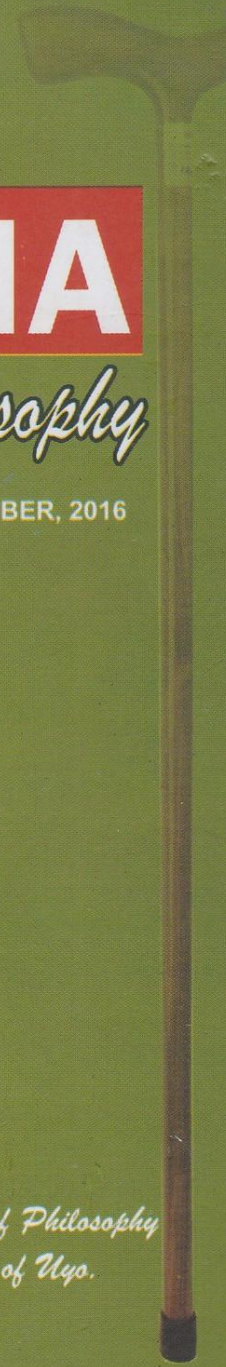


# SAPIENTIA

*Journal of Philosophy*

VOL. 6 APRIL & VOL. 7 SEPTEMBER, 2016

*A publication of the Department of Philosophy  
University of Uyo.*



## GLOBALIZATION AND AFRICAN UNDERDEVELOPMENT: THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE CONNECTION

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### Abstract

*The centrality of the Atlantic slave trade in the history of Africa between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries is no longer debatable. The phenomenon as an aspect of globalization dominated all political, social and economic activities, especially in the coastal and forest regions of Africa within the period mentioned. It also shaped the template of relations between Africa and Euro-America. In the long run, it turned the various sections of the continent into theatres of insecurity, and dislocated their economies especially through the loss of the productive population. The trade accounts principally for the presence of black population in Americas and Europe and provided the capital for the industrial economies of these continents primarily from their exploitation of the Africans. This paper examines the phenomenon of globalization which the Atlantic slave trade represented and the challenge of underdevelopment in Africa ignited by the phenomenon. It concludes that despite the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade more than two centuries ago, the exploitation of the African continent continues through the process of "modern" globalization. The paper adopts a historical narrative approach.*

### Introduction

Few subjects in the pre-colonial history of Africa has received sustained attention and provoked scholarly controversies in the African history and Black race than slavery, the Atlantic slave trade, and the issue of African in Diasporas. Though slavery and slave trade were ancient global institutions, with deep roots and significance in all human societies, the Atlantic slave trade and slavery marked a significant turning point in the historical development of Africa and peoples of African descent, especially, in their relationship with Europe and the Americas between the sixteenth and late nineteenth centuries. The slave trade dominated all major social, economic and political activities in Africa and the African world internally and externally during the period

(Uya, 2005).

Buttressing the above point, Afigbo (2005) notes thus:

Without any fear of contradiction, one can say that no theme, not even that of the evolution of states, big or small, in early African history, can contest for the position of first importance in the history of any region of Africa with the slave trade and its abolition (Afigbo, 5).

Undoubtedly, the Atlantic slave trade, because of its trans-national character was a manifestation of globalization. It almost arrested and retarded Africa's demographic growth for four centuries. It evoked perennial state of acrimony and warfare and created a tense and unprecedented atmosphere of insecurity that hindered economic activities, stifled local entrepreneurship and technological drive. The aftermath is the dislocation of Africa's socio-economic and political structures and institutions. After the Atlantic slave trade experience came the era of direct colonization which tied African countries to the apron strings of Western imperial powers thereby rendering the pre-conditions necessary for socio-economic and political transformation unworkable (Ojo, 2015). Also the era of neo-colonialism of Africa is still being accompanied with its peculiar adverse challenges.

