

## **A HERMENEUTIC STUDY OF KWAME NKRUMAH'S CONSCIENCISM VIS-A-VIS THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION IN NIGERIA**

**Nwume, Chukwuebuka Emmanuel**

Department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.  
ce.nwume@unizik.edu.ng

&

**Chidiebere Obi, PhD**

Department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.  
ccy.obi@unizik.edu.ng

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### **Abstract**

*This research is an effort to strike a balance between the reality of globalization and preservation of the Nigerian State. Due to the independence of many African states from colonialism, most African leaders and nationalists were faced with the task of fashioning a way out of the crises of identity, economy and political instability orchestrated by colonialism in Africa. In the bid to do this, some of these leaders (such as Nyerere) called for a return to the pristine African way of living which is communalistic in nature and total abandonment of all that colonialism has brought which to them were repugnant to the African way of life. Instead of this total abandonment, Nkrumah advocated for a synthesis between all that accompanied colonialism and the communalistic living of Africa; that it is better to grapple with the realities of the moment vis a vis the original African way of life. This is to enable Africans compete with rest of the world instead of leaving in self-denial and isolation. Africa today is battling with the crises similar to that experienced in the earlier years of post-independence owing to the impacts of globalization. It is no news that the world is a global village today due to the advancements in information and communication technology (ICT), international trade and economic charters and international political unions. Despite its numerous benefits in Nigeria, globalization also comes with some negatives like the bastardization of culture (resulting to identity problem), problem of technology transfer, electronic waste, economic and political instability and the like. Sequel to this, this work seeks to interpret (using the Hermeneutic method) Nkrumah's consciencism in order to draw out its implications to resolving the challenges of Globalization in Nigeria. Taking into cognizance the issues with Nkrumah's consciencism, this work concludes that through the instrumentalities of hermeneutics and eclecticism, Nkrumah's views can still be useful to moderating the influence of globalization in Nigeria in such a way that such influence will not be repugnant to Nigeria and at the same time, spurring Nigeria to compete as a major player in the global space.*

**Keywords:** Globalization, Consciencism, Nkrumah, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Globalization is a concept that has been used to capture the coming together of the world's economies, politics and cultures in order to build mutual exchanges and cooperation between the countries of the world. It is the process of opening up the hitherto closed societies of the world. This typifies the nature of man as a being-with, that is, a being that needs other beings in the matters of existence. According to Shenkar and Luo, globalization is “the growing economic interdependencies of countries worldwide through the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and

services and of international capital flows, as well as through the rapid and widespread diffusion of technology and information.”<sup>1</sup> Going beyond its economic sense, Tony Schirato and Jan Webb hold that “globalization is a process integrating not just the economy but, culture, technology and governance.”<sup>2</sup>

The reality of globalization has helped many countries of the world to achieve tremendous economic growth which is hinged on the increased capital mobility, decline in costs of transportation, computing and communications. It marks the interconnectedness of different countries of the world in such a way that happening anyway in the world can affect other parts of the world positively or negatively. Giddens captures this in his definition of the concept of globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”.<sup>3</sup> This is due to the scientific ingenuity of the information and communication technology that made it possible for speedy dissemination of information all over the world.

Globalization has brought the stimulation of technological, economic and political advancement in most developing countries but it has also brought with it many concerns to these countries especially Nigeria. To mention but few, Nigeria today experiences unemployment owing to the too much dependency on imported products made easier by the global free trade charters between States; as such, instead of making Nigeria a producing State (which will create employment), our leaders are carried away by the globalized trading benefits. Another area globalization has impacted negatively on Nigeria is the area of culture; the country is being faced with identity problem today as a result of the cultural diffusion orchestrated by globalization through internet and other technological development such as the social media. This is reflected in the way most Nigerians dress, the dwindling nature of our indigenous languages, our mode of worship and other cherished value systems. Nigeria has also become a dumping ground and experimental guinea-pig for developed countries where most electronically wasted products are dumped and new untested products are tested. Some people have also argued that modelling our democracy after that of the Americans or other developed economy does not reflect our domestic peculiarities. There are usually calls for a Nigerian form of democracy that will take into consideration, our national make-up as a people.

