



Research Paper

Random Thoughts on the Dynamics of Globalisation

Socrates Ebo

Centre for Continuing Education, Federal University Otuoke

Abstract

The advances of humanity in collaborative international trade, economic activities, interregional governance, collaborative international academic researches, collaborative international military actions and above all, the advances of technology in information communication have brought the world so close that it is often called a global village. The processes that interconnect the world, break the barriers of nature, national and regional boundaries to forge an intricately interconnected world in which no nation can optimally function in isolation from the of the globe. The processes shatter cultural barriers, create new trends, new values in a world that has witnessed increasingly overlapping cultures. The processes of globalization have permeated every facet of contemporary human existence. Globalization has not been without rough edges. Like a whirlwind it has unleashed its peculiar upheavals on the world. Hence, the anti-globalization movement. This work is essentially a philosophical reflection on sundry facets of globalization. It is eclectic and analytical in methodology.

Received 02 June, 2022; Revised 13 June, 2022; Accepted 15 June, 2022 © The author(s) 2022.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

Our world today has become, not just a global village but a global tea table [1]. Since the explosion of information and communication technology and conventionalisation of air transportation, no portion of the globe can ever remain isolated from the rest of the world anymore. The world has willy-nilly become a global glass house in which no portion is either impervious or insulated from the rest. In today's world, everyone sees everyone. Whatever happens anywhere reflects everywhere. No portion of the world can successfully keep events happening within it under wraps from the rest of the world. It is near impossibility to shield significant events anywhere in the world from the ubiquitous exposure of the new media. Such is today's world that has become a global glass house. The mantra of non-interference in the internal affairs of any nation is almost becoming an outdated maxim.

Today, a regional bloc can interfere in the internal affairs of a country even outside the confines of that region. At least European Union did it to Gaddafi's Libya [2]. NATO bombed Gaddafi out of power and ultimately out of existence on what was traditionally regarded as the internal affair of a country. Such is the overreaching power of the forces of globalization in the contemporary world. Events in Gaddafi's Libya would be discussed in every corner of the globe as if they were taking place in the street just at the next turn. That was globalization at work. Same principles are playing out in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. Putin's Russia set out to deal with Ukraine only to realized that he is getting involved in conflict by proxy with the rest of Europe and North America [3]. The conflict is being discussed in every corner of the globe just as was the case with Gaddafi's Libya. The processes of globalization in the Russia-Ukraine conflict are so forceful that the rest of the world fears that the conflict might snowball into the Third World War. This all goes to reinforce the maxim that our world has become a global glass house in which any significant effect anywhere reflects everywhere.

Globalization has bamboozled key impediments of space and time. It has shrunk the world to the size of an internet enabled laptop computer or even to the handful size of a tabulate phone. When President Abraham Lincoln died, it took three weeks for the news of his death to reach the western end of the United States of America and three months to reach Europe. Today, such news circulates round the globe not just in minutes but in seconds. The resounding success of Information Communication Technology and air transportation has significantly increased the tempo of global interactions, economically, politically and culturally.

Although, globalization is by no means a new phenomenon, it has risen to such a crescendo that economies and politics of the countries of the globe have become so inextricably interconnected that any significant economic disruption in any part of the world would have repercussions on other parts of the world. It

is a contemporary phenomenon that is contemporaneously changing the world as well as its very meaning. How then is globalization to be defined?

II. The Term “Globalization”

The definition of term “globalization”, is diverse and highly controverted. Rothenberg frankly recognizes the diversity in the definition when he raised questions on three possible definitions of globalization in his quest to comprehensively define the term. In these definitions, he highlighted the positive and negative perceptions of globalization. He acknowledged the economic, political and cultural integrations brought about by globalization, the devastations it has engendered as well as the inequalities and dominance of the developed nations over the developing nations that the processes of globalization have also created [4]. The posers raised by Rothenberg clearly indicate that globalization is a value laden concept; and of course, in the world of values, controversies and dissent are always the norm.

The origin of the term “globalization” cannot be attributed to any particular scholar [1]. However, the French “mundialization” seemed to have initially gained currency before “globalization”. The controversies surrounding the definition of globalization notwithstanding, it is basically about the integration of national processes in the international scene. It is about the internationalization of human activities beyond national boundaries. It is about human activities going more international and less national.