Consequently, Africa entered the 21st century still plagued with lots of unresolved issues such as poverty, rapid urbanization, regional integration, food insecurity and violent fratricidal conflicts, among others. In other words, the effects of the Atlantic Slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism and unfair nature of modern globalization are still being felt and have led to the suppression of freedom, the violation of human rights and dignity of Africans and the looting of human, natural and intellect resources which culminates in the perpetual underdevelopment of the continent (Offiong, 2013).

This paper segmented into seven parts interrogates globalization and its contribution to African underdevelopment in a contemporary perspective.

retardation and economic distortion caused by exploitation and plunder of the economies of the developing areas as a result of their integration into world capitalism.

### Globalization

Globalization is a multidimensional concept which is loaded with ideological connotations depending on which aspect of the North/South divide that one is viewing it from (Mohammed 2013). Globalization is a concept coined from the word "globe" which means a spherical object. The world for instance, because it is spherical, is seen as a globe. Thus, one might be fast to infer that anything which has a worldwide impact is regarded as globalization. To globalize then, means to make ideas, theories, proposals or a way of life to have a worldwide scope and application. This means that people all over the world can have and share the same experience (Idang and Afia, 2011).

Although globalization may not be a new phenomenon as it has a long historical process of evolution, concerns have continued to heighten now than before owing to the nature and spread of transformation that is currently taking place as well as the enormous impact it is having on the economic, social and political organization of countries of the world. Little surprise, therefore, that the concept has remained topical among scholars, policy makers and development analysts all over the world especially, given the instruments and components involved, such as standardization, marketisation and strict adherence to norms. This is further accentuated by the different implications which globalization has for different geo-political zones of the world. Consequently, there have emerged different world-views among scholars and analysts on the phenomenon and its relevance to the development aspirations of political entities all over the world (Mohammed, 2013).

Broadly speaking, the term globalization connotes the deepening of social, economic and cultural interactions among countries of the world. It is the "integration of economies and societies through cross country flow of information, ideas, technologies, goods, services, capital, finance and people (Rangarajan, 2003). In other words, it is the process of universalisation and turning the world into a "global village". Robertson (1999) emphasizes that it is the "compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole". In this context

### Clarification of Terms Underdevelopment

The term underdevelopment has over the years received attention of both Liberal and Marxist scholars. Liberal scholars conceive of underdevelopment in terms of backwardness and primitivity. This explains why it is common for them to use such terms as "agrarian" and "pre-industrial" to imply underdeveloped parts of the world. Scholars in the school believe that underdevelopment is not caused by any external factors, but rather induced by internal variables. Relating to the above is the alternative explanation which is equally offered to support the view that underdevelopment is a natural process. This view has it that development and underdevelopment are natural processes ordained by God. It is contended that the developed parts of the world have been endowed by God with wisdom and high intelligence quotient. This explains why they are superior and advanced. On the other hand, the same God is said to have created the underdeveloped societies differently. He makes them to be culturally and psychologically inferior, which is said to be responsible for their state of backwardness (Okereke and Ekpe, 2002).

In view of this fact, the Bourgeois scholars attribute underdevelopment to internal factors and this informed their definition of underdevelopment as a natural state of social, psychological, political and economic backwardness occasioned by natural and internal milieu.. This definition leads the Liberal scholars to postulate that the way out of backwardness is through modernization. That is "Europeanization" of the traditional sectors of the economy in order to stimulate growth and progress (Okereke and Ekpe, 2002).

To the Radical scholars, it is untrue that underdevelopment connotes backwardness, primitivity or lack of development. This is because every people have developed in one way or the other to a greater or lesser extent (Rodney, 1972). Equally untrue to them is the assertion that it is a natural process. The Radical scholars then view underdevelopment as a man made process and a manifestation of the long period of economic and political relationships between these countries and the advanced industrialized parts of the world. Quite unlike the Bourgeois scholars who claim that capitalism played no part in the creation of underdevelopment, the radical scholars think differently. They latter assumed that underdevelopment is a state of backwardness,

the world shrinks into a single space with barriers of time and space broken and there arise greater interdependence and one universal consciousness of how the world is to be ordered.

