
GLOBALIZATION, POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined Globalization, Political Violence and Democracy in Nigeria. The paper argued that globalization which is one of the changing faces of capitalism is exploitative and does not allow equal opportunity for all the members of the “global village” The paper is of the view that rather than have unreserved belief on the development capability of globalization as a development paradigm, globalization which is couched in inequality cannot guarantee the much cherished even development for all the members, particularly Nigeria, of the so called “global village” Another supportive fact is that globalization considering its operations does not uphold democratic values, especially as it concerns participation in the process of decision-making and equality. One of the findings of the paper is that the inequality and anti-democratic nature of globalization coupled with internal constraints in Nigeria reinforce political violence which truncate democracy in Nigeria. The paper recommended inter alia, that globalization should be democratized and Nigerians should uphold, imbibe and demonstrate democratic culture.

KEYWORDS: Globalization, Political Violence, Democracy, Inequality Development

INTRODUCTION

The uneven distribution of natural resources has apparently compelled man to explore effective mechanisms for fair and equitable distribution of resources not only within the borders of a state but also across national boundaries. Thus, in an attempt to “even what is uneven” and to maximally utilize the scarce resources vis-à-vis the unlimited wants of man different modes of production and distributive mechanisms have been adopted over time and this accounts for the historical materialist development of society as postulated by Karl Marx. Globalization, which is one of the many faces of capitalism as a mode of production has economic under tone to approximate what is originally outside its territory.

In order to achieve this purpose, there is the need to subdue all obstacles and in doing this some democratic values are relegated to the background, thereby leading to oppression, marginalization and exploitation which can lead to agitations and possibly political violence. Again, it should be noted that in a bid to maximally satisfy man’s unlimited wants within the purview of limited resources, man’s existence here on earth is susceptible to political violence.

It is therefore against this backdrop that this paper establishes a link among globalization, political violence and democracy and argues that political violence is as a result of deliberate economic policies and programmes orchestrated to deny man his source of livelihood. Political violence can be curbed if democratic values are upheld in the decision-making and implementation processes.

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

In order to grapple with the above subject matter, it is expedient that the various concerned terms be properly defined and understood.

Globalization: It is the speedy and unhindered movement of capital across national boundaries which are made possible by cheap means of transportation and communication. However, it should be borne in mind that globalization is an offshoot of capitalism as a mode of production. And capitalism which is a derivative of capital as a factor of production is self-augmenting and expansionary in nature. Consequently, capital is always in motion exploring and exploiting virgin areas. This accounts for the movement of capital outside the frontiers of Europe at the wake of industrial revolution. Imperialism which is the product of such movement is the subjugation, domination and exploitation of one country by another. It was concretized by the instrumentalities of colonialism which initially started with trade contacts. Thus imperialism is a form of capitalism and it finds expression in colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalization which are changing faces of capitalism as a mode of production.

It follows that globalization and all other forms of capitalism are also exploitative and appears to favour those who have the capital for investment at the expense of those who do not have the capital. To corroborate the above fact, (Ihonvbere, 2001) says that to the opposing group, globalization is just a mere liberal or shorthand name for imperialism, domination, exploitation, marginalization and the overall reproduction of the injustices, inequalities, and poverty that characterize the relations within and between nations.

It is a candid view that these injustices, inequalities and poverty occasioned by domination, exploitation and marginalization have given rise to political violence not only across national boundaries but also within the frontiers of a state.

Again, globalization is the opening up of the economies of nations to allow for free flow of trade, investment and finance. It thrives on the soil of market economy which sees competition as a necessity. It is being aided by improved means of communication and transportation via advanced technology. According to (Khor, 2001) globalization is a very uneven process, with unequal distribution of benefits and losses. This imbalance leads to polarization between the few countries and groups that gain, and the many countries and groups that lose out or are marginalized. Globalization, polarization, wealth

concentration and marginalization are therefore linked through the same process.(Khor, 2001).

The implication of the above fact as enunciated by Khor (2001) is that it reinforces the fact that globalization brings about inequality and marginalization which creates double standard, and it is this double standard which generates bitterness, rancor and acrimony not only in the international arena but also in the states, especially in the less developed countries. This is made possible by the high interconnectivity and integration among members of the so-called 'global village'.