The importance of this research is quite enormous and it is anchored on the urgency needed in tackling the ravaging negative impacts of globalization in Nigeria. It is believed that the Nigerian society stands to gain a lot from the research; this is so because, the work provides alternative way for Nigeria to partake in the global space without necessarily losing her identity or serving as an experimental guinea-pig in the hands of the key players in globalization. Nkrumah's consciencism provides us with the alternative pathway to globalization; just as Nkrumah recognized the factors that created crisis to the conscience of post-colonial African, this research brings to fore those negatives from globalization that create a crisis in the contemporary Nigerian where most of the original values are lost to the effect of globalization. Nkrumah in his consciencism tried not to take us back to the pristine Africa since that would not be a viable option owing to the development in science and industrialization but rather proposed an option that will keep Africa relevant and competitive in the world economic and political realities as at the time.

### **Challenges of Globalization in Nigeria**

The effects of globalization are janus-faced; this is because, globalization has brought both good and bad effects on Nigerians. It is no longer news that life has been made easier in a globalized Nigeria. Some of the positives of globalization outlined above are applicable to Nigeria. Here, we shall focus more on the negative impacts of globalization in Nigeria.

**Impacts on the environment:** Globalization can have both positive and negative effects on the environment. It can exacerbate environmental problems as well as provide new means for addressing them. However, the negative effects of globalization seem to outweigh its positive effects. Globalization has had a negative impact on the environment through deforestation. Globalization is often viewed as a root cause of deforestation. The overuse of natural resources due to increased demand and also the removal of ecosystems due to population growth have had a large negative impact on the environment. Extensive deforestation has occurred world-wide with the logging industry being fuelled by the need for disposable products. Thus, deforestation whether it is for an increase in demand or for expansion is causing a loss of biological diversity on the planet. Nigeria is not exempted from the impact of deforestation. The country's rain forest is depleting fast majorly as a result of international trade.

Globalization has brought about various forms of environmental pollution. Environmental pollution has been described as the contamination of the environment by biological, chemical, and or physical agents that are harmful to human, animal or plant, life and the general environment, and may arise through the natural events, industrial and human activities or the interaction of all.<sup>4</sup> Pollution of the environment is attributed to the increase in industries, burning of fossil fuels to run the industries, machines and for transport of both raw and finished products to different places.

The activities of oil industries and multinational corporations in oil producing areas of the country, mostly in the Niger Delta area is a major source of environmental concern in the country. Oil industry activities – exploration, production, refining, and transportation – have caused widespread social and ecological disturbances. These include explosions from seismic surveys, pollution from pipeline leaks, blowouts, flaring, drilling floods, and refinery effluents, as well as land alienation and widespread disruption of natural terrain from construction of oil-related industrial infrastructure and installations.

One major activity of these multinational companies that has a tremendous environmental impact is gas flaring. According to the World Bank, by 2002 flaring in the country had contributed more greenhouse gases to the Earth's atmosphere than all other sources in sub-Saharan Africa combined – and yet this gas is not being used as a fuel. According to *The News Magazine* of 18 April 2011, the NNPC, in its May 2010 report, stated that of the 192 billion standard cubic feet (BSCF) of gas produced during the period, over 145 BSCF was flared. This is done at the detriment of the environment. All what flaring of gas does is to contribute to climate change which is already a major global threat, manifesting in food insecurity, diseases, skin cancer, and also increasing rise in the cost of extreme weather damage.<sup>5</sup> People living in the area where gas is being flared are the worst hit. The flares contain toxins, such as benzene, which pollute the air, resulting in respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis.

In other words, due to the intense heat that accompanies gas flaring, vegetation in the vicinity is bound to be affected as plants will not grow in such an area.

