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### CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION, CULTURAL AMERICANIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION: THE AFRICAN FEAR

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#### ABSTRACT

Globalization has caused dramatic changes across African countries and indeed, the world. The people of Africa are skeptical of the net gains from the activities of globalization and afraid of losing their peculiar identity among the comity of independent nations of the world. The psychological and unresolved conflict between indigenous African cultures and the global culture is a problem to be solved. The sweeping effects resulting to monumental changes in socio-cultural and socio-economic relationships in the Africa are affirming that globalization is an important development theory in 21<sup>st</sup> century and should be under studied. The study aims to diagnose the African fear resulting from the actions of cultural homogenization and Americanization of world cultures as critical aspects of globalization. It also intends to move away from the usual norm of critiquing the negative effects of globalization on the socio-cultural and socio-economic space of Africa. The paper 's target is to proffer practical measures/strategies to advance the rich cultural heritage of the continent of Africa to the world. On this note the paper is structured as follows: introduction, literature review, the African fear, any hope for Africa and conclusion.

## INTRODUCTION

Africans seem to be losing grip of their rich cultural heritage due to the overriding influence of global culture, otherwise known as cultural homogenization. Some scholars refer to this global cultural influence as Americanization because United States of America is ubiquitous in international affairs and administration (Ogechukwu, Benjamin & Ann, 2016). The psychological pressure emanating from the negative effects of globalization on cultures of the world is arousing palpable fears in the minds of Africans and African scholars are painting globalization as an evil wind that does no good to the African continent. However, this fear is not incurable! Economic Development Report (2019) recorded those 44 member countries met in Kigali in March, 2018 to establish strategies that will enhance trade of 'Made in Africa'.

The people of Africa are feeling that western culture, western education, western information and technologies dominated by America have overshadowed theirs. They are also losing their original identity to westernization because a group of people without a distinct culture is a lost generation (Edih & Igemohia, 2021). It is believed that western culture was foisted on Africans through colonization, imperialism and globalization. It is also believed that globalization is a modern form of imperialism. Imperialism in today's world depends on a system of multiple nation-states championed by the United States of America (Hardt & Negri, 2000 as cited in Edih & Igemohia, 2021). Globalization has taken the whole world as its empire and not specifically targeted on Africans or the African continent. It is controlled and regulated by the invisible hands of demand and supply of Adam Smith. Muthoka, Muthuri and Oginga (2015) see globalization as hot issue in the economies of sub-Saharan Africa. Though, it has only produced minimal benefit to the continent of Africa. Activities of globalization resulted to capital flight needed for productive investments the countries of Africa (Jomo, Oliver & Rudiger, 2011).

Appradurai's thesis on global culture economy sees globalization as the central problem of today's tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization and may be cultural Americanization (Robinson, 2007). Africans are grossly afraid of the negative effects of homogenization of languages, marriage creed, dressing codes, behaviours, economic activities and of course globalization of cultures. This portends a broad way to global culture where African cultures will be forgotten. Most importantly, it seems that African youths have forgotten their ancestral root and ancestral identity of holding to high morals, values and norms bequeathed to them by their forebears.

Herrington (2013) sees homogenization as the second order effect of globalization. The supposition is that cultural homogenization, cultural Americanization or Americanization of cultures and global culture are different branches/effects of globalization. Lemke (2018) suggests that man cannot discuss globalization holistically due to fundamental limitations. The study of Reshma (2015) sees the exportation of lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) lifestyles into India as imposition contrary to the people's way of life. Edih and Igemohia (2021) suggests that discourse on globalization

and its sister issues are very controversial and inconclusive. The authors opine that globalization may have negative effects on cultures but not the only cause of cultural extinction in Africa. The study of Ogechukwu, et al., (2016) affirms the fears expressed by Africans on the loss of their cultural heritage. The study concludes that globalization has impoverished the continent. Also, Lapham (2001) affirms the fragile position of Africans and the eroding effects of globalization on cultural endowments in Africa. The weakened and disadvantageous position of the African people led them to accepting the notion of Americanization.

This research is motivated on the ground to change the popular narrative of rubbishing the tangible gains of globalization to Africa and portraying African continent as the dumping pool for the exaggerated ills caused by the global economy.