Hoogvelt, (1997) aside from consenting to the fact that the present international state/market nexus must be seen from the context of the series of changes and development of capitalism which is occasioned by its inherent contradictions, he also argued that larger segments of the world population, both inside the Third World, are being expelled from the emerging 'thickening' net-work of human, social and economic interaction. Rather than being an expansive process, the present process of globalization appears to be an imploding or shrinking one. The above is a way of substantiating his thesis of imploding capitalism. By 'implosion' he means an intensification of trade and capital linkages within the core of the capitalist system, and a relative, selective withdrawal of such linkages from the periphery. By way of inference, it appears there is consent to the fact that this process of implosion is in consonance with Marx's own writing on the laws of motion of capitalism which predicted the centralization and concentration of capital arising out of the contradictions of competitive capitalism, and leading to a stage of monopoly capitalism.

The point that can be deduced from the above is that globalization does not carry everybody along, especially those who do not have the competitive muscle to withstand the challenges of capitalist manipulations. Only the strongest survives while the weak are pushed aside. This situation obviously allows the weak to live at the mercy of the strongest who uses the ever accumulating resources at his disposal to determine the fate of the weak. Thus, Hoogvelt (1997) sees globalization as a new social architecture of cross-border human interactions. It breaks down the old international division of labour and the associated hierarchy of rich and poor countries. In this process the integrity of the national territorial state as a more or less coherent political economy is eroded, and the functions of the state become re-organized to adjust domestic economic and social policies to fit the exigencies of the global market and global capitalist accumulation (Hoogvelt 1997).

From the above definition, it is crystal-clear that globalization erodes the sovereignty of the states through the instrumentalities of supra-national organizations which are also known as non-state actors in the international arena. The activities of Supra-national organizations to a very large extent influence the dynamics of international relations. Such supra-national organizations like World Trade Organization (WTO), Multinational Corporations, the Bretton Woods Institutions-IMF, World Banks

show case the actualities of globalization as a global development paradigm that is couched in inequality. We must reiterate the fact that it is the exploitative and marginalizing tendencies of globalization that has actually reinforced and exacerbated inequality in the global configuration, and this has apparently led to dissension and certainly political violence in the polity of members of the so called global village.

For instance, the lending of money to Third World Countries by IMF and World Bank with conditionality not salubrious to the development aspirations and yearnings of the people not only creates crisis of development which further pauperizes the Third World countries, but also gives room to political violence. The case of anti-SAP riot in Nigeria under the administration of Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida is a pointer. Another fact is that WTO apart from the fact that it erodes the sovereignty of member countries as it formulates and implements trade and economic policies on behalf of member countries also creates anti-democratic conditions that can lead to political violence. For example, the denial of delegates from Third World Countries from participating in the 'Green room' meeting where decisions are taken on trade and economic policies at the conference held in Cancun, Mexico and the consequent protest of the delegates from the South, especially as it concerns the refusal of America and other Western countries who are the protagonists of globalization to withdraw the agricultural subsidy. This agricultural subsidy makes it difficult for agricultural products from the Third World Countries to have a place in the market of the Western Countries, (Khor 2001). Whereas, globalization is all about openness-the unhindered and speedy movement of capital across national boundaries. The question that boggles the mind is; why is it that it is only in the economies of Third World Countries that capital can move freely but the capital from the Third World Countries are restricted? This confirms the indictment of globalization and its agents, the Supra-national bodies of double standard and unequal playing field which aggravates and rubber stamps inequality and as a consequence causes political violence. It therefore follows that globalization with exploitative and marginalizing tendencies leads to political violence.

Political Violence

It should be borne in mind that human wants are unlimited whereas the resources with which to satisfy them are limited. This fact makes conflict or violence endemic in society. Again is the fact that no two individuals are exactly the same. Thus, it follows that individuals have different interest to protect at different periods and these interests can clash. The clash of interests endorses conflict or violence in society, but there is the need to harmonize the ever conflicting interest of man in society to ensure the self and collective actualization of man. There is therefore the need for government to ensure good governance and not only fairly distribute the scarce resources, but also in doing that tame the animalistic instinct in man through its laws and sanctions.

At the Macro level, states or nations have their different interests to protect in the comity of nations. These interests, can also be a source of conflict or violence among nations. It means that in order to ensure global peace and stability, there is the need to establish a fair global distributive mechanism that can guarantee the protection of the interests of nations in order to curb violence or conflict. Thus, apart from the state through their diplomatic mechanism relating with one another harmoniously to achieve this aim, there is also the need for organizations to play ancillary roles in this regard. This corroborates the views of Deng (1997) when he noted that regarding these concerns civil society-which is becoming increasingly involved in nation building, formerly, left to the state-has a crucial role to play. The array of citizen associations independent of the state and driven by social, economic, and cultural purposes, civil society is a vital participant in mediating process aimed at national reconciliation and broadened participation in the shaping and sharing of power, wealth, services, other national resources, and development opportunities, all of which are essential for sustaining peace, security and stability.

