



PROJECT REPORT OF

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## ABSTRACT

As the need for adaptation to the ever changing international system continues and rises, it is up to politicians, diplomats, and other representatives to deal and meet with new needs and wants of states and international organizations. The controversial phenomenon of globalization lends itself to various spheres within the socio-political and economic atmosphere of the global system. While we often read about the success stories of globalization in relation to foreign investment, cultural mingling, and worldwide solidarity in times of crisis, its negative effects on relatively powerless nations is often overlooked. As a result, the study of these countries within the international system and in the realm of International Relations has suffered. This paper discusses in detail the phenomenon of globalization, the manner in which it is theorized, and its relevance, contribution, and challenges to the international relations of Africa.

Key words: globalization, International Relations, theorization, third world, inclusion, Africa

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## INTRODUCTION

As the need for adaptation to the ever changing international system continues and rises, it is up to politicians, diplomats, and other representatives to deal and meet with new needs and wants of states and international organizations. The controversial phenomenon of globalization lends itself to various spheres within the socio-political and economic atmosphere of the global system.

It is undeniable that globalization and International Relations are inherently linked, as one always affects the success or failure of the other. Both are post-Cold War phenomena, with the term 'globalization' only coming into prominence in the 1990s, just around the time when the study of International Relations became popularized with its own theories independent of Political Science. As with almost every field in academia, unfortunately the manner in which it currently exists is rather Euro-centric and is by extension only applicable to the Western world. Other parts of the world have only recently begun studying International Relations as a separate subject which condenses other faculties, and are therefore minor contributors to internationally recognized International Relations theory. Barring Russia and China due to their dominating powers in the international political economy, all other Asian, Latin American, and African countries are more or less excluded from the narrative that is International Relations theory.

While we often read about the success stories of globalization in relation to foreign investment, cultural mingling, and worldwide solidarity in times of crisis, its negative effects on relatively powerless nations is often overlooked. As a result, the study of these countries within the international system and in the realm of International Relations has suffered.

This paper discusses in detail the phenomenon of globalization, the manner in which it is manifested into the world in theory as well as practice, and its contributions and effects on International Relations theory in Africa.

## PURPOSE

The aim of this study is to analyse the phenomenon of globalization, the manner in which it is theorized, and its relevance, contribution, and challenges to the theory and practice of African International Relations.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

How has globalization affected the theory and practice of African International Relations?

## HYPOTHESIS

The exclusion of Africa from existing International Relations theories has had a negative impact on its position in the international system.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since my research revolves around the theorization of globalization and International Relations, all data used in this research is secondary data collected from various journals, books, and websites and penned by researchers and scholars in the fields of Sociology, Economics, Political Science, and International Relations. The research is entirely qualitative, as this topic does not require statistical analysis because it answers the question 'how'. This is also why the review of literature and my research findings discussion have been merged and discussed under one heading.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

It is imperative to this study that an explanation and definition of the term ‘globalization’ – and all that it stands for – is made clear at the outset. This is because globalization as we know it today has been defined in various different ways depending on the perspective of its study.

In most existing literature, the essential nature of globalization has been described using many different metaphors and adjectives, often overlapping one another. It has been called a phenomenon, a condition, a phase, or a stage; others have described it as an ideology or a discourse. However, the most common depiction of globalization as employed by theorists is as a process, and this term has been used in combination with those aforementioned. Broadly, however, the international community and the common man has indeed understood globalization to be a process that represents a transformation of the organization of social relations across borders, generating interregional and transcontinental interaction, trade, and cultural exchange.

