

DISCOURSE OF GLOBALIZATION AS A DOMAIN OF COLONIZATION

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ABSTRACT: *Globalization or discourses about it enjoy universal spread. This global visibility persists despite the belief that there are features of globalization that is destructive of social equilibrium. This seeming contradictory nature is explored with Nigeria as a setting. Nine typical textual exemplars were theoretically sampled from leading Nigerian media and displayed as data. Analytical facilities found in Semiotics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are drawn on in the analysis of the sampled textual exemplars. Analysis found that instead of focusing on the woeful economic consequences which should portray globalization in a bad light, the media report globalization in styles that hide globalization's dire economic consequences. It is recommended that the mass media should embrace the emerging media technologies because such technologies could help the media mobilize ordinary people to recognize and resist the harmful attributes of globalization.*

KEYWORDS: Globalization, Discourse, Colonization

INTRODUCTION

There are trends that characterize the discursive pattern of globalization. In discourse of globalization, some meanings are privileged at the expense of others. This trend draws attention to the politics of meaning. Irrespective of time and space or context, the powerful influences meaning. The meaning the world knows does not reflect what the vanquished had wanted. Meanings reflect only the “victories and defeats of past social struggles” (Fairclough, 2001, p.73). In a similar vein, the notion that “the thought of the ruling class is the ruling thought in every epoch,” Marx as cited in Kunczik, (1995, p. 52), points to the marginalization of meaning of the vanquished. Concern about the politicization of language/meaning is sharper in these words:

...language is not a neutral instrument; it is biased in thousand ways; and those ways are of course determined by any number of differing ideologies, knowledge, power systems and institutions.

Birch, (1989, p. 42)

It should be noted that concern about language had been a focus of attention among the ancients. According to Hahn, (1998, p. 110), the disciples of an ancient Chinese sage had asked the sage what the sage would do first if he was given power to set right the affairs of his country. The sage answered that he would certainly see to it that language is used

correctly. The disciples looked perplexed. Surely the disciples said, this is a trivial matter. Why should you deem it so important? And the master replied:

If language is not used correctly; then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone; if this remains undone, morals and art will be corrupted, if morals and art are corrupted, justice will go astray; if justice goes astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusion.

The foregoing is intended to draw attention to what is done with meaning in the discursive practices of globalization. Discourse of globalization projects certain meanings as obvious, universal and commonsensical. When the meaning of a concept is projected as obvious and commonsensical, such projection hides connotations that have the potential of exposing the concept as bolstering inequitable power/social relation (Fairclough, 2001, pp. 27, 70 & 84).

GLOBALIZATION

To be sure, globalization is an economic process (Fairclough, (2001, p. 204) or an Americanization process (Ritzer, 2000, p.434) or a global information process (Castells, 1996, p. 91) that centers upon maximization of free trade, free movement of goods, finance, people and information internationally. Question arises as to whether globalization is a process or just a mere rhetoric. The answer to this question exposes the ambiguous nature of the concept. Globalization affords meaning both as an economic process and as a discourse. As an economic process, globalization is partially complete but fully complete as a discourse (Fairclough, 2001, p. 206). But the sting in the ambiguous nature of the concept lies in way it is “represented” in the mass media (O’Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007, pp. 138-145). In media representation of the concept, its incomplete nature as an economic process with its attendant concomitance of poverty and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources are represented as complete (Fairclough, 2001). The hiding of globalization’s incomplete economic process attribute owes its success to a style of representation which projects globalization as a simple fact of life which should not be challenged for any reason (Fairclough, 2001, p. 207)

