

# The State of Globalization: A Review of The Trends and Impacts on African Union's Regionalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Abstract

This paper is a critical review of the trends of globalization in African international relations in the twenty-first century. In an earlier article on "Regionalism and Integration in Sub-Sahara Africa at the close of the twentieth century" – there was a critical evaluation of the causes and consequences of a globalizing world. But confronted with the number of international challenges-climate change, pandemics, cyber security, gridlock at the UN and migration-which spill over national boundaries, is globalization fractured or evolving as a phenomenon? How do the latest waves of globalization explain the critical catalysts of anti-globalization sentiments on the African continent? If so how can African governments, including the African Union (AU) deal with these drivers of deglobalization?

**Keywords:** Globalization; Deglobalization; Regionalism; Regional Integration; African Union (AU); Colonialism; African Politics; African International Relations; AfCFTA.

## 1.0 Introduction

The African continent has experienced traumatized socio-economic and political history, orchestrated through violent colonial impositions. The outcomes have been first, neo-colonialism, capitalism, and of recent globalization (Mann, 2003). This paper is an attempt to revisit the old debate of the 'idealism' and the 'realism' in the present context of African states' regionalism project as embedded in international relations theory and how they react to the processes of globalization. To make such an attempt we must first elaborate on the extremely broad and diverse areas of globalization. We also need to bring many different converging aspects, which are in need of clarification in the very onset. Indeed, this paper identifies first, the manner in which African states perpetuate themselves while faced with the reductionist forces of globalization. And to do so we will deliberately avoid going into the extremely rich and contested theories associated with the modern state, their origins and survival, as that would be

beyond the scope of the present study. This paper thus discusses African states as identified by international relations; territorially bounded sovereign locations who are generally responding to a single nationalist sentiment, known as regionalism even though they are constituted by different political systems<sup>1</sup>. Through the rebirth of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU), the sovereign scope of the African states have been questioned, as the world has become more integrated in terms of communications, economic transactions, money flows etc. What is of utmost importance in this search is the breath of understanding of the different ways in which African states have been reacting to globalization threats which tend to break a hold over their subjects. But before such an analysis can be made globalization as a concept needs to be explained.

Collecting and analysing information from available secondary sources, such as documents, reports, academic publications and other materials, the first part of this paper thus describes the major themes of globalization and discusses what the phenomenon supposedly entails. It also briefly touches on the debate of the existence of such a phenomenon in historic and political terms. This is accomplished by how interdependence and interconnectedness have reduced the African states' sovereign hold over its territorial identity. This is the most crucial claim of the globalization discourse and it has been taken up following an overview of state-sovereign in the introductory part of this paper. Both sides of the argument have been explained in order to provide the reader with a complete understanding of the claims and counter-claims of the globalists, the sceptics and the transformationalists. The first sections identify economics as being the major defence of the states against the forces of globalization. The next section identifies the African Union (AU) and its attributes as examples and locates the four different ways in which regionalism and the introduction of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) answers the threats of globalization. It shows how Africa can curve-out a niche for itself in international relations in the four different fields of economy, politics, society and culture. It also applies to the African context to show that all states which are rooted in a strong society and culture can accept globalization without the fear of succumbing to it. However, the acceptance necessarily presupposes adaptation on the part of the states within the African continent first before others globally. The future of the modern African nation-state has been laid out briefly on the basis of such adaptations which it needs to make or have already made. Indeed, there is no denying the recent global upheavals and as the title of this paper suggest, distinctions between 'us' – regionalism and 'the rest' – globalization is crucial to such an understanding.

## 2.0 Statement of the Problem

The term globalization means different things to different people, as well as a force most powerful and ancient than the African continent. In fact, it has a fairly long academic history too, particularly in the social sciences (Greig, 2002). Globalization has ebbed and flowed throughout history, with period of expansion and retrenchment. Of recent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we've seen how global stock markets have plummeted after the September 11, 2001 terrorists attack in the United States; but rebounded in the following years. More so, the globalist avers that globalization tend to offer general prosperity and widening opportunities for everyone; whilst anti-globalists associate capitalism with inequality and exploitation of people into misery and injustice (Cadier, et al, 2002). In this realm, the brunt and the negative impacts of globalization is said to reduce the capacity of nation-states – particularly African countries – preventing them from organizing their economic and political lives after their decolonization. And since the basic tenets of globalization is trade liberalization, it forced African countries to open their

small markets (soon after colonization) to market forces of demand and supply to determine the prices of goods and services which indeed marginalized them. So with the present-day negative realities of globalization dawning on Africa, the African Union has to re-strategize, as well as design new programs/policies that will minimize the consequences and maximize the benefit of a globalizing world vis-à-vis the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to cushion such impacts.

