been abolished, that the population of Africa increased from 100 million to 120 million. This increase is just twenty percent in 250 years. In the same period, Europe increased by over 300 percent while Asia increased by 600 percent.

Africanist scholars believe that, this population stagnation contributed immensely to the underdevelopment of Africa. This is because, the people taken out of Africa as a result of the trade in human were able-bodied men, the most active in the society.

Africanist scholars claim that, those that would have tilled the land, mine minerals, carry out trading activities and probably represent Africa in sports competitions. (Able-bodied men) were carried away by the Europeans, leaving behind elderly men and women, boys and girls and the physically handicapped. This



imperialistic nature of the slave trade remains the main sources of Africa's underdevelopment till date.

After this phase came the era of legitimate trade which led to the scramble and partitioning of Africa among European states. The Berlin Conference of 1884, regulated European colonisation and trade in Africa.⁴ The industrialisation led to a struggle between European nations for territory in Africa (a continent blessed with raw materials and abundant human resources) and the subsequent Berlin Conference to prevent the Europeans from going to war.⁵

During this time, the Europeans were technologically advancing. The industrial revolution brought about rapid development in transportation and communications, especially in the form of shipping, railways, and telegraph. Advances in medicine also played an important role, especially in the treatment of tropical diseases, which have helped to control their adverse effects. The production of quinine, effective treatment for malaria, made large tropical areas readily available to Europeans.⁶

Contemporary form of Globalising Imperialism in Africa

Most Africanist scholars claim that globalization in Africa is a whole biblical situation stated in Mathew chapter 25 verse 29 that, for unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have in abundance: but from him, that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁷

To Africanist scholars, the above quotation from the Bible is a clear case of global distribution in Africa. They claim that, Globalization has ruined every aspect of life in Africa, Globalization has been cleverly designed to destroy the spirit of the African people, and sane Africans are now forced to question their sanity.

They posited that the Europeans claim to have given African countries independence, but they left another form of imperialism, 'Globalisation.' The former colonial administrators through the companies that operate in the former colonies especially in Africa,



destroyed the African economy. It is true that, after independence, some African countries had a good economy, but the colonialist through, the marketing board and corporations, all agents of globalisation siphoned the continent's economy. Olisa G. Muojama in his article, "the marketing board placed a high price on products that, they were induced preference for imported goods leading to the killing of the nation's agricultural industry."⁸

These scholars are of the opinion that, globalization, by emphasizing that African countries open up their economy to foreign goods and businesses, hinders the ability of African governments to take reasonable and effective measures to enable the development of the local entrepreneurial class.⁹In the agricultural sector for instance, the Africanist claim that, Africans are being treated like the era of colonialism. According to Kremena Krumova, much like in the 19th century, when European colonial powers expropriated Africa's rich mineral resources, pushing the local people onto marginal land, today foreign governments and wealthy corporations are staking out vast plots of arable land across the warm continent in a form of second colonization.¹⁰

The above opinion is backed by most Africanist scholars and they hold strongly that, just as the raw materials was needed and the market for their European-made goods fomented the scramble and partitioning of Africa, the scarcity of land led to the re-emergence of many of the nation's agents into Africa. Kremena further said, facing a future where domestic resources will not be able to provide for their people, investors from countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, India, South Korea, and Qatar are looking for land elsewhere to establish rice fields and other basic African countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania, Kenya, and Mali are leasing out their lands. Leases are usually long-term and include tax holidays, where there are few environmental, labor, or social protections. The land is often marketed as vacant, and little is considered of the impact on food security for smallholder farmers who are segregated by foreign investors.¹¹



The above depicts that, Globalisation has brought imperialists face to face with Africans, a new form of colonialism, such as the African colonialism in the 19th century when African resources were exploited to develop the Western world. The Pan-Africanist opined that, with the above, as world food prices rise by the day, Africa will eventually pay more for food grown on African land. Unfortunately, very little is known about the exact terms of these international treaties. Negotiations usually take place privately, and it is not uncommon for landowners to have a say in the negotiations. Often the legal context provides little to protect local interests and environmental effects. Few contracts are made publicly available. And to add insult to injury, products that come into Africa from these countries are nothing to celebrate. They claim cheap chemicals and fertilizers from China are flooding African markets. Some of these fertilizers are expired and most not good for African land, but because most African farmers cannot read Chinese labels, they use them, while the ones good for African land and also not expired, some farmers use them improperly or overly. This is because these companies do not have a long-term role in the environment and life of the African people.¹²

