AFRICA AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER: OLD ISSUES AND NEW CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines fundamental principles of the new world order and places its examination within the context of African realities. It examines extant postulations on its effects on Africa. This work however departs from the existing works by situating its analysis within the context of identity question. This work therefore postulates that rather than Africa seeking complicity with the seemingly flaunted possible gains Africa could garner from this new imperial order, Africa should seek the renewal of identity and channel an endogenous development alternatives to protect its identity which is fast receding to extinction.

Keywords: Africa, New World Order, and New Challenges

INTRODUCTION

The old and new world orders are not very different. The new world order is “old wine in new bottles, the old world order adapted to new contingencies” [1]Chomsky, 1993: 83]

The concept and philosophy of the new world order has continued to generate controversy since 1990s. The issues involved occupied the focus and writings of scholars so much so that till date, the challenges are emanating from and those confronting the new order in terms of its socio-political, economic and spiritual variables enjoyed profound attention in the works of scholars who are writing in this area. The debates have taken different colourations relatives to context and focus of the individual writers.

Scholars such as Aluko [2]2003], Arthkins [3]2006], Ajayi [4]2007] and Wordhook [5]2008] have situated their analyses within historical context. They identified attempts at globalizing values by the hegemons of different historical epochs looking, for instance, at the periods of the Romans and the British “Supreme orders” – a period during which they bestrides the global space like colossus. Although the reigning philosophies of the different epochs were highlighted but the historical flavour which coloured their analysis appears to be the hallmarks of their submissions. That an hegemon dominating a given historical epoch makes to hold sway its own values; that a new world order as a concept has cyclical variable.

Onimode [6]2006], Olaitan [7]2008] situates their analyses within the context of political economy. They placed their understanding within the political-economy philosophy which was brought to bear on the global system and space. Thus, to them, the new world order becomes meaningful in terms of its political and socio-economic models. In this wise, the contemporary socio- political and economic systems of the neo-liberal new world order under the U.S. hegemony becomes clearer to understand.

Till date, scholars have continued to analyze its effects, impact and consequences relative to global and domestic issues. Discourse permeates almost all issues that borders on human existence
– politics, economy, military and social (Williams, 2001: 92). Whatever the views advanced by scholars, one issue is clear. That the contemporary new world order is being controlled and dominated by the imperial values of the United States of America; that the context for its emergence became concluded in 1989 – 90; that the U.S. rise to globalism had its root in pre-1945 and that the imperial ambition of the U.S. had its basis in history of the “Monroe Doctrine” which articulates this ambition.

This work takes a profound afrocentric posture. It examines the possible impact of the new world order on the contemporary realities of Africa and African personality. This is done within the context of the effects of the global challenges that seeks to erode the cultural and national essence of Africa and the dignity of an African person. Where this work makes allusion to political and economic issues, such is done to underscore the cultural and personality issues involved in socio-political and economic factors that seek to confine Africa to the periphery of the contemporary political economic order. On what basis would Africa negotiate its cultural identity in the world that seeks to produce a global new man with a new global attitude and culture?

Which culture and personality dominates the new global agenda? Is it possible or has Africa successfully negotiated a better deal in a Hobbesian world? Is Africa not nearing consummation of irrelevance? These and other likely questions that may come up later defines the focus of this work. This work is however a departure from strict but usual political economic analysis of its impact on Africa but a careful understanding of the foundational principles {culture} that defines a being, his society, relations with others and his outlook.

This paper is divided into four parts. The first part is the introductory aspect of the work. The second aspect deals with the philosophy and the historical emergence of the contemporary international order while the third part of the work examines African reality within the context defined above. The fourth aspect is the concluding part of this work.

THE NEW WORLD ORDER: EMERGENCE AND FEATURES

The foundation of the contemporary world order generated debates among scholars especially those of political and historical persuasions. Scholars such as Schmidt {2003}, Stephen {2006} and Rendwick {2009} situated its foundation in the post first world war Wilsonian idealistic engagement of international order. To this group of scholars, the United States signified her intention to help re-define a new world based on the U.S. conceptions of freedom and peace. While the position appears challengeable, the fact that the United States played primary and mediatory role in post first world international peace arrangement must not be-emphasized. This in itself could be seen as a declaration of its emergence in the international arena.