The objectives of this paper are to address the fear of Africans on the extinction of their cultures and proffer measures/strategies that will help to advance the cultural heritage in Africa. The study intends to move away from the norm of painting globalization as negating the strong moral order in African cultures. The study is organized into five sections; introduction, literature review, the African fears, any hope for Africans and conclusion.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Conceptual Review***

#### ***Cultural Homogenization***

Cultural homogenization is a product of globalization. Ogechukwu, et al., (2016) observed that homogenization is one of the important issues resulting from cultural globalization. Cultural homogenization is facilitated by the media, satellites and video cassettes. Bello (2010) also opines that homogenization of cultural relationships has been a key factor in the process of making the world a global community. Some critics interpret globalization to mean homogenization- a system which deals with similarity in lifestyles, dressing code, social mores and intellectual practices among people from diverse backgrounds (Mazui, 1999 cited in Eze, 2014).

Globalization is tending towards homogenization of world cultures though it creates room for multiple cultures by fostering differences. A vivid case is, in every town of any size, the Frenchman, Italians, Indians, Americans, Chinese, Arabic, and of course Nigerians can access different kinds of food. However, Eze (2014) points out that acculturation or cultural globalization is not bad since it leads to increase in human knowledge, improve harmonious relationships among people of diverse race and nationalities. X-raying the onslaught of Western culture on the cultures of the African people facilitated by colonization and globalization, Udeani (2001 as cited in Eze, 2014) laments that the system has succeeded in eroding the foundation of African's cultural identity.

### ***Americanization of World Cultures***

Americanization is an initiative to establish and sustain the dominance of American's philosophies, practices and economic ideologies over nations of the world. Nicolaides (2012) is of the view that, American norms, values and practices are conveyed across the Atlantic Ocean as a suitable mode of behaviour for Africans. As a consequence of cultural migration, African rich culture is degraded and regarded as inferior by the advanced countries. Globalization is a practice of homogenizing popular culture by inculcating ethos of the West- Americanization (American cultural industry) having root in Britain and Western Europe (Ogechukwu et al., 2016).

There may be homogenization of culture, not Americanization because information and communication technologies are not only handy and domiciled in America. The expansion of China's economy is extending very fast to African countries and a major threat to the American economy. We have multiple cultures not only in cuisine but in the areas of media, education, finance, computer, manufacturing, corporate management and religion (Michael, 2007 as cited in Ekeanyanwu & Edewor, 2009). A key factor in the American movie industry affirms that those who oppose globalization are sensitive of the loss of not contributing to the American film industry or Americanization of culture (Michael, 2007 as cited in Ekeanyanwu & Edewor, 2009).

Practical evidence is showing that different cultures in Nigeria are becoming homogenized. No singular culture can be isolated from the other. Their dressing patterns, marriage rituals and payment of dowry are becoming more similar. Also, diverse traditional cuisines are prepared and consumed in almost every home and particularly in restaurants and hotels. This is what Ogechukwu et al., (2016) referred to as hybridization of cultures for a better society.

### ***Global Culture***

The concept 'global culture' is a debatable global phenomenon as a result of cultural dynamics through the process of acculturation. Sociologists have argued that the emergency of a global culture has the capacity to bind society and individual together. This could be done by rationalized systems of imperfectly egalitarian justice and participatory representation in the economy, polity, culture and social interactions (Ekeanyanwu & Edewor, 2009). Studies contend that the notion of 'global culture' is just a catch-phrase for the purpose of academic gymnastics and theorization. The possibility of having a single culture called global culture or otherwise, homogenization of all culture through acculturation process is amounts to a mirage enterprise. The imperfections and complexities of several dynamic factors and change agents which mysteriously work on global activities and global philosophies are explicable and unimaginable (Ekeanyanwu & Edewor, 2009). This may be

comparable with the controversies surrounding the concept 'Effect of Spirit World' associated with the origin of traditions and customs. African –Nigerian folklores or folktales support the view that cultures are rooted and controlled by the spirit world- deities.

Global culture connotes a situation where the whole world is more of a global village. A philosophical thought where single culture is accepted by the diverse races and nations of the world. World Bank sees global culture as a borderless capitalism. While Geertz construes it to a poor sort of village. Smith, in his essay, asked some rhetoric questions bordering on culture that, can we speak of culture in the singular noun? If culture means a collective mode of life, or a repertoire, styles, values, and symbols, then can we also speak of cultures in the plural, for a collective mode of life or a repertoire of beliefs which presupposes different modes and repertoires in a universe of modes and repertoires? Smith sums that a global culture is a practical impossibility except in inter-planetary terms (Geertz, 1998, Smith, 1980 cited in Ekeanyanwu & Edewor, 2009).