It is important to note that the resurgence in the systematic export of globalization, first to the West and later to fawning rest of the world, started during the administration of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair (Fairclough, 2001 p. 211). The export of globalization succeeds when its promoters contrived terminologies that eclipsed its attendant flaws of exploitation and poverty. According to Fairclough, euphemisms like reform, restructuring, privatization, market forces; deregulation and so on are the arsenals that are deployed to disguise the fangs of globalization. These euphemisms lure credulous statesmen who, wittingly or otherwise, blight the welfare of their people by running their states as a “local arm of international business” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 210)). States that are run like that instantiate what Castells (1997:304) refers to as “nodes of a broader network of power.” Castells decries the dilemma that credulous leaders face when they fall for the saccharin used to coat the bitter pill of globalization. According to Castells, leaders risk Western snob when they make a U-turn after embracing globalization. Contrarily, when leaders push ahead with globalization after its risks have been exposed to the citizenry, such foolhardiness estranges them before their constituencies.

Despite the near-perfect manner of disguising it, globalization still gets exposed to draw condemnation. In describing it as a deadly juggernaut Giddens (1990, p. 139) blasts

globalization as:

A runaway engine of enormous power which. ...we can drive to some extent but which also threatens to rush out of our control and which could rend itself asunder. The juggernaut crushes those who resist it... there are times when it veers away critically in a direction we cannot foresee... we shall never be able to control completely either the path or pace of the journey... we shall never be able to feel secure because the terrain across which it runs is fraught with risks of high consequences.

Globalization and Media Representation

In many ways and irrespective of time and space, the media still prop up the powerful (Fairclough, 2001, p. 47). Worse still, media's mode of operation denies the mass media the mechanism of immediate feed-back. Globalization feeds into these flaws. It feeds into these flaws when the media connive at glorifying economic globalization as a kind of an Eldorado instead of decrying it as a catalyst for poverty and an encourager of a ruthless mode of exploitation of the environment (Fairclough, 2001, p. 207).

The glorification of globalization is heightened when its protagonists valorize it "as a simple fact of life which we cannot (if we are sound of mind) dream of questioning or challenging" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 207). An extract from a discourse by Tony Blair, the former British Prime Minister, is often cited as typical of how globalization is valorized. Blair's exemplar is extracted from the speech he presented to the European Socialist Congress in June 1997. As presented and analyzed by Fairclough, (2001, p. 213), the extract reads:

...(1) our young people will work in different industries (2) Many will work in or own small businesses (3) Job for life is gone (4) Money is traded across international boundaries in vast amounts twenty-four hours a day. (5) New, new, new: everything is new...

In analyzing the above extract, Fairclough focused on the unchallenged compositional and ideological flaws of the speech. The first of such unchallenged flaws is entailed in sentence (3): "job for life is gone." Fairclough points out that the sentence implicitly represents insecurity of employment – yet the sentence was allowed to be reported as a simple matter of fact without any hint on its insecurity of employment implications. Also noted is how the modal auxiliary 'will' was used to help the speaker construct the future through predications in sentence (2). The help, Fairclough notes, enabled the speaker to wriggle out or avoid a commitment sentence like 'we shall encourage the setting up of small businesses.'

Sentences 4 and 5 are mere processes. But Blair constructs them, according to Fairclough, as real despite the fact that the absence of an agent exposes the unreality of the process. Those two sentences, but more so sentence 4, has no specific agent whatsoever. According to Fairclough, the audience were just bamboozle with the sound bite of money being transferred and traded across international boundaries without the merest hint of who does the transfer and/or how the transfer is done. The agents that are making everything new are also not mentioned. The obfuscation of the agents responsible for these processes is, according to Fairclough, a way of celebrating saying things instead of doing them despite the saying that it is easier said than done.

The Problem

This paper is inspired by the assumption that globalization has witting and unwitting apostles everywhere – more so in Nigeria. The following objectives are outlined to explore the incidence and nature of discourse of globalization in Nigeria. The objectives for the exploration are to ascertain:

- (i) Whether there are in Nigeria, globalization-induced economic practices.
- (ii) Whether such economic practices, where they exist, spread poverty to the citizenry and dilemma to the rulers.
- (iii) To explore reportorial practices with a potential of reducing the chances of colonizing the psyche of Nigerians with discourse of globalization.