Another group of scholars such as Bredt {2004}, Harris, 2006}, {kent, 2008} and {Rhydat 2009} saw its foundation in the cold war era. This position is also debatable depending on persuasion, context of discourses and intellectual learning. However, it is difficult to deny the fact that the United States was already a fully blown political, economic and military power during this period. The divisions of the global political space into two ideological blocks with one under the United States “imperial control” speaks volume of her willing emergence as a global hegemon. The other, the WARSAW, was under the control of the former Soviet Union. By 1990, the cold war disappeared leaving behind its vestiges and the triumph of the United States Neo-liberal culture with which the United States desires to engage the world.

More illuminating however, was the position of Stephen {1985}. He traced the foundation of the United States rise to global control to 1938 which was the eve of the Second World War. While this position contains its own merits, the historical lucidity of his argument negotiates the colourfulness of his submission. However, all the submissions above helps to understanding the United State’s activities and efforts at enthroning...
or globalizing the values which becomes a reality in 1990’s.

In September, 1990, President Bush in his address to a joint session of the United States Congress set out in details the culture of the new world order under the U.S hegemony. He declared:

The New World Order imposes responsibility on US. The New World Order does not mean forfeiting our interests, it really describes a responsibility imposed by our success……. What makes us American is our allegiance to an idea that all people everywhere must be free [{17}Christopher, 1993:139]

The Nexus between this declaration and the ancient imperial philosophy of “Monroe Doctrine” of the United States is vivid. Thus, it is possible at another level to talk about the gestation period of the emergent order, the realization of the dream and the spread of the philosophy. Whatever the case may be, the new world order emerged from the debris of the cold war.

The long years of ideological context helped to re-shape already conceived philosophy, metamorphosed it and sharpen its edges to confront new challenges of post 1990’s international relations. The transformation trends shaped the global social formation. These trends are; economic internationalization, the internationalization of the civil society, and the evolution of the international political superstructure. The new-liberal structures and institutions with which the “Marshall Plan” was achieved metamorphosed to condition and control the global base of the political superstructure of the neo-liberal international political economy. The structures and network transformed into more sophisticated political-economic and social values of globalization. So, it is either you globalize or perish [{18}Sandra, 2008:113]. The global political economy and social relations are now controlled through international trade and the U.S policy coordination. It was this trend that Benedict [{19}1993:97] referred to as the “the New World Disorder”. Its disorderliness relative to its contradictory development values and processes envisioned the philosophy of dependence in all its ramifications. It was the same situation which forced Morten [{20}1993:115] to conclude that the process of the New World Order, Is not a smooth and homogenous process, but rather, as an uneven, unequal and contradictory one.

In the second half of the 1990’s, the New International Order has succeeded in presenting a more concise definition of its philosophy, presented in a more humane language but its essence and vision remains the same. It is the idea of globalization with the states globalizing. Thus at one length, to discuss the post 1990 new world order is to discuss globalization [{21}Einbestroht, 2006:17] and [{22}John, 2008:8]. On the other hand, it is the discussion of the transformational structures which are now more sophisticated to achieve the objectives of globalization [{23}Ken, 2006:18] and [{24}Brendth, 2009:19]. As its philosophy and structures now controls global political-economic and social relations, individual nationality begins to ask questions on the effects of the global reality on their culture, development and identity. No wonder Crassberg [{25}2006:12] remarked that “The politics of globalization is now daily confronted by the politics of identity and individual state development aspiration that protects their identity and culture”. This is just one of the problems which the polygons of the New World Order appears to have created by its desire for an impossible homogenous global village

THE NEW WORLD ORDER, AFRICAN REALITY AND IDENTITY QUESTION

“…… The way things are going, we in Africa will soon have no image beyond
geography, no identity besides colour
and no decency except flags… Worse, we will end up compelling to do the Master’s urging in the neighbourhood”
[26]Olukoshi, 2002:17}

The above statement by the former Tanzanian President, Benjamin Mkapa in 2002, only took cognizance of a great issue that border on the existence or extinction of the identity of the black race. It may be a consummation of a historical cultural predation of imperial absorption of the remnants of African’s image and imaginaries. His position implies the fears of cultural identity and geographical inviolability that underlines the problem, basic as it may appear, This is part of the issues which this paper seeks to address. We shall turn to this issue later.

