

Globalisation Paradoxes in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Social Reality in Eclipse

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Abstract

This paper challenges the dominant notion that globalisation has a neutral “win-win” outlook and the generalisation of “equal gains” and “equal pains” for all countries. The paper provides the dominant narrative on dimensions of globalisation but also dwells more on the global dichotomy approach in understanding this phenomenon. Drawing on analysis of secondary information, this paper examines the paradoxical problem of contested framing of the phenomenon and how it affects sub-Saharan African society. It distinguishes between the Western-oriented and sub-Saharan African perspectives in framing globalisation, which is a departure from the three other dominant narratives. Through a synthesis of available information and the author’s lived experience, this paper confirms that globalisation is not a neutral “win-win” phenomenon but a being that brings disproportionate gain and pain to the detriment of sub-Saharan Africa in numerous social spheres, as demonstrated in this paper. Based on the realities, mitigating approaches are proffered for African future development and social progress.

Keywords: global dichotomy; globalisation; inequality; sub-Sahara; Africa

Introduction

Globalisation is both a trend and state of being that entails a broadened holistic outlook in all ramifications. As a process of communication and continuous unrestricted immersing of people and institutions—including governments of various countries—it is remarkably driven by cross-border trade and businesses and aided by technological advancement in the information sector. It has been defined and conceived in different ways, with variations in meaning emanating from the context and perspective of the scholars. Importantly, this phenomenon is and involves mass movement of people, resources, ideas and cultures in a none or less obstructed manner. It is “the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness” (Held et al. 1999, 2;

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Marginson and Van der Wende 2007, 8), with a geo-spatial process of growing interdependence and convergence.

Speculation about the origins of globalisation is difficult to resolve. Many modern social scholars place its origin in modern times, but such claims may be disputed when its meaning and what it entails are brought to the fore. While some scholars may trace globalisation to a time long before the European age of discovery and voyage to the New World, or even to the third millennium, others may not agree. There is no dispute that the characteristics of this phenomenon have long been part and parcel of humankind since an unmemorable time in human history, because humans of different races never lived in total isolation but have been interacting in many ways that mimic the present wave. However, what may distinguish the present situation from the past is the pace and large scale nature of the trend that appeared to have begun in the 1820s (O'Rourke and Williamson 2002). The globalisation process in modern times was initiated and made possible by emerging technological advancements, especially the first industrial revolution, which started in 1760 with the invention of the steam engine. It is, therefore, safe to allude that this breakthrough in human capabilities brought about changes in culture as people moved from rural areas to big cities in order to work, mainly within the period 1760 to 1840s in Europe and North America (referred to as the New World). Subsequently, the second industrial revolution around 1900 witnessed the ushering in of electricity and the third industrial revolution, which started in 1960, was characterised by the proliferation of electronics, information technology and automated production that further catalysed the phenomenal trend, pace and trajectories.

Globalisation has been characterised in many ways and forms, but there are some distinctive features that are associated with it by a number of scholars, which include a borderless world, free movement, increased networking, cultural integration, cultural diversity, accelerated diffusion, trade and liberalisation. These features make this context a reality in modern times and facilitate the sustenance of the trend. With the vogue unabated, the world is transforming into being more borderless as people and resources move easier now than before. Globalisation in itself is distinguishable from its enablers and propellers, which function as instrumentalities towards the accomplishment of the phenomenon. Technological advancements in the information sector and "worldwide interconnectedness" through the Internet superhighways, for instance, have aided in speeding up globalisation. Besides, the availability of information technology tends to have not only shortened the distance between countries and places, but, more importantly, has created an open world where there seem to be no boundaries in the transmission of ideas and cultures. New ideas and inventions in one part of the world resonate in another part, irrespective of distance and remoteness. The world is now being conceived as a global village in which distances between national boundaries have been considerably reduced by technology and telecommunication, as earlier mentioned. This emergent world economic and social trend can be referred to as a process that broadens and deepens linkages of national economies into a worldwide market for goods, services and capital (Ajakaiye and Akinbinu 2000, 21; Ohiorhenuan

1998). Globalisation brings with it a fast-growing tendency towards the universal homogenisation of ideas, cultures, values and even lifestyles to one global capitalist economy. One of its tenets is the open competition among world nations, as a result of which some countries are gaining while others are losing (Obioha 2011).