The Africanist argued further that, after gaining independence, many African countries inherited empty treasures. The dire situation prompted them to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for help, unaware that the institutions were under the control of their former colonial masters. The former colonial masters used their majority votes to control the World Bank and the IMF on how these old colonies should be helped. Of the 185 members that make up the IMF, six colonial leaders, and their allies - consisting of the United States, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy - control 42 percent of the vote.¹³

Africans thought earlier that, the loans will help provide infrastructural development but the westerners used the borrowing institutions to frustrate their efforts. This underscores the many



conditions associated with loans from these institutions. Some of these conditions include the establishment of a memorandum of understanding on secrecy, subsidies to foreign companies, and major tax permits (such as income tax, expenditure, and property taxes) - the main source of income for 'export-oriented countries', developing countries.¹⁴

These corporations forced the structural adjustment program on Africa. The policies put in place, a floating interest rate, devaluation, deregulation, de-subsidization, repression, commercialization\privatization, and the retrenchment of hundreds of thousands of able-bodied workers. Like other African economies, required some serious adjustment to strengthen its productive base, make the state more accountable, manageable, and efficient, and regulate expenditure against income, and so on; but the Nigerian version was a total disaster.¹⁵ According to Chris Alli, bewildered by the lack of information on the structural adjustment program (SAP), as military governor of Plateau state, he asked General Babangida, the president, what it was all about in his office? He continued, "I expressed fear that it may lead to capital flight and several other savory consequences. The General equally confessed that the intricacies of the program were not clear to him."¹⁶

Explaining the effects of the program, Khadija Sharife, in her article 'Capital flight: gingerbread havens, cannibalized economies', writes, this policy is especially lethal for developing countries where the poor are now caught in tax brackets, courtesy of the IMF and World Bank's structural adjustment programs (SAPs), instituting policies ranging from "tax holidays" to the privatisation of state services and carving out huge slices of natural capital at corporate auctions... Africa has collectively lost more than \$600-billion in capital flight, excluding other mechanisms of flight including ecological debt (globally estimated at a potential \$1.8-trillion per annum), the cost of liberalised trade (just under \$300-billion) ... and the list goes on.¹⁷



The Africanists claim that the structural adjustment program was arranged to put Africa on permanent stagnation to remain a dumping ground for western goods and a source of raw materials. They further claim that, these corporations operating in Africa promote and fund civil wars, pollute rivers, resources, and lands through their oil and mineral activities, deliberately undermine their profits and counterfeit documents, as well as undermine their assets, smuggle, steal and falsification of invoicing and non-payment of taxes, and employing kickbacks and bribes to public officials. They also overprize projects, provided safe havens for looted funds, encouraged the sale of firearms, overthrew African leaders, supported dictatorships, and executed dissidents. We know, for example, Muammar Ghadaffi of Lybia who was almost the mouthpiece of Africa.¹⁸

The Africanists claim that Organizations forced into Africa by the IMF, the World Bank, the US, and Europe have been implicated in several scandals involving African leaders and the theft of billions of dollars' worth of resources. Global Financial Integrity states that '\$900 billion is secreted each year from underdeveloped economies, with an estimated \$11.5 trillion currently stashed in havens. More than one-quarter of these hubs belong to the UK, while Switzerland holds one-third of global capital flight.' Of this \$900 billion, \$150 billion comes from Africa.¹⁹

According to Adusei, Africa received \$ 161.6 billion in 2015 - mainly through loans, personal loans and grants. However, more has been taken from Africa. \$203 billion was taken from Africa, however, directly - mainly through profitable companies and illegal withdrawals on the continent - or at global costs for climate change.²⁰

The Africanists claim that, the above illustrates the devastating effects of globalisation on Africa. They posit that, those who claim to help Africa need to rethink their role. The priority for them should be: 'first don't hurt'. However, there is a lot of damage right now.²¹ Because the current extraction of wealth from the poor



to a rich world in Globalisation through international corporations is a continuation of historical processes. British theologian Robert Beckford has estimated that Britain exported £ 7.5 Trillion from African countries as a result of the slave trade,²² and this has continued on a global scale.