John Baylis and Steve Smith describe globalization as a process of increasing interconnection between different parts of the world, such that events in one society have more and more of an effect on the people of societies that are far away; it is also the root by which social relations overcome distances and borders, so that humanity and human life has one unified place to be played out. They attribute the phenomenon of modernization to be a part of the process of globalization, and that the latter is a stage that in itself is a result of economic growth. They argue that globalization will in the future be looked at as the cause of a new world order emergence, and that it can also result in Francis Fukuyama’s “end of history”<sup>1</sup>. They are clear proponents of globalization as they more or less applaud it for capturing all important changes in the world. (Baylis and Smith 2001)

James H. Mittleman asserts that globalization may be both, an “objective and subjective phenomenon” (Mittleman 1998). Vidya S. Kumar elaborates on this idea to bring to light an analytical way to distinguish between “capital-G ‘Globalization’ and small-g ‘globalization’”,

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<sup>1</sup> In his 1989 article “*The End of History?*” Francis Fukuyama argued that the victory of liberal democracy “may constitute the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the final form of human government and as such constitute the end of history.” He further elaborated on this theory in his 1992 book “*The End of History and the Last Man*”.

where the former signifies what is actually happening globally (globalization), and the latter what theorists describe as global occurrence (Globalization) (Kumar 2003).

Working on the subjectivity of globalization, it is extremely important to look at different perspectives to it. Many believe that the term was coined to mask global capitalist imperialism, and it is also considered to be another form of imposing the logic of the Western market on other regions of the world. For others, it is a by-product of modernization and hence a marker of progress, where progress can be measured in an increase of wealth, democracy, freedom, and happiness. Defenders of globalization present it as beneficial, as it generates new economic opportunities, political democratization, cultural diversity, and acts as an opening to a new, exciting united world.

Richard Langhorne describes globalization as “the latest stage in a long accumulation of technological advance which has given human beings the ability to conduct their affairs across the world without reference to nationality, government authority, time of day or physical environment.” (Langhorne 2001)

According to Langhorne, the first stage of technological advancement is the introduction of the “steam engine to sea and land transport.” He identifies the second stage with the invention of the telegraph, and describes globalization to be the third stage resulting from computer technology, or the development of digital information. He argues that this revolution in communications is the cause of globalization, and is an ongoing process because of the same.

The defenders of globalization look at its effects on the social, political, and economic activities across political bodies. It is undeniable that globalization has intensified interdependence within the international system, as there is a constant increase in the flows of trade, finance, migration, and culture. This adoption of other cultures and innovations have led to new systems of transport and communication being implemented on a much larger global scale, meaning that ideas, goods, capital, and people have become able to transcend borders more quickly and with more ease. Therefore, the boundaries between domestic and international matters have become increasingly blurred, with most local developments resulting in massive global consequences (Held et al 1999).

The most striking modern example that comes to mind in this context is the response to the United States Presidential Election across the world, where the media coverage is so extensive

that in many places it even tends to overshadow local news. This is also because in today's 'globalized' era, the actions taken by the citizens of one country in electing their leader can have a worldwide impact, economically and politically. This is especially true in third-world countries in Asia and Africa, where hope for a better future lies with the outcome of the US elections. So what does this speak about globalization and its effects on poor, developing countries, and how do we understand this?

Douglas Kellner concluded that the key to understanding globalization is theorizing it as a creation of a technological revolution and economic reconstruction. He emphasized that this perspective would avoid one-sided optics of globalization, and instead would look at it as a highly complex, ambiguous, and contradictory set of social institutions rather than just one that involves the transnational flow of goods, technologies, ideas, people, and cultures (Kellner 2002). He further explains that within the world economy, globalization involves the spread of democracy in finance and information, and that it is thus a contradictory mesh of democracy and capitalism, wherein the capital and market systems enter far more arenas of everyday global life. This is because globalization causes more political regions to be contested by democracy and its demands, by way of technological and market forces (Hardt and Negri 2000).

(Kumar 2003) argues that the debate about how to handle globalization is about what globalization is, and in a four part study traces the irregularities in the use of the term globalization through academic spheres, in that it is used very differently in sociology, political science, law, and economics. He articulates the need for a critical methodology of globalization which includes the relationship between the prescription and description of the phenomenon.