### **3.0 Conceptual Clarification - The term ‘Globalization’ and Africa**

Africa is the world’s second largest and second most populous continent. At about 30.2 million KM<sup>2</sup> (11.7 million mi) including adjacent Islands, it covers 06 per cent of Earth’s total surface area and 20.4 per cent of its area. Africa is home to 1.4 billion people as at 2022, and accounts for about 15 per cent of the world’s human population. Furthermore, Africa hosts a large diversity of ethnicities, cultural and languages. African was colonized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Europeans and decolonized in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In terms of political economy, Africa consists of trade, industry human resources, natural resources and agriculture. The conceptual difficulty of identifying Africa’s role in globalization since the 19<sup>th</sup> century lies in the cyclic logic used to define it. But most researches, such as (Wallerstein, 2004; World Bank (2020) study; Ngepah and Udeagha, 2018; Karingi and Mevel (2012) on globalization tend to extract the meaning of globalization from the effects it has on a society’s economy, political sphere, culture and the so on. More so, globalization has largely been driven by the interests and needs of the developed world as against developing ones (Grieco and Holmes, 1999). In fact, globalization has turned the world into a big village; without benefits attributed to African political economy. Furthermore, the unevenness in the globalization process itself is the primary drawback for such a global unification. But given the historical relationship between Africa and the Western world, it is ironic that the latter is today preaching the virtues of freedom to Africans. Why are former colonizers and ex-slave-owners of Africa making a virtue of championing political and economic liberalization today? Are they not the ‘yesterday’s oppressors’, who have become ‘today’s liberators’; fighting for democracy, human rights and free market economies through the world (Obadina, 1998). Globalization evokes images of the triumph of free market system, massive capital flows, global information revolution, and innovations in science, new transnational cultural expressions and rapidly shifting demographic conditions. But the sad assessment this research is about to reveal is disheartening of the uneven relationship that was in existence and still persist; as well as the harm it does to the African political economy.

### **3.1 The Limitations before the launch of AfCFTA**

For Africa to be part of a globalizing world, and arrest the impacts of globalization the African Union kick-started the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on January 1, 2021. The AfCFTA implementation stage has started with the gradual dismantling of tariffs on 97 per cent of intra-African goods and services over the next 13 years. The full implementation of the agreement is forecasted to boost intra-African trade by as much as 52 per cent according to a widely cited study by Karingi and Mevel (2012) or by \$450 billion by the year 2035 according to more recent World Bank (2020) study. According to further analyses from the academic and policy making circles, hardly is a presentation made on the topic of the AfCFTA without lamentation about how intra-African trade is at an abysmally low percentage compared to other European or Asian continents (e.g., Yang and Gupta, 2005, Ngepah and Udeagha, 2018). On another level, there are generally evidence-led assessments by Cramer et al, (2020:65), of how sub-regions and regional communities’ intra-African trade remains a tiny fraction of

the continent's overall trade. But what inspires and invigorating is that the emerging information of such measurements of the extent of intra-African trade are being affected by statistical errors; aside the cognitive biases and omissions they exhibit (Rosling (2018)).

