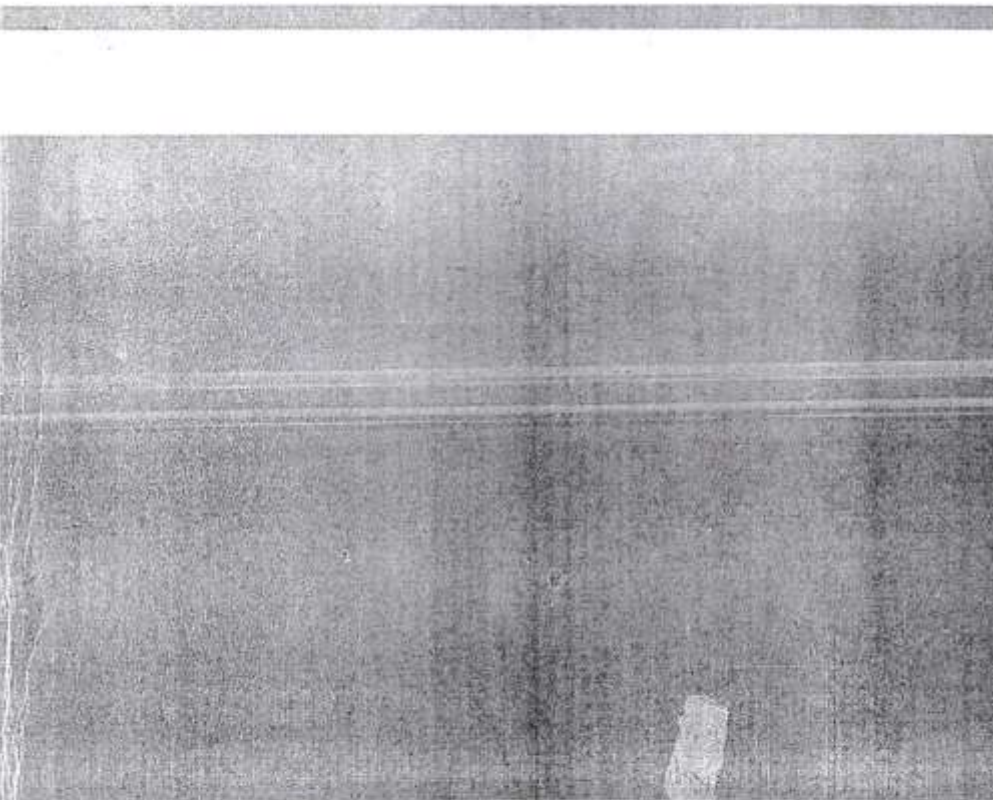




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Globalization and Cultural Imperialism: A Case Study of Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the concepts of culture and globalization in relation to the various changes taking place since the middle of the 20th century. It expounds that the culture of a particular group of people is not confined to their geographical or ethnic class and only diffused in piecemeal as before. That culture today is more dynamic and transcends ethnic, sovereign nations and institutions. Nigeria as a nation has been influenced by the culture of other nations such as Britain, United States of America, Italy, Brazil etc. Most of these cultural influence spread through books, newspapers, television, radio, film and telecommunication. Nigerian people therefore, and to a large extent copy some items of culture from other societies outside those named above. The paper also discusses that globalization is not only confined to market structures caused by changes in rapid industrial technology and manufacturing, but also other service industries such as films, telecommunication, insurance among others. It concludes that every nation is a donor as well as a receiver, and every nation equally possesses the chances of benefiting from this trade. Hence, some aspects of Nigeria's growth and development have come through tourism, education, films, food, and technology among others. These are some indices of globalization of economies. The tool used for writing this work is the survey method of analysis.

Introduction

The terms culture and globalization are difficult terms to explain or elucidate. They are terms people or some authorities define or explain in the way they perceive and understand. However, for the purpose of this write up, attempt is made to explain these concepts beginning with culture. However, Nigeria is a developing nation. In the process of her development, she borrows heavily from both the developed and developing nations. For instance, Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation, and for her to understand and conduct the affairs of government English language is adopted as the lingua franca. The English is itself borrowed from the English people – culture. The conduct of and the business of governance in Nigeria is borrowed from the Western World. Education is structured in line with the Western style though for our benefit. Most of the houses we live in are equally products of Western culture.