In the burgeoning literature, globalisation and its heterogeneous meanings have been identified in three dimensions, which are: *economic* globalisation (Shangquan 2000); *political* globalisation (Modelski, Devezas, and Thompson 2007; Moghadam 2005); and *cultural* globalisation (James and Mandaville 2010)—dimensions which mainly concur on the generalisation about the gains and pains of this global trend. While globalisation has been argued in these three dimensions of the dominant Western narratives to be a neutral, unavoidable, self-propelling trend with a win-win outlook, this paper departs from these narratives and generalisation and argues on the flip side of this phenomenon that has some harsh realities, especially for sub-Saharan African countries and societies. It may, however, be premature for one to conclude on the negative or the positive side of the scenario, but the problem that this paper tries to address lies in the untested assumption, oversimplification and generalisation regarding the “equal gains” and “equal pains” accruing from globalisation to all countries and societies in the world, as propagated in the dominant narratives. This oversimplified assumption leaves much to further analysis and interrogation. Therefore, what is poignant at this point is to interrogate the realities of globalisation in the sub-Saharan continent and explore how its countries are affected as losers in the whole process, considering the framing and interpretations of the phenomenon. This paper, therefore, articulates on the framing (in terms of different meanings to different people), its drowning social implications on sub-Saharan African societies that eclipse the subcontinent, and how to mitigate its negative outcomes. The paper adopts a conceptual approach, drawing on an analysis of secondary information and reflections to examine the problem of contested framing of globalisation and how it eclipses sub-Saharan African society.

Dominant Narratives on Dimensions of Globalisation

Dominant narratives on the dimensions of globalisation have identified its economic, political and cultural aspects. The understanding of the economic dimension connects it with world economic activities, which tend to melt into a single or commonly shared way of operation. It “refers to the increasing interdependence of world economies as a result of the growing scale of cross-border trade of commodities and services, the flow of international capital and wide and rapid spread of technologies” (Shangquan 2000, 1). This manifests in the unobstructed and continued expansion based on suspiciously mutual integration of world market frontiers, which is not reversible. In the current millennium, this is driven by the increasing importance of information in all types of productive activities and marketisation. In a more practical term, economic globalisation is seen in the formation and function of regional economic blocs and other intercontinental or intercountry organisations, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), European Union (EU), Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS), and Southern Africa Development Commission (SADC), among others, that foster a common market and elements of economic activity. Besides the public and governmentally based propellers, economic globalisation is intensified and consolidated by multinational companies and corporations that are its primary agents of sustenance. These agencies, including the regional and globalised institutions, make more sense when seen as agencies that drive and sustain the globalisation of capitalism.

Within the same parameters of internationalisation like the economic aspect of this phenomenon, political globalisation exists in mobilising and blurring political boundaries. It commonly refers to the emergence and increased international political system, which has a global outlook both in size and organisational arrangement and complexity. Modelski et al. (2007) define political globalisation as “the expansion of a global political system, and its institutions, in which inter-regional transactions (including, but certainly not limited to trade) are managed.” On the other hand, Moghadam (2005) had earlier conceived it as:

... an increasing trend toward multilateralism (in which the United Nations plays a key role), to an emerging “transnational state apparatus,” and toward the emergence of national and international nongovernment organisations that act as watchdogs over governments and have increased their activities and influence. The common denominator for the two definitions is the overall purpose, goal and long and short term outcome, which is multinationalism and internationalisation of public governance.

In more specific terms, political globalisation encapsulates national governments, all the governmental and intergovernmental organisations, civil society groups identified as international non-governmental organisations, and other social movements with international characterisation. This diminishes the importance of the nation-state and the rise of other fragmented actors on the political scene. Among other examples, the formation of politically inclined international organisations, such as the United Nations, is an epitome of political globalisation where world and intergovernmental consensus on governance matters is reached.

In a more specific term, James and Tulloch (2010) attribute cultural globalisation to the “transmission of ideas, meanings, and values around the world in such a way as to extend and intensify social relations.” It broadens more to involve the formation of shared norms and knowledge with which people associate their individual and collective cultural identities (James and Mandaville 2010). In its brazing characteristics, James and Mandaville (2010) ascribe the potency of strengthening integration, interconnectedness and shared communalities among different peoples and cultures of the world to cultural globalisation. This is marked by the common consumption of cultures, commodity exchange and diffusion that have been made available through advanced information channels such as the Internet, popular culture media and international movements of people. The creation and expansion of such social relations are observed both on non-material and material aspects of culture through diffusion, assimilation and acculturation processes. The outcome of cultural globalisation, which

includes hybridisation and homogenisation of aspects of culture, has left the world with latent and manifest hegemony and domination; this is in terms of one group of culture or cultures having domination over others, leading to the demise and eclipsing of some weaker cultures at the extreme case.

