

**AFRICA AND THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION:
A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE RELEVANCE OF PAN-AFRICANISM**

BY

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Introduction:

There is no doubt that Africa, as a continent, is facing a lot of challenges on account of the phenomenon of globalization. In the course of history, Africa has at one period or the other become a battle ground for external socio-political, economic and even cultural forces struggling for her soul. For instance, one of the fallouts of industrial revolution in Europe was the massive influx of European powers into the continent in search of raw materials for their industries. But even before this phase of industrial revolution, the so-called discovery of the new-world had unleashed on the African Continent, the notorious trans-Atlantic slave trade, which led to millions of Africans to be forcefully taken away from Africa to the Caribbean. The subsequent industrial revolution and its mercantilist economic dialectics led to the scramble and partitioning of Africa into areas of influence by the colonizing powers of Europe, and thus was unleashed on Africa the period of colonial governance. Throughout this period, African spirit of brotherhood and communalism was sufficiently broken. Africans became slaves to alien cultures, political processes and value orientation.

In the midst of all this confusion, it was the Africans sold into slavery that brought a new wave of African consciousness. Stephen Howe (1999:103), argues that pan-Africanism represented a response to the waves of foreign dominance on Africa. In a manner of speaking we can describe this response as the aggregation of the historical, cultural,

spiritual and philosophical legacies of Africans from the past to the present. As a movement, Pan-Africanism could be said to have originated from the European slave trade. It will be recalled that the enslaved Africans of various backgrounds found themselves enmeshed in an inhospitable and exploitative socio-political and economic system; an unfriendly terrain that saw their African origins as a label of their low esteem and servitude. Faced with these limiting situations; these Africans subsumed their cultural and ethnic differences to foster brotherhood, solidarity and a common ground of resistance against exploitation. In later years especially during the period of decolonization, African nationalists who had come into contact with afro-American pan-Africanists carried the current of Pan-Africanism into Africa where it became a guiding force and ideology in the struggle for decolonization.

Today, Africa is confronted by yet another phenomenon – globalization – that is of global dimension. That globalization, as a process, poses a lot of challenges to Africa is not in doubt. While some schools of thought believe that the process is of massive benefit to Africa, others believe that whatever benefit globalization has brought to Africa has come at a very high price. The contention here is that the benefits of globalization can very often be uneven-with the strong getting stronger and the weak getting weaker. This is particularly true of Africa. Aware of this kind of challenge on the African-continent, this work envisions to critically assess the relevance of Pan-Africanism in addressing the many challenges of globalization on the continent. The paper has been divided into five sections. The first section deals with contending perceptions of globalization. Section two focuses on the ideology and concept of Pan-Africanism while section three throws it searchlight on the challenges of globalization to African. Section four addresses these challenges while section five summarizes and concludes the paper. The fundamental assumption of the work is that the challenges of globalization for Africa are many and that the philosophy of Pan – Africanism has the potential to galvanize Africans into action of crucial significance in addressing these challenges.

Contending perceptions of Globalization

The concept of globalization is a very difficult one to pin down to a strait-jacket definition essentially because the term or concept has come to refer to a gamut of interlocking variables and trends so much so that once the term is mentioned, it evokes a lot of passion and emotion. These perceptions are at once geographical, ideological and academic. Whereas the dominant perception of globalization in western Europe and North America is the existence of vast opportunities for world economic development and significant contributions to improving people's condition of existence, the Third World, especially African countries, perception of globalization is that of a dangerous process that increases inequality within and among states; a process which increases poverty and sustains disempowerment of the weak.

From the foregoing it is safe to conclude that the process of globalization is multi-faced and subject to various perceptions. While some people see the process as positive and promising, others see it as less attractive and even threatening. The International Monetary Found (IMF 2001), conceives of globalization as a process of growing global inter-dependence of countries through increasing volume of cross-border transactions in goods and services and of capital flows and also through the more rapid and widespread diffusion of science and technology.