Procedure

In view of the objectives, a purposive theoretical sampling method is adopted. A theoretical sampling method yielded its potentials and enhanced the effort of tapping data from Nigerian rulers, the organized labor, big corporate players and other stake holders. In making the choice of theoretical sampling, I ensured that the sampled texts would enhance the theoretical perspectives of this paper. Theoretical sampling's potential of enhancing the theoretical perspective of a researcher accounts for why (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p.167) cite Mason, (1996, pp.93-94) to note as follows about theoretical sampling:

Theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your questions, your theoretical position... and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing ... it builds on certain characteristics or criteria which help to developed and test your theory and explanation (p.167).

As planned, the sampling procedure sought print media texts, settings and individuals “where the phenomenon being studied is most likely to occur,” (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p.166). Media texts from two major Nigerian print media –*Guardian* and *Vanguard* – are considered adequate. The sentences sampled as textual data are number – 1 to 9 – for quicker/easier referencing.

METHOD OF TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

My construction of explanation with the textural data drew on both “researcher construction” and “subjective valuing” (Keyton, 2001, p. 70). These two approaches emphasize the use of subjective introspection in writing up what the author or researcher has gleaned from textual data. In using subjective insight, I “attributed a class of phenomenon to segments of the texts (Fielding & Lee, 1998, p. 41). This deconstruction approach lies in the notion that “subjectivity is advantageous and can be seen as virtuous and as the basis of researchers making a distinctive contribution that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected ” (Peshkin as cited in Peredaryenko and Krauss, 2013, p. 1). Scholars of the qualitative community (Meyers, 2009, p.166) agree that drawing on various analytic tools like Hermeneutics, Semiotics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) gives a fruitful foothold on data analysis. This is more so in the light of the fact that there is no off-the-shelf approach to qualitative data analysis. The standard procedure of qualitative data analysis is “custom-built and choreographed according the task

in hand. The pass word is learn by doing” – meaning that it is intuitive and iterative (Creswell, 2007, p.150).

Data Display

Vanguard, June 13, 2004

(1) The government does not set prices. (2) If the government intervenes in bringing down prices, marketers cannot sell at a profit. (3) People need to understand that this policy must be allowed to go ahead (4) we were voted in and given a mandate by the Nigerian people to do a number of things including the deregulation of the downstream sector of oil industry and we are not going to change that policy...

Guardian, April 29, 2005

(5) President Obasanjo again acknowledged that he was aware that Nigerians especially the poor have been hurt because of his policies. (6) He appealed to Nigerians to understand clearly, that government had no other motive...than the welfare of the citizen...

(7) MTN Nigeria also informs me that in May 2004, they launched a limited program for members of the House of Representatives and the Senate to aid them in their communication needs. (8) The program offered a mix of telephone equipment and call cards, this program they offer in other countries where they operate...

Guardian, May 1, 2005

(9) But the NLC insists that this year alone, the country’s workers have faced the worst challenges in their lives due to various reform agenda of the government.

ANALYSIS

Pursuant to the first objective of this paper, the immediate task in the analysis of the texts displayed above is to see if there are evidence in the texts showing that some businesses in Nigeria are run in a style that makes it look as if Nigeria is a mere node of a broader network of power where the business of governance must be run as though there is an international headquarter elsewhere that barks down instructions that must be obeyed. Sentence 3 but, particularly, sentences 7 & 8 are prime examples showing that governance here is run like a mere arm of international business. This summation is made in the light of the context that prompted the former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, to utter exemplars 7 & 8. Exemplars 7 & 8 were uttered to calm the uproar that erupted when a member of Nigeria’s House of Representatives interpreted as bribe, MTN’s gift of recharge card and other telecommunication equipment to his colleagues. Additionally, the bribery allegation and how I interpreted it here needs to be understood in the context of when it was made. The House of Representative member’s bribery allegation was made at a time Nigeria was supposed to be prosecuting a war against corruption. The bribery allegation was also in a time when such allegation claimed the job and reputation of a high-profile government official who committed no other crime than that of giving and receiving a ‘gift’. Given these circumstances vis-à-vis the casual way the former South African President rationalized what should attract the same censure as those meted to the Nigerian official, it may not be wrong to conclude that such rationalization smacks of complicity by a country that has different standards of discouraging/punishing crime/bribery. Stated differently, the rationalization

makes it look as if whatever international businesses with branches in Nigeria do elsewhere must also be done in Nigeria irrespective of whether such practices violate Nigerian laws and morality.