### **Electronic Waste**

Another major challenge of globalization in Nigeria is that of electronic waste (e-waste). “Electronic waste” or “e-waste” may be defined as all secondary computers, entertainment device electronics, mobile phones, and other items such as television sets and refrigerators, whether sold, donated, or discarded by their original owners. This definition includes used electronics which are destined for reuse, resale, salvage, recycling, or disposal.<sup>6</sup>

According to Achim Steiner (2007), UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, “globalization is triggering a massive rise in electronic wastes, some of which are being dumped in Asia and Africa: one investigation indicates that at least 100,000 computers arrive at the port of Lagos alone each month. Up to three quarters of the imports — which also includes old televisions and mobile phones — will end up in an African rubbish tip or open-air incinerator.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, with computer manufacturers competing intensely in terms of innovation, the raw processing power of computers is rapidly increasing, resulting in a large number of machines becoming obsolete in increasingly short periods of time and also due to ongoing technological advancement, many electronic products become obsolete within a very short period of time, creating a large surplus of unwanted electronic products.

As a result of lower environmental standards and working conditions in most developing countries, e-waste is being sent to these countries without any concern on the negative environmental impact as well as the negative impact on the health of the citizens of these countries.

### **Technology Transfer**

Technology transfer also known as Transfer of Technology is the process of spreading and adoption of technological skills, services, methods, products etc from one geographic area to another. This is to facilitate a wider coverage and usage of such technological ingenuities. The concept of technology transfer has been defined as the movement of know-how, technical knowledge or technology from one organizational setting to another.<sup>8</sup> David E. defined Technology transfer as the act of exchanging technical knowledge, skills and final products from one body to the other.<sup>9</sup>

Plainly, it is the process by which technology developed in one place is exploited and used in another place. This can be done in two major ways: horizontal and vertical transfer.

Horizontal transfer is the most common form of technology transfer. This takes place when technology is moved from one area to another, while vertical transfer takes place each time technology is moved from one department to another within the same area.

It is important to note that the transfer of technology is not confined within geographical boundaries, but can be done internationally, that is where technology is transferred between different international institutions and governments. This can be said to be 'International Technology Transfer'.<sup>10</sup>

This transfer is usually necessitated by the technological needs of the less developed countries as such movement is usually from developed to less developed countries and this is made possible by globalization. That does not mean that technology transfer cannot take place between developed countries but the concern here is the transfer between the technologically advanced countries and less developed ones with Nigeria as a typical instance.

Most of the technologies used in Africa today are transferred which earned African a debasing name: 'Dumping ground'. The reason for this dependence on technology transfer by Africa is due to her inability to put measures in place that will help build the capacity for technological know-how in her citizenry. This is because most of these technologies that are being transferred to African are products of researches in Universities sponsored by the government; they are made possible by the government investment in education. Therefore, one can argue that the reason for so much dependence on technology transfer by African countries is as a result of lack of government's responsive actions to the responsibility of funding education in Africa.

### **Consciencism vis-à-vis the Challenges of Globalization in Nigeria**

To create the link between Nkrumah's consciencism and resolving the bad effects of globalization in Nigeria, the question we may first answer is: what really informed Nkrumah's consciencism? Nkrumah's propounded consciencism at a time Africa was battling with the aftermath of colonialism; colonialism brought with it, a destabilization of African traditional way of living, introducing alien cultural traits. In the words of Nkrumah: philosophical consciencism is the “map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western, Islamic, and Euro-Christian elements in Africa and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality.”<sup>11</sup> The need for philosophical consciousness is based on the irreversibility of the dynamic changes that have occurred in African society as a result of the influence of alien cultures, as well as the belief that for any institution or ideology to be effective, it must relate to the conditions of the people it seeks to serve. Through a process comparable to gestation or grafting, philosophical consciencism would synthesize a harmonious whole out of the otherwise conflicting cultures in Africa. According to Nkrumah, African history has accumulated many muddled teachings and orientations from external influences such as colonial imperialists, Islamic and Euro-Christian elements, resulting in an equally muddled and conflicting vision.<sup>12</sup> The situation has been worsened by the deceptive presentation of African history as a story of Western adventure. A reforming, revolutionizing, and inspiring philosophical system is indispensable to fully undertake the venture of the unification and liberation of Africa. He calls this system “*Philosophical Consciencism*.”