Dominant thinking about development today sees globalization, as not just the harbinger of the New World Order, but as a matter of life and death for less developed countries. It was argued [27]Bradford, 2003:119] that globalization would quickly propel developing nations into modernity and affluence. That the new world order offers great promises for transformation within its defined limits and opportunities. Rather, we continue to see a complex picture of exacerbated inequalities. In fact, its mixed record at century’s end has dampened the euphoric optimism of the 1980s and given rise to a sober mood [28]Blanca, 1997: 383].

The contemporary world order is not making the world less diverse and more equal. A growing but still small part of the world’s population is becoming more similar in what it eats, buys, wears and thinks. More and more people across the planet have become increasingly exposed to the amenities of the global marketplace, although mostly as permanent window-shoppers and silent spectators [28]Blanca op.cit, 387]. This is the situation for the Africans.

Amazingly, the predictions of neo-classical economic theory proved futile. The freeing up international capital flows is not benefiting countries where capital is most scarce. The lion’s share of private international financial flows continues to go to capital abundant nations. In 1995 for example, 65 percent of Foreign Direct Investment [FDI] inflows went to the developed world. The bulk of the recent growth of capital inflows into developing countries, moreover, has been concentrated in a handful of relatively rich emerging markets. The reality has been that the poorest countries have seen little profit from the recent boom in international financial flows. Net official development assistance over the past decades has stagnated in terms of value and has declined as a share of donors’ Gross Domestic Product [GDP] reaching in 1994 in lowest level ever since 1993 and contemporarily, grossly affected by the global financial meltdown- The crisis of neo-liberal capital regime.

We must note that developing countries that have access to international capital got the opportunity at great cost- The loss of internal policy autonomy. This is because international financial integration entailed an important loss of policy autonomy that has increased host countries’ vulnerabilities to external financial shock. This is because the closer or the deeper the integration, the greater the effect of the global financial shock. The recent global financial recess appears clarifying.

The African conditions have worsened. Heightened exposure to global markets only magnified and multiplied domestic inequalities. While it is true that in a handful of countries like China, liberalization and expanded access to global finance have led to significant reduction in poverty, the bulk of the developing world has not been such fortunate. For instance, in Africa, since 1980’s, poverty has grown, despite policy pretensions and statistical magic in countries like Nigeria, in absolute and relative terms. No thanks however to the multi-transnational agents and institutions that helps to facilitate this syndrome.

The socio-political-economic degradation and the inert empowerment policy underscore the politics of slavery, subservience, mental imprisonment, inferiority complex and loss of identity which the statement by Benjamin Mkapa vividly captured. In fact, the basic reasons advanced by Michael Camdesus [29]1995:215] for Africa’s participation in the new global
arrangement appears deceitful as it fails to capture the realities of Africa’s problems of transformation and stability. To him, indeed, especially in the case of Africa, let us be clear that the task now before us is to ensure that these countries gain more and more from opportunities afforded by the closer integration into the world economy that such a globalized world can offer them. If they fail to take advantage of these opportunities, the risk of their marginalization will only be increased.

This position is laden with paradox. How can the African economy that has already been condemned to realm of the ancient play vital role in the politics of power and distribution of development resources at the global level when, apparently, the individual African states are in need of domestic distribution of common goods and policy transformation for development? At best, Michael Camdesus’s call was for structural integration of the African economy into the global one in which Africa’s role remain peripheral. This structural integration can at best produce acute underdevelopment, and entrenched imperialism in which the fate of Africa is sealed. Who does not know that Nigeria will not and cannot be a serious actor in the new globalization? It might remain somewhat influential in West Africa but such influence will not be sufficient to attract the sort of global support and generate local creativity so much needed to survive in the current capital driven global order. Africa was simply invited to a contest for survival without perfectly understanding or controlling the rules of the game. Much as the seeming catastrophic effects of this unhealthy romance with the new global order appear in the political and economic spheres, it reverberates in the socio-cultural existence of Africa. This must have partly alarmed the need to look at this aspect of Africa’s situation in the contemporary global politics. To this issue we may now return.