Broadening the conceptual scope further Mohammed (2013) notes that the term has two principal meanings: as a phenomenon and as a theory of economic development. With regards to the former, it implies the occurrence of greater interdependence among different geographical entities "in terms of trade, finance and communication". In this context, globalization is conceived strictly on economic terms, which, in any case, represents a general trend among scholars. However, there also exists a political dimension to the globalization process, hence, it relates to the creation of a world government which regulates the relationships among nations and guarantees the rights arising from social and economic globalization and on the other hand, it has to do with the process by which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe.

Through advances in technology, globalization has conquered time and shrinks space. But this did not just occur suddenly; as noted earlier, it is a historical continuum that started several centuries ago. In fact, current globalization can be described as the climax of a long process in technological changes and advancement that have characterized human societies since the emergence of organized human communities. According to Aina (2003), every discovery and advancement in the technological and scientific world has impacted on its evolution. For instance, the emergence and transformation of transport technology, Information Communication Technology (ICT) - (telegraph, telephone, fax, computer, internet and satellite communication etc.), have facilitated the movement of persons, goods and services around the world.

Globalization trend could be traced back to the era of mercantilism (an early modern European economic theory and system that actively supported the establishment of colonies that would supply material and markets and relieve home nations of dependence on other nations) starting from the mid fifteenth century. This period was characterized by primitive accumulation of capital including, the Atlantic slave trade. It also witnessed the pillage of Africa's natural resources.

The era of the Atlantic was followed by the phase of formal

colonization of foreign territories. During this period the British, French, Belgian, Portuguese, Italian and German interest dictated the way that map boundaries were drawn, transportation and communication lines were established, agricultural and mineral resources were exploited and religious and cultural patterns introduced. The material benefits that came the way of Africans were far outweighed by the many negative consequences of economic exploitation, environmental degradation and social dependencies (Offiong, 1980).

Following the outbreak of World War II, a new phase emerged in the globalization process. This era, masked as "internationalism" and witnessed the birth of supranational organizations such as the United Nations (UN). The birth of Breton Woods twins was also part of this process. While the Breton Woods twins are to facilitate the economic integration and development of the world, the UN represents a political dimension to unifying the entire globe. With the end of the Cold War following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in the late 1980s, globalization entered another phase. This was facilitated further by advances in technological innovations such as optical fibre, satellite communications among others. The world witnessed the emergence of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as another major player in the globalization process as well as the propagation of ideas and policies such as trade liberalization, including removal of obstacles to international capital flow, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), spread of knowledge and liberal democratic practice as the only impetus that can propel a country's development (Mohammed, 2013).

Reflecting on the above historical process of globalization, one would discover a long stretch of trend to integrate and incorporate the political and economic structures of countries into one that is largely controlled from a single centre. Equally the process has largely followed the path of capitalist development with countries and institutions of Western Europe as its bastion (Mohammed, 2013). Although, it is an old phenomenon that is manifesting in new forms, Asobie (2001) has however, argued that contemporary globalization has specific features which define its distinctiveness. First, it is characterized by the dominance of finance capital, that is global in its operations and which results in the transfer of economic policy decisions from the national government to global, transnational actors. Second, there is the gradual transformation of business companies from Multinational Corporations

to Transnational Corporations with the later taking the world as one component unit, while they constitute non-national entities for which national boundaries are largely irrelevant. Third, investments are being concentrated in countries with advances in new information and communication technologies. Typically, these are the industrialized countries of the world. Fourth, there is increasing concentration of global trade, not mainly on goods but primarily on services. Fifth is what is described as a gradual replacement of land, unskilled labour and capital by technology as the chief economic resource, the sixth is the incorporation of a political dimension in terms of global governance. Lastly, contemporary globalization features conscious effort by governments of industrialized countries to govern the world through the strategy of multilateralism.