Embedded in the three narratives is the notion that all countries and societies in the world stand a fair chance to benefit from globalisation in a win-win situation; in which case the propagators advance the argument that the benefits outweigh the losses. In as much as these dominant narratives on the dimensions of globalisation are long-standing and accepted in literature, the present discourse departs from these narratives because of their seemingly sweeping assumptions that have failed to categorically define globalisation in terms of a North-South dichotomy. In recognising the North-South difference and unequal development, among others, dwelling on examining or framing the phenomenon differently in terms of the global divide and corresponding dividends is the interest of this paper.

Framing Globalisation: The Global Dichotomy Approach

Globalisation has been given different interpretations and understanding by various scholars who analysed it from their broad or narrow interests. This makes it a concept, a movement, or a state of being that is difficult to understand in a neutral manner. As some scholars put it, “touching many interests as it does, interpretations of globalisation are coloured by different agendas, and its reception is affected by other contemporary tendencies, phenomena that intersect with globalisation but cannot be wholly ascribed to it” (Marginson and Van der Wende 2007, 8).

In many respects, the perspectives in the interpretation of globalisation as a phenomenon, state of being or trend, differ remarkably between the occidental-oriented scholars and those from developing societies, including sub-Saharan Africa. This brings us to the two narrative divides in this intellectual debate. While the occidentals or Western scholars present and defend it as a social good and one of the best things that have happened to humankind, scholars from sub-Saharan Africa may see the flip side of the coin, given their everyday lived experiences, realities and observations, which invariably shape their worldviews. Globalisation has a diverse character; it does not happen as a phenomenon that is either single or universal in nature, as its interpretation is based on a number of peculiarities, including culture, locality, language and region.

The Western scholars’ perspective is synonymous with freedom, liberalisation, internationalisation and even westernisation, in which Europe and North America have the edge over other regions of the world. The core argument of this orientation is the propaganda of a win-win situation for every country and all cultures on the globe. The forces that drive the win-win idea include the common sense euphoria that all countries and economies are contributing to the global arena and also derive advantages from being part of the globe. These propellers are indeed what cause Western scholars to believe that globalisation is an era where the dominance of Western civilisation (through

all the enablers and instrumentals) is the accepted norm. The new proposition positions Europe and North America as unarguably the nucleus of modern civilisation and the point of origin of contemporary global cultural diffusion. This replaces the age-long accepted anthropological theory of diffusion by various schools of thought (led by G. E. Smith and W. J. Perry), which contend conferred Egypt as the origin of human civilisation. This, however, raises a contention among the two main infusionist schools, where one school of thought believes to the extreme that all human groups had their cultural traits from one source, being Egypt in Africa, while the second school argues that cultural elements are derived from multiple centres. Literarily speaking, “the table appears to have turned” against Africa in modern times.

The reality of globalisation is indeed Europeanisation and internationalisation of local Western ideas and knowledge systems through diffusion processes, where the Western standards are used in every aspect of measurements. This stance was obvious many years ago in the formulation of the Modernisation theory of development, which was criticised for being Eurocentric and advocating for a unilineal path to development, where European society is regarded as superior and on top of categorisation in terms of human civilisation (Rostow 1960). The Eurocentric and Rostovian interpretation of globalisation is in consonance with the earlier assumptions of modernisation as a worldwide transformation where developing societies, including sub-Saharan Africa, should model their development in line with the European design, the only acceptable mirror image for the rest of the world’s regions to copy. Its fundamental proposition is that people in traditional societies should adopt the characteristics of modern societies in order to develop, progress and be modern in their social, political and economic institutions. Considering the processes and content of globalisation as a state of being, it is apparent that it is mainly about “globalising the local” ideas and cultures of Europe and North America. This being the case, Western society lies in a comfort zone as the barometer for measuring other societies’ development. A case in point is Europeanisation in higher education, which has its origin in the growth of international mobility of people and ideas; international cooperation between EU countries in their economic, social and cultural activities; and in the explicit commitment to a common European higher education zone in order to facilitate such international activities within Europe (Marginson and Van der Wende 2007, 12). This international cooperation in higher education, according to Van der Wende (2004), is expected to enhance the global competitiveness of Europe as a whole, which will also present them with immeasurable opportunities on which they will leverage in all aspects of social and economic affairs of the world. The present wave in the world is in many ways a rejuvenated Rostovian Model of the 1960s and those Eurocentric models of civilisation and human development before it, which placed European societies to an advantage. To the Western societies, globalisation is epitomised by bureaucracy and rationalisation, where there is a world division of labour between nations of the global North and South (Goldfrank 2000; Wallenstein 1974) in which the North dictates the modalities, while the South seemingly chases their shadow.