The African states aside South Africa, Libya, Egypt and a few others, have not only failed in defining a focus for national identity, and culture preservation. In fact, majority have not embarked on any meaningful process of state decolonization and the enthronement of enviable and enduring post colonial Afrocentric and endogenous policy formations for development, identity protection and culture preservation. No wonder, Anselm [{30}2002:12] provocatively remarked that Most African leaders are agents of post colonial imperial values. They are far from the culture and sociology of their people. All that matters are the success of alien Values on their socio-cultural space.

This position is not only illuminating; it also explains the hatred for African culture protection by those who are supposed to do so. Thus, they are always ready to import and plant alien policies without considering its effects on Africa’s cultural existence. The more sophisticated contemporary New World Order which presents a more profound culture for integration into a global village can only worsen the African situation. In fact, Africa has confronted several attempts at cultural globalization time immemorial. Was it the confrontation with the Mohammedan Islamic Arabian culture which almost erodes all African identities including ancestral names or the African world view or its perception of reality, existence and development? Or the European colonial bastardization of African essence and humanity occasioned by the Dawinist philosophy or Trevor Ropper’s denial of the existence of African history? All these represent previous attempts at burying African culture and dehumanization of African person and identity. The New World Order appears more balanced unlike the previous ones. It contains political, economic, social and spiritual engagement which creates means between politics, economy, spiritual development and the philosophy of free market. The New God is the God of riches and not necessarily that of good names and order {[30]Hassan, 2006:18}. 
A critical look at Hassan’s position reveals two basic issues. Firstly, it explains that the new world order defines the scope for modernity based on new ideas and thoughts. Secondly, to modernize within the new liberal values in vogue, then individual identity must give way to a new identity and culture by globalization. This therefore defines the burdens of Africa and the Africans. Thus, there is a need for Africa’s cultural survival and the re-definition of African personality within the context of a defined Pan-African philosophy which articulates policies and politics of cultural regeneration, preservation and enduring identity. This could be a sustaining agenda for Africa in a new world order which seeks to conclude the process of Africa’s identity and culture demise.

The European experience was rather instructive. Richard ([31]1999:109) argues that the Europeans were convinced that discussion “concerning the changes in our social and value systems caused by globalization is dominant by three view points”. These are (1) The new economic liberalism (2) The defence of the welfare state which produces growing potential for violence and political extremism (3) The dwindling power of nation state’s inevitability. The Europeans, according to him, “possess the power necessary to contain such problems”. The European leaders thoroughly defines their identities from National to European and then to Global ties. By this process, the European culture and identity are not threatened nor subsumed by the neo-liberal global ties and values in which they also thoroughly participate. Of course, the story from Africa is not the same. It is a story of a determined failure in or before a contest.

CONCLUSION

The New World Order created its own structures and dynamism to adapt to changes and recreates itself for continuity within the context of its philosophy. While the subjugation and structural incorporation into the predatory global order appears unstoppable, the cultural and identity of an African person seems eroding. Thus, it is difficult as postulated by Amilcar Cabra to control and dominate a race through the use of arms; they will rise up one day and change the situation through the same method. The control becomes permanent, if the culture of the oppressed is substituted with the culture of the oppressor. The control and situation of the oppressed may never change. This position implies the possible future of African personality and identity crisis.

Since several other races and nations define the bases of their cooperation and linkage not only within the context of the economic and political policies but also essentially within their socio-cultural reality which helps to keep and retain their identity in a veracious global order which seeks to super impose its values and culture on all the nations, countries and races inhabiting the global village. We therefore suggest that a more robust European step should be examined by the African leaders.

Secondly, socio-political and economic policies should largely be home grown with a deep reflection of African reality or individual nations or countries national cultural values. On the whole, a wholesale cooperation with the existing global values should be re-examined and see where such alienates and subjugates African cultural values with the intention of either enabling its anti-thesis for development sake or negotiate an Afrocentric alternative.

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