### **The Origins of the Atlantic Slave Trade**

Attempts have been made by European scholars to link Africa with the trade in human beings before the advent of the Atlantic slave trade. This was done to justify the trading on, and enslavement of Africans for the benefit of Europe.

According to Richon:

Before the coming the Atlantic slave trade, Africans had been living in a "state of servitude", consequently, when the Atlantic slave trade began, African chiefs did not have to search for slaves to export but merely gathered those who were already available (Udoka, 2).

Reinforcing this argument, Fage (1982) asserted that the institution of slavery was endemic and a natural feature of indigenous West African society, so much so that when foreigners arrived in West Africa with a demand for slaves, West Africans were able immediately to organize an export trade in slaves on an ever increasing scale. The arguments by these scholars imply that there was voluminous trade in slaves before the Atlantic slave trade. This could not have been true because researches carried out by African scholars like Uya and Inikoro have shown that there was no large scale trade or large scale institution of slavery in Africa

before the emergence of the Atlantic slave trade. Though there were slaves, who were mostly domestic servants for prominent persons in the society, they were never traded in market places. Instead, most of them were pawns and were mistakenly regarded as slaves by the Europeans (Davidson, 1971).

According to Uya (2005) the Atlantic Slave trade took its roots with the "discovery" of the New World by Christopher Columbus who was commissioned by Queen Isabella of Portugal to find an alternative route to the Far East through the Cape of Good Hope. The attempt was meant to circumvent the hazardous Mediterranean Sea. The landing of Columbus in Latin America triggered the settlement of Europeans in Latin America, the Caribbean peninsula and North America. It also led to eventual colonization of the area, first, by Spain and Portugal and later France, Holland and Britain.

After the establishment of colonial rule in the region, the Europeans embarked on massive land alienation from the indigenous Amerindians for the establishment of large scale mining and highly capitalistic plantation agriculture. As in all economic activities, labour as a factor of production, especially in a labour intensive venture, became imperative; consequently, the demand for labour led to various experiments. Initially, the Europeans planters and miners had sought to use the indentured servants as labour in the area but failed. The indentured servants were European convicts, who, instead of serving jail terms in Europe were contracted to the investors in the New World to work for a fee by the government according to the duration of their imprisonment. The policy failed because, the number of indentured servants at a time was not regular to meet the labour demand in the plantations.

Additionally, there were discontinuities in their supply because planters had to wait until people had committed crimes and were sentenced before they could anticipate labour. This situation became more difficult because at the completion of their terms of imprisonment, the indentured servants could return to Europe or engaged in a paid labour, which became costly for the planters to afford. In some instances the indentured servants, since they were Whites, on their arrival at the plantations easily escaped or disguised themselves as the planters. These circumstances created imminent problems.

The failure of the first experiment on indentured servants engendered the adoption of a new approach to solving the problem of

labour in the plantations - the enslavement of the aborigines. However, this policy could not work because of a few reasons. First, on arrival, the settlers had embarked upon massive evangelization of the aborigine population. They were later confronted by the moral burden of enslaving people who had become Christians. Second, the Iberian government had set out to abolish serfdom in their territories at this time and could not reconcile the paradox of enslaving the aborigines of the New World whom they had come to regard as their subjects with the policy of abolition back home. Third, the topography of most West Indian territories helped the West Indians who were enslaved by the Europeans to conveniently escape. Fourth, the aborigines could not resist diseases associated with the Europeans and a great number of them died, while physically, they could not work for long hours (Klein, 1986).

