

GLOBALIZATION, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND FORMULATING FOREIGN POLICY IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

There is increasing concern in Africa for re-thinking sustainable development in the face of contemporary globalization. The various challenges in formulating foreign policy and the sustainability of development under the circumstance are major issues attracting scholarly discourse. Globalization has been described as a game of unequal players. Hence, there are losers and gainers, exploiters and exploited. This is the characteristics of contemporary international system where the losers or exploited are suppose to through their foreign policy play a significant role of influencing the cause of events. Globalization has transformed the conditions under which state power is exercised in Africa. The paper thus, noted the international and domestic variables that contributed to the low level performance of African governments in their foreign policy formulation and implementation. This is as a result of the economic dependence of Africa on the West. A political elite class produced by globalization and less committed to the development of Africa, more on amassing wealth and perpetuating themselves in power. In the light of this, the paper concludes that there is no African foreign policy but rather a ruling elite agenda for the continent in this globalizing era. An African foreign policy it is presumed should articulate the interest of the African peoples while aiming at advocating measures for the sustainable development of the continent.

Keywords: *Foreign Policy, Africa, Globalization, Challenges, Sustainable Development*

INTRODUCTION

The concept and the term globalization according to Heywood (2000:137) are slippery and elusive. Nonetheless Ohmae's (1989) description seems to be the best suited to explain the concept of globalization. He refers to globalization as the tendency of transcending political borders, based on national and state boundaries, to become permeable. He went on to remark that it also implies that divisions between people previously separated by time and space have become less significant and are sometimes entirely irrelevant. Scholte (2000) observed that a significant change has been unfolding in the world roughly during the last four decades of the twentieth century which he termed globalization. He describes globalization as the processes whereby social relations acquire relatively distanceless and borderless qualities so that human lives are increasingly played out in the world as a single place. Scholte (2000) then attempted a distinction between internalization and globalization. In his view while internalization refers to a process of intensifying connections between nations, globalization which refers to a process of intensifying connections between national domains while remaining distinct and separate. The global sphere is a web of trans-border network regarded as supra-territorial. From the above conceptualization of globalization, it is obvious that the conventional norm of sovereignty has been challenged. Consequently, the idea of states as

autonomous, independent entities is collapsing under the combination of such institutions of globalizations like monetary unions, cable network, international organizations etc (Rourke 2005). Scholte (2002:21) in support remarked that state sovereignty was premised on a territorial world. Consequently, in order for governments to exercise total and exclusive authority over a specified domain, events had to occur at fixed locations, and jurisdictions that had to be separated by clearly demarcated boundaries which officials could keep under strict surveillance. Thus, when globalization acquires a host of non-territorial qualities, and borders are dissolved, the right to make an independent foreign policy is greatly limited. Besides globalization policies seem not to support efforts at building sustainable economy in Africa.

Consequently, it is instructive that the African countries are yet to attain sustainable development despite the various arguments in support of globalization. Hence its inability to meet its present needs while compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. This constitutes a big challenge to its economy and foreign policy. These trends pose immediate and long-term threat to foreign policy of the state in Africa. Sustainable development stresses the importance of institutions that are willing to integrate economic, social and environmental objectives at each level of policy development and decision-making (see OECD Report 2001). It is believed that an economically sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services on a continuing basis and maintain manageable economy without jeopardizing sectoral balances of economic activities of the country. Development that is sustaining in the developing countries will include increase in real income, improvement in health and education, access to resource, equitable distribution of resources and of course guaranteed security and basic freedom. It is trite to observe that African states have remained at the margin of process, failing to share the benefits of sovereignty and of globalization. This paper examines such limitations occasioned by globalization on independent African states to formulate and pursue their national interest as expressed in their foreign policy. The paper thus examines both international and domestic factors that act as challenges to the imposition of self by states in Africa in international politics.

