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**The Effects of Globalization on the State in Africa:
Harnessing the Benefits and Minimizing the Costs**

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1. Introduction

This presentation is not about technical aspects of internationalization, although I am sure these will continue to be important in public administration life all over the world. It is not about processes of localization, although I believe that both theorists and practitioners in politics and public administration must preoccupy themselves with the questions related to how tendencies and forces of globalization and localization have to be compromised for socio-politico-economic harmony within and without African countries. Nor is it about the intricacies of international marketing, trade and finance, even if I am sure that these will continue to play a determinant role in the capacities and ways of public administration work. Globalization is having effects on the way the State and its Public administration apparatus behave and this is the main gist of the thinking in my presentation. In the first section, I give my understanding of globalization. In the second one, I will highlight the effects both positive and negative it has on the State and public administration, especially in Africa. Then I will conclude by proposing how Africa's Public Administration should respond in order to maximize the benefits of globalization while minimizing negative effects.

2. What is globalization?

Globalization is a process of advancement and increase in interaction among the world's countries and peoples facilitated by progressive technological changes in locomotion, communication, political and military power, knowledge and skills, as well as interfacing of cultural and value systems and practices. Globalization is not a value-free, innocent, self-determining process. It is an international socio-politico-economic and cultural permeation process facilitated by policies of governments, private corporations, international agencies and civil society organizations. It essentially seeks to enhance and deploy a country's (society's or organization's) economic, political, technological, ideological and military power and influence for competitive domination in the world.

3. Is globalization positive or negative? The two sided coin

Globalization is a phenomenon that seems to have come creeping through man's history only to recently gain speed and cover the entire world like in one sweep. Some countries are taking it as

a big problem, and therefore missing the opportunities it is offering, while others have grabbed it as a movement offering development potential and used it to advance their growth and development and their self-interest, whether it be national or personal. While some are taking it as a dangerous process of exploitation where rich countries and big international corporations are getting bigger and richer at the expense of the poor ones and a sort of fulfilment of “man to man is a wolf”, others are seeing it as the final pin in the process of positive socio-politico-economic, mutually beneficial, global integration.

Whichever way it is taken, the phenomenon of globalization has attracted enough world attention to warrant intensive discussion at the world’s governing body (the United Nations General Assembly) which, in its resolution 55/102, recognized “globalization and its impact on the full enjoyment of all human rights” and expressed the “need to achieve international cooperation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction” (referring to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development).

It is important to note, optimistically, that globalization offers great opportunities. However, it is probably more important to be clear about the negative aspects of globalization and the fact that its benefits are very unevenly shared and its costs are unevenly distributed among, across and within countries. This is very true especially when seen in the light of African countries. Both in concept and in practice, for every positive aspect of globalization, there is negative side: “While globalization has positive, innovative, dynamic aspects, it also has negative, disruptive, marginalizing aspects” (UNDP Human Development Report 1999, page 25). Below I give examples to illustrate this point.

Positive side	Negative side
Globalization opens people’s lives to other cultures and all their creativity and to the flow of ideas and values.	As cultures interact, some cultures are being diluted and/or destroyed at the expense of others and negative values are being spread all over the world with relative ease.
Information and communication technologies have eased interaction among countries and peoples.	The world is now divided between the connected, who know and who have a monopoly on almost everything, and the isolated, who do not know and who practically have nothing.
Globalization has eased international trade and commerce, facilitated foreign investment and the flow of capital .	Globalization has encouraged illicit trade in drugs, prostitution, pornography, human smuggling, dumping of dangerous waste and depletion of the environment by unscrupulous entrepreneurs.
Globalization has freed labour across boundaries and facilitated “brain trade”.	Globalization has facilitated the “brain drain” in developing countries, thus reducing further their human capacity.
Globalization has set new rules that are integrating global markets.	Globalization has set new global rules that have further marginalized Africa’s poor countries and people, especially in areas of trade.

Globalization is creating a global village out of a wide and diverse world.	Globalization has created a global village of privileged people whose borders are impenetrable to the poor, unconnected and unskilled. The citizens of the global village are very few.
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The extreme optimists see globalization as a glass three quarters full of opportunities. The extreme pessimists see globalization as a calabash full of problems, especially exploitation, socio-economic injustice and international political domination. Mid-point strategists must see globalization as a change process full of opportunities and challenges that must be carefully and skilfully harnessed and managed for human development.

The effect of globalization on the State in Africa is not only of an economic nature. The process and the outcome of globalization involve a lot more than economics. Globalization includes permeation of political ideas and practices across borders. It includes permeation of cultural and religious beliefs and practices, resulting in dilution of some cultures. It includes the permeation of administrative/managerial concepts and practices across borders and organizations. It includes the domination by some super-powers through military coercive means and the impositions that go with it. It involves internationalization of conflicts that would otherwise remain local.

