Chapter 9
Globalization, the Media, and Challenges of Illegal Migration for Africa

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing concern about African migrants who risk their lives to embark on hazardous journeys across dozens of borders and the treacherous waves of the Mediterranean Sea in search of a better life in Europe. Cable News Network footage of a live auction in Libya, where black youths were presented to north African buyers as potential farmhands and sold for as little as $400 confirm the fears and brought to the fore the ugly reality of the plight of illegal migrants. Aside, the narratives in the media about migration also give cause for concern. In the midst of the general invisibility of illegal migrants in the media, most portrayals refer to migrants in connection with themes of ‘trafficking’, ‘prostitution’, ‘slavery’, and ‘death’ because cases of enslavement, drowning, and killings of trafficked Africans in search of utopia greener pastures flood newspapers, magazines, and broadcast space. It is against this backdrop that this chapter proffers solutions and recommends ways to halt illegal migration and change media narratives about migration in Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

There is no denying the fact that with progress and advances in international cooperation, the world we live has become more connected than ever. Information, commodities, people, and money flow rapidly across national boundaries, a phenomenon often referred to as globalization (Rowntree et al., 2000; Ritzer, 2011).

Globalization is not recent as some scholars (Giddens & Sutton, 2013) have agreed. It has been occurring over a very long period of human history and is certainly not restricted to the contemporary world (Nederveen, 2004; Hopper, 2007), although debates around it became intensified some few decades ago. Therborn (2011, p. 2) posits that:

Segments of humanity have been in global, or at least transcontinental, transoceanic, contact for a long time. There were trading links between ancient Rome and India about 2000 years ago, and between India and China. The foray of Alexander of Macedonia into Central Asia, 2,300 years ago is evident from the Greek – looking Buddha statues in the British museum. What is new is the mass of contact, and the contact of masses, mass travel, and mass self-communication.

Therborn’s (2011) contention suggests that contemporary sociological debates have focused more on the sheer pace and intensity of globalization over the past 40 years. It is this central idea of an intensification of the globalization process that differentiates this modern era from others.

The most important challenges facing the world in the twenty-first century are associated with globalization, the increasing interconnectedness of people and places through converging processes of economic, political and cultural change. Once – distant regions are now increasingly linked together through commerce, communications, and travel. Many observers argue that globalization is the fundamental reorganization of the planet’s socio-economic structures since the industrial revolution. While few dispute the widespread changes brought about by globalization, not everyone agrees on the implications, or whether the benefit outweigh the costs (Rowntree et al., 2000).

The dispute and disagreement notwithstanding, most nations of the world including countries in Africa have benefited immensely from the opportunities presented by globalization. The remarkable growth Africa has enjoyed in recent times, for instance, has been largely due to a globalized system that distributes wealth (albeit unequally) and encourages trade, even though deeply flawed (Adio, 2018, p. 29). Dappa & Thom-Otuya (2010) however note that globalization has distorted the economic development of third world countries in several ways.
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