Scholars of various persuasions (Mazrui 2001, Isidore Okpewho 1999), see globalization as both historical and socio-cultural process. As a historical and socio-cultural concept, globalization is thus perceived as the movement of people, language, ideas, culture and products around the world. Yet there are scholars like Cecil Blake (2005), who perceive of globalization merely in terms of the dominance of multi-national corporations and the destruction of cultural identities. Among scholars of globalization, there has been no unanimity of definition but there are at least two variables that are common to globalization. The first is that globalization is real and the second is that it is a process that encourages increasing interdependence among states and global actors. What is at issue, however, is the impact of this increasing global inter-connectedness and the challenges or opportunities this interdependence brings along.

The Oxford English Dictionary (2000:165), perceives globalization as deriving from the abstract noun-global-meaning “pertaining to or involving the whole world “world wide” or “universal”. This dictionary meaning of the word only goes to confirm the assertion of increasing global inter-relatedness. The International Forum on Globalization (IFG) (2006:1), contends that globalization is the present world-wide drive towards a globalized economy dominated by supra-national, corporate trade, banking institutions that are not accountable to democratic process or national governments. Paschal Lamy (2006), argues that globalization is a historical stage of accelerated expansion of market capitalism like the one experienced in the 19th century with the industrial revolution. Lamy’s opinion here is that globalization is a fundamental transformation of societies because of the recent technological revolution which has led to a recombining of the economic and social forces on a new territorial dimension.

The World Bank publication of 2006, suggests that globalization is the growing integration of economies and societies around the world, while the UN-Poverty and Development Division (1999), observed that “while definitions and perceptions of globalization varies with context of analysis, the process generally refers to an increasing interaction across national boundaries that affect many aspects of life in terms of the economic, socio-cultural and political aspects of life.

Thus far, we have tried to present the various perceptions of globalization. One noticeable feature of these perceptions is the consensus on the universality of the phenomenon. Much as scholars have not been able to proffer a single acceptable definition of the phenomenon, the World Health Organization in 2006, came out with a perception of globalization that appeared more embracing in terms of conceptual definition. According to the WHO (2006), “Globalization, or the increasing interconnectedness and inter-dependence of people and countries, is generally understood to include two-inter-related elements namely the opening of borders to increasing fast flow of goods, services, finance, people and ideas across international borders; and secondly the changes in institutional and policy regimes at the inter-national and national

levels that facilitate or promote such flows and it is –recognized that globalization has both positive and negative impacts on development.”

This paper agrees with the above perception of globalization by WHO especially in recognizing that globalization impacts on national and regional governments either positively or negatively. For Africa, the impact of globalization weighs heavily in favour of the negative and it is these negative impacts that constitute the biggest challenges to Africa. How has Africa responded to these challenges? Has Pan Africanism any relevance to this response? How can the continent be effectively mobilized for this response? These and more questions inform our present discourse on the relevance of Pan-Africanism in our collective drive to confront the ravages of globalization.

Challenges of Globalization in Africa

That the concept of globalization poses a lot of challenges to Africa is not in doubt. The meat of this challenge could be gleaned from Alexander Neville’s (2003), conceptualization of globalization as an advanced capitalist mode of production. His argument is that globalization represents the new material and ideological mechanisms by which the capitalist classes control the economies and societies of the world. If, according to Stiglitz (2002:22), globalization relates to global technological determinism, then it means that Africa is operating at an unequal ground with the developed economies of the world.

The first major challenge of globalization to Africa is economic challenge. It is common knowledge that today the thematic and dialectics of capitalism has not changed at all. The central thesis of capitalism as a mode of production according to Alexander Neville (2002), refers to the “collective production of use values or goods by individuals who in return for wages sell their labour power to a class of people who own the means of production, and who in turn, as the private owners of the labour power sold to them appropriate surplus value (the difference between the price of labour and the total exchange value of the “socially necessary” labour inputted in the product or commodity.” In whatever manner we choose to consmetize capitalism, the foregoing illustration is the