The state decision-making and policy-making process itself, and therefore the influence and power of the State, has been globalized and shared among the various world decision-making bodies. There are international courts, international human rights organizations, international military conventions, international laws, rules and regulations to which the State is subjected. There are international and regional trade agreements, and powerful international lobby and pressure groups in various fields. There are universities and institutions of higher learning with all their power to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes that shift behaviors of societies and state leadership as well as followership. All these combine to reinforce the phenomenon of globalization and force the State to shift its behavior and the way it relates with both its "subjects" and its internal and external partners. Below I highlight some of the effects of globalization on public administration in Africa.

- i. **Overstretched capacity to regulate and protect the environment.** The capacity of most African States to handle issues such as production of harmful chemicals, global warming, depletion of natural resources destruction of organic agriculture, dumping of nuclear waste is still limited. However, as global actors invest and expand their activities, especially related to industrial, agricultural, mining, forest exploitation and fishing, the regulatory capacity of public administration in African countries, which is already limited in many respects is becoming overstretched. The State is getting caught in the middle of its need to speed development through industrialization, agricultural modernization, exploitation of natural resources, etc. and the pressure of local and global environmentalist groups. Global forces in this respect, rather than putting too much pressure on governments to do what is beyond their capacity, should first and foremost concentrate on strengthening the capacity of these governments in relevant aspects.

- ii. **Undermining the power of the State.** Most African governments are finding themselves in a situation of “*fait accompli*” when it comes to making certain policies and decisions. International agencies such as the World Bank, IMF, the United Nations World Trade Organization, etc. take decisions which are binding on countries. This could be looked at as eroding the sovereignty and power of the State. We must add that this is not only the case in Africa. The poorer the country, the more chance of power erosion for the State. This would be minimized if the voice of Africa’s States was increased and strengthened in the world bodies. Stronger African regional bodies would also help in this respect, provided these bodies were represented in the world bodies at the same time.
- iii. **Undermining the democratization process.** There is an ongoing democratization struggle in Africa. Some African countries began the process of democratizing their governments, political systems and societies sometime back. However, the international partners they are working with in this globalized world are hardly democratic. While the democratization process would require that the people of the country in question get involved in the taking of decisions and policies that concern them, some of the big decisions affecting Africa today are more or less imposed by the globalization players such as the World Bank, IMF, the World Trade Organization, etc. This has been the case for example with the liberalization and privatization policies in Africa. This makes the people not trust the democratization rhetoric they hear from their leaders when they are confronted with this “*fait accompli*”. There is a discrepancy between the rhetoric from these bodies concerning the need for democracy and the way the same bodies arrive at decisions of great consequences. It is not possible to be seen to be democratic by the people you govern when they do not see or get involved in the process of making the decisions and policies you follow to govern them. This is a big dilemma for African leaders.
- iv. **Overstretched capacity to handle international and computer-based crime.** The African State and its forces of law and order were used to handle “traditional crimes”. However, with globalization there has been an increase in crimes (drugs, pornography, international corruption etc.) that had been at lower magnitude. In addition, progress in Information technology has facilitated the emergence and growth of computer-based crimes, especially fraud. For this the law and order forces have not been well prepared. The increase in these crimes across borders makes the forces of law and order look helpless, unhelpful and incapable. This tends to erode the confidence of the public in the State, thus weakening further its legitimacy. The strong challenge posed by the powerful criminals on the State creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity in the public, thus reducing the required confidence that would attract both local and foreign investment. There is need to strengthen the capacity of the forces of law and order, especially in the areas of detecting and handling sophisticated crime. If this does not happen, the sophisticated criminals will find ready-made comfortable hiding places in Africa. This will be a big insecurity problem for the rest of the world.
- v. **Making the task of poverty eradication more difficult.** As global actors pressurize African governments to open up more and more to maximize foreign investment and capital inflows, and as big multinationals and local enterprises utilize this environment to

cater for their interests, the government is having less and less room to pay attention to the abject poverty amongst its poor people. Evidence that shows the widening gap between the poor and the rich both in country and between countries is increasingly becoming abundant. The African State will have to be encouraged to pay more attention to the fate of its poor than to the fate of big global actors. The big global actors can talk for themselves with little problem. The issue is: who will talk for the poor?

- vi. **Debt accumulation and the debt burden.** The phenomenal debt burden of African countries is well known. Most of the accumulation of this debt over time was as much a result of the incapacity of the borrowers to pay it back as it was of the ease with which the lenders gave money to the countries. This was, and still is, facilitated by the context of globalization. The paradox about this is that the governments borrow in the name of poverty reduction, while their social spending that would go towards alleviating poverty remains very low. In the same way, the rich countries that lend money rarely allocate their financing towards social goals (see “Debt and Sustainable Human Development”, Technical Advisory Paper # 4, MDGD, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP, May 1999). There is a strong need for both national governments and external partners to shift their spending priorities towards the declared goals, such as poverty reduction and sustainable human development.
- vii. **Drain on the human capacity of the State.** Globalization has opened borders and relatively freed labor movements. But for African countries this has aggravated the problem of brain drain, which has existed for a long time. Although most African countries with appropriate financial policies receive remittances from their nationals working abroad, it is not clear whether the contribution of some of the most qualified to the process of developing their countries would not be more than the remittances they send back home from “exile”. It is noted, however, that this problem should not be over simplified. Some of the most qualified Africans ran away from their countries because of the negative behavior of the regimes themselves. In other words, this human capacity in some instances is frightened away by brutal regimes rather than being attracted by globalization forces as such. This problem can be appropriately tackled if the African leadership put their house to order first and foremost.
- viii. **Globalization of public expectations and social demands.** The interaction between local socio-politico-economic forces and global actors has generated new and or different demands from African societies and this has increased pressure on the public administration system to re-adjust to these demands constantly. Examples of such demands include: the demand for transparency and accountability, democracy, a clean environment, gender equality, human rights and freedoms, poverty eradication, competent leadership, effective service delivery and applying New Public Management approaches in public administration. These demands require that public administration systems and practices accordingly re-adjust consistently. In most cases, these demands are expressed by the private sector and civil society, both national and international, without considering the cost of what it would take to meet them. This is often beyond the capacities of African states. Moreover, some of the demands from international circles are not in line with the contextual realities in Africa.

