

# INTRODUCTORY **SOCIOLOGY**



Edited By:  
**Olakunle Abiona OGUNBAMERU**

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## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **AFRICAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN THE SILHOUETTE OF GLOBALISATION**

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#### **Chapter Objectives**

After completing this chapter, readers should be able to:

- conceptualise the terms: social structure and globalisation,
- understand the types of social structure,
- identify the elements/components of African social structure and five basic social institutions that depict the social structure of the African society,
- list and explain the main theories used in analysing social structure in Africa,
- categorise the positive and negative impacts of globalisation on African social structures, and
- recognise what Africa can do to preserve its social structure in the face of an aggressive globalisation phenomenon.

#### **Chapter Outline**

- Introduction
- Literature review
  - Conceptualisation of terms: Social structure and globalisation
  - Types of social structure
  - Elements/components of African social structure
  - Five basic social institutions that depict the social structure of the African society
  - Sociological theories on social structure
- Modern Systems: The product of globalisation
- The positive impact of globalisation on African social structures
- The negative impact of globalisation on African social structures
- Recommendations
- Conclusion
- Chapter exercises
- References

#### **Introduction**

Sociology has been described as that field in the social sciences which systematically employs methods used for empirical investigation and critical analysis, thus bringing about the refinement and development of knowledge about social structures and activities, and using this knowledge to resolve the myriad problems facing the human society (Cragun, Cragun & Konieczny, 2010; Imhonopi & Urim, 2012; Ogunbameru, 2008). The methods sociology utilises in studying and understanding society could be qualitative or quantitative in nature or both, depending on the specific subject matter being studied within the vast field and the methodological preference or competence of the researcher. However, sociology is



very much concerned about the society (the individuals and groups within it), its history, development and advancement, and how it is shaped by its interaction with human agents and the prevailing social structures (i.e. laws, conventions and institutions) or vice versa. While society connotes a group whose members share the same culture and delimited territory, sociology is more concerned about the interactions of the group with and within the social structures in place and how these interactions alter, shape and affect human behaviour, values, actions and perceptions of the social world (Abbott, Wallace & Tyler, 2005; Cragun et al., 2010).

Thus, in agreement with Mills (1954), sociology furthers an understanding of the unique relationship between our own personal experiences and the social structures that define us. In the words of Mills:

What people need... is a quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves. The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals (Mills, 1954 as cited in Cragun et al., 2010, p.4).

Mills' sociological imagination or lens or perspective was proposed to assist individuals to cope within the society by helping them come out of their personal, subjective or self-immersed worldviews. Hence, as Cragun et al. (2010) argue, through the use of the sociological imagination, human beings are capable of perceiving the activities and social structures that impact or modify attitudes, behaviour, attitudes and cultures.

Before the advent of colonialism, Africa had its own unique social structures. However, through colonialism and the ongoing ineluctable invasion of globalisation, African social structures have been losing their pristineness and at the same time assuming the shades, characterisations and content of social structures from the metropole (Imhonopi, Urim & Iruonagbe, 2013). In 1973, through his seminal work entitled "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa", Walter Rodney set up an intellectual and historical polemic for Africa's underdevelopment and the role the metropolises or developed societies played when they truncated the growth and development of many societies including Africa through the forces of colonialism, slave trade and economic exploitation of African resources to develop their own societies. In addition, Rodney believed that the incursion of Western interests in Africa, whether through the vehicle of imperialist business expansion activities or the outright colonisation of African territories, also affected the natural growth of African social structure. This was because the colonialists were not only satisfied with the economic exploitation and domination of African states, they also extended their control to Africa's political, cultural, social, family, religious and educational institutions. While the spirit of colonialism has been exorcised from Africa and other satellite states, the present globalisation phenomenon seems to have continued where colonialism left off because of its obvious imposition of Western social structure on independent African and third world states (Fischer, 2002; Lee & Vivarelli, 2006; Nujoma, 2009).

In this Chapter, a scholarly attempt is made to dissect the subject of social structure with relation to Africa, examine the types, elements, and basic social institutions that depict the structure of the African society, conceptualise globalisation, identify the damage it has done to the African social structure and distinguish ways by which African, as well as other satellite states can position themselves to benefit from the present all-pervading forces of globalisation.

### **Social Structure**

The structure of anything points to a system of interrelated parts functioning as a whole. Social structure could also refer to the orderly arrangement of parts or components of a thing. For example, a musical composition has a structure; a sentence in linguistics has a structure; a building has a structure and a political system, an organisation or any social phenomenon has a structure. The human society also has a structure. The components or units of association in social structures are humans while the units of social structure are institutions (Sociology Guide, 2019).