More important is the thing that is covered up by Nigerian authorities' connivance at Thabo Mbeki's rationalization. First is the strategic relevance, to the welfare of Nigerians, of the three institutions involved in the bribery allegation. MTN as a corporate institution was the only cellphone service-provider to Nigerians as at the time the allegation was made. The two parliamentary institutions – the House of Representatives and the Senate – have the mandate of Nigerians to make not only laws but to protect Nigerians from every manner of exploitation especially the kind that could come from profit-seeking corporations like the MTN. What Thabo Mbeki's rationalization played down was the fact that acceptance of 'gifts' in those circumstances could compromise/neutralize the alertness of the law makers to protect Nigerians when MTN gets encouraged to exploit Nigerians by taking advantage of the law makers it had already pocketed with 'gifts'.

This raises the question of how Nigerian media reported the rationalization by the former South African President. When I approached the Port Harcourt correspondent of the newspaper that reported the rationalization and asked what he made of it, his "*our paper did credible standard professional job*" betrays media's predilection "to misrepresent reality in the interest of power" (Toynbee, 2006, p. 160). The betrayal resonates with newspaper reportorial flaws which have drawn flaks from Carew (1996) as cited in Hanson, & Maxcy, (1996, p. 237). The focal point of Carew's criticism is the style of reporting that merely reacts to events in a way that makes it impossible for the audience to learn any new thing than to confirm a particular view of the world. According to Carew this style of reporting aspires to change nothing but just to dramatize events in ways that cast hapless readers as if they were spectators at a sports event. When readers are cast in that mode, according to Carew, the spectator may observe many flaws in the way the game is officiated but cannot do anything to ameliorate the flaws. In Kunczik's (1995, pp. 202 & 213) view, readers that are cast in the way Carew noted above lapse into "pluralistic ignorance" and "learned helplessness." According to Kunczik, such lapsing heightens to a degree that induces "spiral of silence."

The media would have done better if they had given more than elitist day-topical treatment to Thabo Mbeki's rationalization. They would have succeeded in doing that if they had increased the attention span given to the rationalization. Increasing the attention span would have meant bringing in the views of many Nigerian stakeholders. Such robust approach helps to make news reportage a dialogic instead of atomistic endeavor. The incorporation of individuals and the encouragement of community participation when hunting for news sources is the idea that "civic journalism" as championed by Friend; Challenger, and McAdams (2000, pp. 228-31) promotes. Because of the democratic latitude it promises the news production process, Fairclough, (2001, p. 163) references Jurgen Habermas to suggest that it is only when news about globalization incorporates dialogic style that such news will be free from colonizing tendencies. To be sure, colonization of people's lives takes place (Fairclough (2001, p. 194) in situations where the power dynamics have cajoled people to agree acquiesce and be silent in contexts that demand "questions, action, challenge, contradiction, assertiveness, boldness" and so on.

Critics of civic journalism has always said that the tenets of public journalism in its dialogic

mode is impracticable given that contemporary information technology cannot easily adapt to the imperatives of that brand of journalism. If the antagonists are right, an emerging innovation that projects social media as integral part holds out promises that erase the excuse. The streaming media (Topic, 2002) idea holds out hope for when rich information content will attain wide reach. Topic (2002, pp. 4, 5 and 251-2) further emphasizes the idea as follows:

If you have anything to say, you can say it to anybody and everybody who cares listens, uncensored, immediately. If you didn't understand what was said, you can play it again or ask directly for clarification ... today's media audience wants informed comments...the ability to ask searching questions...with all possible conflicts of interest declared. It frustrates people when the media are complicit in missing key stories and party to manipulation by vested interests... Streaming media with its ability to explain technicalities and to allow the audience to participate and trace back to sources, provides a unique opportunity to fulfill these expectations...