The conclusion here is that globalization has posed enormous challenges for the African public administration systems. It has put demands on their capacities (institutions, structures, skills, knowledge, networks, technology, facilities, equipment, etc.), which, as everyone knows, has always been very weak, the systems themselves being still nascent.

Managing globalization effectively to benefit the African people, especially the poor, calls for new attitudes and leadership. It requires vision, appropriate knowledge, skills and wisdom from Africa's leaders. But it also requires sensitivity, willingness, a change of attitude and the right technical assistance from global actors such as the United Nations, especially in supporting the strengthening of Africa's public administration capacity to deal with issues of globalization.

3. Response to globalization

In a general way and in light of the effects of globalization on the African State highlighted above, I would like to outline the responses below. African States need to:

- i. Be open to uncertainty, ambiguity and change and develop and strengthen public administration systems that are change-oriented.
- ii. Adhere to openness and accountability, especially to the African people, so as to be seen to be democratic and sensitive to the problems of the local people.
- iii. Adopt a proactive approach to globalization so that the challenges it poses and the benefits it offers can be foreseen and planned for. The reality of globalization is that either a country changes or the globalizing forces change it. African States should use globalization to determine the direction of their people rather than letting globalization use their countries to determine the direction of the world.
- iv. Address human capacity needs from a comprehensive angle (skills, knowledge, attitude, networks, information technology). In any case, globalization or no globalization, a country cannot be more developed than the capacity of its human resources.
- v. Address institutional capacity needs (i.e., create and/or strengthen institutions that are change-oriented, outward-looking and able to interact meaningfully with global actors). These institutions must be in all spheres of politics and public administration and they must be tailored to have ability to network with the private sector, civil society and the international community. They should include institutions for policy analysis, planning implementation monitoring and evaluation. They should be buttressed in strong legislatures, executives, judiciaries and institutions of control.
- vi. Adopt flexible approaches and methods of administration as opposed to inflexible rule application and inward-looking bureaucracies). However, the adoption of the " New Public Management approaches (as they are advocated in developed countries) should always take into consideration the context of African countries, especially their needs and capacities. For example, the rolling back of the frontiers of the State, which included privatization, retrenchment and reduction of public expenditure in social sectors such as education and health, was probably not introduced in appropriate doses in some African

countries. This could be one explanation of the current high levels of poverty and inequality on the continent.

- vii. Strive to increase and strengthen the voice of African governments in international bodies (such as the United Nations) to offset the weakness created by the pressure of global actors at the local level). The decision-power of world bodies is eroding the decision-power of States. In order to offset this, the African States should have their voice strengthened in these world bodies so that the decisions taken have the input and blessing of the African leaders. In many respects, this is not the case today.
- viii. Adopt and practice participative governance involving all actors (central government, local governments, the private sector and civil society, both national and international, as well as world bodies).
- ix. Embrace the application of information technology in public administration practice (e-government).
- x. Develop social capital, especially by investing in the education and health sectors

In other words, a strategic attitude to be taken by African countries in light of the phenomenon of globalization should not be to seek apportioning blame between developed and developing countries. They should rather think in terms of strategic analysis to identify analyse, diagnose their strengths and weaknesses in light of the opportunities and challenges posed by globalization. Such an attitude would then create a mindset for self-assessment and appraisal to see how the weaknesses can be overcome. The cutting edge for African people to participate in and benefit from the game of globalization lies within the internal force, and the internal force lies within the capacity of its people. African countries themselves and those that hope to assist them must first and foremost recognize this fact and commit resources and energies to harnessing the capacity of the African poor for their development.

It is hoped that the global actors will realize that it is not beneficial to them or to anyone else to play the globalization-game without the poor. For globalization to ultimately be beneficial to everyone—the rich and the poor—all must have certain levels of capacity that permit them to effectively participate in the game. The current world, where resources and benefits are concentrated in the hands of very few, is not a comfortable world for anybody. And to sustain it is to breed future insecurity as the mass of the poor strives to get a share of the riches concentrated in the hands of the few. It is clear that globalization benefits those who have the capacity to harness it but can be very detrimental to those whom it finds not prepared. Most African States are not prepared, especially in terms of having the requisite capacity.

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