GLOBALIZATION AND THE LOGIC OF CAPITALISM IN DANIEL DEFOE’S “ROBISON CRUSOE”

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Abstract
In the course of human existence, the actors pay attention to the safety of their comfort zones. People do not only protect their comfort zones and what they have acquired, depending not on their might alone but on others. Today, the world is no longer as large as it used to be since globalization has brought about emerging trends in the areas of communication, education, trading, etc, such that one can be educated on-line, get information faster and do transactions from the comfort of one’s house. Over time, the nature of a true capitalist is that his quest for wealth is insatiable and he uses the worker to achieve his objectives and dumps him as he is due to be alienated from the benefits of his labour. This paper, therefore, explores the themes of globalization and capitalism and shows their relationship in the context of Daniel Defoe’s “Robison Crusoe”.

Introduction
The quest for survival has been and will remain the hallmark of human existence. Human beings must eat and acquire the basic necessities of life, no matter the circumstances. The urge for satisfaction has, many times, brought about innovation in no small measure. Robinson Crusoe’s innovativeness is brought to bear as a result of him being cast on an island. He rescues victims from the evil hands of savages and turns them into servants on the island. The rescue of Friday means more mouths to feed, therefore, there has to be an expansion of his cultivations and getting more games. Crusoe is usually restless when there is nothing to be done. Crauzetin (Saltoglu, 2010) aptly describes the English in these lines: “The Englishman [was] never satisfied with what he obtained; his mind [got] bored when in rest. The desire to increase always his property by continuous speculations destroy[ed] in him the love of tranquility . . .” He has no business in sharing his wealth with anyone even though he has used others to acquire them. This is a clear case of what Karl Marx describes as alienation, a situation, where the worker is completely separated from the benefits of their labour. Xury is sold without compassion, Friday is made a perpetual punitive servant who continues to serve and protect Crusoe.

Text Synopsis
Robinson Crusoe, by Daniel Defoe, is a young and restless individual who defies the advice of his parents especially that of his father and goes on seafaring. He gets involved in series of violent storms yet refuses to go home to the parents as a result of shame. He ventures into sea
again; he is cast on a lonely island where he lives for more than 20 years. He comes back and realizes that so much wealth has been made for him.

**Globalization**

Even though the word globalization is a new entry in most dictionaries, its noun form globe has always been used and the adjective global indicates the whole earth. Globalization, being a noun, stands for a process of globalizing. The implication of this is that there is a process that is being carried out in order for globalization to be realized. Oyeleye (2005), opines that to globalize, therefore, implies lower costs of production, international expansion of companies and appropriate take overs – global trade, global media, global fashion, global pollution, global language, etc. The world today has become a small community or a village such that to achieve or make advances in any human discipline, be it education, communication or marketing, one does not necessarily have to travel because of modern technologies that have really reduced the world to a small space. Larsson (2001), believes globalization “Is the process of world shrinkage, of distances getting shorter, things moving closer. It pertains to the increasing ease with which somebody on one side of the world can interact, to mutual benefit, with somebody on the other side of the world”. Globalization enables the ease of doing things. This cuts across every sphere of life and human endeavours.

It is no longer news that information is now at our finger tips, businesses, politics, education, technology etc. This is done across communities, cultures and disciplines. The point here is not to exhaust the concept of globalization but to examine and establish the fact that it has everything to do with the ease of doing business across the world. It does not really matter anymore whether or not an entrepreneur is around to manage their business, it will go on so long there are good people to manage such a business. An example of this is demonstrated in the text of consideration – Robinson Crusoe. Robinson Crusoe has found himself in Brazil and because the world is a global village contemplates thus:

…I resolved, if I could get license to settle there (Brazil), I would turn planter among them, resolving in the meantime to find out some way to get my money which I had left in London remitted to me. To this purpose, getting a kind of a letter of naturalization, I purchased as much land that was uncured as my money would reach, and formed a plan for plantation and settlement, and such a one as might be suitable to the stock which I proposed to myself to receive from England. (Defoe, 2011:38-39).