A lot of scholars have written extensively on the challenges posed by the definition and processes of globalization; and have proffered various solutions and definitions. At the heart of the problem of the definition of globalization is how a mono-culture can be obtained or globalized in a multi-cultural world? The proposition itself is beset with a lot of conceptual problems. It seems a priori that mono-culturalism is not possible in a multi-cultural world. Rather, the culture which controls the instruments of globalization might use them to aggressively suppress other cultures while globalizing its own values. This is apparent in the conflicts that militate against the quest for a stable world order. The history of the political world is largely a history of the clashes of civilizations [5]. Shall the Nietzschean will to power ever be so universally subdued and brought under a unified Leviathan will? Would the rest of the world succumb to the Western culture led by the US since the West has dominant control over the instruments of globalization? Shall the world accept globalization as defined and projected by the West?

III. A Historical Sketch of Globalization

Globalization is an ongoing historical event. The manifestation of the processes could be observed in varying degrees in all phases of human history. Each historical phase of globalization impacted on humanity in unique ways for good or for bad within the known boundaries of the globe in that era. From prehistory through the Ptolemaic era down to the Copernican era; and up to the contemporary era, the story has not changed. Humans have always striven to interact with rest of humanity to the extent that is permitted by the contingencies of space and time in each era. The interactions have not always been positive; but they were there all the same. The interactions could be in the form of marriages, trade or sheer warfare.

3.1 Prehistory: Even in the prehistoric times, the processes of globalization were already manifesting. The first phase of globalization was the globalization of the presence of man. Anthropologists are unanimous on the Black African origin of the human person [6]. It must have taken thousands of years for the presence of man to be spread on a global scale as we witness it in the world today. The globalization of the presence of man from Africa to the entire globe was no mean feat.

3.2 Ancient Time: When the Greek cities sailed around the Mediterranean in search of trade and commerce, it was globalization at work, albeit in economic terms. When Alexander the Great marched upon the known world of his day, overrunning cities, gobbling up states and erasing national boundaries, it was still the globalization bug at work. Alexander the Great continued to globalize the world under Greek hegemony until his soldiers would march no further. He was literally out to Hellenize the entire world. That was the globalization of that era. When the Romans marched upon the known world of their day, spreading the Latin culture, imposing their suzerainty and interconnecting cities with highways, it was globalization at work also. Of course, according to Roman values. The Greek civilization and the Roman civilization were the major globalizing forces of classical antiquity.

3.3 Medieval Period: Globalization at this period was driven by forces of religion, specifically Christianity and Islam. Christianity spread from Israel to the rest of Europe, introducing a new way of life and ideology which was eventually embraced by Roman authorities and turned into the state religion and ideology after years of trying to suppress it. Despite the fall of the Roman empire, Christianity grew exponentially and remained the dominant ideology in Europe for most of the medieval period. It gave a bond of oneness of destiny among the nations that adhered to it. What Christianity accomplished in medieval Europe, Islam replicated in parts of Eastern Europe, Middle East and North Africa. The medieval world was globalized by Christianity and Islam.

3.4 Modern Era: Globalization in this era saw Christopher Columbus and company extend the boundaries of the known world by sailing across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. It was also in this era that Vasco da Gama sailed round the world of his day, from Europe, through Africa to India [7]. Both men were looking for an alternative route to India. While the predominant motivation for the explorations could be said to be economic, it equally unleashed a deluge of demographic, political and cultural consequences. That was globalization.

The once absurd journey of Christopher Columbus and an assortment of desperately curious or curiously desperate seamen would eventually result in: the establishment of the most powerful nation that would eventually emerge the most powerful country in the universe, the exportation of the Spanish language and culture to a sizeable portion of the Americas, and the near extermination of the aborigines of North America from the face of the earth. That too was globalization at work. Its consequences have not always been necessarily positive. Sometimes, the consequences of globalization could be brutal on those at the receiving end. Globalization could also have unintended consequences.

3.5 Contemporary Era: In 2010 when a high-power delegation of US senators led by John McCain returned from a fact finding mission to Tunisia and declared that “everyone we met wanted Zuckerberg to visit Tunisia” [8], it was a powerful statement of how extensively social media has influenced globalization in the contemporary world. The processes of globalization have become significantly pronounced, driven by information and communication technology and global organizations.