generic character and mode of capitalist mode of production. In this sense, globalization basically means increasing vertical and horizontal integration of world economics and social formations into the world capitalist economy. This drive towards increasing global economic integration is driven by the dominant economic powers of the west for their ultimate benefit. It is in this wise that we can understand the argument that globalization strengthens the strong and weakens the weak. In this globalized economic order, Africa is seriously disadvantaged. The economies of the continent are individually and collectively weak in comparison with economies of the USA, European Union or even the emerging economies of the Asia-Pacific axis. This economic domination by the super-economic powers is sustained by proclaiming and promoting “free trade” enterprise in the knowledge that the acceptance of free trade by the world would only benefit the strongest economies to the detriment of Third World economies especially Africa. This is the neo-liberal economic order which has driven the process of globalization from the earliest times and which is being mediated by such international multi-lateral institutions such as the World Bank, World Trade organization and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Today, the powerful economies of the West and Japan have structured world trade in such a way that their economic benefits are mutually reinforcing and this is attained through their transnational corporations, mutual trade and investment. The *Le Monde* (2003:16), asserts that some 50% of world trade takes place between North America, the European Union and East Asia (mainly Japan). Together these countries comprising only 15% of the world population account for 70% of world trade. In this equation Africa is seriously marginalized and disadvantaged in a globalized world.

A related challenge to the foregoing is that of technology and information dissemination. Stiglitz (2002), has argued that globalization simply means technological determinism. The meaning of this is that technology drives globalization. This again corresponds to a historical period of production in its most advanced stage. African economy is grossly import-substituted. It is a consumer economy that produces primary products and consumes finished products largely from Europe, America and Asia. Africa is technologically very dependent on forces outside the continent. This dependence is not

for lack of skill, personnel or resources to develop our innate abilities but primarily due to prevailing socio-political situations that are not enabling. This type of situation has in turn led to massive migration of Africans to other parts of the world where they have made brilliant careers of their professions. The implication of this is that African energy, intelligence and creativity have been employed in the development of societies other than Africa.

Because of the advancement in information, and communication technology, Africa has been subjected to consuming foreign information and culture at the expense of her own. This is not entirely the fault of globalization. It is more so because most indigenous ICT outfits are state-owned and are employed in presenting only government view points.

There is also the challenge of leadership in Africa. One major problem on the continent has been the paucity of credible leadership to drive the process of continental unity. The new AU has not really met its mandate because virtually all African states owe allegiance to one foreign power or the other. The union has spoken from both sides of the mouth concerning the issues in Cote D'Ivoire, and North Africa. But there is also some degree of commitment by our leaders to institute credible leadership on the continent for which reason it has established a peer review mechanism to assess leadership performance periodically.

In reality, the effect of globalization on Africa is enormous. As a peripheral actor in a rapidly globalizing world economy, Africa can best be described as a de-linked continent and unless as Collin Leys (1994:44), remarks, the global economic and political forces bearing on the continent radically alter, much if not most of the continent are doomed to further decline, material and moral degradation and suffering” .

So in all this what is the relevance of Pan-Africanism in addressing the negative effects of globalization in Africa? I know that a lot of alternatives have been suggested but I also know that, as Africans, if we continue to confront the negative currents of globalization with analytical and practical tools of capitalism, we would not be able to go beyond “practical adjustments to the current hegemonic order “(Alexander Neville 2002). If we

suggest greater involvement of the state having larger budget deficits etc— These are classical Keynesian economic models that amplify neo-vertical models of the west. So it is at this point that we have to examine the relevance of Pan-Africanism vis-à-vis the challenges of globalization in Africa.

The ideology of Pan-Africanism

It is not the intention of this paper to dwell extensively on the historicity of Pan-Africanism but rather to show that as a movement anchored on the ideology of assertive identity and freedom, Pan-Africanism has always- emphasized a commitment towards self-renewal, self-determination, unity of Africans in the Diaspora and for freedom of enterprise by Africans as free and unfettered citizens of the world.

As a liberating ideology of freedom and unity, Pan-Africanism originated from the Americans. As Ronald W. Walkers (1997:131), argues, “Pan-Africanism is usually seen as a product of the Europeans slave trade. Enslaved Africans of diverse origins and their descendants found themselves embedded in a system of exploitation where their African origin became a sign of their servile status. Pan-Africanism set aside cultural differences, asserting the principality of these shared experiences to foster solidarity and resistance to exploitation”.