International Relations theory, as a field in academics, has been used to represent the transnational system of non-domestic political and economic forces and the manner in which they interact with each other. The theorization of this field of study has needed to separate from Political Science, Economics, and Social Science within a separate framework and by adopting its own theories and means of analysis. These have typically included the study of states, balances of power, anarchy, and the resorts to war. As with most subjects within the academic world, International Relations theory has constantly been undergoing repositioning for a number of years, owing to the growing permeability of the territorial state, and this unpredictable nature of the field spurs many questions about the international economy, the

viability of states as providers of security, the moral identity of states, and of the sustainability of democracy and its institutions on a nation-state basis (Clark 1998). The current process of globalization generates this new configuration wherein old actions and thought are being questioned, and International Relations cannot stay stable in a fluid historical context, where nation-states are increasingly challenged by other events and actors (Sindjoun 2001).

Many have pointed out the closeness between globalization and Westernization, claiming that the former has a neo-imperialist angle to it; that it is being used as a cover to spread Western socio-political propaganda to benefit Western markets. This has deeply affected the manner in which International Relations are theorized and practiced, with democracy and Capitalism as frontrunners of positive theorization. Rather, the entire concept of international organizations to promote democratic processes overlooks cultural barriers and presumes a better over a worse. It is important to note that the need for sovereignty and democracy has always been challenged, and that globalization in the form of intrusive and assertive international norms are an old not a new phenomenon. (Haber, Kennedy and Krasner 1999).

The above observations attest to the conceptions that it is especially problematic to apply the so-called traditional and Western International Relations theory to the African continent. In fact, the idea that Western social theories are inappropriate to understand the non-Western world is not new at all, and the existing International Theory misunderstands or rather misrepresents the reality of Africa as it continues to act as an exercise of neo-colonial hegemony – at least in theory (Brown 2006).

The absence of Africa in International Relations theory is worsened by concepts highlighted in the field, which aid in maintaining its existing invisibility. Central concepts in traditional International Relations theory such as the state, the market, sovereignty, anarchy, and domestic/international opposition become problematic when applied in the third world, particularly African context. Rather than using African experiences to update their theories, International Relations theorists continue to ignore the varying opinions and practices on the continent (Dunn and Shaw 2001).

African and Africanist International Relations critics do not explicitly discuss their desired usage of International Relations theory, but their arguments assert that for theory to be applicable and useful, its model must reflect the reality to which it is being related. Since

African reality does not resemble at all the mainstream images of Western “international order”, existing theories tend to be faulty and inapplicable to the continent; this is exemplified in theories that presuppose fully functioning and rational nation-states, which do not exist in Africa as per the stringent, democratic definitions and descriptions of the same.

Carl Death criticizes the presumption in International Relations theory that the pre-eminent actors within the international system are states, and the relations among them constitute a different realm of politics, even in an anarchic system. African politics, on the other hand, does not commit to a clear analytical differentiation between international and domestic politics. It draws attention to a vast range of actors and scales, such as locales, regions, linguistic and ethnic groups, classes etc. He also points out the irony of the fact that many International Relations scholars use Africa as a field of primary data collection, whereas the actual theory-building is carried out elsewhere. (Death 2015)

The focus of International Relations theory to the Western world and Western ideology does not take the disparity of democracies and governments in different nation-states into account, and either paints non-conforming regions as irrational or ignores them altogether. Developing countries and areas are rarely seen as having their own identity, rather as being products of larger powers in the system and continuing to be complementary to their growth. In fact, Africa in particular is generally referred to as a single entity, and its constituent states are not really taken into account as separate actors in the international system. International organizations have a rather patronizing stance towards Africa, and it is viewed as a hotbed that needs to be controlled – the African Union being a product of this thought. While grave issues such as poverty, hunger, and security need to be battled in most regions in Africa, faster developing countries such as Seychelles, Mauritius, and South Africa are often overlooked by the international community as countries that do not necessarily need such dire human resource development; they are treated with only a marginally different outlook as the rest of the continent.