IV. The Dimensions and Factors of Globalization

Events in the contemporary world that drive globalization and the dimensions they take are multifaceted. Revolutionary progress and advances in technology have driven globalization more than any other factor. There is the economic dimension of globalization driven by economic factors. Among these factors also are political, military, social and religious factors.

4.1 Economic Factors in the Process of Globalization

The economic dimension of globalization manifested quite early. Most efforts in globalization are inspired by economic factors. Of all the facets of globalization, globalization in the economic sphere has been the most pervading, the most controversial and the most ruthless. The Second World War saw the crumbling of the economies of most European states. Much of Europe was physically damaged. Fearing a repeat of pre-World War II economic dynamics that led to the war, the West sought for a way to achieve a negotiated economic cooperation among nations. In 1946, the United Nations held a conference at Breton Woods to find solutions to post WWII economic challenges facing Europe and the world in general [9]. The conference thought it wise to set up an international pool of funds for the reconstruction of Europe and the development of the Third World. Thus, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, (later known as the World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were set up by the conference. These two institutions had the clear and unambiguous mandate to assist in the reconstruction of Europe and other countries ravaged by Second World War, and to assist the Third World countries with the much-needed fund for accelerated development. These institutions rapidly strove to globalize the world economy. The economic globalization quest was comprehensively achieved in 1995 with the formation of the World Trade Organization after the signing of the 1994 Uruguay Round of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariff and Trade) [10]. The GATT regulated the application of tariffs in international trade. This facilitated international trade greatly. The practice of containerization of goods was adopted for international shipment of goods worldwide. The International Organization for Standards was established to maintain internationally acceptable quality for manufactured goods. Individual nations also established their own standard organizations to ensure that the goods they manufacture conform to internationally acceptable standards. The US dollar eventually emerged as the globally accepted legal tender for international trade.

Today, globalization in economic terms has manifested in the rise of multinational corporations which in turn have increased direct foreign investments. Transnational companies outsource manufactures to countries where raw materials are available in abundance or where labour is cheap. Sometimes they site their factories in a country where there is big market for their products. There are also countries or regions with trade agreements that encourage free movement of capital, goods and services between them or within their region.

4.2. Political Globalization

States have always tried to expand fellowship by going into alliances with other states in order to garner stability. The First World War was more or less triggered by the complicated maize of alliances among European nations. The effects of this maize of alliances reverberated even as far as Japan in the Far East. How could the assassination of the crown prince of Hungary, Franz Ferdinand have led to a world war? The answer lies in the political globalization of that era.

Prior to the First World War, Europe had sought to globalize its politics with the Peace of Westphalia Treaty of 1648 [11]. This treaty put to rest the pockets of wars between the Ferdinand III of the Holy Roman Empire and Sweden, the Seven Cities of the Netherlands and the Imperial Cities. These series of treaties formed the first modern international society and provided the blueprint for European diplomacy [12]. But for France and Spain which continued to fight on the insistence of France, the Peace of Westphalia brought peace to the whole of Europe, having brought most of Western Europe under one international treaty and political ideology. However, the emergence of a unified Germany in the 1870s altered the political landscape of Central Europe thereby upsetting the Peace of Westphalia [13]. With the fall of the Peace of Westphalia, Europe fragmented into pockets of alliances fuelled by economic interests and mutual fears.

France and Britain which held sway in much of Africa, Asia and Middle East paired up. In order to ward off the Japanese incursions into the vast and lucrative market, China, the British co-opted the Russians into the alliance. Germany which looked forward to having its own colonies abroad was frustrated. Germany had to make do with an alliance with the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Japan. Thus, the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the Crown Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which would have been a local affair snowballed into a global crisis which triggered wars worldwide, including even remote Africa! When Russia rushed to the aid of the Serbs in Hungary, Germany immediately declared war on Russia as Hungary was her ally. Britain and France immediately responded by declaring war on Germany since they were allied to Russia. Japan reacted by declaring war on Britain and France since she too was allied to Germany. Ultimately, the war would be taken to their respective colonies in Africa and Asia. Events would soon drag America into the war thus effectively spreading the war to every continent on the earth planet. That was political globalization at work.

At the end of the WWI the world saw the need for a global regulatory institution to moderate international politics. The League of Nations was formed. Unfortunately, the League was weak. The failure of the League of Nations led to the repeat of war on a global scale from 1939 to 1945. At the end of WWII, the United Nations Organization was formed with the sole determination of preventing a global war from ever having a repeat. The nations of the world have finally politically globalized, at least diplomatically. The world could act as one; it was hoped.