His desire now is to become a citizen of Brazil and become a farmer as it happens today. One can become a citizen of a place by birth, length of stay and so on. Such a person could participate in politics and any other legitimate business they so desire. Another very important tool of globalization is language acquisition. English language has been and it is still being used to globalize and tie and bind the world together. Fishman (1998) in Oyeleye (2005), describes the linguistic situation of English as “both a consequence of and a contributor to globalization”. Friday is rescued crude. Crusoe teaches him English, not to Friday’s benefit.
but his. No capitalist can be magnanimous enough to teach others what will salvage their situation because they (capitalists) need loopholes to exploit. English language is meant to make Friday do his master’s biddings with ease ... having learned him English so well that he could answer me almost any questions... (Defoe, 2011:20). Friday has successfully acquired English for easy manipulation by his master-Crusoe. As a capitalist in search of more wealth, he ventures into sea leaving behind his plantation in Brazil. Upon his return, he realizes that he has become wealthy:

...By the same fleet, my two merchant trustees shipped me 1200 chests of sugar, 800 rolls of tobacco, and the rest of the whole account in gold. I might well say now, indeed, that the latter end of job was better than the beginning. It is impossible to express here the fluttering of my very heart when I looked over these letter, and especially when I found all my wealth about me; for as the Brazil ships come all in fleets, the same ships which brought my letters brought my goods, and the effects were safe in the river before the letters came to my hand. In a word, I turned pale, and grew sick; and had not the old man run and fetched me a cordial, I believe the sudden surprise of joy had overset Nature, and I had died upon the sport. (Defoe, 2011:278).

Capitalism

Capitalism can be said to be an economic system in which the means of production and business ownership are completely left in the hands of private individuals. It must be noted that these individuals determine the prices of goods and services. Scott (2006) believes that:

...Capitalism is an indirect system of governing an economy where in various economic actors are allowed to compete to serve the needs of consumers according to a set of laws and rules, and where the ensuing competition serves to induce the mobilization of human energy and talent as well as other resources for the benefit of society as well as the economic actors themselves.

From the observation on capitalism by Scott (2006), the capitalist economy is highly competitive in that the more innovative one is, the more relevant one (and his product) will continue to be. Society is usually left at the whims of capitalists as they are to determine the prices of goods and services. We cannot separate capitalism from materialism. The basic interest of a capitalist is to make profit and to make it maximally; this could even be to the detriment of another person. Adam Smith says: “Political economy is one that protects its citizens, creates conditions for well-being, including economic growth and provides public services in the context of personal liberty protections of rights, and enforcement of laws of
justice”. (Smith, 1976) Political economy of capitalism ensures moderation, it is not absolute, that is, the practice of capitalism has human face, since the laws can be activated to deal with a situation in which the citizen has been taken advantage of. This argument by Smith sounds ideal. It will save consumers from heartless and inhuman capitalists. (Saltoglu, 2010) believes that:

By the turn of the 17th century, the overseas discoveries together with the development of new markets, increasing consumption, banking system, and trade enabled the limited British economy to flourish beyond its national boundaries. The young Englishmen, who could not find any promising trade or job opportunities in their native land, followed the voyages of discovery of the Spanish and the Portuguese sailors. Like Crusoe, these young Englishmen were inspired by wealth gained through adventure, and they left their homes with the hopes of finding fortunes.

Robinson Crusoe’s flare and desire to acquire wealth is not different from that of a typical capitalist. Sombart (1967) further states that due to the desire for having more, the new individual enjoys the bliss of “possess[ing] . . . the delight of owning much gold, no matter in what form”. As observed before, the interest of the capitalist is to make profit and make it even more. Crusoe became a capitalist before going to be stranded on an Island in which he spends over 20 years of fruitfulness in material acquisition. Necessity becomes the mother of invention for Crusoe. First he realizes that there is no one to contend with on the island but wild beasts and fowls that can be domesticated:

I found also that the island I was in was barren and, as I saw good reason to believe, uninhabited, except by wild beasts, of whom, however, I saw none, yet I saw abundance of fowls, but knew not their kinds, neither when I killed them could I tell what was fit for food, and what not; at my coming back, I shot at a great bird which I saw sitting upon a tree on the bide of a great wood. I believe it was the first gun that had been fired there since the creation of the world; I had no sooner fired but from all the parts of the wood there arose an innumerable number of fowls of many sorts, making a confused creaming, and crying every everyone according to his usual note; but not one of them of any kind that I knew. As for the creature I killed, I took it to be a kind of a hawk, its colour and beak resembling it, but had no talons or claws more than common; its flesh was carrion and fit for nothing. (Defoe 2011: 56-57).

The capitalist turns a barren land into a fruitful one. His (the capitalist) desire is always to create wealth with the available resource / resources. Crusoe comes upon an uncultivated/barren land which he turns into his empire by cultivation and taming the already existing animals. The capitalist is more superior as a result of the wealth at their disposal. Saltoglu, (2010) opines that “Having worldly riches turns into the lust for possessing even more fortune, and this insatiable psychology pushes the economy of Crusoe’s time. As the
capitalist individual is imbued by the capitalist urges, Crusoe’s personality is split between the conservative mercantilist culture and the entrepreneurial passions”. Crusoe is not different as he is able to acquire a lot with the power of his gun. No wonder he concludes above that no gun has been fired on the island since its creation. His survival is largely owing to the power of his gun:

The first shot I made among these creature, I killed a she-goat which had a little kid by her which she gave suck to, which grieved me heartily; but when the old one fell, the kid stood stock still by her till I came and took her up,…. took the kid in my arms, and carried it over my pale, in hopes to have bred it up tame, but it would not eat, so I was forced to kill it and eat it myself… (Defoe, 2011:65).

… I made him understand that I would shoot and kill that bird; accordingly I fired and bade him look, and immediately he saw the parrot fall; he stood like one frighted again, notwithstanding all I had said to him; and I found he was the more amazed because he did not see me put anything into the gun; but thought that there must be some wonderful fund of death and destruction in that thing, able to kill man, beast, bird, or anything near or far off; and the astonishment this created in him was such as could not wear off for a long time; and I believe, if I would have let him, he would have worshipped me and my gun. As for the gun itself, he would not so much as touch it for several days after; but would speak to it, and talk to it as if it had answered him, when he was by himself; which, as I afterwards learned of him, was to desire it not to kill him. (Defoe, 2011:208).

On the island, the power of his control lies in his gun. It is with the power of the gun that he saves Friday from the savages. Incidentally, this marks the beginning of his expansion and human companionship. He has said that he has to expand because of the extra mouth he has to feed:

I began now to consider that, having two mouths to feed instead of one, I must provide more ground for my harvest and plant a larger quality of corn than I used to do; so I marked out a larger piece of land, and began the fence in the same manner as before, in which Friday not only worked very willingly and very hard, but did it very cheerfully; and I told him what it was for, that it was for corn to make more bread, because he was now with me, and that I might have enough for him and myself too. He appeared very sensible at that part, and let me know that he thought I had much more labour upon me on his account that I had for myself; and that he would work the harder for me, if I would tell him what to do. (Defoe, 2011:209).

As a result of the safety he has given to victims of savages and shipwrecks, he becomes a lord onto them on the island which he calls his island, “This put new thoughts into my head; for I presently imagined that these might be the men belonging to the ship that was cast away in sight at my island , as I now call it…” (Defoe 2011:219). He has become the sole owner and
possession of the God-given island because he gets there before the others and the fact that he is able to rescue others and provides them with food. They all see him as God-sent in the time of their affliction. He desires his escape from the island and to do this he needs those he has rescued. Basically, the rescue of the victims is for a selfish reason. Using others to achieve what you want is a typical process that is usually adopted by the capitalist. It is also clear that Crusoe regrets not having a servant when it is very important to him. This is an indication that his servants are like tools that should be discarded when they have served their use. Saltoglu, (2010) observes that “He violates Xury’s basic right by selling him, and ignores Friday’s fundamental right of freedom, too. Since capitalism creates such an intruding psychology, reification forms the core of his behavior. The system itself, thus, gives way to schizophrenia in people like Crusoe”. The case of Xury is important. When it is time to do away with Xury, he does it without conscience or an iota of humanity. The capitalist is about himself and nothing else. Crusoe has no regret for selling Xury. He regrets when he has a need for him:

…I could have been content to have taken this moor with me and have drowned the boy, but there was no venturing to trust him. When he was gone I turned to the boy, whom they called Xury, and I said to him, “Xury, if you will be faithful to me, I’ll make you a great man; but if you will not stroke your face to be true to me,” that is, swear by Mahomet and his father’s beard, “I must throw you into the sea too.” The boy smiled in my face, and spoke so innocently, that I could not mistrust him; and swore to be faithful to me and go all over the world with me. (Defoe, 2011:38)

This is an indication that Crusoe eliminates heartlessly whatever serves as an obstacle as he has done to the boy and decides to retain Xury so long as he will be loyal to him. Xury has confessed his loyalty to him and one should think that he will hold and protect Xury to the end. Without having recourse to Xury’s pledges, he sells him to enlarge his coasts:

…he offered me also sixty pieces of eight more for my boy Xury, which I was loath to take, not that I was not willing to let the captain have him, but I was very loath to sell the poor boy’s liberty who has assisted me so faithfully in procuring my own. However, when I let him know my reason, he owned it to be just and offered me this medium, that he would give the boy an obligation to set him free in ten years if he turned Christian; upon this, and Xury saying he was willing to go to him, I let the captain have him. (Defoe, 2011:37 & 38).

When Crusoe sees the need for Xury, he feels bad for selling him. The regret is no longer for the compassion he has for the boy but the need to use him to work and expand his plantation: “…However, we began to increase, and our land began to come into order; so that the third year we planted some tobacco and made each of us a large piece of ground ready for planting canes in the year to come; but we both wanted help, and now I found, more than before, I had done wrong in parting with my boy Xury”. (Defoe, 2011:39). “…Now I wish for my boy Xury, and the long boat with the shoulder….” (Defoe, 2011:125). As observed before, parting with Xury is not painful to Crusoe perhaps because the boy will suffer in the
hands of his new master but because he needs him to expand his empire and to assist in leaving the Island a typical life style of a capitalist. The attitude he demonstrates toward those around him is also displayed in his relationship with God. The attitude of needing people when in distress and forgetting about them when things are good. Crusoe does not have any form of spiritual connection with God. He can best be described as a fair weather believer, “This sense makes individuals feel “shamefully, guiltily, abashedly naked before [God’s] all-seeing eye”(Amato, 1982). An individual who calls on God only in moments of trouble or victory / escape is not worthy of God’s providence but the almighty is merciful,” “…I was now landed and safe on shore, and I began to look up and thank God that my life was saved in a case wherein there was some minutes before scarce any room to hope”. (Defoe, 2011:50). Crusoe begins to allow God have His way in his life before a critical situation arises not because of conviction but convenience, “…I would act then as God should direct…”(Defoe, 2011:228). When his race is faced with death, he throws away his desire to clothe himself with God:

…I was filled with horror at the very naming of the white bearded man, and, going to the tree, I saw plainly by my glass a white man who lay upon the beach of the sea, with his hands and his feet tied with flags, or things like rushes, and that he was a European and had clothes on…( Defoe, 2011:229-230)

Conclusion

During the Age of Enlightenment, Britain experienced many changes from religious creed to economic system which all contributed to the formation of the capitalist system. Written in the early 18th century, Defoe’s novel coincides with the socio-economic shift from mercantilist to capitalist order which is the period of instability in Britain (Saltoglu, 2010). So, one can clearly see this psychology as exhibited by the eponymous character of Daniel Defoe. Crusoe never gets satisfaction, if he does, going back to the island where he suffers hell would not have been of paramount importance to him. The novel captures so many themes but the themes of globalization and capitalism have been examined in this paper.

References

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