Culture, Globalisation; Conceptual Clarifications

Eboh and Ukpogon (1993) state that culture is the entire way of life of members of a society, learnt and passed on from generation to generation. According to them, culture is composed of rules and behaviour relating to the economy, government, belief and social interactions of the people of a particular society. In this connection, one can see that nothing is considered as culture unless it is generally accepted and had been passed from one generation to another.

Wilmot (1979) explains culture as the total self-expression of a people, through which they reflect on their destiny as a people and become conscious of themselves. By this reflection, man becomes aware of his achievements and failures and thus begins to chart a course of action based on a realistic consciousness of his own strength. On this strength, Wilmot's explanation and analysis of culture is viewed from the standpoint of colonization and an ensuing decolonization, on man's realization of his achievement and failures, which appears satisfactory because it centres on people struggling for self-actualization.

As earlier noted, culture has been defined in various ways, and the often quoted definition of culture is the one propounded by Taylor and adopted by Malinowski which states that culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, art, beliefs, morals, law, customs and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society. Other exponents have looked at culture in this general way, pointing out that man's cultural inheritance is the natural world in addition to what he has made of it by his material creation, his arts, sciences, ideas and philosophies. Thus, culture is the process by which man builds society and civilization from generation to another.

Indeed, Taylor's definition clearly shows that culture has both material and non-material aspects and that it is acquired by every member of the society. Thus, a particular society can be recognized by the culture of its people. Our ways of making a living, our language, our religious beliefs, dress, political organization and all other aspects of life are influenced by our culture. The component of culture is man's creation, and a person absorbs many arts of a culture by living within it. A person is influenced by culture, but at the same time, he can also modify and change culture. For instance, when he develops a new political and social ideas. Culture is not fixed and permanent. By the words of Robert Lowie, "there is no culture that is pure and static." It is always changing. Meaning that culture is not static but dynamic owing to circumstances within or without the society.

Culture, society and the individuals are themselves dynamic, brought about by changes in the physical build up of the society as well as in their historical or geographical circumstances. As community grows and becomes complex, its culture also changes. In this process, societies have often created and ideas borrowed or learned, adapted, accumulated and added to their values, their material possessions, their institutions constitute the culture. Books, newspapers, television sets, radio and films all help to change and shape cultural ideas, and, as they reach more and more people, their influence on our culture becomes greater.

It should be noted, and emphasized that culture belongs to a group of people. It is shared and passed on from generation to another by members of the community. In the same manner, culture varies from society to society and from one stage to another. People, therefore, and to a large extent copy some items of culture from other societies. For instance, most Nigerians copy new forms of dress, eating habit and speaking from Europeans. Hence, human beings learnt to eat, speak or work through personal experience, initiation and deliberate teaching in society.

Concept of Globalization

Globalization is the term used to describe the growing world interdependence of people and countries. This process has accelerated dramatically the pace of growth and

development of societies in the past decade largely because of advances in modern science and technology. Globalization is the rapid integration of trade relations, productive and emergency decisions across the globe by economic agents who employ and move investment capital and technology to take advantage of environments where their competitive edge can manifest in high returns. This process has reduced the world to a 'global village' (Stiglitz, 2002).

Stiglitz and exponents in globalization posit that it is the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world which have been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and (to a lesser extent) people across borders. He also added that globalisation is powerfully driven by international corporations, which move not only capital and goods across borders but also technology. His globalisation 'lenses' spans and adds that the phenomena has also led to renewed attention to long-established international intergovernmental institutions: the United Nations, which attempts to maintain peace; the International Labour Organization (ILO), which promotes its agenda around the world, for decent work; and the World Health Organization (WHO), which has been primarily concerned with improving health conditions in the developing world (Abdulrahman, 2004).

Abdulrahman (2005) sees globalisation as an intensification of the global extension of the capitalist mode of production with its underlying logic and value systems and its wealth-generating and inequality producing potentialities. The development pattern in Nigeria is what was bequeathed to her by the colonialists. The major features include growth without regard to distribution, the dependence on one export commodity and few trading partners, the subjection to the crisis of capitalism generated elsewhere, the lack of good governance and the consequent political and social instability (Ochugudu, 2005).