Contrary to the Western orientation of globalisation, which propagates the win-win idea and tries to sell it as a desirable wave of transformation associated with internationalisation, freedom and liberalisation, the developing countries' perspective is different. They perceive the phenomenon as the "master piece" that affords the Western societies a chance to sustain their project of Europeanisation of the world. It is indeed an inevitable neo-colonial tool where there is an absence of physical coercion, as was the case in the colonial era in history. The dominant narrative in this perspective is the win-lose game where the developing regions of the world, including sub-Saharan Africa, remain the losers. Even though many groups and societies in the global South (sub-Saharan Africa, for example) have embraced the global theatre, there is an understanding that globalisation is inescapable and has no other alternative system in place. This renders the acceptance and embracing of the phenomenon a willy-nilly deal, in which "you are in" or "you are out completely." There is no doubt that the globalisation of capitalism has left sub-Saharan Africa with no choice but to swallow and, therefore, contaminate its development with the bitter pills of Western modernisation. In its manifestation and characteristics, globalisation presents some imperialistic and neo-colonialist tendencies in relation to the societies of the global South. It is considered by some as a form of capitalist expansion that entails the integration of local and national economies into a global, unregulated market economy (Guttal 2007) that may not favour the weaker economy in the long and short run.

The emergence of this new global trend also solidifies and consolidates some of the effects of colonisation in African societies, thereby leading to it being interpreted as a tool of domination and neo-colonialism. It is the "eggshell" that drives and within which capitalism lives and survives. Some scholars have robustly defended their views that globalisation is a negative force that came in to thwart and derail Africa's development, especially in the rural population, characterised by egalitarian principles where there was relative equality in the society before colonialism (Obioha 2011; Sanginga 1995). It is perceived to be hegemonic by furthering the cultural subjugation of the developing countries by the countries of the Western world, who dominate them. Borrowing from Antoni Gramsci's analysis of cultural hegemony—which is different from the capitalist, materialistic orientation—one can allude that the Western society is at the helm and in control of the superstructure of the society. This is in terms of ideology, which entails the domination and manipulation of the culture, beliefs, explanations and perceptions of developing societies through the imposition of Western world views, which have become the accepted norm. At face value, globalisation appears liberating and progressive, but in practical terms and reality, there are hidden clauses and restrictions that favour Western societies and disfavour developing societies, such as sub-Saharan Africa. It can, therefore, not be a win-win situation, as the phenomenon and process cannot exist without being favourable and/or unfavourable at the same time to different societies and cultures (Obioha 2011).

Globalisation Paradoxes in Sub-Saharan Africa

Even though globalisation provides some selective opportunities for developing countries, its major thrust provides challenges and threats to these countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The gains and benefits have huge disadvantages and negative implications attached to them, which render the gains meaningless in the long run. As it brings about a fast-growing tendency towards the universal homogenisation of ideas, cultures, values and even lifestyles, it opens competition among world nations, as a result of which some countries are gaining while others (like those in sub-Saharan Africa) are losing. In this regard, a critical view of what obtains in African societies in recent times depicts a decline rather than progress in the economies and welfare of communities. Examining the social implications of globalisation on sub-Saharan Africa, it is obvious that the impact has been mainly negative. The reasons why African societies are affected in this process and phenomenon are manifold, but how the sub-continent has been disadvantaged and is being eclipsed manifest in many ways. These include: deepening inequality; brain drain; stiffening of local industry and production; mass job losses; capital flight; erosion of local knowledge and practices; identity crises; vulnerability to global insecurity; and spread of diseases, among others. While the general position of African scholars may be that these manifestations are externally induced, thanks to globalisation, one may not lose sight of the fact that there are internal forces equally as important as these external ones. In this regard, the internal contradictions emanating from Africa's postcolonial and Cold War politics, characterised by missed or wasted economic priorities, corruption, ethno-racial conflagrations and exclusionist economic development tendencies, seem to be just as important as the external forces of globalisation. It may, therefore, not be enough to lay all the blames of Africa's socio-political and economic woes on globalisation.