The concept of social structure has attracted different opinions from social thinkers and sociologists over the years. Chronicling pertinent definitions on the subject, Sociology Guide (2019) provides the following conceptualisations: Herbert Spencer considered social structure using biological analogies in which he described it as an organic and evolutionary phenomenon. Radcliff-Brown defined social structure as part of the social relations from person-to-person. While describing social structure, S. F. Nadal emphasised that social structure represents a web of social relationships triggered by humans when they relate with one another with respect to their positions/statuses in line with such society's hierarchy. According to Ginsberg, social structure is the chief component of social organisations such as institutions, groups, associations and society which is the complex part. In Karl Mannheim's view, the modes of observations and thinking conditioned by interacting social forces are stimulated by social structure. Meanwhile, Talcott Parsons argued that social structure suggests the specific arrangement that binds agencies, institutions and social patterns, with the positions or statuses and roles that each individual occupies in a group.

Social structure is, as Henslin (1999, p. 96) put it, 'the framework of society that was already laid out before you were born'. However, it provides the routes which aid social mobility. Hence, Henslin (1999) observes that there are two aspects of social structure: (1) the micro aspects which entail statuses and roles and (2) the macro facets which point to groups/institutions (e.g., education, government, family, economy and religion). Porpora (1987), not only delineated social structure as a pattern of social relationships, which gives shape to the society and determines, to some extent, individuals' actions socialised into that structure, but he also pointed out its categorisation. According to Porpora (1987), social structure can be treated as patterned relationships between and among large social groups, social institutions or class structure. At the intermediate level, Porpora (1987) considers social structure as a web of social networks binding individuals and organisations while at the micro level, he construes social structure as reflecting how norms alter or influence the attitudes and behaviours of actors within the social milieu. From these various definitions, social structure can be conceptualised as a pattern of lasting and organised relationships

between the elements that make up or define society and that contribute to the shaping of the behaviours, attitudes and perceptions of societal members.

### **Globalisation**

Globalisation has been described as the tendency towards greater integration and interdependency in the global economy (Hill, 1999). It characterises a process of growth in cross-border trade and increase in the flows of financial and foreign direct investments (FDI), advanced by rapid liberalisation and developments in information and communication technologies [ICT] (Daouas, 2001). According to Ajayi (2001), inherent in that definition are the 'description' of what globalisation is and the 'prescription' of how it should evolve. By description, globalisation connotes an increase in international trade, information and finance, in an integrated world economy. The prescription angle points to the belief that when the national and world markets are liberalised, it would lead to greater flows in information, finance and trade, supporting more growth in the economy and human welfare. For Dixon, Tanyeri-Abur and Wattenbach (2003), globalisation is nothing more than growing economic integration between countries in the areas of trade and capital, leading to trade liberalisation which enlarges and transforms markets for inputs and commodities facing producers in the agricultural sector, drastically altering the terms of trade, and stimulating competition at the international agricultural level. As Lee and Vivarelli (2006) observed, the effect of globalisation had started since the 1980s, when the world economy became progressively 'connected' and 'integrated', supported by reducing transportation costs and increasing penetration of ICTs which have downgraded the concept of 'distance', while rewarding states in the global community with more flows in FDIs, trade and led to more transfers in technology and capital. However, they note that in most countries, globalisation has created negative impacts in terms of lower income distribution and employment with a huge toll on the social structure of many of the world's people.

Olurode (2003), like many other scholars of the global south, contends that globalisation is not a philanthropic gesture designed to promote human welfare or wealth redistribution in the world. According to him however, globalisation is driven by an invisible hand which aims at making and maximising profit for the metropole. He believes that return on capital was the driving force (as it was admitted in Lord Lugard's *The Dual Mandate*) behind colonialism by the British in Africa as it was elsewhere in other third world states. He contends that there is no compatibility between having profit and human welfare as objectives except this happens by an accident. This is because profit is sustained by greed while human welfare is sustained by morality. He summarises the characterisations of globalisation in Africa as follows: structural adjustment programmes designed and suggested for African economies in order to prune down wastages and economic brigandage; privatisation, leading to the deregulation of the economy; compulsion of African economies to abide by the rules of the World Trade Organisation which are to liberalise their trade and reform their politics. With regard to political reform, African states under one-party regimes were mandated to admit more competition to the political space in order to make them more established and democratic in their complexion and content. According to Fischer (2002), globalisation is complex and multi-faceted even though it has triggered greater cooperation among countries and their citizens. He points out that the impact of globalisation across national borders in recent times is both economic and non-economic in nature, suggesting



that the cultures, languages, politics, religions and beliefs of nations, including Africa, have been nudged.