Philosophical consciencism would serve as a "body of connected thought which will determine the general nature of our action in unifying the society which we have inherited; this unification to take account, at all times, of the elevated ideals underlying traditional African society.”<sup>13</sup> This would further equip the African with the ability to shift and blend appropriate values for the major elements of African history in order to form or fit the African personality. To help resolve the crisis of conscience already created by the contact between Africa and the West, Nkrumah (1964) further writes that our philosophy must find its weapons in the environment and living conditions of the African people. It is from those conditions that the intellectual content of our philosophy must be created. The emancipation of the African continent is the emancipation of man.

Consciencism is therefore, that philosophical standpoint which taking its start from the present content of the African conscience indicates the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience.<sup>14</sup> Following from the above definition, it is clear that the present content of the African's conscience is that fraught with the crisis of synthesizing the traditional African thought with trends of Islamic and Euro-Christian influences. The new ideology is to ensure therefore an order in the whole life of the African people and should be seen in the peoples' class structure, history, literature, arts and religion.<sup>15</sup> According to Nkrumah, the African personality is defined by the cluster of humanist principles that underlie traditional African society. Philosophical consciencism is that philosophical standpoint which, taking its start from the present content of African conscience, indicates the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience. The above view brings about the dialectical nature of the doctrine of philosophical consciousness.

Deducing from above, one is right to argue that the negative effects of globalization in Nigeria as outlined above have brought about distortion in the conscience of an average Nigerian thus, calls for a remedying. Average Nigerian is battling with the novelties that accompanied globalization which have changed a whole lot about the way he speaks, eats, his ideal family living, his original natural/healthy environment, his dress sense, his gender relations and indeed, all facets of his existence have been affected by globalization. Since globalization is something that cannot be wished away, it then, calls for the application of ideals of consciencism which admonishes for a synthesis between the good and bad globalization brings thereby, instilling in the consciousness of Nigerians the better approach to globalization.

Nkrumah criticized the like of Nyerere for trying to do away with everything western thereby, calling for a total return to the pristine traditional African ways. To Nkrumah, this attempt by some African nationalists is anachronistic as it fails to grapple with the current realities in the world; Africa is not and should not be isolated from the rest of the world and as a result of this, must exert herself by grappling with scientific revolution and the accompanying industrialization. Therefore, consciencism represents a clarion call on Africans to draw a synthesis by managing the crises occasioned by colonization as against doing away with everything Western as suggested by some nationalists. Consciencism operates within the understanding that there some good in every system (even the seeming bad ones) and that it takes some kind of eclecticism to sieve out the good, make it align and fit into our peculiarities as a people; by so doing, a synthesis is formed from what *abninitio*, seemed antithetical.

In the light of the above, consciencism is also applicable to resolving the challenges posed by globalization in Nigeria. Just as Nkrumah posited the impossibility of Africa disregarding the scientific and industrial revolution of the West for the pristine African traditional lifestyle, same can also be said about the Nigeria of today; in the face of the negative effects brought by globalization, it is impossible for Nigeria and by extension, Nigerians to isolate themselves from the rest of the world as a way of remedying these challenges. This is because, globalization, through its mercenaries (such as, many international organizations and charters) has made it impossible for any part of the world to be an island. Nkrumah's consciencism would advise that we establish a synthesis between who we are and what we want as a people on one hand and globalization and its accompanying effects (both the good and bad ones) on the other hand. This will help us

manage the bad effects of globalization, enjoy its advantages while also retaining our cherished traditional values as a people. The question still remains: since we cannot do away with globalization, what are the measures that can be deployed to resolving its negative effects in Nigeria? This question will be resolved in the conclusion of this work.