Deepening and widening Inequality

The integration of sub-Saharan African countries into one world economic and social system has contributed to a deepening and widening of inequality in the sub-region. This occurs across regions and countries, within countries and across diverse people of different social and economic backgrounds. While it may be true, as has been argued, that globalisation has brought prosperity to the sub-continent with progressive growth of HDI from 0.402 in 1990 to 0.541 in 2018 (UNDP 2019), it, unfortunately, parades the worst case scenarios of inequality. Based on the Human Development Report for the years 2010 to 2017, the top three most unequal countries in the world, namely South Africa, Namibia and Zambia, with corresponding GINI Coefficients of 63.0, 59.1 and 57.1 in that order, are in sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP 2019). Interestingly, these three countries are in the southern sub-Saharan Africa region, where there is more exposure to the global economy compared to other regions of the continent. South Africa is the leading industrialised country in Africa with great human diversity in terms of resources and race, yet it is the most unequal on the continent and in the world. This is the puzzle. One would have thought that the less developed economies in the sub-continent, such as Niger, Chad, and so forth, with less exposure and interaction with the globalised

world, would have more problems in terms of inequality, among others. Therefore, it shows that the more a country in the sub-continent is infused in the globalised world, the more vulnerable such a country will be in experiencing widening and deepening inequality within it. This hypothesis may, however, not be the same for countries in Europe and North America. Within sub-Saharan African countries, there tends to be a widening gap between the dichotomies of rural and urban dwellers, the illiterate and literate, the rich and the poor, as a result of globalisation, which brings the elite, the rich, the literate and urban population closer to the integrated world through various means such as information technology. On the other spectrum, the same wave pushes rural, poor, illiterate folks further down to a near state of *incommunicado*. Moreover, on numerous occasions, due to the high rate of illiteracy in rural African societies, their exposure to the international technology and telecommunication system worsens their situation. This is because they are not yet ready to embrace the new technologies and ride on the super highways of high-tech telecommunication systems, and thus, they tend to be trampled upon. It, therefore, creates a more paradoxical situation tending towards “putting a square peg in a round hole.”

Brain Drain and Skills Flight

Brain drain and skills flight from sub-Saharan Africa to other regions of the world have also created a worrying situation. As a result of a combination of factors such as Western educational training in overseas countries, poor living conditions, low wages and insecurity in the sub-continent, the elites from sub-Saharan Africa are prone to emigrate to Europe and North America after acquiring highly needed skills in technology, medicine and other disciplines that are required to develop Africa. The globalised competition has forced many high-skilled workers away, where highly educated and qualified professionals, such as scientists, doctors, engineers and IT specialists, emigrate to developed countries to benefit from the higher wages and greater lifestyle prospects for themselves and their children. This leads to decreased skilled labour in developing countries. In South Africa, for instance, there are many doctors who study abroad, e.g., China and America, who do not come back to South Africa after their studies, but rather prefer to work overseas, in which case the developed countries are gaining more and more. The sub-Saharan continent has been grossly unattractive to most of its skilled population, which makes it difficult to hold them behind, as governments, private and public organisations are unable to compete with the stronger Western companies who sort through and import the best skills from Africa into their country. The loss of many skilled workers from sub-Saharan Africa to North America, especially Canada, through its Skilled Migrant worker policies and visa, may be the first point of contemplation in this discourse. This emigration trend and skills flight would not have been easy without an open and seemingly borderless world that has been made possible by the principles and doctrines of globalisation. While sub-Saharan Africa is struggling with skills to develop its economy, the available ones continuously evaporate out of the continent. In this chain of events, North America and Europe, which are the preferred destinations for these skilled immigrants, continue to consolidate and

strengthen their hold on the world's best skills, including those that originate from sub-Saharan Africa.