Unfortunately, the Cold War saw the regionalization and the polarization of the world into vehemently opposing ideological blocs. It retarded the gains of the U.N.O and even brought the world on the brink of another world war. The Cold War put a halt to the advance of globalization and promoted polarization. It is pertinent to note that the Cold War era polarization itself in the final analysis was but globalization on a bilateral basis. The two blocs: capitalist West led by the United States of America and the communist East led by United Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia embarked on aggressive proselytization, inducting new states precipitating wars and the threats of war in many states especially in the Third World countries. This fear of bi-polar political globalization led to the formation of the Non-aligned Movement by Third World countries which did not want to be caught up in the fierce bilateral ideological crossfire [14]. In nutshell, the Cold War was a war of two opposing political systems which sought to impose themselves on the world.

Together with the UN, so many international institutions continue to bind nations across regions, enhancing political globalization. Some of the organizations include: NATO, EU, AU, Arab League etc.

4.3 Religious Globalization

The quest for the globalization and stabilization of the world also has strong religious roots. The formation of Christianity, ca 33AD and its accession to political power in 313AD played significant roles in the globalization and stabilization of the world. The founder of Christianity, Jesus of Nazareth preached a universal brotherhood and the unanimity of human destiny. That was a radical departure from Judaism, the religion of his birth which occupied itself with the Jewish world and Jewish worldview. Christianity brought down the barriers between the Jews and Gentiles; and proclaimed the universal fatherhood of God. Most importantly, Christianity popularized the monotheism of the Christian God. A religious ideology which started with a man and his twelve disciples would soon transform into a gargantuan global ideological movement even after the death of the founder, despite fierce repression by the agents of the state.

The breakthrough for Christianity came in 313AD, after Constantine the Great ascended the throne of the Roman Empire in November 312 AD, with the support of Christians. He made Christianity the State religion by the Edit of Milan and elevated its officials to positions of authority. Thereafter, Europe came under same religious ideology, the Christian faith. The Christian religion, turned a sizeable proportion of the world into a global family. Christians can be found in every nook and cranny of the globe. Wherever they are, they preach the message of the oneness of humanity.

The Islamic religion is also a powerful globalizing factor in the world. It started in the 7th century but rapidly spread through Middle East, Asia, Africa and parts of Europe. Today, adherents of the Islamic religion could be found all over the world. It created an international brotherhood of humanity bonded by common creeds.

4.4 Security Globalization

There have been fervent attempts to achieve global security. The formation of the League of Nations after the WWI was the first of its kind. The League was supposed to prevent a world war. Unfortunately, WWII happened. The UN was established and empowered to police world and prevent wars whether international or intranational. The UN prevented wars or crushed aggressors when weaker countries were involved but often could not do much when powerful nations were involved. The Russian aggression in Ukraine is a typical example [15].

Other international security organizations such as NATO and ECOMOG operate in their respective regions. The Interpol (International Criminal Police Organization) was established to coordinate with police forces worldwide to track international criminals and to curb international crimes. Today no one can openly commit a crime in one country and run to another country to live openly.

4.5 Technological Factor in Globalization

Globalization was greatly facilitated with eponymous advances in technology. Transportation technologies helped to overcome the problem of the vastness of the earth. The invention of railway made travels over long distances cheap and less risky. The invention and popularization of the commercial flight literally obliterated the barrier of distance. There is no portion of the world that cannot be reached in a day. The steamship and further advances in ship building technology made sea transportation faster, safer and much cheaper. Bulky goods could be transported from one end of the earth to another within reasonable time and at far less risk than previously.

Information and communication technology also developed exponentially. The world transitioned from letter writing to telegram, and then to telephones. Radio and TV were invented. The invention of the computer and the internet became the ultimate technological tools that globalized the world.

4.6 Internet Globalization

Advances in information and communication technology took globalization to explosive levels. The creation of the internet opened infinite possibilities on the globalization of the world. The internet started as a US government asset. It was later expanded to serve academic research purposes but eventually commercially in the 1980s. The commercialization of the internet unleashed great creative possibilities with highly rewarding economic returns. One of the features of the internet is social networking. Numerous social networking sites sprout, shattering the barriers and limitations of human interaction. Networking sites globalize culture and social interactions. They afford the citizens the opportunity to broadcast themselves and their values to the entire world. The social media have afforded people the leverage to interact and forge relationships across the globe without the limitations of national boundaries. It has become a veritable avenue for the spread of values and culture trends. Today, no event in any part of the globe is completely isolated from the rest of the globe. Humanity exists on social media interact and commune without boundaries. A globalized social consciousness is catching on.