In other words, Pan-Africanism was a response by enslaved Africans abroad who has been violently uprooted during the period of slave trade from their motherland and planted in the so-called new World. C.I.R James (1981), had given a graphic description of the suffering, humiliation and degradation to which the African slaves were subjected in their new environment and how these limiting factors galvanized them into resistance.

In some strict sense, Pan-Africanism was and still remains a gift from Africans in the Diaspora to Africans in the continent. During the period of decolonization Pan-Africanism became the new spirit of African identity and consciousness. It was anchored on the ideology that Africans are decent people- not atavistic or barbarous as others would want to characterize us.

Regrettably, soon after political independence of most African states in the 50s and 60s, most of the nationalist lost the vision and consciousness of Pan-Africanism in pursuit of narrow interests. Consequently, the zeal of Pan-Africanism has remained a glorious ideology and philosophy that seeks to bring to life the glory of a devastated continent. It is not a recent phenomenon. There were many factors that awakened this ideology abroad before it came to Africa during the decolonization process. The impact of these factors was felt by Africans-both at home and abroad. These factors were behind the various resistance movement and organizations, which sought to restore the status of Africans in Africa as well as those in the Diaspora who have sought to rise from centuries of degradation, which began with the notorious trans-atlantic slave trade. In the words Diallo Telli as quoted in Wallerstein (1967:7), Pan–Africanism was born in the emotional atmosphere of complete alienation, physical exploitation and spiritual-torment of Africans outside their homeland. Therefore, when in 1900, Henry Sylvester Williams of Trinidad and Tobago convened a Pan-African conference his aim was to mobilize solidarity for Africans threatened in various ways by degradations of the slave masters. The ideology of Pan-Africanism is very simple: that blacks, wherever they are on this planet must think Africa first. It is the African world new. When it started, its main focus was to unify and uplift the Africans especially in the new world.

As an ideology, it could be argued in a sense that Pan-Africanism is Africa’s concept of unity in diversity in terms of a truly extended and expanded African community on the world stage. As a movement, it denotes or signifies a people’s determined struggle against subjugation, injustice, inequality and oppression. This was the philosophy of such pioneer Pan-Africanists like Tadelli; Padmore, Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X. Africans like Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Patrice Lumumba etc who traveled abroad to acquire education came into contact with this vision of Pan-Africanism.

As Richard J. Reid (2009), observed “After World War II, Pan Africanist interests once more returned to the African continent with a particular focus on African unity and liberation. A number of leading Pan-Africanists, particularly George Padmore and W.E.B

Dubois emphasized their commitment to Africa by immigrating to Ghana and becoming African citizens. Across the continent, a new group of Pan-Africanists arose amongst the nationalists-Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Ahmed Toure, Ahmed Ben-Bella, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Amilcar Cabral, and Patrice Lumumba”. In 1963, the Organization of African Unity was formed to advance cooperation and solidarity between newly independent African countries and fight against colonialism. In an attempt to revamp the organization and move away from it being seen as an alliance of African Dictators, it was transformed into the African Union in July of 2002. Ajuku Rok (2002), opines that the transition by OAU into AU is not the case of an old wine in a new bottle but rather it signifies a new beginning for Africa in the context of the prevailing world order.

The relevance of Pan-Africanism to the challenges of globalization in Africa:

Pan-Africanism is Africa’s ideology or philosophy of continental unity. Today, the dynamics of globalization has led to the formation of continental or regional organizations all over the world, the aim of which is to present a common and united response to the forces of globalization. This is the underlying philosophy in the re-engineering of such socio-political and economic bodies like the EU, OAS, Asia-Pacific Union etc.

Therefore, African leaders must realize that in order to be relevant in this age of globalization they need to respond to the threats of globalization in a concerted manner not necessarily using new institutional frame works to fire the embers or flames of neo-liberal economic models that disadvantage the continent.

Pan-Africanism connotes a new orientation of African unity that will create alternative economic models that will strengthen our bargaining power and make the continent relevant in global economic equation. In Africa today, there is high degree of poverty, illiteracy, wars, hunger and deprivation. The unequal currents of globalization have sharpened these contradictions.