Citing Alassance Quattara of the IMF in his speech to the Southern Africa Economic Summit in May 1997, Nujoma (2009) defined globalisation of the global economy as 'the integration of economies throughout the world through trade, financial flows, the exchange of technology and information, and the movement of people'. He goes further to argue bluntly that what Olurode (2003) calls the invisible hand of globalisation is the Americanising the world, propagating a universal formula for economic and political development, and dominating the conduct of international relations in a way that suggests unilateralism. He therefore concludes that globalisation, through trade liberalisation, has advantaged the industrialised nations more than their developing counterparts because of embedded inequality in the system or absence of a level playing ground. With respect to Africa, because of its poor economic and human development, the continent plays a fringe role and occupies a weak and insignificant position in the international arena. Thus, while globalisation is the economic integration of nations within the global system, aided by accelerated advancements in ICTs and a decrease in transportation costs, the impact of globalisation on various nations is not limited to the economic front alone. But like Fischer (2002) and other vigilant scholars of the south, the non-economic consequences of globalisation have gradually or aggressively continued to transform the basic social structures of nations, including Africa, from where the colonial monstrosity stopped.

### **Social Structure Categories**

According to Talcott Parsons, there are four main social structure categories defined by four social values (Sociology Guide, 2019). These include values that are (1) universalistic (2) particularistic (3) achievement-oriented and (4) ascribed. Social values are universalistic because they are found in all societies and are applicable to all people while social values are particularistic because they differ from one society to another. On the other hand, achieved social values are societies that place a high premium on achieved social statuses (for example, the United States) while societies that attach importance to hereditary or inherited statuses (such as monarchies of the world or wealth inherited by scions of rich families) are considered as ascribed social statuses. Sometimes, there is a combination of these social values, as Parsons notes.

Universalistic–Achievement pattern is the value pattern which is opposed to a social structure that is built around kinship, community, class and race. This pattern of social structure supports universalistic values where individuals take responsibility for what they want and the goals they want to achieve. On the other hand, under the universalistic-ascriptions pattern, the social structure evinces ascription characteristics. Thus, in this pattern, there is emphasis on the inherited status of individuals rather than on their specific achievements. In other words, people occupy a social position based on who they are rather than by what they have achieved. Therefore, the individuals derive their position from their group. In the Particularistic–Achievement pattern, the social structure supports both values for achievement and for particularism. In this pattern, there is an emphasis on achievement which is a product of what an individual has done and not what he or she is. This pattern promotes initiative, responsibility, diligence and human achievement and is maintained by

continuous efforts of the individual concerned. On the contrary, the particularistic-ascriptive pattern is a social structure that is organised around kinship and local community values; it is traditional in nature and promotes stability.

### **Elements/Components of African Social Structure**

There are different elements or components of African social structure. When these elements or components are listed, they help to make the subject of social structure clearer. These include culture, social class, social status, roles, groups, as well as institutions.

- Culture means the whole complex of traditional behaviour (beliefs, values, language and gestures) that defines a particular society, group of societies, a race, an area, or a certain period of time developed by the human race and transmitted to the successive generation. It could be material (e.g. airplane, chair, table, computer, mat, *et cetera*.) or non-material (such as mores, folklores, values, beliefs and customs).
- Social class is based on education, income and occupational prestige. However, it can also be understood as a social group occupying a position that is defined by its relationship with the means of production within an economic system and other criteria such as wealth, prestige and power that its group members possess (Imhonopi, et al., 2013).
- Social status points to the positions individuals occupy within the social structure (e.g. a judge in the judicial system or a teacher in the educational system, artisans, blue-collar workers, white-collar educated folks and others). Status ordinarily are the positions that individuals occupy within the society. It could be ascribed when it is inherited at birth or received involuntarily; and it could be achieved when it is earned, or accomplished by the individual concerned. Status symbols refer to the signs that people have so that others can recognise them that they occupy a particular position (e.g. wearing wedding bands, riding fancy cars, living in expensive neighbourhoods, *et cetera*). Status becomes inconsistent when there is a contradiction between the positions occupied by people.
- Roles are the behaviours, privileges and obligations attached to a status. In other words, individuals occupy a status but play the roles attributed to the position. For example, judges perform judicial or adjudicatory roles; teachers teach; police officers apprehend criminals and maintain peace and order while the military protect the territorial integrity of the state. Roles are an important part of culture owing to the fact that they establish the responsibilities expected of people, and sustain the society as people continue to perform their roles.
- A group is composed of individuals who are in constant interaction with one another and have similar norms, values and expectations they share. Group members are usually assigned statuses which come with roles and responsibilities.
- Social institutions provide society with the standard ways to meet its fundamental needs. These are religion, family, the economy, education, politics/government, the mass media, medicine, the military and science/technology.