Before, we begin to know what political violence is, it is important to mention the fact that because of fear of the devastating effects of conflict or violence, man enters into a social contract with the state. It is therefore the responsibility of the state to protect lives and property of the citizens. The state therefore reserves the right of coercion, using its coercive apparatuses. This means that any move by individual or groups of individuals to usurp state power is seen as political violence.

According to (Okanya 2001), the state, therefore becomes a means of taking violence out of the hands of individuals and groups and bringing it under a single authority. This informs Max Weber's conception of state as holding the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence. In this context, he sees political violence as all attacks or use of force not permitted by the political authority, since the use of force is specific to state. Such attacks or acts become political when they are directed against the political regimes, their actors and policies to the extent that they inhibit, challenge or disrupt the exercise of authority in the system.

It should be noted that political violence is an offshoot of exploitation, suppression and marginalization which are products of abnormality and demonstrates abnormality in a bid to address abnormality. This means that any abnormal behavior exhibited to take care of abnormal situation is violence. Thus, the walking out of the Third World Countries' delegate from the Cancun WTO conference can be referred to as political violence. However, political violence which overarches other forms of violence is like a graduated scale (Deng, 1997). Consequently, political violence may start without any form of destruction but may later degenerate to destruction of lives and property if the circumstances warranting political violence are not abated.

From the foregoing, political violence is a precipitate of globalization which thrives on exploitation,

suppression, marginalization and exclusion. This view was corroborated by Deng when he says that in the context of the Nation-State, conflict of identities occurs when groups, inspired by their political elites react against what they see as intolerable oppression by the dominant group, often expressed in denial of recognition, exclusion from the mainstream, marginalization, and perhaps the threat of cultural annihilation or even physical elimination. A dominant group may in turn feel threatened by the rebellion of the subordinate group and react to stop it from overturning the system.

It should be added that political violence can be more prominent and rife in a situation where democratic values are thrown into the dustbin.

Democracy

It is a clear fact that virtually all societies across the length and breadth of the globe profess to be democratic, even when they are not actually democratic. To some societies, it is actually the ideal system of governance that has the capability to reconcile the ever conflicting interests of man and ensure that the people take their destiny in their own hands. However, other societies merely use democracy as a cover up of their tyrannical, dictatorial and arbitrary government.

Whatever may be the level of democratic application in the societies, the fact still remains that democracy is a system of governance that places much premium on the people. This means that the people forms the epicenter of good governance which must ensure the achievement of the ‘greatest good for the greatest number’. This can only be achieved if the people are allowed to actively participate in the process of decision-making. By participating in the process of decision-making, the interest of the people are built-in within the calculus of the decision made such that the sincere implementation of these people-oriented decisions can guarantee the welfare of the people. The people therefore becomes the life-wire of every good governance which can be situated within the context of their active participation in the process of decision-making. It should be recalled that before now, the participation in the process of governance was direct as was demonstrated in the Greek city states. This means that everybody save for the women, children and the insane directly participated in the process of decision-making. But as time went on, and mainly as a result of upsurge in population, it became practically impossible for everybody to participate in the process of decision-making, thereby charting the path for indirect democracy or what may at best be referred to as representative democracy. It requires that the people through periodic fair and free elections vote in their representatives (leaders) who now make decisions on their behalf. The leaders must be answerable to the people, who through the exercise of their franchise have transferred legitimacy to their leaders.

This view on the participation of the people in the decision-making process was corroborated by an Activist in Port Harcourt when he said that “democracy is about local people, being in charge of their

lives, being able to take charge of their resources and making power flow from them and not the other way round”.

To further buttress the above fact, Hadenius (1992) averred that political democracy may in this context be formulated as follows: public policy is to be governed by the freely expressed will of the people whereby all individuals are to be treated as equals.

He went further to say that this articulates a general principle of popular sovereignty and autonomy to rule themselves. Their explicit preferences, therefore constitute the ultimate ground for the legitimacy of political decision-making. To this is linked a principle of freedom, so far as possible the free, uninhibited will of the people is to be expressed in the political decision-making, and it is expected that no individual preferences shall then be regarded as superior to others.