To be sure, Thabo Mbeki's rationalization fulfills objective one of this paper. The analysis of the rationalization fulfills the objective by establishing that the comment of the former South African President has made the running of Nigeria look like the running of a local arm of an international business. Another objective is to ascertain whether such style of running the country spreads poverty in Nigeria. Also to be ascertained is whether globalization afflicts Nigerian rulers with dilemma as predicted by (Castells, 1997, p. 304). The analysis of sentences 1, 4, 5, 6 and 9 above provides interesting insight. It is important to note that sentences 1-4 were uttered by Femi Fani Kayode. Femi Kayode was the special Assistant to President Olusegun Obasanjo on Public Affairs. In that capacity, Kayode's utterances as entailed in those sentences represented the position of the Obasanjo's administration on the issues.

Sentences 5 and 9 vindicate Castell's prediction that globalization spawns and spreads poverty. The entailments of sentence 5, uttered by former President Obasanjo, and the entailments of sentence 9, uttered by the Nigerian Labor Congress, indicate that globalization-driven policies of Obasanjo's administration worsened the sting of poverty on Nigerians. Sentences 1 and 2 affirm that globalization-inspired policies cause frustration and uncertainty to unsuspecting leaders who get entrapped by the pretenses of globalization. There are further interesting insights in sentences 3, 4 and 6. Those sentences entail "expressive modal categorical claim to truth and knowledge" (Fairclough, 2001, pp. 105 & 106). While O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2007, p. 121) note that "whoever controls modality can control which version of reality will be selected out as the valid," Fairclough explains modality in terms of writer or speaker authority. He informs that when modality orients towards speaker's authority with respect to truth, that is, with respect to the evaluation of truth or probability of a representation of reality, we have expressive modality. When it orients to authority of one participant to another, we have, according to Fairclough, relational modality.

In sentences 3, 4 and 6 the speaker drew heavily on the expressive variant of modality. By such move, the speaker got so committed to the 'truth' of his position in a way that portrays his views as transparent and as if his view signals its meaning to any observer without a need for interpretation/representation (Fairclough, 2001, p. 107). For instance, how did the speaker

know in sentences 5 & 6 that a policy he acknowledged as hurting the poor has no other motive than the welfare of the citizens? In a similar vein, Kayode did not explain what prompted him to sound so categorical (sentences 3 & 4) on why people must understand that they must allow the policy to go ahead? This manner of representation, according to Fairclough, is what makes categorical/expressive modality a site for ideological struggle. Fairclough also informs that categorical expressions like those of sentences 3 and 4 are typical of styles of discourse of globalization. The style of representation under review are the ones used to create the impression that whoever tries to challenge the discourse of globalization has gone out of their mind. It is this intimidating discourse style that colonizes the thoughts/mentality of hapless victims of discourse of globalization.

CONCLUSION

Foregoing discussion has not only established that globalization and its discursive practices are in Nigeria. More importantly, discussion establishes the existence of the most insidious variant of discourse of globalization in Nigeria. Discussed in the analysis are utterances showing that globalization is not only inflicting poverty to the populace but is racking Nigeria's ruling class with dilemma and frustration. Also discussed is how the inept mass media get unwittingly cajoled into the myopia of "misrecognizing the arbitrary" and by such ineptitude, "legitimizing it" Fairclough, (2001, p. 76). To fight off the colonizing tendencies of discourse of globalization, it is recommended that people should "contradict and assert themselves in settings where power dynamics would expect them to agree, acquiesce and be silent" (Fairclough, (2001, p. 194).

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