### **Five Basic Social Institutions that Depict the Social Structure of the African Society**

As mentioned earlier, there are many social institutions within the society which organise our lives, affect or influence our behaviours and assist in meeting our various needs. Out of the many that are in existence, five basic social institutions are as follows:

**Religion:** This is an essential aspect in the study of social structure as particular traditions play a crucial role in the hierarchy of African religious structure. Africa has numerous traditional religious beliefs in the past before the encroachment of Christianity and Islam on the continent. These beliefs have been tagged to be 'paganistic' by outsiders or educated Africans because of the abundant ritualistic tendencies, sacrifices to gods and the ancestors, and a plethora of issues surrounding African traditional religion. However, what can be said about the African traditional religion is that it is polytheistic or pantheistic, and it offers a syncretic belief system which accommodates all kinds of worship and veneration of deities. This traditional religious practice has over the years been losing a large number of Africans as a result of the attraction that Islam and Christianity and other newer but enlightened religious practices now offer their devotees. However, religion has been important to Africa, defined the way of life of the people, influenced their beliefs and greatly impacted the structure of the African society. Religion is still an important social structure in Africa.

**Family:** Murdock (1949), considered the family as a social group with features of a common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. Families generally consist of adults represented by both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults (Imhonopi & Urim, 2012). Thus, family members live together, pool their resources together, work together, and produce offspring. In sociology, the family is treated as the foundation of the society because it forms the basic unit of social organisation and it is difficult for human society to function without it. For some time, it has been thought natural and normal for households to be based around families and continuously the family has kept playing important functions in the society. These functions include serving as the gateway for the procreation of human beings, acting as an agent of socialisation of the young and it is the primary institution where young people are prepared for their adult roles in the society. Types of family include nuclear family, extended family, polygamous family, and monogamous family. Family members have some functions to perform in maintaining their home units. In contemporary African society, the family which was more communal in nature in the past has increasingly gone nuclear due to the effect of changing culture, intrusion of Western education and others.

**Economy:** The economic system is significant for the social structure to sustain and maintain the members of the society by providing them with a means of livelihood. In the past, the economy was characterised by trade by barter whereby the farmer produces and exchanges with the hunter, same with the fisherman and the craftsman, and vice versa. The economic structure of the African society has progressed from the hunter-gatherer stage to the present industrial system. In some African economies, they have entered the post-industrial stage of a vibrant service economy. In modern Africa, the economic structure is characterised by paid formal employment, a growing entrepreneurial climate and a modern and industrial system.

**Politics:** The political structure is an important unit within the society because it is what organises the power levers/levels and creates/sustains a government that administers the state. The government provides the needs of members of the society, protects them from



social deviants and ensures that peace and stability reign in the society. In the past, most African societies were monarchical in nature. The traditional monarchy with its kings or rulers, kingmakers and chiefs, elders and subjects prevailed. This type of government made laws for the people, interpreted and implemented the laws for the good of the members of society. However, modern African societies have replaced most of their monarchies with democratic and unitary systems of government over time. Nonetheless, the political structure in present-day Africa has the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government.

**Education:** This is another basic social institution in all human societies. The educational system in Africa before the colonial interregnum was an informal system that also promoted a master-journeyman skill acquisition process. The African society then had a way of teaching and grooming its young members into adulthood which was done informally at the family level. Also, there was a plethora of age-group associations and social rituals that young members of the society had to pass through to become legitimate and respected members of the society. However, modern African now has a formal educational system that, with its diverse variations, has a primary, secondary and tertiary educational systems in many of its societies.

### **Sociological Theories on Social Structure**

There are important sociological perspectives on social structure. Some of them have been identified thus:

#### **Structural functional theory**

This theory is concerned with the important functions that social structures play in the society. For example, functionalists believe that families are an important social institution, playing critical roles in the socialisation of the young, feeding and catering to the needs of the young and stabilising the society. They further argue that family members take on positions in a marriage or family and that their members perform certain functions that facilitate the prosperity and development of society. The educational, political, religious and economic structures also play vitally important functions in the society in many ways. The economy provides a means of livelihood for the members of the society; religion enables the faith that people have in a deity to meet their emotional and spiritual needs; the educational structure arms members of the society with the knowledge, skills and abilities to become respectable and resourceful individuals, while through the political unit, members of the society choose their leaders, receive protection and preservation from the government and meet many social needs such as health, infrastructure, transportation and others. However, the theory has been criticised for not recognising the various interests which lead to conflict and for sometimes, if not most times, ignoring the gender-based power differentials which favour the male human species above the females.