In his own view, Nwabueze (1998) said that a society is democratic when it is free. According to him by a free society is meant a state of condition of society in which the members as individuals, possess and enjoy, within limits, full civil and religious rights or freedom not to be coerced or controlled by the arbitrary will of others, in particular the rulers.

In another perspective democracy can thrive in a well-nourished economic soil. This means that economic wellbeing of the people must be enhanced. Obasanjo (1993) gave credence to this fact when he said that for the democratic process to be irreversible in these societies, therefore, it must bring forth an improvement in their economic and social conditions. It must, very concretely and visibly mean a forward movement in their lives.

The point being stressed is that democratic virtues such as equality, freedom, justice can be achieved in a sound economic environment. Little wonder why Less Developed Countries (LDCs) inspite of the fact that they profess democracy are still miles away from being democratic. This is because poverty which appears to characterize these societies militates against democracy thereby causing alienation and dissension which in most cases give rise to political violence. At the international scene, due to poverty, the LDCs are usually considered not as a force to be reckoned with. And this probably informed the action of WTO in alienating Third World delegates in the “Green Room” decision-making process which led to the walking out of delegates from Third World Countries in Cancun, Mexico. The point being stressed is that the absence of democracy will necessarily lead to the alienation of the people from the process of decision-making. The implication of this is that the people will be suppressed, exploited and marginalized thereby causing agitations and dissension which can lead to political violence.

THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

The actualities of globalization are demonstrated by World Trade Organization (WTO) and other supra-national institutions such as Multinational Corporations and the Bretton Woods institutions. The discriminatory, anti democratic and exploitative tendencies of these supra-national institutions reinforce inequality and impoverish third world countries, particularly Nigeria. The inability of Nigeria to be part of the formulation of trade and economic policies and programs at WTO portends great danger to the economy of Nigeria. The implication is that such extraneous trade and economic policies and programs are mere extrapolations of Nigerian socio-eco-political realities.

Consequently, such externally imposed trade and economic policies and programs, when implemented not only scuttles the sovereignty of Nigeria but also may not be for the economic growth and development of Nigeria. The influx of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Nigeria without corresponding reinvestment of the surplus value generated in Nigerian economy leads to grave capital flight which debilitates Nigerian economy and reinforce poverty in Nigeria. To aggravate the problem is the lack of vision, political will and commitment on the part of Nigerian leaders whose comprador linkages have continued to dwarf Nigerian economy. The case of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) is a pointer. SAP, rather than improve the economic conditions in Nigeria has plunged Nigerian economy into economic quagmire.

Furthermore, is the primitive accumulation mentality of Nigerian leaders as they see the state and its apparatuses as means of enriching themselves. This has not only inundated them with corrupt practices but also makes them see ascendancy to public office as a do-or-die affair. Thus, it truncates electoral process through electoral irregularities (Oddih, 2007) which is exemplified by the alarming spate of electoral violence.

The over celebrated 1914 amalgamation became a “marriage of inconvenience” which imposed state on Nigerians and infused ethnicity into the body politics of Nigeria (Wonah, 2017). Ethnicity which also led to nepotism and political marginalization became a breeding ground for separatist agitation and political violence in Nigeria. The case of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a classic example. The denial of sense of belonging to some component units in Nigeria distorts democracy by not allowing them access to state resources and opportunities, and participation in the making and implementing decisions that affect their lives.

The overall effect of the foregoing is that it leads to inequality – a situation where few elites are swimming in ocean of affluence, while the rest are wallowing in seemingly abysmal poverty. This obviously creates a feeling of dissension which can lead to political violence. Democracy cannot thrive in an atmosphere of political violence which is characterized by greed, injustice, discrimination, exploitation and indiscriminate violation of human rights. There is therefore the need to uphold, imbibe

and demonstrate democratic values for political stability and development in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

It is quite obvious that globalization which is exemplified by such supra-national organizations as the WTO, Multinational Corporations, and the Bretton Woods institutions-IMF, World Bank etc. does not seem to practically uphold the ideas of democracy, especially in issues that affect Third World Countries. This is mostly as a result of the fact that globalization is an offshoot of capitalism which is rooted in exploitation.

The effect is that globalization considering its exploitative nature and double standard does not seem to work in tandem with democratic values, especially as it affects participation in decision-making. This has ostensibly led to agitations, dissension and of course political violence. There is therefore the need for the democratization of globalization and Nigerians, particularly their leaders should uphold, imbibe and demonstrate democratic culture.

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