CONCEPTUALIZING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND FOREIGN POLICY

There are diverse meanings of sustainable development. The Brundtland report of 1987 describes sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own need. Among the various literatures on sustainable development apart from environmental issues, an area of emphasis is on the concept of an improvement in the current living standards without jeopardizing future living conditions. According to the report of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2001), sustainable development underscores the importance of taking a longer-term perspective about the consequences of today's activities, and of global cooperation among countries to reach viable solutions. The OECD report (2001) further posit that these elements (globalization elements) have made sustainable development a key objective for domestic and regional policy formulation, as well as for relations among states in the international system. Some of the pressing challenges facing Africa are global. During the past decades globalization has increasingly establish itself as the dominant paradigm of development. In the 1970s, the primary development concerns were state initiated programmes aimed at achieving redistribution with growth, to provide basic amenities, and enhance people's participation. Globalization as a paradigm of development emphasizes stabilization, structural adjustment, market forces, deregulation, privatization and liberalization of trade. The realization of sustainable

development through these policies by the developing states is seriously in doubt. It undoubtedly raises concern for the role of developing countries in global politics.

The international system is a collection of independent political units (states) which interact with each other. Orwa (19985:1) explained the international system as an organized whole in dynamic interaction. Coplin (1971:331) describe the international system as a decentralized political system dominated by competing relatively autonomous, territorially based political organizations. The major units of the international system are sovereign independent nation-states. Before now, the state was seen as the main actor within the international system. As an international actor the state is conceptualized as a relatively autonomous unit that exercise influence on the behavior of other autonomous actors (Ojo, 1985:20). However, other units such as regional and international organizations, multi-national (transnational) corporations, organizations have become recognized as important actors in the international system. The main recognized characteristic of the modern state, within the international system is sovereignty. Sovereignty here refers to the exclusive legal jurisdiction that a state possesses within its territory, and its freedom to act in international affairs without being subjected to any legal control by another sovereign state (Orwa,1985:2). The concept (principle) of sovereignty led to the conceptualization of foreign policy as a mechanism through which nation states attempt to project and preserve their independence, and security, as well as the pursuit and protection of their economic interest (Abia, 2000:82). Though foreign policy is a fluid concept, it has a central concept which enjoys a universal acceptability. This is captured by Adeniran (1983:185) in his conceptualization of foreign policy. In his view foreign policy can be defined through an explanation of what actually is. He went on to state that foreign policy consist of three elements, one is the overall orientation and policy intentions of a particular country toward another, second, is the objective that a country seeks to achieve in her relations or dealings with other countries and thirdly, the means for achieving those particular goals or objectives. He concluded by claiming that these three elements are reflected in the interaction of nation states within the international system. The goals or objectives which a nation seeks to achieve and the means at her disposal for achieving them are regarded as main ingredients of foreign policy (Adeniran 1983: 185). Modelski (1962: 3) conceptualize foreign policy as the process whereby a state adjusts its actions to those of other states so as to 'minimize' adverse actions and 'maximize' the favourable actions of foreign states. According to him, the purpose of the adjusting is to make the environment more hospitable and favourable or at least less hostile and disadvantageous (see Utete, 1985: 44). The pertinent questions that should arise from the above are: to what extent has African countries geared their foreign policy toward making their environment hospitable and favourable in this era of globalization? Have they (African countries) been able to preserve, protect and defend their economic interest and independence in the globalized international system?

GLOBALIZATION AND DEPENDENCY THEORY

Chandra (2007:151-152) explain that imperialism is a reflection of economic forces as stated in three economic theories of imperialism; they are Marxian, Liberal and the Devils theories. A summary of it all is that imperialism is essentially an outcome of the monopoly phase of capitalism. In Chandra's view the record of service rendered by imperialism is not always impressive. It made native people parasites and thus degraded their character. Quoting Hobson(1948), Chandra(2007:158) posit that the laws of nature doomed the parasite to atrophy, decay and final extinction. These he noted are not evaded by rendering some real but quite unequal and inadequate services to the host. Imperialism and colonialism therefore, took yet another form referred to as neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism operated on the twin principles of power without responsibility

and exploitation without redress (see Chandra,2007:159). Capitalism is strongly linked to imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Contemporary globalization is a lineage from imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. It has thus been argued that globalization is an extension of neo-colonialism. Though the term globalization was first coined by Prof. Theodore Levitt of Harvard University in 1983, historically the extensive and widening phase of economic globalization can be dated to the 19th century (see Chandra,2007:297). For instance, proponents of an “all continuity” argument highlighted antecedents to contemporary development going back to many centuries. The group assumes that these earlier manifestations of globality had a level of prominence and intensity similar to that witnessed today. According to Scholte(2000:63) globalization has no origin, in the sense of an exact starting point. Rather the trend had a long gestation period without a precise moment of conception. While Scholte(2000) listed four stages of globalization, Toyo(2000:15-16) listed five stages starting from the period of Mercantilism(1450-1800). The main issue is that globalization has taken a modern form as captured by Scholte(2000) and some other writers.