It is also seen as a process of increased integration of national economies with the rest of the world to create a more coherent global economy. This means, it integrates economic decision-making such as the consumption, investment and saving process across the world. Hence, globalization can best be described in a broad sense as the process that promotes the integration of a whole system of interrelationships across sovereign states. At the centre of this process is the technological advancement in communication and the impact created in a global society at the core of which is the global market. Countries cannot operate in isolation, every country is important and must be carried along to achieve a desired end. These countries also have to align with other nations for growth and development within the international system. Countries operating in a separate sovereign autonomous environment, take decisions, which have bearing on others, and are, themselves, influenced by decision taken by others.

Globalization is the rapid expansion through giant multinational companies, of capitalism to global areas of the world, including areas where it has hitherto been resisted or put in check. Side by side with this expansion is the phenomenal development of computer technology, telecommunication and transportation (Ochugudu, 2005).

Globalization as a phenomenon is the totality and speedy connection and interaction in areas of economic, political and socio-cultural interaction that are sometimes beyond the control and even knowledge of government and other authorities.

It is also characterized by the comparison of distance and breaking through traditional boundaries for the rapid flow of goods, services, people, information and ideas.

Historically, globalization did not begin with the fall of Berlin Wall. Or possibly, could it be linked to the Industrial Revolution of Britain but the need for exchange relations according to the needs of nations within the international system. Globalization started nearly since the 14th century when some European nations such as Spain and Portugal started sailing round the world. Indeed, the transnational corporations, international capital outflows, the spread of American culture, global pandemics,

emergence of global networks of commerce and private foundations had already been in place before this fast age propelled by modern technology-computers, information and telecommunication and transportation. In addition, human societies across the globe had established progressively closer contacts many centuries ago. What is in vogue is that through faster means of communication or links such as jet planes, cheap telephone services, e-mail, computers, huge ocean going vehicles, instant capital flows, all these have made the world more interdependent than ever. Transnational corporations manufacture products in many countries and sell to consumers around the world. Money, technology and raw materials move more swiftly across national borders than before.

Modern technology is aiding products and finances, ideas and cultures to circulate more freely. As a result, laws, economics, and social movements are regular and understood at the international level. Many see these trends as inevitable and so welcome it. But for billions of the world's people, business driven globalization means uprooting old ways of life and threatening livelihoods and cultures.

Globalization and Cultural Separation

Globalization as a term is said to have been used as early as 1944 but gained momentum and application among economists around 1981, and culture on its own had gone global as late as the 19th century. It was at this time that the continent of Europe set out in its quest for empire building. For instance in Africa the major impact of colonization was the disintegration of societies, cultural assimilation and cultural division. The colonial powers to a large extent divided areas that were traditionally homogenous nations, states, kingdoms and units of ethnic groups. According to Adeniran, it was the instrument of language that was used to divide the people and language as an instrument of colonialism succeeded in transplanting an alien culture to the colonized areas and people (Dickson, 2005). The results of these were not only alienation or separation of people with common bonds but the development of new values which are alien to the original predominant cultures of the people.

In another corollary, the British empire described as 'most global of any formal empire' there existed an imperial educational policy through English medium schools found in India, Africa, Latin America where elites went and still go to Oxford and Cambridge as a means of acquiring education. On their return home English language is still a medium of communication and for admission of candidates in high schools and universities (Adeniran, 1983). One begins to ask why is English language compulsory after many years of political independence and not a local language as a medium of communication? The colonial masters never thought of developing indigenous languages for reasons best known to them. Wherever they spread their tentacles, they left behind them political arrangements that would serve as legacies. This is to say that even when the colonies assume independent status, they still find it difficult to break ties with them. Hence, such influences are mostly seen through language, form of government and sometimes dress codes. There exists also the effective use of imperial communication infrastructures.