New Trend in Africa's Indebtedness

Today's China is an overseas trading partner of Africa. A surprising change of activity, considering that trade between the continent and China was very low in the Sixties. In 1980, Sino-Africa's global trade volume reached billions of US dollars. In 2010, the volume of trading was estimated at \$ 150 billion. That includes Chinese imports from Africa. They consisted mainly of corks, crude oil, and agricultural products. Chinese exports amount to \$ 93 billion and mainly include finished products. In 2018 the trade improved to \$ 170 billion.¹

From 2000 to 2017, the Chinese government, banks, and contractors extended the US \$143 billion in loans to African governments and their country-owned organizations (SOEs). Angola is the pinnacle recipient of Chinese loans, with \$42.8 billion allotted over 17 years. Chinese loan finance is various. A few government loans qualify as "official development aid." but other Chinese loans are export credit, suppliers' credit, or commercial, not concessional.²⁴ China is now Africa's biggest trade partner, with Sino-African trade topping \$200 billion per year.²⁵ According to McKinsey, after assessing Africa's economic partnerships with the rest of the world across five dimensions: trade, investment stock, investment growth, infrastructure financing, and aid. China is among the top four partners for Africa across all these dimensions. No other country matches this depth and breadth of engagement.²⁶

It has been obvious that the diplomatic battle to control Africa has been between the United States, France, United Kingdom, and China. However, China seems to be winning in the battle to control Africa with it been the largest trading partner of



Africa. Bilateral trade agreements have been signed between China and no less than forty African countries. While China seeks resources for its growing population, African countries seek funds for infrastructural development. Commentators have claimed that the Chinese's action in Africa is bribery in the form of charity. A lot of events have shown that Zambia has become Africa's first full Chinese colony. For instance, in 2015, Zambia deputy minister of home affairs announced that, 13,292 Chinese living in the country were given work permits. In 2017, Chinese nationals were sworn in as Zambian police officers only to be removed after a protest.²⁷ Pictures of Chinese nationals selling roasted cobs maize on the street of Lusaka the Zambian capital are everywhere on the internet.²⁸ The Zambian national broadcasting service (ZMBS), is set to run by China, and (ZESCO) the Zambian electricity company is also set to be run by the Chinese government. In late 2018, a Twitter user tweeted with pictures of a Zambian newspaper publishing news in the Chinese language.²⁹

The above shows clearly, China's intention in Africa. China intentionally extends aids and loans to African countries to extract economic and political concessions when the country cannot pay up the debt. What this means is that China has over the years studied corrupt African countries with greedy leaders and sadly most African countries have corrupt and greedy leaders. So, China came up with the best strategy, offering mouthwatering loans knowing too well the countries wouldn't be able to pay back due to their corrupt leaders, they can't maximize the loan, then, they come back for the throat of those nations. Unfortunately, the poor citizens bear the consequences.

Rejoinders

Pan-Africanist scholars have come out hard on Europe, America and China for using Globalisation to re-colonize Africa. However, ignoring the fact that, these nations' activities in Africa is a product of their foreign policy which in turn is a product of their national



interest. Foreign policy is the reflection of any nations domestic reality, it begins with the identification and articulation of national interest in the words of I.O.S Nwachukwu as quoted by Obiozor, “It is safe, therefore, to assume that whether this national interest represents the principal consideration in the formulation and excavation of national policies, both at the domestic and international levels.”³⁰ Foreign policy is inseparable from national interest. Political decision making is a modality of decision making in general weather in an economic or business transaction. Foreign policymaking, in turn, is a modality of political decision making.³¹ This is because no nation stages a bazaar for another nation in international relations. In international politics, no nation is father Christmas, every nation is into the game to achieve a certain objective which is a part of their national interest.

The above calls for the following questions: can’t African nations fine-tune their foreign policy to imperialize the western nations? Don’t African nations have a foreign policy that reflects their national interest? Are Africans father Christmas of the world? Or have Africans chosen to be imperialized by the western countries? These questions arise because international relations or international politics is a game played with every country’s national interest at heart.