#### **Social conflict theory**

This theory treats society as a context in which conflict takes place owing to societal members' struggle for scarce resources. Access into the various institutions in the society for membership, power and rewards is contingent on competition, suspicion and divergent interests which pitch people against one another. This leads to conflict which has to be resolved for the good of the institutions concerned and the society itself. Its main concepts include class conflict, alienation, competition and domination. Although this theory is relevant in the dissection and interpretation of social structures, it overemphasises conflict,



division, inequality and domination. This approach further neglects the possibility that shared values, relations and interdependence can trigger unity and solidarity among members of society.

### **Symbolic interactionism**

This paradigm accentuates the process of how human behaviours depend on how individuals define others and themselves. It is a theory that encores the role of the individual as an important actor within the process. Also, symbolic interactionists explain the external world through symbols and the meanings they attach to them. For instance, the political structure is a symbol having the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government in whatever type of governance system that is in place. Interactionists also identify the roles of each member as socially constructed, since such roles influence how individuals perceive and explain social behaviour. It is akin to the adage that another man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter depending on the part of the social structure which each individual occupies. However, as society changes, the interpretations given to symbols also continue to change to accommodate the perceptions of individual members of the society. Its key concepts are symbols, processes, interaction and meaning. Its weaknesses, however, are its overdependence on micro-level analysis and the subjugation or subordination of larger social processes.

### **Feminist theory**

In sociology, the feminist theory is a rallying point for disaffected members of society who rise against what they perceive to be the masculinisation of social structures, which favour men and edge women out of mainstream society. This theory, therefore, identifies the numerous disadvantages and inequalities, including oppression and exploitation, faced by women in society as a result of nothing but their gender. For example, feminists believe that while men dominate the political structure and through their interests, greed and domineering disposition cause conflicts, some of which lead to armed violence. Women who are the passive players are the ones who bear the brunt of males' avarice and violence. Thus, feminists frown at the subjugated statuses and roles of women in the social structures in society and canvass for a new order of equity and equality among the sexes and genders. The key concepts of the theory include women, gender, exploitation, and male supremacy. Its weaknesses remain some of its extreme views canvassed by radical feminists which seem very impractical such as overthrowing men in the social structures, which in itself is tantamount to one gender dominating another gender and does not promote gender relations in the society. Feminists also do not take into consideration that social problems such as unemployment, poverty, homelessness and different forms of discrimination are gender-neutral because they affect both genders.

### **Modern Systems: The Product of Globalisation**

While it may be argued that many Africans are deeply loyal to the prevalent traditional social institutions, Western institutions and policies dominate contemporary Africa through globalisation. For example, social class affects everyone's daily behaviour, yet the class structure is too complex and varied to be easily summarised. Indeed, the class structure of African society is still taking shape and evolving as it gives way to the influx of external culture in all aspects. Globalisation is not an entirely new trend but can be traced to an



enduring chain of economic interactions and transactions, which wedded the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. As indicated earlier, this marked the beginning of unusual relations between Africa and the rest of the world through a process of conquests and colonisation, followed thereafter by social, political and cultural globalisation, as Western European institutions and structures were grafted onto social systems in Africa and globalised as modernity. Globalisation stands out as a defining term of contemporary society and refers to a dynamic spread of social structures of modernity such as capitalism, rationalism, industrialism, and bureaucratism the world over, in the process destroying pre-existing cultures and self-determination of other peoples.

### **Positive Impact of Globalisation on African Social Structures**

Globalisation is not all that evil and ill-omened for Africa as there are many advantages that Africa has benefitted by being integrated into the global economic and sociocultural system. According to the proponents of globalisation, the following are the benefits enjoyed by nations today, including Africa, as a result of globalisation:

- First, national economic systems all over the world are increasingly interacting through the growth in international trade, investment and capital in-flows. Thus, African economies and nations are not cut off from these interactions but have been integrated into them and are benefitting from these interactions via the free trade policies where African goods can now enter industrial markets, and a rise in investment and capital inflows into Africa. Thus proponents of globalisation see this interaction as a global drive toward globalisation and an endorsement of a globalised economic system.
- Second, there is the development of and access to information and communication technologies all over the world at low and affordable costs. This situation fosters social and family relations between peoples, including Africans. Through the internet, e-mail, GSM phone technologies, text messaging, social media and others, African people are capable of keeping in touch with the rest of the world at relatively cheap costs (Imhonopi, 2019).
- Third, globalisation, through the force of technology, also encourages social mobility. In the modern world, human movement has greatly been enhanced, and human interaction greatly improved because of the telephone and the internet. Therefore, the contemporary means of transport and communication have improved the consciousness of African citizens about the world around them, with multiple influences coming from various cultures. Consequently, time and distance are of no importance, and language barriers are downgraded because global citizens now communicate through trade, social Internet forums, various media sources, and a variety of other ways.
- Fourth, with the tremendous development in modern ICTs, knowledge and culture are shared around the world at the same time including within and across African borders.