The failure of the opted policy created the need for a re-think and re-formulation of alternative option. In attempting to evolve a new policy thrust, the planters sought a source of labour that would be characterized by continuity and adequacy. They also sought labour that would be easily recognized and controlled, and people who would fit into the tropical climate of the New World. Moreover, they considered the fact that the people to be recruited should possess the strength for long hours of service. In fact, it was for these considerations that the planters had to turn their attention to Africa. Africans met all the requirements of the planters. The supply could be sustained over a long period and sufficient numbers could be acquired. Due to skin pigmentation, the Africans could be easily recognized any where they escaped to and being alien to the region, would not understand the topography of the area to escape. This made it easy for them to be controlled by the Europeans. Finally, since Africa shares the same climatic condition with the New World, the Africans could withstand the ravages of tropical diseases (Udoka, 2005).

It would be recalled that the Europeans, especially the Portuguese, had already developed plantation agriculture in Africa, in places like Madeira, the Canary Islands and Sao Tome, where they used hundreds of Africans as slaves in the sixteenth century. They had seen that the Africans had enormous strength and could withstand the rigorous labour that intensive agriculture required. Thus, by the time the labour problems of the Americans became serious, there were already Europeans merchants and investors familiar with the use of slave labour in Africa (Inikori, 1977).

### **The Organization of the Atlantic Slave Trade**

At the time of its maturity, the triangular trade was based on partnership between Africans, mostly rulers, and the European traders. The carrying trade was controlled by Europeans who monopolized the maritime technology which had made the voyages possible. The Portuguese and Spaniards who dominated the trade in the early periods were later challenged by the Dutch. The English and the French became increasingly dominant thereafter in the business. The European aristocracy, financiers, merchants were united in their determination to prosecute the trade and make huge profit it. Chartered companies, such as the British West Indian Company, the Dutch Middleburg Company, the Royal African Company, the Muscovy, Levant, Virginia and Massachusetts Bay Companies, as well as private traders were involved in the trade (Uya, 2005).

Within the forest belt and outside West Africa, nine main supplying regions may be distinguished in the trade. These are, Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast, the Gold Coast, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra, Loango, Angola and East Africa. The Europeans came with ships specifically constructed for the trade. They largely remained at the coasts, paid rents on the lands they built their factories and obtained the slaves from the indigenous participants in the trade. However in some cases, like in the Congo-Angola region, the Portuguese embarked on direct raids in the region (Uya, 2003).

It is instructive to note that the victims of slave trade were not usually coast dwellers. Slave raids were also organised by stronger states against their weaker neighbours and the prisoners of such wars were sold into slavery. In the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, the Aro consolidated their hegemony through their oracle, (the Long Juju). As the major arbiter in disputes between communities that had no machinery in resolving them, the Aro insisted on fines being paid in slaves. The control of the Aro of the slave trade in South Eastern Nigeria was established, through the use of the instruments of intimidation and force – guns, which they readily acquired from the coastal states (Akpan, 2016).

### **The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on African Societies**

Eurocentric writers have submitted that the slave trade was mutually beneficial; that it helped in the development of Africa. They said

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that Africa acquired some food crops which became staples in the continent. They have also said that the trade “enhanced the development of those states that benefitted from it largely by increasing the wealth available to the king of the state (Offiong, 1980).

However, one cannot doubt the fact that one profound impact of the Atlantic slave trade is depopulation. Although the general destructiveness of the slave trade on Africa's socio-economic and political structures and institutions remain clear, the question of the number of Africans transported across the Atlantic remains a subject of speculation and debate with estimates ranging from a few millions to more than a hundred millions (Ojo, 2015). According to Offiong (1980), for every one slave who arrived there alive, about five or six had died in the wars in this continent, during the trek to the coast, while in the barracoons, waiting to be transported to the New World, in the frequent insurrections aboard ships, and in the course of the horrors of the six to ten weeks in Middle Passage.