### **3.2 The African Union and Regionalism**

The African Union is an institution formed by African States, to reorganize and consolidate, as well as correct the mistakes of the Organization of Africa Union (OAU of 1963) in 2002. The AU has since introduced the concept of regionalism for an eventual continental unity as anchored in the recently launched AfCFTA under Agenda 2063. This flagship project is part and parcel of the on-going debate and contestation of the African Union, in its quest to link countries within a geographic area by international trade and to see; who benefits from the processes in a fast globalizing world. Africa's regionalism is constituted within the five categories in which Hurrell (1995:39-46) defines regional integration of communities. Indeed, the AU's AfCFTA – under Agenda 2063 seeks: (i) to achieve a regionalization on the continent, which is characterized by the growth of societal integration by bringing together regions, as a consequence of the expansion of markets, trade and investment and activities of private companies; (ii) to bring about a regional awareness and identity, either as a result of identification with a culture, history or tradition (Pan-Africanism), or in response to external challenges (globalization); (iii) to reinforce a regional interstate cooperation, expressed by interstate or intergovernmental agreements or regimes; (iv) to improve on a state-by-state promoted regional integration, with the intention of reducing barriers to the mobility of goods, services, capital or people; and lastly, (v) to build regional cohesion, which is the process that leads to the emergence of a liberated continent – continental union. Indeed, the IMF's World Economic Outlook admonishes that those economies that have made the most economic progress in recent years and have profited the most from recent trends are linked to the appropriate combination of three main objectives: (i) achieving and preserving macroeconomic stability; (ii) promoting openness to trade and capital flows; and (iii) limiting government intervention to areas of genuine market failure and to the provision of the necessary social and economic infrastructure. So the overriding question remains: What are globalization trends in Africa that ought to be arrested by the introduction of AfCFTA through the African Union?

### **4.0 Theoretical Framework**

The term globalization means different things to different people in the social sciences. Many scholars say the term globalization is the movement of people, language, ideas and products around the world. To the African, globalization is the dominance of multinational corporations and the destruction of cultural identities as a result of their incursions (era of African colonization). 'Googling' the term, "Globalization" from the website, refers to 'the expansion of global linkages, the organization of social life on a global scale that has affected Africa and the African and the impacts of a global consciousness, hence their consolidation into the world society.' Definitions vary indeed, especially in the particular driving force they identify. But too often and in respect of this paper, we associate and define globalization as economic integration and the exchange of ideas, people and goods that comes with it – as a recent phenomenon. In essence, the term in itself is a topic of global discussion, which may refer to 'real' processes, ideas that justify them, or to a way of things about them – hence we refer to globalization as 'process'; the failure of which can lead a country or object to a 'condition'. So, what is the relationship between globalization and the African nation-states? Are African nation-states being undermined? Have African nation-states pursued their own development trajectory? Or are the nation-

states in Africa becoming transformed in new ways or deglobalizing? Does globalization involve internationalization, seen as an increased intensity and exchanges among nation-states or transnationalization, involving emerging structures, processes and phenomena that transcend the nation-state system? The questions posed can help at this stage to use the different theories of globalization to address the impacts globalization has on the African continent – as to whether it is fractured, evolving and will get to Africa's turn; or dying as a phenomena. Therefore, what follows is not a comprehensive review of extant theories, but a limited selection intended to provide a view of the range of theoretical discourse on which we intend to draw our analysis.

#### **4.1 Theory of Integration**

The theories of regional integration seek to explain the establishment and development of regional international organizations. Whereas regional integration theories started on a broad comparative regional and organizational scope in the 1950s, and were used solely to describe the European integration - the theories are now being copied by scholars for use in Africa's regionalism project. The theories are explanations of why countries in Europe came together, and indeed entail the establishment and implementation of supranational policies and a controlling institution to achieve cohesiveness in the flow of goods and services among other variables (Hurrell, 1995). Indeed, regional integration theories seek to explain the establishment and development of regional international organization as coordinating a group of countries in a bloc. The establishment (i) consist of the willingness and commitment of state members (ii) has the required organizational capacity (iii) engaged in multilateralism and (iv) involve countries within a geographical setting. Besides, such an international organization should be recognized by the states and must establish a physical headquarters to run the affairs of the outfit since regional agreements or conferences cannot constitute the delegated authority to integrate them. In so doing, national governments delegate the authority to regional organizations to secure their bargaining outcomes but remain in control of the larger integration process. Such transnational corporations and interest groups as well as supranational actors are empowered by the interaction process to shape it to the benefit of all those engaged in the process. Whether the African regional communities (AEC), the European Union (EU), the Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN) or the MERCOSUR in South America, regional integration theories are vital both for the materialistic nature of cooperation and the geopolitical configuration of integration since the emergence of the 'new regionalism approach' to regional integration (Zoleka, 2006; Hettne & Soderbaum, 2006).