### *Empirical Studies*

Farman, Yunfei, Mahammad and Fahim (2019) conduct a study on globalization and culture perspective in Chinese retail market. The authors noted that the behavioral patterns of consumers are becoming heterogeneous due to dynamics of cultures and effects of globalization. The study employs Hofstede's frame of individual culture with materialistic effect to understudy consumers behaviours in a processed food market. The results of multivariate co-variance-based model equation showed that individual materialistic values are major determinants of consumer buying behaviours in a globalized economy. The study recommended that food processing retail market should focus on individual cultural values to promote sales.

Herrington (2012) study on globalization and religion in historical perspective in Kansas, USA, asserts that religion has been a driving force in the process of globalization. The study further concludes that homogenization is a historical process linked to the expansionary policies of the hegemonic powers in regional scale. The study recommends that there should be partnership with social justice movements like the Jubilee Network and inter-faith dialogue with religious actors.

The study conducted by Alphonse (2010) on the impact of globalization on traditional African religion and cultural conflict in Florida, posits that in Africa tradition, religion is a vehicle of moral and spiritual values and children learn moral and societal values through traditional and socialization methods. It concludes that children understand myths and rituals through teachings on how the gods accept or forbid certain actions in communities and these revered deities are the source of traditional customs.

Fuchs (2008) in his critical globalization studies in Austria, denotes that affirmative globalization studies stresses positive aspects of global capitalism while critical globalization studies use concepts such as 'empire' and 'new

imperialism' to analyze the negative aspects or results of global economy. He also contends that critical globalization lacks a precise theoretical meaning of imperialism.

Jackson (2006) study on global queering and global queer theory in world history asserts that local process remains a powerful force for cultural transformation and central to both new forms of sex cultural difference and transnational convergence emerging in world sex culture. He also stresses that globalization is not necessarily homogenization or Americanization of world culture.

James (2006) study defines cultural globalization as the transmission of ideas, meaning, and values around the globe. This entails that globalization is an instrument of extending and intensifying social relations among independent countries. Manfred (2005) laid credence to the positive effects of globalization. The author opines that globalization entails the process of common consumption of cultures that have been defused by the internet, popular culture media and international travels. The study contends that cultural globalization brings increasing inter-connectedness among different population and cultures. Similarly, Aylin, Ahmed and Zeynep (2013) see globalization as a necessary tool that enhances inter-dependence of the social fabrics of nations across the globe. However, Nicolaides (2012) dwells on the negative effects of globalization on the Nigerian economy. The actions of globalization work against indigenous cultures, values, knowledge experiences of persons and national privacy.

Edih and Igemohia (2021) conduct a study on globalization and cultural uniformism: a literary excursion into traditional cultures in Nigeria. The study found that globalization has been painted as an evil wind by African scholars because of its negative effects on cultural norms and values in Africa. It also found that globalization is not the only cause of cultural degradation in African but culture changes through natural dynamics. The study recommends that governments in African continent should appropriate the gains of globalization to advance the rich cultural endowments. In Sylvia and Martins (2017) study on cultural globalization and sustainable development, discovered that globalization integrates culture on a global scale as evident in changing lifestyles, technological advancement and a near absence of cultural identity among Nigerians. It also revealed that globalization promotes imperialism and encourages impoverishment of developing nations. The authors recommend a deliberate measure should be marshaled to globalize the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria.

Ogechukwu, Benjamin and Ann (2016) state that globalization is a double-edged sword against Nigerian cultures. The study refuted the notion of Americanization and that homogenization is a process of natural selection. It affirmed that some aspects of the Nigerian cultures are superior to foreign cultures and vice-versa. It is on this note the study recommends hybridization of cultures to attain a better society. Robinson (2007) study on theory and the rise of globalization studies opine those different theories approach socio-cultural questions in various ways. He enunciates on several globalization

theories such as World system theory (expansion of capitalism), Global capitalism theory (economic imperialism), Network society theory (connecting the world's system and governments through technologies), Theory of space, place and globalization, Theory of global culture (homogenization and inter-connectedness of world cultures). Accordingly, the practical impact of globalization on Nigerian cultures is unimaginable.