Although, the absence of data about the size of Africa's population in the 15th century makes a categorical, definitive, scientific and systematic analysis of the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Africa a bit hazardous but there seems to be no doubt Africa's demographic changes were in the deficit throughout the slave trade era. This was because fewer babies were born than would have been the case had millions of child-bearing Africans not been killed in slave-hunting wars or removed from their homelands. For four centuries the Atlantic slave trade evoked perennial state of acrimony and created a tense and unprecedented atmosphere of insecurity which hindered economic activities and stifled local entrepreneurship and technological drive which in turn distorted Africa's socio-economic structures and dislocated her political institutions. Development as the capacity for self-sustaining growth is a many sided process which is achievable only when other variables – for example a tranquil atmosphere – are present (Ojo, 2015) was adversely affected

During the period, the Atlantic slave trade engendered wars and other chaotic situations which were at cross-purposes with meaningful development of any sort. As Rodney (1972) has pointed out, the relationship between Africa and Europe from the 15th century onwards served to block the spirit of technological innovation both directly and indirectly. In the first-place, millions of young men and women, the

agents of development, were removed from Africa thereby robbing the continent of the mental and physical contributions of millions of potential talents, supporters, anchors and sponsors of Africa's development. In addition, those who escaped being captured by slave raiders lived in perpetual fear and apprehension and were pre-occupied with devising safety stratagems and precautions – this took the farmer away from his farm, the blacksmith from his furnace, the carpenter from his workshop, the dyer from his dyewood and so on; thus, dealing devastating blows on social, economic and technological take off of Africa since the buoyancy or depression of the economy depend on the peace or warfare in the land.

According to Lovejoy (1986), “many Africans communities relocated from the slaver's route as far as possible. In the process, their technological and economic development was hindered and they devoted their energy to devising means of hiding and defending themselves”. Agriculture, which guarantees food production and a *sine qua non* for development was seriously affected by removing millions of able-bodied men and women from Africa.

At the 2012 World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, African leaders took turn to blame the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism for Africa's development tragedy. Some scholars like Rodney, Inikori, and Nunn have also expressed the view that the Atlantic slave trade is responsible for Africa's socio-economic ills, political ineptitude, technological backwardness and sundry dislocations. The most prominent of these scholars is probably Nunn who has attempted to show the link between the slave trade, the legacy of extractive colonial institutions and Africa's underdevelopment.

Corroborating this fact, Uya (2005) presented studies conducted by Inikori and Richards, which shows the effect of the importation of firearms in slave recruitment in the 18th and 19th centuries to African nations. According to Inikori's estimate:

Between 283,000 and 394,000 guns were exported yearly into West Africa from Britain between 1750 and 1807. Estimates for the Congo-Lango region stands at 50,000 guns per year. Guns were used in slave raids and for hunting of elephants for ivory. Some states also used guns to expand their territories to give

them the advantage over many people which they could easily capture and sold into slavery. Indeed, the proliferation and indiscriminate use of fire arms in slave territories made violence very endemic (Uya, 2005: 6).

### **Globalization and African Underdevelopment: A Contemporary Interrogation**

There are two contending views about globalization. One view is that globalization has brought rapid prosperity to underdeveloped countries. The second view is that globalization serves the needs of the metropolitan countries at the expense of the peripheral countries. Offiong has noted that while there is potential for good in the present global capitalist economy, Africa has not benefited from it. Africa's position has not changed from what it has been since its forcible integration into the system years ago; it still retains its dependency status. The asymmetric relationship between the core and the periphery continues to leave the latter in a very weak position of simply relying on the crumbs coming off the tables of the core. Africa's share of world trade has dwindled; Direct Foreign Investment in most countries has remained at very low levels (Offiong, 2013).

Globalization in terms of promoting liberalization, deregulation and privatization envision a market-driven level playing field at a global scale". As far as Africa (particularly Sub-Saharan Africa) is concerned, it is at best a footnote to the world economy. At worst it is merely considered an object of international charity. In Sub-Saharan Africa, some 650 million people live in 48 countries, corresponding to 11 per cent of the world population. Shockingly, their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), equals just incomes (measured as GDP) of 7 million people living in Switzerland, or 1 per cent of the world's wealth. Further, 25 per cent of the world's poor living in extreme poverty with less than one dollar per day is found in Sub-Saharan Africa. The African share in the global trade in general and raw materials in particular has been dwindling in the last 50 years. Their foreign direct investment remains marginal while capital flight and brain drain are astronomical (Offiong, 2013).