Our new form of Pan-Africanism should therefore serve as a platform for launching the continent on the world stage through sustainable democratic governance, transparent in governance, initiation of home-grown economic models that would radically change the continent's story for good.

According to Manning Marable (1995), the relevance of Pan-Africanism as a strategy for liberation of the African people lies in taking progressive stand on global issues. This new form of Pan-Africanism cannot afford to define itself in terms of race or accusatory alone but should define itself in terms of its politics and vision essentially because Pan-Africanism remains a democratic vision aimed at deconstructing and uprooting inequalities of racism and economy; to challenge the neo-liberal model of new world order. Pan Africanism remains relevant as a political framework that should bring together the collective perspectives of people of African decent in our committed struggle to assert and to affirm our humanity.

Pan-Africanism should expand its scope beyond the politically – driven movement of the past to include cultural and socio-philosophical perspectives. One of the major issues, which globalization has spawned on Africa is the tendency to undermine our culture. Odora Hoppers (2002), has argued that there is a fundamental- relationship between culture and development and that Africa should not in the wake of globalization, discard her indigenous knowledge systems.

According to Hoppers (2002:15-16), “If development is endogenous, then people are the subject. They are not trapped in the cold condescending gaze of the rich upon the poor, because endogenous development begins at the point where people start to pride themselves as worthy human-beings inferior to none and where such pride is lost, development begins at the point where this pride is restored, and history recovered. Yet the confluence between modern scientific knowledge, wealth and power continues to privilege the exogamous model of development. It cannot be said enough that rural people's knowledge and modern scientific knowledge are complementary in their-

strengths and weakness. Combined they can achieve that which neither would alone.” Our new form of Pan-Africanism should realize that it is in the domain of culture that some of the first and incidentally, the direction finding initiatives will be engendered (Alexander Neville 2002). This new wave of Pan-Africanism should be geared towards recreating the colonized mentality of the African mind. The biggest limitation to the new idea of Pan Africanism as it stands now is the prevalence of this attitude of colonized mind and the belief that Africa’s redemption lies in the hands of her erstwhile colonial masters.

Africans should therefore be positively mobilized to confront the challenges of her existence through improved and sustainable food production, re-invention of African technology and promotion of same. It is in doing that we can understand the relevance of Pan-Africanism to the extent that Africa’s destiny lies in her own hands.

Conclusion/Recommendation

In the face of the enormous challenges of globalization on Africa, the obvious question is: what are the options open to African leaders? Has Pan – Africanism any relevance to confronting these challenges? The answer is an emphatic yes. As Wallerstein (1967) and Francis (2006), have separately argued, Pan-Africanism provides a mobilizing and uniting force for Africa in her desire to confront the challenges of globalization; and as a socio-political framework it has become a legitimate basis for African action and collective solidarity in the new world order. As a continent we can no longer afford the huge costs of civil wars, poverty, illiteracy etc. In the new spirit of Pan-Africanism our leaders should desist from wasting the wealth of their nations and mortgaging their natural resources to unscrupulous western industrial nations (Adogamhe P. 2008:26).

It is regrettable that though Africa is richly blessed with human and natural resources, we have not been able to convert this strategic advantage into sustainable growth and development and as such we have remained the least developed continent in the global packing order.

Pan-Africanism therefore, represents a praxilic and pragmatic framework for continental unity and development. This continental unity cannot be achieved without obvious commitment by our leaders to conflict resolution, peace-building, deepening of democratic governance, public accountability, eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease. This calls for real political will and selfless leadership in order to rekindle such strategic vision that will unite and reposition the continent as a global force to reckon with.

This paper, therefore, recommends the adoption of the ideology of pan-Africanism as Africa's continental ideology of liberation. This adoption is very crucial if Africa is to make any meaningful impact in a rapidly changing and globalizing world. In addition to this, the paper further recommends the incorporation of the concept of Pan-Africanism into the curriculum of tertiary institutions in Africa. Such incorporation would prepare emergent African leaders both intellectually and ideologically especially in terms of devising authentic African therapies to confront African problems.

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