Indeed, the countries of Europe dominated the scene during the crazy days of empire building but today America is leading in the trend of globalization. Meaning that USA is the world's most globalized country. In the light of the above, Laurence Rothenberg has asked: is globalization the integration of economic, political and cultural systems across the globe? Or is it "Americanization of World Culture and United States dominance of world affairs?" As would be expected, the question carries very many answers as there are people to argue for or against. But, perhaps, a better understanding will emerge from the introduction of the cause and change factor in line with the concept of globalization, when used to refer to these collective changes as a process, or as the

cause of turbulent change. The distinct uses include Globalization and Changes in World System since 1981: Globalization though a concept is also an engine of commerce. One, which brings an increase in production of goods and services more than before thus improve the standard of living – prosperity to developing countries and further wealth to developed economies. This has taken root through the activities of Trans-national Corporations, which invest heavily through their advanced technology, capital and ingenuity. They are found everywhere, in the oil sector, construction, telecommunication, pharmaceuticals, beverage, distributive trade etc. Millions of people (in Nigeria) are employed in these sectors of the economy. Employment has a positive linkage effect on economic and social development of nations.

On the other hand, globalization is an engine of 'corporate imperialism' – one that tramples over the human rights of developing societies. The advocates of globalization claim that it brings prosperity, yet, often simply amounts to plundering and profiteering the economy of host nations. Negative effects include cultural assimilation and cultural imperialism – the export of artificial wants, and the destruction or inhibition of the growth of local communities, ecology and cultures.

In this connection, in response to the challenges of cultural extinction/inhibition, states such as Nigeria have tended to develop modern national cultures where a nation is seen as a cross-class community. It implies that a nation shared sense of identity, solidarity, and interest is rooted in a national identity and common historical experience (real or imagined), and the central project is the possession of a distinctive state in a bounded territory.

Unfortunately, psychological influence and the predominance of American structural hegemony and other institutions tend to greatly influence and direct the path of Nigerian culture. However, the fact remains that European diplomacy in Africa in the 19th century exhibited antagonism and strife, which often resulted in wars. One of the instruments of colonialism was force and coercion, this had a negative impact on Nigeria. For instance Nigerian soldiers were conscripted to fight the First and Second World Wars on the side of Britain and its allied forces. Before now Nigerians had never known war of that magnitude. Similarly, during the dark days of slave trade, the European slave merchants introduced violence among Nigerians and African communities which were not common sights before the slave raids. The result was that even after the end of the war and slave trade, it would appear that, that war mentality is the consequence of the existing wars and strife in Nigeria and other Africa communities today (Wikipedia, 2006).

The United States of America is the leading force in global culture/tourism markets. She also dominates the international media. All these are means by which culture is either transmitted, bought or sold. In the media world, the radio and the music industry thrives as an instrument of localism; serves as a major source of communication in developing countries for community/political entertainment. With globalization, music is highly competed for, US too is the dominant actor. In the area of cinema and television, US dominates film with an increasing growth of new film industries. Today, satellite cable television has added a boost while awareness is expanding in sex tourism.

The effect is great and presently telling on Nigeria's development. What these films and music showcase greatly influence the lives of Nigerians especially the youths. The patriotic scenes of American films have refused to impact on the value of Nigerians. Instead, the nude culture, violent (shooting and commando styles, kidnapping etc) scenes have had dangerous impacts on our national life and image, as violence is fast taking over our streets, towns and cities on a daily bases. Today, there is insecurity of lives and property. Equally, though it may sound or look funny, today our ladies prefer wearing trousers other than our traditional attires. They do make ups and appear like masquerades,

fix their nails and appear like vultures. In a more simple sense, they have exchanged our culture for another. This erosion of our cultural values are direct fallout of the dangerous scenes which these films promote. Pornography, cultism, kidnapping, hostage taking, assassinations are but alien culture to Nigeria.

Indeed, the core of Nigerian values of brotherhood (being your brother's keeper) has in fact given way to the usual European – American isolationist lifestyles. The question is, is this the cultural imperialism? Should culture be protected? Rothenberg says values are keys to assessing the impact of globalization around the world. The impact of globalization on culture, for example, Rothenberg argues, "depends on whether one thinks the local cultures should be protected from outside influence or whether one thinks that new cultural creation results from interaction and mixing of ideas from different cultures" (Rodney, 1972).

Rothenberg says there are, after all, few cultures that are truly isolated, and cultural interaction, especially through trade relations, has occurred for thousands of years – from Phoenician traders impact on Greek culture, to Chinese silk used in clothes making in the Medieval Europe, to the spread of coffee, chocolate, and tobacco around the world, and the impact of Chinese and Japanese styles in American and European art in the 19th century. In today's world, Rothenberg observes that American films and film styles are popular throughout the world, and that foreign films are popular in the United States (Rothenberg, 2002).