Offiong (2013), notes further that in the late 2011, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected that the number of people living on less than 1.25 Dollars a day will be 883 million in 2015, compared with 1.4 billion in 2005 and 1.8 billion in 1990. However, much

of this progress reflects rapid growth in China and India, while many African countries are lagging behind. The report continues that 17 African countries are far from having extreme poverty, even as the aggregate goals will be reached. Regardless of the indices used, Africa lags behind the rest of the world.

The rise of global trading system stemming from the European colonial expansionism had culminated in a "colonial division of labour", in which the colonized African countries (subsequently dubbed developing) countries were sentenced to the role of exporting primary products, agriculture and mineral goods, while Europe and North America exported manufactured goods. Since then, the former colonial territories have become dependent of their erstwhile colonial masters and the structure of trade has not changed.

Sutcliffe (Offiong, 2013) has noted that the following represent important recent characteristics of global trade patterns: 75 per cent of the world exports are from developed countries while paltry 25 per cent are from developing countries; developed countries export largely manufactured goods; 83 per cent of their total, 62 per cent of total world exports; developed countries also export more manufactured goods than primary products: 56 per cent of their total, 14 per cent of world exports. More primary products are exported by developed countries than by developing countries: 14 per cent of world exports, compared with 11 per cent.

The asymmetry that characterizes the global economic system has been a tremendous concern to African countries. There is a "paradox at the heart of international trade" in the globalized world where trade remains a most powerful instrument affecting people and it is also a source of unprecedented wealth to certain countries. The unfortunate thing is that "millions of the poorest people in the world particularly Africans are left behind. At the present, very significant increase in prosperity is simultaneous with mass poverty and the widening of unconscionable inequalities between the rich and the poor. While there is no doubt that international trade has the potential to reduce poverty and for increasing economic growth but the potential seems to have been lost. The problem does not lie in the trade itself but the fact that "the rules that govern it are rigged in favour of the rich (Oxfam, 2002).



## Conclusion

While globalization is a twentieth century ideology, the phenomenon is as old as man's development into groups and states. The idea of the world being a global village is quite novel but it is interesting so that the phenomenon has always existed overtime. In time past, peoples of the world have related with each other in varying forms and Africa even before the colonial era was not exempted.

According to Ikime (2006), Atlantic slave trade undermined the Black man's self-respect and blurred his identity; "it not only sapped our man-power and so deterred our development for four centuries, but also conferred on us an inferior status in our relations with the white race". He observes that, tragically for Africa, the end of that trade was followed by developments which ended with the imposition of European colonial rule on the continent. Colonial rule ensured that the African genius remained undeveloped for nearly another century. "We thus had five centuries during which we virtually stood still, development-wise, while the rest of the world left us behind".

It is only since independence that Africa has been seeking to take off again from where it has been left off five centuries back. That re-taking off is being rendered difficult, almost ineffective in certain sectors, because the wherewithal for effective take-off is controlled by the technologically advanced nations of the world. It is on the basis that Ikime has placed Africa's level of development as a function of her history. To him a proper understanding of that history ought to affect the modalities mapped out for overcoming Africa's under-development in a world still dominated economically and politically by the descendants of former slave owners.

It may be useful to remind ourselves that this system of Black exploitation, especially economic exploitation of Black natural and human resources has not changed appreciably in our day, although it is no longer depended on the basis of race. The foreign debt and capital flight through corruption pose a serious problem in which all African countries are trapped. Equally glaring is the alarming rate of impoverisation of African countries resulting from the policies of economic globalization, which like slave trade and slavery is an international enterprise which has locked Africa, Europe and the America's into a global network in which Africa is the loser, while the rest of the continents are gainers.

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