

The Global Village that never was?

By: Costantine V Magavilla

Published in S&C Magazine

The commonly used term – Global Village is in many ways misleading to those of us living in Africa who are/ were used to the term ‘village’ meaning a place where people live in a community with close family ties and shared social values; working together to produce food and protect their borders against enemy states. It is no wonder that this term has died off and has been superseded by the more ‘appropriate’ term – Globalisation, which decries and sounds off more accurately the aggressive border blind process leading towards the formation of a Global State where you may be your greatest enemy.

To get things rolling, let's take a quick look at the history behind this process. The term Globalisation was first coined in the eighties, but the concept stretches back decades, even centuries, if you count the trading empires of Spain, Portugal, Britain and Holland. Ironically Globalisation is a very natural phenomenon that reflects our desire as human beings to be masters of our environment. The term Globalisation gains its negative connotations from Global initiatives that made an effort to capitalize on this without due consideration for the adverse effects resulting. From the subtle pleasantries of its initial stages from this long history [the history of Globalisation], the present phase is marked by deepening but not widening capitalistic integrations and is quite different from earlier expansive phase of capitalism (Hoogvelt 1997).

So what has changed so much over the years? In the aftermath of World War II, Global integration reflected the need of the time to develop

economic stability that would protect the interest of the countries devastated by the war first. None-the-less, the cold war presented an ideological platform on which most internationalisation efforts were based. With the demise of the cold war, the main drive for internationalisation was pegged against capitalism and its appendages. It is arguable that globalisation is, now more than ever, evolving in a system for organizing economic life and production in which price mechanism, working through supply and demand, in workable competitive markets, provides the dominant mode for making economic decisions about what is being produced, and in what way it is distributed.

The 'natural' boundaries that gave us time to prepare for our enemies coming are slowly fading away. Globalisation has reached a level where it is near impossible to manage like the Nation States we have grown used to; the Global state is a self-managing state driven by boundary defiant integration of advanced communication systems and internationalisation of finance. Though the economic will and drive exists (everybody wants to make money), the political will and ability is almost non-existent. In national governance more focus is put on addressing the people's needs because their voices are easier to hear, but what do we make of the voices of the people in the global state; who is listening to their voices? This forging of a Global State is arguably more reliant on economic governance and its appendages and totally sidelines political or in other words people governance.

None-the-less, if we are to view the global context objectively, we need to go back to the 'village' economy where above all productivity is a critical determinant of the strength of a community and its members. Could this monstrous Global State really be an inflated village? Anyone who has been

to village in any part of Africa knows that those who eat are those who have worked and if you are eating without working, you are eating (figuratively) someone else's sweat. Can we then argue that economic sense is our primary sense and conclude as a result that we are primarily motivated by scarcity and our desire to protect ourselves against its adverse effects. And as a result a sustainable society promotes productivity as a principle and those who are not productive for any good reason are in effect the true enemies of the state.

Why then do we view globalisation negatively? Globalisation is perceived negatively in lesser developed economies like the ones in Africa, because of the failure of industrialization to penetrate into these countries, focus on economic growth at the expense of human development and my all time favourite corruption of the most adverse nature (day-time robbery). Not to mention that because we lack economic might, we are voiceless and feel victimized as a result in a world where you either exploit or are exploited.

Globalisation is liken to being tossed into a crocodile swamp; you better learn how to swim. One of the world's most respected economic thinkers of this time, Peter Drucker, in his book

The Age of Discontinuity argues that the world has become divided into nations that know how to manage technology to create wealth and nations that do not know how to do this. Creation of wealth is a critical base for a productive and sustainable society. A critical link to social economic development is the people and efforts have to be put as a result on developing people who are able to take advantage of the technologies available to create wealth. For sustainable development we not only have to multiply the productivity of capital but also we have to attract the human

energies of society into growth opportunities (Drucker 1969). We can spend eons arguing terms, but the proof is in the pudding.

Globalisation, Global Village, Global State are just a terms that we use to pose our varying and often time theoretical arguments, but the challenges presented are the same and real and require practical interventions. Do you remember this one – ‘think Global, act local’?