Scholte(2000) views globalization as the link to the growth of super territorial relation between peoples, a reconfiguration of social space in which territory matters less because an increasing range of connections have a trans world or transborder character. Globalization has a neoliberal or free market ideological character in which capitalism remain the issue. Globalization is linked to the extension of market exchange and commerce, hence pro-globalist argue that capitalism(globalization) tends toward a general prosperity and widening opportunities in which global capitalism will allow benefits to be enjoyed by more people in more countries(see Heywood, 2004:137). Just as capitalism advocate for liberalism so also does globalization advance liberalism which happens to be its main thrust. On the other spectrum anti-globalization debaters raised the issue of equality and poverty. Critics of globalization have therefore drawn attention to the emergence of new and deeply entrenched pattern of inequality. For instance, the global North-South gaps describe the relatively rich industrialized countries of the North and the relatively poor countries of the South. Several criteria have been used to measure the levels of growing disparity between the rich North and the poor South. This disparity places the North in an advantageous position in international relations. It is not surprising that the North not only stands to benefit from globalization but also stands to dictate to the South and is able to pursue a more robust foreign policy.

It is on record that while in the developing world, wages are low, regulation is weak or non-existent and production is increasingly oriented around global markets rather than domestic needs, in the U.S and Europe their economies grew strongly in the 1980s and 1990s on the basis of globalization and technological advancement, with absolute living standards falling in the poorest parts of the world, notably sub-Saharan Africa where 40% of the people live below poverty line(see Heywood,2004:142). Goldstein and Pevehouse (2008:423) argued that about a billion people live in abject poverty, without basic nutrition or health care all of which are concentrated in Africa, where income levels have lagged for decades. For instance, between 1990 and 2005, income per person in the Global South as a whole rose from \$3,000 to about \$5,000 while in the Global North they rose from about \$20,000 to \$28,000. Opponents of globalization thus associate capitalism with inequality and exploitation. Meanwhile, skeptics borrowing from Karl Marx, thus tend to link capitalism with imperialism. Hence, when globalization skeptics argued that globalization has eroded state sovereignty, the most affected was states in Africa. The institution of globalization such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank and International Monetary Fund (I.M.F) are controlled by countries of the North. The activities of these global institutions have impacted on

the sovereignty of states, so much so that sovereignty is no longer an absolute but just a spectrum of bargaining leverages held by states (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2008:20). While the power of the state is declining that of large MNC corporations operating globally was growing. Consequent upon these facts globalization is thus seen as a game of winners and losers. Hence with globalization there exist an unequal relationship between the North and the South. The South depends on the goodwill of the North. The debt issue of the South explains it further. This is where the dependency theory becomes relevant. Dependency theory assumes that groups of countries have their economies conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, to which the former is subject (Offiong, 1980:73). According to Ojo (1985) dependency analysis initially emphasizes economic factors as being decisive in shaping the kind of relationship an under-developed country might have with a powerful industrially developed state. This led to the concept of core and peripheral world system. It is based on this analysis that we can explain the foreign policy of African countries in this decade of globalization. It is thus obvious that these factors formed one of the major determining factor influencing African foreign policy. In a sense, it has made Africa irrelevant in global issues. This position is captured in the preceding sub-sections. This position no doubt is as a result of the neo-liberal ideology being promoted in the developing countries.

FOREIGN POLICY IN A GLOBAL WORLD

In explaining the foreign policy of African states in a globalizing world there are two levels of analysis that will suffice; the interstate or international/ systemic levels of analysis and the global level of analysis. The system level analysis is concerned with the influence of the international system upon outcomes. It focuses on the interaction of states without regards to their internal makeup or the particular individual that leads them (see Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2008:17-18). Rourke and Boyer (2003:45) explain that system levels analysis begins with the view that countries and other international actors operate in a global social-economic-political-geographic and environmental arena. Hence, the specific characteristics of the system at a point in time help determine the pattern of interaction among the actors. How the system operates is based on four factors; structural characteristics, power relations, economic realities, and norms. The system level therefore pays attention to states' relative power positions in the international system and their interactions (e.g. trade) among them. The global level of analysis seeks to explain international outcomes in terms of global trends and forces that transcend the interaction of states themselves (Goldstein and Pevehouse 2008: 17-18). For instance, certain emerging historical events such as globalization influence the nature of interaction in the international system. Consequently, a study of this nature requires an understanding of the current nature of the international system and those trends and forces that transcend the interactions of states. Globalization happens to be one of those international factors that have influenced the economy in terms of attaining sustainability and foreign policy of African states. It is therefore, pertinent to examine the nature and impact of globalization on the dependent economies of African states.