The entire concept of the ‘third world’ has never been clearly defined; it has gone from referring to poorer post-colonial nations after the Cold War, to now an underdeveloped and unmodern mindset. Countries like Singapore, although initially ‘third world’ in political theory, have transcended the title as their development has rocketed and they have adopted a more modern and Western outlook.

The continued usage of the term 'third world' to homogenize a vast range of nations has also concealed and tended to ignore class relations within them, or their commonalities with countries in the 'first' and 'second' worlds. The term has been used continuously as a shorthand to point out the massive gulf between rich countries, which are a minority, and the majority of countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that are still poor. It is indicative of an international class divide, and a hierarchy in the international system which is headed by Western capitalist states, followed by the so-called third world countries, and with Africa at its tail end. In theory, globalization has always meant to bridge this gap but has led to a stronger consciousness of the disparities that exist within.

Policy makers and scholars alike have constantly been debating on the impact of this globalization on the international relations of third world countries. The exclusivity of Western International Relations theory and its anti-third world stance has been a major hindrance while trying to analyse the manner in which these nations interact with one another as well as with the Western world. It is undeniable, however, that globalization to the third world has been seen as a replacement to imperialism, as it places a strong focus on the domination of the developed first world over developing nations and their transnational corporations.

It is very important, then, to clearly identify an increasing fear of re-colonization and marginalization due to this rather neo-imperialist form of globalization that we know today. This is spurred by the fact that almost all defined structures which are the foundations of the modern-day global village are controlled by the rich and developed countries.

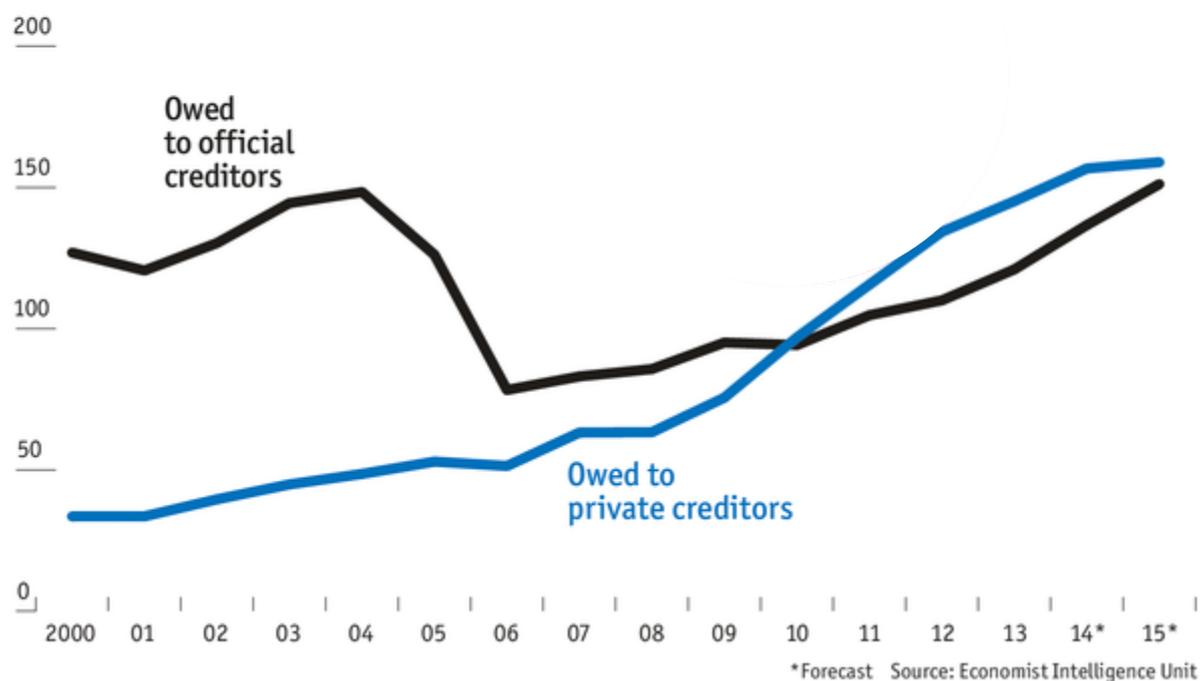
As parts of Africa become more and more integrated into the international economy due to globalization, the processes of marginalization and criminalization become more and more rampant. The entire notion of regionness and community has been undermined due to this, and the transnational globalist hegemony has become an inherently crisis-prone and unsustainable tool of control in the area. Neo-liberal globalism facilitates social polarization and breakdown in Africa, as it alienates the labour from the production process, increasing marginalization. It also stimulates swings in the business cycle and a climate wherein the threat of crash and recession is always looming. The deregulation of global commerce also leads to a worsening in structural imbalances, as elites are engaged in a race to break down their competitors. While such tendencies and outcomes may create a new sense of community in the affected societies, they do not work in developing regions of the African third world, which need to be built from the bottom-up, that are already rampant with regionness and marginalization (Taylor 2003).