Muthoka, Muthuri and Oginga (2015) investigate globalization in Africa. The authors conducted the study in Nairobi, Kenya. They employed survey design to compare empirical studies as a measure of validating their arguments about the impact of globalization on the African continent. The study found that globalization is a hot issue in the economies of sub-sahara Africa. It noted that the unfavorable outcomes of structural Adjustment programmers sponsored by IMF and World Bank are measures to propagate Western interest in Africa. It was also revealed that globalization has minimal benefit to African's economies. Based on these findings, shrewd and fiscal policy measures to actualize the gains of globalization were recommended.

In the study of cultural implication of ICTs and globalization in Nigeria, Ekeanyanwu and Edewor (2009) contended that developing societies have continued to generate arguments. The study argued that potential influence of globalization and ICTs on culture is unduly exaggerated in favor of cultural imperialism arguments. The study submits that arguments on cultural imperialism are socially irrelevant, theoretically moribund and conceptually deficient and outdated. The study sees globalization and ICTs as drivers of growth in socio-cultural development in the world.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### ***Global Culture Theory***

The study adopted the global culture theory as critiqued in Robinson (2007) because of its unique and relevance to the study's line of arguments. He states that cultural theories of globalization tend to line up along one of these three positions. One, homogenization theory sees a global cultural convergence that would tend to highlight the rise of world beat (music), world cuisine (food), world tourism, uniform consumption pattern and cosmopolitan city (urban settlement). Two, heterogeneity approach sees cultural differences that promote local autonomy, cultural resistance to homogenization, cultural clashes and polarization, distinct subjective experiences of globalization. The third argument is hybridization theory which emphasizes new and evolving cultural forms and identities produced by several transnational processes and the fusion of distinct cultural processes.

Ritzer and George (2011) explain the theory of homogenization with the new popularized term "McDonaldization", to describe socio-cultural processes by which the principles of fast-food economy restaurant dominated more sectors of the economy of the United States of America and the world. Ritzer opines that homogenization approach suggest Weber's process of rationalization epitomized in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the McDonald's restaurants. The

commoditization and rationalization of social organization spread throughout the gamut of social and cultural process giving rise to Mcjobs, Mcinformation, Mcuniversities and even Mccitizens. As McDonalization spread throughout the institutions of global society, cultural diversities were undermined as uniform standards eclipse human's creativity and dehumanized social relations.

Robinson (2007) tried to connect the interplay of cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization and through the Appradurai's thesis. The thesis lays emphasis on the central problem of today's global interactions, the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural here organization. He identifies global cultural flows that are more in isomorphic paths. These flows generate distinct images –set symbols, meanings, representation and values that are called 'scapes' or globalized mental pictures of the social world as perceived from the flow of cultural objectives. These different flows in Appradurai's thesis create transnational cultural spaces and practices not linked to any national society, hence a disjunctive between culture and economy or culture and politics. Globalization is thus an empire with an unknown/visible emperor. Can this be true?

### ***The African Fear***

By extrapolation from previous studies, a comprehensive list of the negative effects of globalization on the indigenous African cultures and in particular the Nigerian economy are overwhelming amongst is that, developing countries are living at the mercy of the super powers in term of military, economic manipulation, technologies and even health facilities. Globalization, according to the author discredit indigenous cultures, values knowledge, personal experiences and national privacy. Eze (2014) affirms that through colonization and imperialism, the people of Africa were forcefully dominated, paving a broad way for the process of globalizing the continent. Colonial masters imposed their cultures on the people by teaching them a foreign language. They made Africans to behave those traditional African cultures were bad and inferior to theirs. This was enhanced through economic and educational globalization. Nicolaidis (2012) also affirms that globalization resulted to erosion of the rich traditions and customs of the African people. It is evident that many African languages, festivities and values have gone into extinction.

The proliferation of small and light arms which Militants, Shittees, Boko Haram, Bandits and Arm-robbers are using to invade homes, cart away properties and monies from banks (Offa bank robbery in Kwara State, Nigeria) and destroying human lives is traceable to the negative effects of globalization. The Vanguard Newspaper, 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2014, says that African traditional cultures emphasize values such as communalism, dignity of persons, respects for elders, hospitality and brotherly love. However, through globalization, African are made to confront values that are alien and in conflict with their own way of life. Eze (2014) also emphasizes that developing nations are blackmailed by Europe and United States of America for refusing to legislate in favor of gay or same sex marriage which Africans consider



abhorrent and abominable. African tradition of human fidelity is in consonance and conformity with natural creation.

