

POLI 441

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE

SESSION 9 : GLOBALIZATION AND AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT I

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2014/2015 – 2016/2017

Session Overview

Globalization is one of the most 'slippery' and over-used concepts in the social sciences. As such, it does not only engender intense academic debate but also "plain confusion" (McGrew, 2005:208). Just like the definition, the concept of globalization is disputed as a valid description or explanation of the dynamics of the current world economic order (McGrew, 2005). Globalists often view the concept as a new opportunity for developing economies to integrate into the political economy and achieve wonderful things for their citizens while the anti-globalists are increasingly suspicious of the assumptions of the globalist.

To the extent that some anti-globalist perceives the concept as new form of Western machinations in order to continually exploit African ailing economies and resources. This session is aimed at addressing the theoretical and conceptual aspect of the concept; paying much attention to the meaning, theoretical assumptions, types and drivers of the concept. These dynamics shall be explored within the context of Africa's development.

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in this session are:

- Topic 1: **ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE CONCEPT**
- Topic 2: **NATURE & TYPES OF GLOBALIZATION**
- Topic 3: **DRIVERS OF GLOBALIZATION**
- Topic 4: **THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS**

Reading materials

- Wolf, M. (2004) Why Globalization Works, New Haven: Yale University Press (Chp. 2, What Liberal Globalization Means, pp. 13 – 22; Chp.7, Globalization in the Long Run, pp. 96 – 105)
- Stiglitz, J. E. (2002) Globalization and its Discontents, New York: W.W. Norton and Company (Chp. 9, The Way Ahead, pp. 214 – 252)
- Wade, R. (2005) “Globalization, Poverty and Inequality” in Ravenhill, J. (ed) Global Political Economy, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Bofo-Arthur, K. (2003) “Tackling Africa’s Developmental Dilemmas: Is Globalization the Answer?” *Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 1, Spring, pp. 27 – 54

Learning objectives

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

- Understand the concept of globalization
- Recall the types of globalization and their manifestations
- Appreciate the theoretical assumptions of underlying the concept
- Become familiar with the drivers of globalization and their forms
- Appreciate the role and contribution of globalization to Africa's development

Topic one

ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE CONCEPT



ORIGIN AND MEANING

- The word globalization is believed to have been coined in the 1960s but came to prominence in 1990.
- It is one of the most ‘slippery’ and over-used concepts in the social sciences. As such, it does not only engender intense academic debate but also “plain confusion” (McGrew, 2005:208).
- It has become, in the words of Paul Hirst, the “...new grand narrative of the social science...” and,
- “...a hideous word of obscure meaning...” (Martin Wolf, 2004)

ORIGIN AND MEANING

Globalization is understood as the “widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness” (McGrew, 2005:207).

Hans Kohler (2002:1) defines globalization as the “process through which an increasingly free flow of ideas, people, goods, services and capital leads to the integration of economies and societies” (Thomas, 2005:318).

ORIGIN AND MEANING

Similarly, Giddens (1990:21) sees globalization as the “intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.”

Conceptually, globalization is often equated to notions of liberalization, internationalization, universalization, westernization, and or modernization (Scholte, 2000).

Topic Two

NATURE AND TYPES OF GLOBALIZATION



POLITICAL GLOBALIZATION

Globalization comes in different forms: cultural, social, technological, political and economic. Politically, it represents the attempt to create a global government in which decisions affecting the world at large are made in wider and consultative platforms such as the UN, NATO, AU, WTO etc.

The development of the concept of “responsibility to protect” has increasingly made global governance a reality and has further pushed the state back as a pre-eminent political institution

ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

Economically, it is represented by the feverish implementation of the neo-liberal economic paradigm (this paradigm as discussed in previous lectures is marked by deregulation of national economies, open markets, rolling back state's role in economic development, etc.).

The globalist school argues that the contemporary patterns of world trade, finance, production and migration have increased largely due to economic globalization.

SOCIAL GLOBALIZATION

Socially, globalization represents the increasing bridging of global culture and identities through:

- international travels and marriages;
- the development of the concept of the global citizen;
- appreciation and tolerance of different identities and
- the development of the concept of global norms and ethics among other things.

Topic Three

DRIVERS OF GLOBALIZATION



DRIVERS

What then are the causes of economic globalization? Academics believe it is a daunting task but have distinguished between thick and thin conceptions of causation (see Mellor (1995), Garrett (2000), Scholte (2000) and Giddens (1990)].

In its thickest conceptualization, causality implies determination (i.e. insofar as a cause is considered both necessary and/or sufficient to bring about an event or a given social phenomenon).

Understood this way, technology is often regarded as the cause of globalization because it is sufficient to bring it about, and globalization could not have occurred in the absence of technology.

DRIVERS

On the other hand, thinner conceptions of causation refer to dispositions in the sense that they include factors which make given events or social phenomenon more rather than less likely or probable (McCullagh, 1998).

For example, the liberalization of national economies following the political revolution of neo-liberalism in the 1980s can be seen as a cause of economic globalization in the sense that it made it more rather than less probable.

The thinnest conception of causation is more to do with the contingency of events (i.e., there could readily be otherwise) than the certainty of it.

Topic Four

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS



THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

There are many theories on the causes of globalization. However, there is no substantive globalization theory. Most theories on globalization are dependent on existing theories in the social sciences and none provides a coherent and systematic explanation of the causes, consequences and developmental trajectory of the phenomenon.

Academics explain three different types of globalization theory: the structural, the conjectural and the constructivist theories. These theories are explained along the thicker and thinner causation of globalization.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The structural theory is thicker in causal accounts and highlights the imperative of technological advance and/or capital accumulation.

Under structuralism, globalization is considered almost an inevitable consequence of either modern technologically advanced societies or the expansionary imperatives of capitalism.

Structural theory of economic globalization may be differentiated by the emphasis they place on domestic and/or international structures.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The conjectural theory better explains globalization in terms of the timing and its forms as well as the historically specific causes.

Conjectural accounts are causally thinner than structural explanations and pay more attention to the confluence of particular historical circumstances, trends and events which together combine to produce a given social phenomenon at a specific point in time and in a given form.

Therefore, rather than stressing the inevitability of globalization, conjectural explanations stress its conditionality

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Constructivist theory stresses more of the role of ideas, including economic globalization as an idea or prevailing discourse, rather than seeking to identify specific causal patterns or mechanism within the empirical evidence of globalizing trends.

Social constructivists are much more interested in the ideas of economic globalization and why it has become such a pervasive discourse or way of talking and theorizing about the world economy.

Therefore to be able to make sense of globalization, it is important to deconstruct the dominant ideas which inform how it is generally understood and the extent to which such ideas reflect or misconstrue contemporary world economic trends.

References

- Wolf, M. (2004) Why Globalization Works, New Haven: Yale University Press (Chp. 2, What Liberal Globalization Means, pp. 13 – 22; Chp.7, Globalization in the Long Run, pp. 96 – 105)
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