#### **4.2 The World-system Theory**

Another theory that we intend to use in the current state of globalization is the world-systems theory. The theory asserts that most nations are part of a worldwide interdependent economic and political system based on the unequal exchange in the division of labour and allocation of resources between core nations, semi-peripheral nations, and peripheral nations. The key questions are why and under which conditions do states decide to transfer political authority to regional organization; how do regional organizations expand their tasks, competencies and members and what impact do they have on states and societies in their regions? The world-system theory is the understanding of social change based upon geohistorical system. These provide a space-time framework for understanding social change that replaces the orthodox use of national-state as the basic unit of change – that is 'space' as in homeland territory and 'time' as in the 'rise of the nation.' Geohistorical systems denote specific structures of social relations that are concretely realized through time (trends and cycles) and space (extends and order). According to the modern world-system in which we live, the world-system was constructed in

Europe in the “long” 16<sup>th</sup> century; it expanded to cover the whole world by C. 1900 (but destroyed all other systems); and will meet its demise to in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Wallenstein, 2004). These theoretical approaches by Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970s were the key geohistorical challenges that world-system analysis was designed to overcome. That is drawing on his ‘first-world’ experiences of the 1968 revolutions that spurned the orthodox ‘old’ left, and his ‘third world’ of severe constraints on national liberation revolutions. According to Wallerstein, the world-system produced two great geographical myths of the times: Developmentalism, in which the world is divided into “developed countries” and “developing countries; Cold-War thinking, in which the world was at the time divided into “capitalist” and “communist countries (Wallenstein. 45). With the world-systems theory, the state of globalization has revolved from the two geographical myths from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the same point in geohistory today – citing the intense fighting between Russia and Ukraine, with global consequences for the whole world (Cadier, et al, 2022).

### 4.3 The Political Economy theory

‘Political economy’ is a term that has been used for the past 300 years to express the interrelationship between the political and economic affairs of the state. In theories of political economy (PE), first published in 1992 – by James A. Caporaso and David P. Levine – used the term to explore important frameworks for understanding the relationship between politics and economics and to influence Marxian, Keynesian, neoclassical, state-centred, power-centred, and justice-centred approaches. Political economy theory explores the relationship between a nation’s government and its population upon enactment of public policy. The term political economy originated from two Greek terms: polis – which means a city/state – and oikonomos – which also means a household or estate manager. PE studies and theory were initially local, but have gradually gone beyond national borders to International political economy (IPE) today. In short, political economy has a significant impact on domestic and international markets, since the respective fields of politics and economics crucially impacts and influences each other and in determining how societies and individuals are affected by governance through governments’ public policies. In essence, its approach involves the connections between economics and ideas from political science, sociology, history and international relations – and the use of global institutions – to influence political system. as depicted in this diagram.

### 5.0. The Review, Analysis and Discussions

In the most basic terms, globalization of the world economy describes the integration of economies throughout the world of trade financial flows, the exchange of technology and information, and the movements of people (Ohmae, 1990). The extent of the trend toward integration is clearly reflected in the rising importance of world trade and capital flows in the world economy. If that is the case, there is an increasingly large share of world’s Gross Domestic Products (GDP) being generated in activities linked directly or indirectly to international trade. In this case, everyone benefits, but which is not the case with African countries. The following review is to compare these past world economic inflows and outflows and to see if there has been a phenomenal growth in cross-border financial flows, particularly in the form of private equity and portfolio investment in Africa, compared with the past. In addition, the revolution in communication and transportation technology and the much improved availability of information have allowed individuals and firms to base their economic choices more on the quality of the economic environment in different countries. In a globalizing world it is not a question of relative resource endowments or geographic location that is employed as in the past. In this review and the

discussion that will follow; we are looking at how globalization is now a question of the markets or a perception of the markets and the predictability of a country or a group of countries' economic policy (Cadier, et al, 2022). It is with such vim that we believe that the launch of the AfCFTA under Agenda 2063, if pursued in a positive light, can aid in drawing most, if not all, African countries to a position where the benefits of globalization will meet every country's aspiration leading to a more positive world.