Africans are afraid of losing their rich and endeared cultural heritage. They understand that a nation without identity, origin and culture is a lost generation. This fear was captured by Ogechukwu et al., (2016) that Africans are skeptical of the net benefits of globalization and that the continent has adopted a defeatist approach towards the process of globalization. In similar vein, Lapham (2001) and Nicolaides (2012) observe that Africans believe America is in position to reshape norms, alter equations and create new realities. Americanization of people's cultures is creating fear and has grave consequence on African's identity.

### ***Any Hope for African's Cultural Heritage?***

This study intends to move away from the usual norm of critiquing the negative effects of globalization on the socio-cultural and socio-economic space in Africa. There is therefore need to ask and ponder on these questions; how long will Africans complain about the ills caused by globalization? Are there no benefits derivable from the actions of globalization by the countries and people of Africa? Is it possible to recover the loss values, traditions and customs allegedly caused by the wind of globalization? Didn't you think that these are some of the effects resulting from competition, growth and development to the African nation-states? The world being a battle field for growth and development does not allow weak practices and foundations to favourably compete with new and rewarding philosophies, innovations, inventions and ingenuity in man to create a better and sustainable way of life for humans and society. Bipolarization of the world is caused by ideological differences— countries belonging to the Northern and Southern blocks of the world are in constant rivalry. Similarly, cultures of the world (Western and African cultures and ideologies) are in dogged competition and the stronger and evolving cultures are playing the 'bigger brother' role while the weaker traditions are fading away. This is the African palaver!

According to biblical sermonization, the world at the beginning was globalized or homogenized till the 'Babel saga'-where God saw the strong and ill-conceived unity among the people that culminate to the building of the 'Tower of Babel' that ascends into the heavens. The account recorded that, the people intend to see God and may be to relate with him as man to man, or to usurp his authority as Satan boasted to ascend higher than God. God saw it as an insult, blatant blasphemy and ungodly act of insubordination that caused the Babel confusion and dispersion. God multiplied the singular world's language/dialect into several languages/dialects – a multi-linguistic generation which made the people to disembark from their intended projects.

The heavenly journey tower was abandoned because they were unable to hear and understand themselves-leading to the creation of diverse tribes, diverse tongues, diverse cultures, and diverse nations. This was the beginning of de-globalization or de-homogenization. Present day globalization is a process of returning the world to the basis or foundation - re-globalization or re-

homogenization of the scattered world. I hope this notion will not offend GOD! (Holy Bible, king James version). Based on this account, we can infer that globalization predates global capitalism and modernity theories as propounded by its proponents. The subject of globalization and attendant issues are larger than man. Lemke (2018) asserts that the system we seek to model, discuss and analyze has been in existence for centuries and we are limited by scale and exist for mere decades. Therefore, Africans must arise! Nigerians must arise! We must stand to do all it takes to promote and sustain our veritable cultural heritage to become one of the strong, virile and acceptable cultures of the world.

## CONCLUSION

The study dissected the issues evolving from cultural homogenization, cultural Americanization and globalization: the African fear. The study concludes that globalization is not entirely an ill-wind blowing against developing economies of the world. It is global phenomenon not necessarily targeted on the people of Africa. African nations are also benefiting from the dividends of economic, educational, technological globalization. Based on the foregoing the study recommends as follows;

1. The governments and leaders in the continent of Africa should act as the change agents by repackaging and re-inculcating the African people with the veritable traditional values through the use of modern libraries and mass media.
2. The families, churches, mosques and traditional institutions should wake up to their avowed responsibilities of reviving the strong moral norms and values, the African belief system in the minds of the people through constant preaching and ensuring their relevance to modern realities. However, the archaic, anachronistic and barbaric traditions and customs must be furiously discarded.
3. Educational institutions in the continent should make African studies compulsory for pupils and students.
4. African nations and governments should also explore modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) to propagate the rich cultural heritage of the people to the world. The world can be AFRICANIZED if African leaders and governments will consistently utilize modern technologies to their advantage.

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