Globalization has three inherent tensions, which reveal conflicting values in its process. This include individual choice versus societal choice; the free market versus government intervention, as well as local authority versus supra local authority. All these variables are within the international system. However, whether individual choice or localized authority, all are global driven. However, free market is important, but often time government usually intervene when the economies appear prostrate.

Conversely, it is pertinent to state that the influence of globalization is unprecedented and has attained an irreversible status. Meaning that almost every human affair is conducted through globalization, and this is not without attendant benefits and of course, disadvantages. This is the characteristics of globalization. Its witness is found in the transformation of economies of countries such as Nigeria in the areas of Direct Foreign Investment. Foreign investment in Nigeria flows from developed and newly industrializing nations of the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Belgium, Hong Kong, China, Korea, Malaysia etc. The cumulative effect of employment, increased in international trade is assessed as being positive to Nigeria development. But on the other hand, Nigeria like other countries is used as a dumping ground for finished goods. Other areas are the creation of international agreements leading to organizations like the World Trade Organization and Economic cartels such as Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); Development of global financial systems; greater international cultural exchange have impacted on Nigeria negatively.

Globalization leads to multiculturalism and better individual access to cultural diversity, for example through the export of Hollywood and Nollywood movies. However, there is room for imported culture to easily supplant the local culture, causing reduction in diversity through hybridization or even assimilation. The most prominent form of this is Westernization, but systematization of cultures also plays a role. The trend also encourages greater international travel and tourism, greater immigration (legal or illegal), spread of local consumer products (e.g food) to other countries (often adapted to their culture), worldwide sporting events such as Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) World Cup, Olympic Games and Confederation of African Football (CAF) Championships. There exist also other areas or trends in globalization such as in

technical/legal, which encompasses global telecommunications networks. All these create impact on Nigeria's development.

Diseases are easily transmitted by people who move from one part of the world to another and are often deadly. For instance HIV/AIDS is imported to Nigeria and today it has infected over 5 million Nigerians distorting and some bedridden, eating much into the economy. Drug cartels have found a host of new opportunities to launder their billion-dollar profit. International merger groups have also developed a lucrative business in prostitution. Every year they ferry some 300,000 young women and girls to Western Europe for prostitution. All these undermine the growth of economies especially ours.

Globalization has brought about increase inequality between rich and poor (haves and haves-not). In Nigeria there is very high rate of poverty especially among the rural dwellers. A little but related issue is the removal of subsidy on petroleum products by the federal government in response to developed economies, which insisted that developing countries should eliminate their subsidies on industrial goods. This policy has affected the poor than the rich and has further widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Majority of these poor people live below one dollar a day.

Cultural globalization has turned Nigeria into a dependence state. Our economy is depending on foreign investment before it is hoped to grow. That explains why Olusegun Obasanjo in his first tenure toured overseas countries inviting investors to come to Nigeria. Today Nigeria has been turned into a dumping ground where people increasingly consume in abundance product that have little connection to their struggle for existence, for example films, literature and music. In another instance Nigerians tend to consume food products from the Western world except left over food from their tables it can be as bad as that. Dumping in a technical term is counter economic development, it makes prices of local products higher than foreign goods. Hence in the Nigerian manner, anything foreign is better than home made, even when home made is far better than the foreign thus creating markets in far away countries at our expense.

Cultural globalization has made room for globalization of arms. Arms are freely used in Nigeria and are making insecurity difficult. Insecurity cannot allow for development. It is estimated that over 200,000 small arms are currently circulating in Nigeria. This in effect creates insecurity of lives and property. The fall-out of this is hostage taking, kidnapping, high-rate of armed robbery among others due to specialized crime practiced in other cultures marketed to Nigerians through global influence.

Conclusion

The paper agrees that culture is a total way of life of a group of people. However, that Nigeria culture is equally dynamic and not static as changes in culture come as a result of contacts in various ways. With the globalization of economies, cultural barriers are broken, realigned and developed because of changes in modern communication, technology and sciences. In this connection, nation-states and homogeneity of cultural reflexes are no longer observed. Hence changes in other cultures are directly or indirectly influencing certain aspects of Nigerian culture. The evidence is that the world now is smaller and smaller because of this fusion caused by **modern science and technology – vis-à-vis globalization.**

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