According to Politzer (2008), other benefits of globalisation to the African society and peoples include:

- Industrial growth and development. By this, the growth of global production and markets and more access to foreign products for consumers and companies at an



unbelievably high rate are made possible, particularly movement of goods and materials experiences greater exchanges. For example, international trade in manufactures grew more than 100 times (from \$95 billion to \$12 trillion) in 50 years since 1955 while trade between China and Africa between 2000 and 2007, increased sevenfold.

- Financial integration. The financial markets have not also been left out. There is the emergence of a global financial supermarket offering better access and products to individual and institutional borrowers. In terms of market value, at the start of the 21st century, an excess of \$1.5 trillion in national currencies was traded daily to support the trade and investment growth levels across the countries of the world. However, the growth of these structures, exceeding the careful vigilance of countries and their transnational regulatory regimes was identified as one of the factors that triggered the global financial and lending rates crisis that occurred between 2007 and 2010.
- Economic integration. Through globalisation, a global common market, based on the freedom of exchange of goods and capital, has been fostered. Therefore, manufactures in Asia are easily exported to Africa or Europe and sold in whatever regional market manufacturers desire. This has obviously led to the moving of production activities from one area to another. For example, almost all reputable global IT companies have a presence in India.
- Health Policy. Influenced by global trade and global economy, health policy has also developed in line with technological advances and medical innovations.
- Political integration. Through globalisation, one-party and autocratic regimes in Africa hitherto are beginning to embrace liberal democratic doctrines and political systems aimed at widening the political space within national borders, guaranteeing free and fair elections and popular rule and engendering accountable, responsible and responsive political leadership.
- Information explosion. Globalisation has also triggered an upsurge in information flows between geographically remote locations. Arguably, this is a technological change with the advent of fibre optic communications, satellites, and increased availability of telephone and the Internet.
- Competition. African economies have begun to improve their economic structures with the view to competing and winning in the global trading and global economic environment. This is also due to globalisation.
- Ecological Solutions. Through globalisation, global environmental challenges are receiving international cooperation, such as climate change, cross-boundary water and air pollution, over-fishing of the ocean, and the spread of invasive species.
- Cultural development. This can be seen in the growth of cross-cultural contacts; advent of new categories of consciousness and identities embodying cultural diffusion; the desire to increase one's standard of living, enjoy foreign products and ideas, adopt new technologies and practices, and participate in a 'world culture'. Through globalisation, practices that limited women's rights, promoted child labour, child slavery, child prostitution and child marriage are globally resented and there is an international cooperation to discourage such practices including human trafficking.



- Recently, too, there is more international travel and tourism, greater immigration with remittance inflows to developing countries which as at 2008 amounted to \$328 billion.
- Spread of local consumer products (e.g., food) to other countries (often adapted to their culture).
- Worldwide fads and pop culture such as Numa Numa, Sudoku, Pokémon, Idol series, Origami, Orkut, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, and MySpace are now accessible to the world's bottom billion who have access to the Internet or Television, leaving out just a small number of the Earth's population.
- Globalisation has also enabled worldwide sporting events such as FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games to be shown live to African nations and other parts of the world simultaneously. Through such sports, nationalistic feelings and support are generated and these promote oneness and unity among African nations.
- Social investment. Through the activities of global non-governmental organisations, as main agents of global public policy, humanitarian aid and developmental efforts are on the increase and directed towards African nations.
- Technology diffusion. Development of a Global Information System, global telecommunications infrastructure and greater trans-border data flow, using such technologies as the Internet, communication satellites, submarine fiber optic cable, and wireless telephones is now on the increase. Also, on the increase is a range of standards applied globally namely patents, copyright laws, and world trade agreements meant to protect the inventions and intellectual properties of citizens of the world, including Africa.
- Legal/Ethical Contributions. Globalisation has facilitated the establishment of the International Criminal Court and international justice movements, increased knowledge of crime importation and raised awareness of global crime-fighting efforts and cooperation and there is also the emergence of Global Administrative Law.
- Religious Integration. The spread and increased interrelations of various religious groups, ideas, and practices and their ideas of the meanings and values of particular spaces have helped to improve religious understandings in many parts of the world.

### **Negative Impact of Globalisation on African Social Structures**

In spite of the numerous benefits of globalisation in the nations of the earth including Africa, some African scholars consider globalisation with scepticism and have even greater concern for it (Nujoma, 2009; Olurode, 2003). Churches working in Africa, including the Catholic church, have also been worried. The Holy See published a note on finance and development, immediately before the United Nations Conference in Doha, which states: 'We need to pay particular attention to Africa, where the development map shows strong inequalities. In Africa, the situation is different from country to country; there is a trend towards polarisation between situations of success in obtaining resources and making them fruitful, and situations of total marginalisation' (Eanes, 2009).