AFRICA IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM AND THE ROLE OF MULTINATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Several changes have taken place since the end of the cold war. During the cold war the United State and the then Soviet Union enriched themselves with military and political alliances in pursuit of territorial expansion. Their involvement in Africa was an attempt to spread their influence and ideology. The rivalry between United States and the Soviet Union

provided African states the opportunity to be seen as relevant in international politics. This is because African continent became a contested terrain where each bloc tried to curb, control and exert influence, often through granting of aids and through sponsoring opposing sides in regional and civil wars. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the international system assumed a different structure and arrangement. The domination of the United States in the immediate Cold War Era gave the international system the characteristics of a unipolar system. The post Cold War witnessed increased globalization which ultimately encouraged more cooperation among the major powers in virtually all fields. Consequently, globalization witnessed increase of large corporations and international organizations. These organizations were able to exert remarkable influence in the international system. Not only did this development erode on the sovereignty of African states, it surrenders the running of their economies to these multi-national corporations and international organizations. It is instructive to mention that, though the African continent attempted to solve some of their problems through institutional collaboration, they have only ended as attempts. This explains Smith's (1979:249) remark that as dependent states, they (African states) cannot exist without their dependence, but they also cannot exist with it. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that African states in their present state are incapable of playing a significant role in international politics. The transnational and multi-national corporations are owned and controlled by the 'Big' powers. The international organizations are firmly controlled by the Super powers. In essence the economy and cultural development of the world is decided and dictated by the 'Big' powers. The formation of the G8 and their assumed responsibility to the rest of the world speaks volume. While some African countries may come out with a sound foreign policy, it is also necessary to have the where-with-all to implement such policy meaningfully. The successful implementation depends on certain factors, most of which they lack. For instance, they are nowhere to be reckoned with in terms of military power, economic wealth and technological growth. Hence, individual African state lacks the capacity to exert influence on the course of events in the globalising world.

Furthermore the dependent nature of the African states contributes to shape the social and political structure of the states. It imposed political leaders and created a class structure on the dependent states. In essence the internal development has been severally curtailed or conditioned by the needs of the dominant economies of the world or the international economy (Offiong, 1980:76). According to Offiong (1980: 73) the international system upon which Africa depends implies a structure of institutions, classes, and power arrangements. With globalization the gap has widen between the "have" and the "have not". Globalization can, therefore, be seen as an institutionalized system of control which systematically shapes these institutions and structure of dependent dominated countries and limit their freedom of actions if they are to avoid the systems sanctions.

DOMESTIC FACTORS

Independent African states inherited borders that were drawn on European capital and an exploited economy. The developed internal rivalries between ethnic groups and regions make it difficult for them to accommodate themselves and implement coherent economic plan. Contemporary Africa is a witness to series of conflict. Today, African states occupy the peripheral position in the world system decades after independence. Many factors have been offered to explain this. Ake (2001:1) gave the following as factors that explain apparent failure of the development enterprise in Africa; the colonial legacy, social pluralism and its centrifugal tendencies, the corruption of the leaders, poor labour discipline, the lack of entrepreneurial skills, poor planning, incompetent management, inappropriate policies, sifting of the market mechanisms, low level of technical assistance, the limited inflow of foreign capital, falling commodity prices and unfavourable terms of trade and low levels of

saving and investment. He observed that these factors alone or in combination constitute serious impediments to development. These same factors could be said to influence the foreign policy of African states. Ake (2001) though recognize these factors for the underdevelopment of Africa; he named political conditions as the greatest impediment to development. In post colonial Africa, the political leaders were exposed to new conflict/political competition and conflict among nationalities, ethnic groups and communal and interest groups. In appealing to national, ethnic, communal and religious loyalties they weakened the solidarity of the people. Hence, creating strong antipathies and exclusivity in the society. The struggle for power by the elitist class became intense and so absorbing that they were more concerned on how to remain in power rather than the thought of external image of the state. Consequently, their external policies were geared towards maintaining a good relation with such countries that would want them to remain in control. Besieged therefore by a multitude of hostile forces and a number of pressures at home, African countries have continued to surrender their sovereignty to the developed industrialized countries. In fact, some are turning to be failed states. Globalization has thus exploited this position to turn Africa into a dumping ground for European goods and labour. For instance, the IMF controls the process of macro-economic policy and has a perspective approach to it.