### **5.1 Globalization and AU's Regionalism – with the AfCFTA**

Since the launch of the African Continental Trade Area (AfCFTA), the impacts of globalization have become a major topic of discussion and concern in economic circles. It is true that the AfCFTA has embraced the trend toward more integrated world markets; and alongside; opened a wide potential for greater continental growth in Africa that would present an unparalleled opportunity for developing countries to raise their living standards. At the same time, the recent economic crisis such as the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2019 makes globalization very relevant and critical to understanding the current challenges facing African economies. The slowing trends of international commerce concerns have risks of marginalization for African countries. Toward these trends; what is globalization to the African countries, who are struggling to develop value chain networks? What are the implications for the conduct of economic policies to remain relevant to globalizing trends, particularly by African countries? What are potential benefits and pit-holes to look out for in the looming order? What will developing African countries have to do to benefit from it; or to avoid deglobalization? Are there any good reasons for Africa's regionalism to be fearful of globalization trends? The term 'deglobalization' signifies a process of declining interdependence (for instance, trade and investments, reduced international cooperation between nation-states across the world).

### **5.2 What is the new looming order?**

The African Union must, as matters of urgency begin to address the widening gap between the new systemic risks that will be generated as a result of a fully-functional Africa Continental Free Trade Area amidst globalization. Goldin and Mariathasan (<https://.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/publications/the-burterfly-defect-how-globalization->) avers that systemic risk issues are now endemic everywhere – in the supply chain, pandemics, infrastructure, ecology and climate change, economics, as well as politics because of a globalized world. The first point here is that if the Africa Union wants member countries to thrive as one within the free trade area, the free trade has to work for every country in order to achieve a united continent in the future. Second, the African Union should know how to manage systemic risks – from cyber-attacks and pandemics to financial crises and climate change – in the 'free-trade area. Third, because of the global pandemic of COVID-19 that caused economic recession worldwide on top of the great number of lives lost to the virus, there must be a lot of coverage of the risk of globalization as insurance for members of AfCFTA. This is because the African Union seeks interconnectedness among members of the AfCFTA; therefore, the world is not only seen as the increased flow of people, goods, and information but also viruses that can sweep through the continent like wildfire. That said, we believe that the responses from the African Union to most of these risks devastation on member-countries can insulate the kind of policies, undoubtedly to avert most negative aspects of globalization. Lastly, the African Union must address the concerns that will definitely lead to greater protectionism, such as xenophobia, particularly in South Africa, nationalism and inevitably, rising inequalities due to corruption, conflicts, 'lately of several coup de tats' and slower economic growth. With the reversal of these risks to the AfCFTA, investment capital will seek out the most efficient markets for producers and consumers across Africa, to access the most competitive sources, expose and intensify existing structural

weaknesses in individual economies within the free trade area (FTA). Most risks within the FTA, due to the speedy flow of information, caused by mistakes endure quick punishments; so is increased capital mobility, which carries the risk of destabilizing flows and heightens exchange rate volatility in cases where domestic macroeconomic policies are inappropriate. And since the African continent is still unsure of when to launch a common currency, the increased capital mobility carries the risk of destabilizing such flows. Finally, the countries within the AEC constitutional Act, which promises to combine the 8 regional economic communities into a continental union, run the risk of being left behind if policies meant to bring their macro-economic convergence criteria for continental integration continue to linger on. In earnest, the continent risk running into a ‘deglobalization’ trend unless these problems are addressed comprehensively.