According to a Portuguese scholar and former President of Portugal, Eanes (2009), globalisation has brought dangerous consequences for African governments and peoples in the following ways:

- The technological and scientific breakthroughs that support globalisation and global integration are not owned by third world countries, including Africa. These technologies are deployed to Africa and other nations to facilitate and support the business and other interests of the metropole without any plans to transfer the knowledge of these technologies to the African peoples and third world nations.
- The assimilation of African economies into the capitalist economy through the colonial invasion of Africa has been completed by globalisation, providing a legal ground somewhat for the continued dependence of African economies on western interests.
- Privatisation has intensified the integration of African countries in production and financial global systems, encouraging the flow of capital investment and attracting the ownership by foreign capital of former public-held companies.
- Africa has become the dumping ground for a series of products (art and literature, cinema or music) that have little to do with African people, obliterating African culture and leading to a Eurocentric and American vision of reality.
- Globalisation subverts the autonomy and self-determination of African peoples. The burden of external debt of African countries as at 2017 amounted to 417 billion dollars (Rensch, 2018). Increasing debt burden affects African citizens and pushes the vulnerable into the precarity trap.
- The lack of governmental incentives to local production, the subversion of local production by high imports, the exchange rate devaluation and the depletion of foreign reserves are some of the effects of marginalisation and underdevelopment caused by development agents.
- Due to globalisation, it has not been easy for governments to ensure social protection, one of their core functions and the one that has helped many developed nations maintain social cohesion and domestic political support.
- Furthermore, globalisation has damaged the natural environment of Africa. The situation in the Niger Delta and the Ogoni people in particular, affected by oil exploration in the region, which has ravaged marine life and environment, has affected the supply of drinking water and caused a number of diseases to happen to the people.

Thus, the effect of globalisation on the African society and peoples is also negative and plain retrogressive for African economies, cultures, languages, social relations and political systems. While one may not be able to wish away globalisation anytime soon, Africa should be prepared to reposition itself to take advantage of the opportunities this phenomenon presents and minimise the risks it is exposed to particularly as they affect its social structure.

### **Recommendations**

Following a conference attended by African and world leaders in 2009 on '*Globalization: Learning from the Past, Enabling a Better Future*', which was a joint International conference sponsored by UNESCO and the United Nations University in Tokyo, Japan, some of the recommendations made by African leaders will come in here very handy. According to Nujoma (2009), founder of the Namibian republic, the following points can



help African countries to undo the deleterious consequences of globalisation, while reaffirming its positive influences in Africa.

1. African economic and political leaders should direct their resources and efforts on the education of their people, and sensitise them on their civic, social, economic and cultural rights and responsibilities. They should also empower them so that they can defend their rights and interests, while contributing fully to the overall development of their countries. This will be possible if African countries invest heavily in developing and maintaining their social structures, particularly health and educational facilities that support the welfare of a larger population than that of the aristocratic classes. Through education and the development of the human capital of Africans, African countries will be capable of taking control of their destinies and dealing effectively with the outside world.
2. Globalisation has weakened most African economies, making these countries more vulnerable than they were at the time of their independence. Rather than have closer ties with their people, most African leaders now depend on external coalition of interests and powers to rule over their people. Consequently, during international negotiations, such leaders demonstrate detachment arising from the lack of popular support which, if present, could effectively goad them to defend the interests and welfare of their people. Africa should, therefore, do everything possible to ensure that it is led by competent leaders, dedicated to the welfare of their people, and whose legitimacy in power emanates from the people.
3. As a corollary to the above, many African countries depend on development strategies and policies initiated and formulated by external interests, which are then imposed on African countries as a condition for aid, investments, trade access, and political and military supports. As a result, these strategies and policies serve more the interest of external forces rather than those of the African people they claim to be assisting. Africa needs a new approach to economic development that looks holistically at the nature, ownership, management, allocation, utilisation and distribution of resources, keeping in mind that Africa is very rich in natural resources. However, these resources have not contributed significantly to the continent's social and economic empowerment. African countries should therefore design policies that maximise the potential benefits of globalisation, and minimise the downside risks of destabilisation and marginalisation.
4. Because most African countries have weak economies and few, if any, can succeed on their own and withstand the impact of globalisation, cooperation with others should consequently become a central objective of their governments. African countries should vigorously and proactively exploit modern forms of transport and communication, especially information technology, so as to strengthen the interdependence among them, and thus provide them with the material base for economic, political, social and cultural cooperation and integration among them. There is thus a need to analyse, in respect of the capabilities, functions, objectives and accomplishments, the current sub-regional and regional, intergovernmental organisations on the continent, with the view to rationalising them, so as to ensure that they make effective contributions to economic cooperation and integration for the good of the African people as a whole.