Mass Job Losses and Structural Unemployment

Economies across the globe have witnessed more of the lethal consequences of globalisation, with a robust alteration in the functionalities and operations of the labour markets in the last four decades (Smidt, Becker, and Bradley 2015). The increasing influence of globalisation has amplified job insecurity in the sub-Saharan continent, as well as caused the flourishing of job automation, while the bipartite employment relationship is seen to be increasingly dwindling in recent times (Kahouei et al. 2016). Job losses occur in sub-Saharan Africa as a result of twin circumstances produced by globalisation, in addition to the internal contradictions. Firstly, the free movement of labour across borders has suppressed local labour competitiveness. Employment casualisation practices, such as contract and outsourced modalities, have increased. Owing to the near abolishment of boundaries, there is increased interconnectedness and the flexibility of labour markets, which are a few of the features of economic globalisation (Wilpert 2009). In some countries in the sub-Saharan continent, suppression of local labour has led to resentment from the local population and often escalates to what has been termed xenophobic attacks in South Africa. The main drivers of these attacks are the real and imagined perception by local labour that foreigners are stealing their jobs on the one hand, and killing their wage competitiveness because they accept lower wages from employers, on the other hand. Secondly, the inability of local industries to stay afloat due to international or global competitiveness degenerates to de-industrialisation and consequent job losses, as witnessed in many African countries and currently in South Africa. Importation of cheap goods from elsewhere, especially China, has induced contraction of demand on domestic products and a consequent decline in various industries leading to eventual business closure, with mass retrenchment being the unpleasant outcome. One of the significant effects of globalisation on work can be avowed from the use of various strands of employment casualisation as evidenced in indigenous, private and multinational corporations (MNCs), respectively (Fapohunda 2012). Understandably, MNCs are instrumentals and propellers of global capitalism. Concisely, rather than prospering the world of work, sub-Saharan African scholars and others have demonstrated that globalisation has remained a bane to the future of work (Austin-Egole et al. 2014; Hessami and Baskaran 2015; Smidt et al. 2015).

Erosion of Local Knowledge, Cultural Values and Practices

Countries in Africa are concerned about the rise of globalisation because it has the potential to deepen the assimilation of their people into other cultures, as previously happened in many French colonies in the continent during the colonial era. French assimilation policy remarkably destroyed local culture, tradition, customs and languages, as the local population tended to behave like developed nations' citizens—the French in this instance. The globalisation trend induces the erosion of indigenous

values, cultures, and norms, and replaces them with received versions. Great changes have taken place in the family life, structure and function, language, and worldviews, among others. This has led to the disappearing of many words and expressions from local languages because many people use English words or other foreign languages that have been adopted as the *lingua franca* in many sub-Saharan African countries. Notably, most of these newly introduced values run contrary to the realities within the indigenous communities.

With the notion and increase in the knowledge of what obtains in other societies (Western), the old, long-standing traditions and practices in the sub-Saharan continent tend to be erroneously considered inferior. Nevertheless, common knowledge and observation have proved these assumptions wrong, as local African cultures are not inferior to any other one. This is referred to as cultural relativism or historical particularism, as propagated by Franz Boaz (the German-American anthropologist), who acknowledges the non-hierarchical order and equality of every culture. The introduction of some so-called Western-oriented improved agricultural technologies, for instance, have not performed excellently better in all spheres of agricultural sectors in the sub-continent. Presently, there is no imported technology that has been proven to be better than the native technology in the production of “yam tubers” (Obioha 2011). The major concern lies in the continuous demonisation and disappearance of the local or indigenous ways of doing things. As such, indigenous African medicine, religion, and even marriage have been under attack by both the foreign and local populations in Africa. This is especially evident among the “*xenocentric*” or “*ethnophobic*” sectors of the population who prefer the received cultural values to the detriment of local knowledge systems. Some local folks are timid to accept the merits of the local culture because—in their thinking—they feel that their culture is not “international,” while the borrowed or received European culture represents the acceptable globalised culture. Failure to contextualise and understand what works where, how and when, is the major problem that confronts sub-Saharan African countries, which undermines local excellence. Even in the educational system, unbalanced comparisons are often made between sub-Saharan African systems and more developed regions of the world, without heeding the differences and particular needs of the local environment and societies. In such circumstances, Larsen (2016)—in explaining a similar situation elsewhere in the world—averred the importance of attending not only to broader, global processes, but to also consider specific local contextual factors. She maintains that rather than considering internationalisation as one set of practices to be taken up globally, there are many different forms of internationalisation in teacher education that are influenced by both global and local contexts.

Vulnerability to Global Insecurity and Spread of Diseases

Globalisation has amplified insecurity by aiding the pace, spread and sustenance of terrorism and transnational crimes. In the present global time, any insecurity concern in one part of the globe resonates in another part. Previously, when the world was not highly interconnected, security threats, crimes and related activities were easily