These are counterproductive in the current scenario, and an insistence of a globalized economic standard is only worsening it.

Economically, the liberalization and globalization of trade are in practice inequitable to the poorer countries. The fact that most African countries are largely indebted to today's developed nations leaves them with minimal or no actual control over their own national economies, let alone that of the international economy.

### Burdensome

Sub-Saharan Africa's medium- and long-term debt, \$bn



It is quite apparent, then, that relations between debt-ridden Africa and the Western world is similar to that between masters and slaves.

Politically, globalization is changing the manner in which governments within Africa operate; policy makers are challenged by the different kinds of 'internationalizations' that are under way, as the policies made by more powerful nations and international organizations very largely affect the development and aid given to the poorer African countries. The autonomy to make national policies and on a larger spectrum the national sovereignty of African countries is undermined when theorists call the world a 'global village'. The foremost principle of the

freedom to make decisions in internal affairs for the state is no longer upheld when a single perspective of human rights and democracy are being considered as the norm and are being internationalized.

Governments in Africa constantly have to choose loyalty between their national interest and that of the newly created international government. This is because they are so heavily dependent on external powers that they operate out of fear of displeasing and contradicting the globalised government. Very often, representatives of these governments act against their national policies in order to appease the international environment.

The African Union cannot even compare to the success of the European Union and its contribution to a more uniform, globalized international relations. While it is a much younger organization, it struggles with civil unrest and endemic poverty, barriers which other international organizations have not necessarily had to battle in order to operate fully. In addition to that, the African Union also depends on regional and national economic bodies, which are also weakly organized (Hanson 2009).

Therefore, even in terms of security, the lack of globalization in Africa in terms of sophisticated technology has left it far behind in the cyber sphere, with developed nations having the upper hand with global security, through which they are able to exercise structural powers. The pressure by the United States of America to Nigeria in the case of Charles Taylor is a prime example of this power struggle.

It is because of all these factors that globalization has failed to make place for Africa in the international political economy, and that Africa's relations with other parts of the world face such a disparity in power and dominance.

## CONCLUSION

South African President the late Nelson Mandela once asked: "Is globalization only for the powerful? Does it offer nothing to the men, women and children who are ravaged by the violence of poverty?"

While all of the problems mentioned in my discussion may seem like structural issues that can be solved with better policies, infrastructure, and funding, the root of their existence is their absence in theoretical frameworks. Those in power in the international system only seem to be equipped to handle and propagate the existing unidimensional theories that hold liberalization and democracy at the highest order. There is a dire need for the inclusion of not only African, but also Asian and Latin American intricacies in International Relations theory, in order for a better-rounded globalization to take place.

It is my hope for the future, as a student of International Relations, that academia be inclusive to different states, their cultures and their experiences with daily socio-political and economic occurrences and phenomena. It is only then that International Relations between countries can improve, as states will be able to understand with theoretical backing the intricacies behind responses and movement within the international system. Once this is achieved, we can truly say that we live in a globalized world – where all perspectives are studied and respected equally.

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