5. African countries need to diversify their economies and move away from dependence on a few primary goods by ensuring a balance between agriculture and manufacturing, and by increasing the competitiveness of African goods on regional and world markets.
6. By insisting that African countries must open their economies, through trade liberalisation, to allow in foreign goods and entrepreneurs, globalisation has thus limited African countries from taking proactive and conscious measures which can facilitate the emergence and expansion of an indigenous entrepreneurial class. The indigenous entrepreneurial class, if adequately empowered, has the ability to contribute to the development of truly integrated, national economies.

According to Kufuor (2009), former President of Ghana, given the general agreement on Africa's historical, psychological, political and economic handicaps which must be radically overcome, Africa needs the following critical tools to empower it to leap-frog into the mainstream of globalisation:

- a) Leadership with a comprehensive grasp of, and knowledge of,
  - i. Africa's history;
  - ii. the economic dynamics of international relations;
  - iii. the development imperatives that Africa should employ to enhance its competitive advantages, rationally deployed on whatever comparative advantages are available, and ensuring that human capital development is central to those advantages;
  - iv. the necessity for vigorous provision of education, healthcare, and physical infrastructure including transportation, energy, telecommunications, food security, potable water and environmental balance in each and every nation;
  - v. awareness that healthy and vigorous symbiotic development of macro and micro-economies dictates public-private partnership policies as a cornerstone of socio-economic advancement;
  - vi. good governance issuing from constitutional imperatives of institutional checks and balances; respect for human rights as the basis for democracy; respect for minority rights, property rights, cultural and religious rights; transparent and accountable government and also responsible citizenship under law and order, with due process of the rule of law;
  - vii. appreciation of the decisive benefits of economies of scale from customs unions of regional groupings on the continent, including attracting FDI's for industrialisation and job creation.
- b) NEPAD should be empowered to be a continental think-tank so as to endow Africa with a vision of strategic planning within the globalisation context.
- c) Such strategic planning should enhance adoption and development of purposeful continental and regional projects.
- d) The strategic planning should be matched with improved negotiating skills in Africa's dealings with the global community.
- e) The advent of the science and technological era and also of the blossoming global understanding and co-operation between Africa and other nations as evidenced in mechanisms like TICAD, FOCAC and the various councils between Africa and the other regions of the world must be used to increase the self-confidence of Africa to stand shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the world.

For Konare (2009), former President of Guinea, having a United States of Africa is one way to galvanise the political and economic interests of the continent and to present a common and solid front to the world with regards to issues affecting the social structures on the continent.

### Conclusion

Whereas this Chapter is about African social structure, the author has considered it pertinent to wade into the conversation on how to preserve the existing structures so that they continue to serve the interests of Africans and not foreigners. But in a globalising world, and as a credible member of the global community, African social structure, particularly its institutions, cannot be isolated. Thus, while the present globalisation movement is a rechauffe of the imperialist and colonialist invasion of African social structures, because of its ability to redefine the social, economic, educational, political and production relations of the African peoples, efforts to rein in the negative effects of this engagement and exploit the positives should be pursued single-mindedly by the African elite, academia, peoples and other stakeholders. Although the African society has continued to modernise, bringing along with it such positives as democratic liberties, technology-motored and equitable educational system, advocacy of the rights of employees and the poor, technological diffusion and advancement; from the era of late night story telling by grandparents/parents to television and internet influence, short message service (SMS), voice-calling, social media and video conferencing, among others, the dangerous effect of Western influences which have continued to erode the African value systems should be checked. Within the silhouette of globalisation, African social structures should continue to address its inherent weaknesses, lack of cohesion and coordination, poor leadership and corruption which have continued to blight the chances of the continent to compete in the global arena. With the adoption of the recommendations made here and the increasing spread and succession of the new breed of democratically-elected leadership throughout Africa, many of whom are appropriately informed with a global vision and the need to deliver the social goods to their people, Africa might just be in a position to truly make the 21st century its own, riding on vibrant and pro-African social institutions.

### Chapter Exercises

1. What do you understand by the term, 'social structure'?
2. What are the different types of social structures you know?
3. List and explain the five basic social institutions in Africa.
4. Do you agree that globalisation has affected African social structure in negative ways? If yes, support your answer with logical reasons from the Chapter.
5. How can Africa exploit the positives of globalisation to better its social institutions?

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