On the political front the political elite continue to get away with their brand of democracy. A brand that disempowered the people and gives room for corruption. The industrialized countries have also continued to encourage the corrupt political elite to take loans that are not properly utilized. The African debt burden is so heavy on the various African countries that they continue to plead for debt relief (forgiveness). It is thus obvious that African countries cannot be a major player in international politics when they go cap in hand to beg for crumbs. Since they do not have a voice in the making of global economic policy for which they are bound to implement, their interest is less taken care of. Hence, their foreign policy is less antagonistic towards the rich developed nations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the colonial period through to the contemporary globalization era, the nature of the incorporation of African states' economies into the global economic system has had a devastating effect on African, economically, politically, socially and cultural. Consequently, the dynamics of the emerging international system has often determined the foreign policy of African state and in particular their level of participation in international politics. Globalization policy has continued to decrease the ability of national governments in Africa to manage their economy. The loss of economic control, and the inability to attain sustainable development, it could be argued diminished the general authority of the state. For instance, they have been unable to attain such indicators of sustainable development as;

1. Population and quality of life measures, such as, infant mortality, life expectancy, per capital drinking water supply, literacy rate, and expenditure on health care
2. Welfare and living standards indicators, such as security, stability, peace, per capital income, per capital consumption, income inequality, degree of industrialization, employment rate, social unrest, and reduce crime rate
3. Institutional and legal indicators, including workable political structures, technological advancement, media and information sources, degree of people's participation etc.

It is therefore apt to claim that Africa has sustainability problems. Haque (1999) among others listed the following as causes of sustainability problems, extreme poverty and economic inequality within and between nations, development thinking that emphasizes a growth-oriented industrialization in order to multiply the volumes of productions and consumption, and the spirit of consumerism. These are all features of globalization in developing states. They represent neo-liberal ideology which assumes to promote the general good by applying the principles of free market and open completion, limited state intervention. Neo-liberal thinking emphasizes maximizing the role of the market and minimizing the interventionist role of the state. Neo-liberal policies manifest in Africa as deregulation, privatization, withdrawal of subsidy, and liberalism. For these reasons, market forces and multinational corporations have increasingly taken over the economic and social role of the state in Africa.

Globalization as a neo-liberal ideology has at a minimum raised serious questions about the meaning of external sovereignty (Rouke and Boyer, 2003:35). The diminishing authority of the African State is, the fact that globalization brings about uneven process of winners and losers, exploiter and exploited nations. Under globalization the international system has witnessed the growing powers and assertiveness of corporations operating mostly in the third world. They have virtually seized the economy of the developing world.

Hence it has become a situation of “he who pays the piper dictates the tune”. Globalization succeeded in creating a new class that collaborated with the exploiters. Incidentally, the new class was in absolute control of the political and economic machinery of the state. This collaboration expresses its in foreign policies which are to the advantage of the winner. For instance, most African countries implemented the IMF policies such as Structural Adjustment Programme(SAP), devaluation of their currency and deregulation with no thought on its impact on the teeming masses. It is also of note that in such domain as on environmental issues, African states adopted a more activist posture whilst in the political and economic domain they have been central to the explosive growth and institutionalization of bad governance. Globalization thus transformed the conditions under which state power in Africa is exercised.

In the face of these realities, African foreign policy should best be referred to as the agenda of its ruling elite class(ruling elite agenda) as public opinion play no part in politics and decision making. Consequently, what Africa needs is a new crop of leaders with an orientation to serve the nation than the self or their immediate families. Above all, Africa should endeavour to institute democratic ethos which should lead to recognizing the right of the people to elect their leaders and contribute to policy making. A multi-dimensionality and multiple measures of sustainable development is crucial for the African state. They should situate their economic plan to their environment. To this extent governments in Africa should try and harness science and technology, develop priorities, involve experts from various fields of research, communities and encourage domestic industries if they intend to promote sustainable development. Sustainable development is the key to a robust foreign policy.

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