confined within a territory with a very low possibility of extending or spreading to other territories and countries. Human traffickers, terrorists and various religious fundamentalists are able to carry out their actions in enormous magnitude across countries worldwide because of the availability of network systems that are characteristic of a globalised world. Various attacks are planned and carried out, even simultaneously, having been coordinated from one part of the world. Similarly, globalisation has the potential to further deepen fractures in conflict-ridden societies or countries, in spite of home-grown mechanisms in resolving conflicts in Africa. There is no gain echoing that other causal processes of ethnic fragmentation and conflict in Africa revolve around colonialism and neo-colonialism, of which globalisation is the egg shell within which they reside. Even when one examines civil strife, civil wars, and ethnic tensions in contemporary African societies, the external forces and previous colonial masters who still have an interest in the resources of the sub-continent, may be the hidden “third force” behind most conflicts (Obioha 2000). Countries are no longer existing in quasi-silos where they individually determine what takes place within their territories. The open borders and integration between and among countries that have been made possible by this trend translate to other countries having the privilege of interfering in domestic affairs without necessarily proffering solutions to any conflicts. This originates from the pretentious thinking that “what concerns one country concerns another,” and whatever political or social problems one country has, eventually affect others. In this spirit and principle, while the international community has played a positive role in returning peace to some countries in the sub-continent, on the other hand, internal conflict within a country and inter-country conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa have been fuelled by the international community’s interference. Studies in other regions of the world have shown that the international community plays a significant role in the perpetuation of ethnic conflict within states, yet it also constitutes a key component for the possibility of a cessation of violence (Degany 2014).

Unarguably, globalisation facilitates the spread of new and old diseases in developed and developing nations, including sub-Saharan Africa. The new age of easy and free movement of people across countries and within countries has increased the risk of spreading all sorts of diseases, especially infectious ones. Sub-Saharan Africa has the world’s highest HIV/AIDS prevalence, especially in southern Africa, and the inter country spread of the disease (where families and communities have been ravaged) reminds us of the possibilities that are created by globalisation. Besides HIV/AIDS, swine flu, Ebola, and bird flu, many diseases are facilitated across borders from sources that are difficult to be vividly identified. Even though sub-Saharan Africa is the least affected region of the world in terms of the coronavirus pandemic, the fact still remains that it did not originate from any country in Africa. In fact, current statistics show that Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, has the least infestation, mortality, and vaccination ratios when compared with the rest of the world. The fast spread of this disease, which is alleged to have appeared first in China, has demonstrated the possibility of highly infectious diseases spreading into sub-Saharan Africa from other continents. The high interconnectedness between sub-Saharan African countries with

China and the rest of the world places the sub-continent at very great risk of its people contracting this virus and other infectious diseases. Hypothetically, in the absence or non-imbibing of globalisation tenets and doctrines, the world would be able to contain disease epidemics in one region of the world from spreading to other regions and becoming a pandemic. The current pace in the spread of the coronavirus across continents has been made possible by globalisation and through the convergence and free movement of people from one country to another with little or no hindrances and restrictions.

Mitigating the Globalisation Paradox

Having explored these negative consequences of globalisation, this paper argues further for a realistic, home-grown, mitigating engagement to be determined by state and non-state actors in the sub-Saharan continent. There are indeed a number of options that are available to sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries in dealing with the negative consequences of globalisation. These include disengaging from the mainstream global economy, living with these consequences, or adapting to them. Disengaging from world networks is an option that sounds liberating, but practically it is difficult to achieve. In a highly globalised world, the interconnectedness and integration of people and cultures are so huge that delinking from such a network may be harmful in the long run. However, delinking from certain networks, but not in entirety from all world systems, is possible for the sub-continent. Both in the past and in recent times, countries have delinked or pulled out from certain regional globalised networks. Mauritania pulled out of the Economic Community of West African States, Israel has delinked from the Middle East community dominated by Arab countries, Russia declined to be part of NATO and the European Economic Community, and recently, in February 2020, Britain exited the European Union. These are a few examples of countries deciding whether they will be part of a system or not, in spite of the globalisation wave that seems compelling and negates such positions. Delinking need not be total but partial and could take place in terms of either social, political or economic links, as the example of Britain exiting the European Union mainly for economic reasons.

Protagonists of the dependency theory of development (Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, Emmanueal Wallenstein and other sociologists) maintain that Third World countries, including sub-Saharan Africa, will perpetually be impoverished or in poverty as long as the unequal exchange between them and European and North American societies continues. They will continuously lag behind Western countries who set and determine the pace and will never catch up based on the yardstick of development (Amin 1976; Wallenstein 1974). It is based on these observations that they advocate for the delinking of developing countries from the consuming fire of globalisation. This remains the condition if they aim to achieve meaningful development because Africa has been underdeveloped because of its links with Europe (Rodney 1973). Heeding the above, African countries and governments have made some positive moves to actualise

their delinking from the global legal system (World Court), which some leaders felt was meant to target Africanist leaders. The extent to which this claim is true or false falls outside the ambit of this present discourse, but what could be distilled from various agitations from African member states of the World Court is that the option of delinking from a globalised structure is possible.