### **Conclusion**

As Nigeria aims at ripping the good fruits of globalization while grappling with its negative impacts, this research deems it fit to suggest ways we can get this done. This is because, globalization promises a whole lot of economic opportunities that if properly managed, would facilitate the desired progress. Most of the challenges of globalization in Nigeria can be managed if agencies saddled with the responsibilities decide to diligently carry out their duties. Oftentimes, the negative impacts of globalization are due to the negligence and corruption that exist in these government agencies.

For instance, the negative environmental impacts and electronic waste in Nigeria can be checkmated by the designated agencies such as the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (also known as NESREA) which is an environmental agency of the Federal Government of Nigeria that was established by law in 2007 to "ensure a cleaner and healthier environment for Nigerians".<sup>16</sup> Part of the responsibilities of this agency is to ensure the environmental impacts assessment and since the creation of NESREA, the agency has held the responsibility for enforcing EIAs in Nigeria. Though Nigeria runs a federal system of government, the sub-national regions (known as States) are not empowered to issue this document. NESREA's sole jurisdiction over certifying EIAs was affirmed in a 2015 court of appeals ruling.<sup>17</sup> Some of the environmental hazards emanating from the activities of the multinational oil companies such as deforestation, gas flaring, oil spillage etc can be checkmated by this agency to ensure that these multinational companies operate within the international best practices. The agency should also ensure that Nigeria does not continue as a dumping ground for all manner of outdated electronic appliances that would further degrade the environment. This can be achieved by shunning all manner of corruption at our borders and ensure proper screening of imported electrical appliances into Nigeria.

On the area of technology transfer, we have stated earlier that the reason for this dependence on technology transfer by Nigeria and by extension, Africa is due to her inability to put measures in place that will help build the capacity for technological know-how in her citizenry. This is because most of these technologies that are being transferred to African are products of researches in Universities sponsored by the government; they are made possible by the government's investment in education. Therefore, one can argue that the reason for so much dependence on technology transfer by African countries is as a result of lack of government's responsive actions to the responsibility of funding education in Africa. Therefore, government should invest more in education and research to ensure that when technology is transferred from any country, that it will be for capacity building.

Most of the multinational companies that usually use the free trade policy brought about by global charters and unions to exploit most African countries like Nigeria should be checkmated as well. Nigerian universities graduate thousands of electronic and civil/building/ construction engineers on yearly basis but we still rely on foreign companies and contractors for road construction who usually treat our engineers poorly. We are not arguing against the transfer of such technologies but such should be tilting towards building on what we already have and not to make us to be perpetually dependent.

Applying Kant's categorical imperative to the foregoing, the Universal Law ethical formulation states: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." This formulation simply implores one to always carry out universalizable acts. Sequel to this, one should desist from actions that cannot be universalized.<sup>18</sup> An application of this to technology transfer will admonish all parties to be partners in progress. This is because, the transferred or the recipient of technology transfer who sees such as an avenue for exploitation, is not acting from duty and such is repugnant to the Universal Law formulation of Kant.

On the other hand, the Humanity or End in itself formulation states: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never as a means only, but always at the same time as an end." This formulation simply underscores the worth and value of a human person who ought to be treated always as an end. Applying this to technology transfer, it will simply admonish that exploitation in the guise of technology transfer is to treat people as means instead of as an end. If the purpose of technology transfer is to make a people to be perpetually dependent instead of helping to build the capacity for self-dependence, then, such violates the second formulation of Kant's categorical imperative.

From the foregoing, it is clear that technology transfer should tilt towards building bridges across nations in terms of helping to solve some of the problems facing the less technologically developed countries; helping them build the capacity for self-reliance which will eventually transform them into inventors and transferrers of technology. Ethically speaking, the idea of using technology transfer as an avenue for exploitation and perpetual monopoly is highly condemnable.

The arguments advanced so far showed that Nkrumah consciencism is quite pivotal to changing our attitude towards the negative impacts of globalization. It simply admonishes that, since Nigeria cannot exist outside the globalized world as a way of avoiding these negative impacts, she should rather focus on how to manage these impacts (both positive and negative) in such a way that she becomes a strong competitor in the globalized world.

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