V. Some Ethical Issues on Globalisation

The phenomenon of globalization has been dogged by sharp controversies. So much criticisms have been advanced against globalization, especially in the economic sphere. It has been called the globalization of unbridled capitalism. Breton Woods institutions have been often accused of targeting developing countries with harsh and unfavourable policies for the benefit of the developed nations. The World Trade Organization has become the albatross of the Third World economies. The WTO, could as well pass as a classical casestudy on exploitation. It surreptitiously controls the World Bank and IMF, and use them to unleash brutal forms of capitalism on economically struggling countries, especially the Third World [16]. Most of the criticisms against globalization are centred on the activities of Breton Wood Institutions. Their overall philosophy of business could be interpreted as keeping the Third World underdeveloped and ripping it off. The Breton Wood Institutions are severely undemocratic institutions, making decisions that affect the whole world. The stability or otherwise of the world ultimately rests on the activities of these institutions. In the Third World, they set up puppet governments to drive their agenda. They pull down governments that refuse to pander to them. Their powers are so enormous that standing on their way often proves suicidal. It is indeed, a globalization of inequality and exploitation.

Globalization has also led to the globalization of crime and moral decay. Indigenous people are often coerced or influenced to embrace values alien to them. What is easily gleaned from cultural globalization is the globalization of the Western culture.

VI. Conclusion

This work has critically analysed the processes of globalization, pointing out their dynamics - positive and negative. The work discusses interesting perspectives on the phases of globalization. Globalization was always happening. The extent of globalization in every era is determined by the extent to which such era was able to subdue the limitations of space and time. Technological advances in the modern era led to exponential expansions in the globalization of the world. The world in the 21st century could indeed be called a global village. No nation can successfully thrive in isolation. Humanity has become so interwoven that any significant event in any part of the world would definitely have ramifications in other parts of the world.

References

- [1]. McLuhan, M. (1962). *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*
- [2]. 978-0-8020-6041-9
- [3]. Hill, T & Wilson, N. (2020). Foreign Interference Remains Key Driver of Libya Conflict. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/06/foreign-interference-remains-key-driver-libya-conflict>
- [4]. NATO. (2022). NATO's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_192648.htm
- [5]. Rothenberg, L. (2003), Globalization 101: The Three Tensions of Globalization <http://webspace.ship.edu/hliu/347/14global/3-tensions.pdf>
- [6]. Huntington, S, (1993). The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. *Foreign Affairs* Foreign Affairs Vol. 72, No. 3
- [7]. Tattersall, I. (2008). Out of Africa. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0903207106>
- [8]. Halsall, P. (1998). Vasco da Gama: Round Africa to India, 1497-1498. <http://www1.udel.edu/History-old/fiagal/Hist104/assets/pdf/readings/01dagama.pdf>
- [9]. Joselyn, T. (2013). Social Media Jihad: John McCain visits Tunisia. https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/04/social_media_jihad_jewish_john.php
- [10]. US Department of State Archive.
- [11]. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/98681.htm>
- [12]. World Trade Organization.
- [13]. https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/fact5_e.htm
- [14]. Tistcher, A. (2021). Peace of Westphalia (1648). DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780199743292-0073
- [15]. Hoeksana, J. (2020). Replacing the Westphalian System. <https://fedtrust.co.uk/replacing-the-westphalian-system/>
- [16]. Schroeder, P. (1983). The Lost Intermediaries: The Impact of 1870 on European Systems. *The International History Review* Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1-27
- [17]. Strydom, H. (2006). The Non-Aligned Movement and the Reform of International Relations. https://www.mpil.de/files/pdf1/mpunyb_01_strydom_11.pdf
- [18]. Reliefweb. (2022). War in Europe: Responding to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine.
- [19]. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/war-europe-responding-russia-s-invasion-ukraine>
- [20]. Ebo, S. (2018). Philosophical Perspectives on Theories of Development for African Economies. <https://www.ceol.com/search/article-detail?id=705085>