Adopting a selective approach in engaging and accepting what is foreign to Africa should be considered. The present globalisation trend tends to blunt the sense of choice among African peoples and countries. An exercise of choice on what should or should not be adopted from received knowledge and practices from Europe and North America is a right and not a privilege to the people of the sub-Saharan continent. In so doing, choosing what is relevant, compliant, suitable and non-destructive to the home-grown indigenous tested systems and practices should be advocated and propagated. As quite a number of local knowledge and cultural practices are negatively affected in some ways, others are totally affected and being replaced by received European cultural practices. It is the default for a society to be selective in adopting newly received cultural values and practices, but in reality, some African cultures have little resistance to invasive cultural practices. This paper does not argue that African societies should refrain from adopting some foreign cultures, as no culture is static or immune to infiltration by other cultures, but selectiveness in adopting these values and practices is being argued for. Indeed, we have to acknowledge that globalisation and modernisation have contributed immensely to correcting some harmful local practices that are not progressive in the lives of the people. In a more balanced outcome, Western education, technological inventions and economic interdependencies have given rise to some problem-solving hybridised cultural norms and practises. However, accepting everything foreign amounts to being "*xenocentric*" (oriented toward or preferring a culture other than one's own), which is not encouraged for sub-Saharan African peoples and cultures. The indigenous health, educational, and family systems, among others, need more appreciation instead of the demonisation they receive presently. For instance, embracing some technological advancements without due consideration of how to carry the illiterate population of the sub-Saharan continent along, has created an education system that seems to fail in targeting the needs of the people. It is necessary in this instance that the education of the illiterate population in rural Africa be intensified in their own way, before new technologies are introduced to them. If this is not done, it will create a condition of exclusion among them, or exclude them further from world economic activities, thereby worsening their poverty level (Obioha 2011).

Promoting local knowledge systems and carving a comparative niche for the sub-Saharan continent remains a viable mitigation point. In the global world, acceptance of foreign values and practices is not compulsory. The onus is, therefore, on sub-Saharan Africa to keep its cultures and possibly internationalise them unapologetically among its people. The world is an open and competitive environment where the stronger and better branded ideas, cultures and practices dominate the weaker, more fragile and supposedly crude ones. Discovering a comparative niche, where none is existent, or

identifying the most potent ones can liberate African societies from the yoke of globalisation. Developing very strong niches where the sub-continent is better than other regions of the world, translates to being more relevant and competitive in the global scheme of things. Being part of the globalised world comes with developmental opportunities for African countries. Over the years, one may acknowledge that there have been missed opportunities for Africa and Africans to take advantage of some aspects, instruments and agencies of the globalisation of capitalism to reverse some of the hydra-headed postcolonial vestiges stoking group-based genocidal relations. Unfortunately, at the present moment, the sub-Saharan continent has not fully utilised this opportunity that may eventually place it in a respectable position in the globalised world; rather than being viewed as the unfledged part of the world, in spite of an abundance of mineral and human resources. The subcontinent will emerge stronger if the abundant mineral and human resources are put to beneficial use with little or no reliance on the developed world.

Conclusion

In this paper, the notion was challenged that globalisation is a neutral, self-propelling trend with a win-win outlook and the generalisation of “equal gains” and “equal pains” for all countries. The paper employed the exploration of secondary information and reflection analysis. Our discussion provided the dominant narratives on dimensions of globalisation but also dwelt more on the global dichotomy approach, which is a departure from the former in understanding the phenomenon. In framing globalisation, a striking difference exists between the Western-oriented perspective that subscribes to the notion of “good” and developing countries’ orientation that perceives it as an imperialist tool, and the egg shell where capitalism and world inequalities amongst nations reside in the modern time. While the trickle-down positive effects of globalisation in sub-Saharan Africa are acknowledged, this paper submits the reality of a paradox of unintended pains and negative implications that contribute to eclipsing the sub-continent in several ways. Subtle delinking, instead of total isolation from the world network and systems, is strongly advocated for. Thereby the sub-continent can rely on its numerous comparative advantages to reposition itself from being a “loser” to a “winner” in the world system. It will involve adopting foreign knowledge selectively, promoting and internationalising the local knowledge since the sub-continent cannot exit and exist in complete isolation.

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