The truth is that, Africans directly or indirectly gave approval for the new imperialism. This is because, Africa is one of the richest continents in the world with different mineral resources, yet still underdeveloped. As Miriam Mannack puts it quoting Charles Mutasa the executive director of the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), a Zimbabwe-based NGO working on Africa’s debt problem, “Africa is known as one of the richest parts of the world when it comes to natural resources, yet it is also the poorest region – despite the natural wealth and the aid flow.”³² The problem of Africa is clearly enumerated in proverbs chapter 11 verse 29: He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool *shall be* servant to



the wise of heart.”³³ The biblical citation is an epitome of the demeanor of Africa leaders. Right from the 1960’s when most African nations got independence from their various colonial masters, the leaders of these newly independent African countries, assume the role of colonialist to their own people. Replacing the white colonial masters. Rather than concentrate on the task of delivering on the promise of independence, they seek to solve their dearth of private property. Describing the Nigerian case, Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu addressing students of the University of Nigeria Nsukka on 25 April, 1966 on the state of the nation before the military took over power, said:

“The masses of this country were exploited for the benefit of a few and a personality cult became the sole object of Government. In this state of affairs, it was inevitable that our leaders should become alienated from the people they were supposed to serve. They built for themselves places of marbles, laid grandiose plans directed purely at the glory of individuals. They even strove to become our gods. In this attempt, they mobilise and geared all efforts towards the acquisition of wealth and influence. In search of wealth they became even more corrupt and bribery became rampant. In search of influence they indulge in nepotism and tribalism, fanning all sectional antagonism until the conflagration threatened to devour the whole country. In this, they were heedless to the peoples cry.”³⁴

He asserted that, murder and arson became the order of the day, and they abandoned their responsibilities. He further said, “It was said of the Emperor Nero that he played the fiddle whilst Rome burnt. In Nigeria, alas, we had no Emperor. While our dear fatherland stood burning, our leaders went junketing on world-wide cruise.”³⁵



The issue with Southern hemisphere in general and Africa in particular is that, mentally, Africa is imperialized. It is only a mentally trapped person that can be taken advantage of by an outsider. This mental imperialism is Africa's attitude towards foreign things and its attitude towards itself. We tend to value anything foreign and undervalue local products, and also individual Africa tend to focus on oneself without considering the interest of others. According to a Colonial Government Report (CGR) of 1947, "The African's background and outlook on public morality is very different from that of the present day Briton. The African in the public service seeks to further his own financial interest."³⁶ This mental imperialism (corruption) has often determined Africa's interaction with some of the multi-national corporation operating in the southern hemisphere. Some Pan-Africanist scholars claim that some of these multi-national corporation dodge taxes and fines, where as in the real sense, it is Africans that either encourage them to carry out those funny acts, or even themselves help them carry out these.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, it is germane to note that, though, Pan-Africanists see Globalisation as imperialism, the western world see it as a practice of foreign policy. It is so, because, the Pan-Africanist chooses to see it as such because it is only a mentally trapped person that can be imperialized by an outsider. Consequently, This study recommend that, other African countries should learn from Tanzania and Rwanda. As one of the smallest countries in Africa, with one of the fastest growing economies, Rwanda has achieved success against great odds, in defiance of all predictions, and in the face of unspeakable national tragedy (genocide). One of the ways that Rwanda is leading the rest of Africa is with a strong leadership committed to their national interest. Secondly, stamping out corruption which has led to the Rwandan economy becoming an



attractive investment proposition and commitment to cleanliness and environmental practices.

Da capo, in the *Mafia Manager* stated that, if one must get up there, what you don't have, you should be ready to steal. That is the mafia's way. However, in economics and foreign policy, it is different. Although, Japan has shown a typical example of what Da Capo said in the book, by sending students to study the secret of America's development and then adopted it, leading to Japan economic and technological transformation, African countries can also adopt that, sending students and using them to develop their countries. Better still, using soft diplomacy, it can be achieved through educational exchange program. The above, if properly adopted, can change the fortune of African countries.



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