### **5.3 What are the realities?**

The African Union’s integration agenda is enshrined in the Abuja Treaty (1991), and is an overarching goal at achieving the African Economic Community (AEC) at the continental level in six (6) successive stages; namely (i) the strengthening of sectoral cooperation among African states; (ii) the creation of regional free trade areas; (iii) the establishment of a continental customs Union; (iv) the establishment of a Common Market and a monetary union and (vi) the eventual establishment of an economic union (1991 Abuja Treaty Docs). More so, there is a general feeling that the consolidation of the African Common Market hinges on the realization of the envisioned principles of ensuring that there is the free movement of people, the right of residence and right of establishment across the African continent. However, globalization is first and foremost a result of the expansion, diversification and deepening of trade and financial links between African countries. This reflects above all the success of multilateral (intra-African) tariff reduction and trade liberalization efforts currently being unleashed by the launch of trading within the AfCFTA on January 1, 2021. Should there be greater openness and participation in the competitive trans-national trade, there will be an increase in employment – primarily in the skilled labour sector – which Africa has in abundance – and in the manual skills and tradable goods sectors. More so, with the expansion of these sectors, unskilled labour will find increased employment opportunities in the non-tradable sectors, such as construction and transportation. The expansion of merchandize trade will also lessen migration pressures – in particular, reduce the ‘desperate journeys’ across the Mediterranean sea for “greener pastures”- and allow such movement of labour to remain within African national boundaries and lessen production bottlenecks, as well as raise the supply response of recipient economies and increase incomes in the supplying countries through worker remittances. The openness to inter-African expertise and movement techniques will also greatly improve production efficiency in AfCFTA as well as the African continent.

### **6.0. Africa and Globalization Trends – Is it fractured or evolving?**

Africa’s economic potential in the global market is huge. But as forecasted, Africa, by 2030 will be home to about 90 per cent of the world’s poorest people unless globalization works better and faster for Africa (Cramer et al, 2020). In 2013 Africa was the world’s fastest-growing continent at 5.6 per cent a year; and GDP was expected to rise by an average of over 6 per cent a year between 2013 and 2023. Indeed, there was growth throughout the Africa continent with over one-third of African countries posting 6 per cent and high growth rates and another 40 per cent of them growing between 4 per cent and 6 per cent ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy\\_of\\_Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Africa)). But African governments spent 16.5 per cent of their revenues servicing external debts in 2021, which is up from less than 5 per cent in 2010.



More so, growth in SSA is said to bounce back to 3.5 per cent in 2023 and 3.9 per cent in 2024. Apart from South Africa and Angola, the Eastern and Southern African sub-region will grow to 4.5 per cent this year and 5.0 per cent in 2024. WAEMU countries in West Africa are also set to recover in 2023 from the slowdown they went through in 2022 (4.9 per cent), and firming further in 2024 to 7.0 per cent. Specifically, Cote d'Ivoire will come from 5.7 per cent in 2022 to 6.8 per cent. Senegal, after slowing to 4.8 per cent in 2022 will see an increase to 8.0 per cent in 2023 and firm up to 10.5 in 2024. Cameroun however, will maintain its steady post-pandemic growth in 2023 of 4.3 per cent and move slight up to 4.6 in 2024, buoyed by investment and private consumption. In view of these statistics, globalization can be described as fractured this time. (<https://www.imf.org/en/news/Articles/2022/10/14/tr101422.afr-press-briefingin>)

### **6.2 Is globalization evolving then?**

Africa's experience with globalization decelerated from 4.1 per cent in 2021 to 3.3 per cent in 2022, as a result of a slowdown in global growth, rising inflation, exacerbated by the Russian-Ukrainian war; adverse weather conditions; caused by global warming; a tightening in global financial conditions, and the rising risk of debt distress for over half of the African economies (World Bank of Africa, 2022). In a similar forecast, Sub-Saharan Africa will achieve a GDP of \$29 trillion by 2050, but with income inequalities as a major deterrent in wealth distribution (Ibid, 2022). Indeed, Africa's GDP in 2022 was estimated at around three trillion U.S. dollars. This has been the highest since 2010 when the continent's GDP amounted to only 2 trillion. This year in 2023 Africa's GDP growth forecast is expected to reach 7 per cent before increasing further to 8.6 per cent in 2024 according to African Economic Outlook for 2022. But experts have warned that careful planning will be required to avoid the "resource curse" that has afflicted so many African countries (Gupta, 2016). More so, some of Africa's major economies are expected to suffer from the on-going impacts of the Russian-Ukrainian war, runaway food prices inflation and the trail wings of the Covid-19 pandemic that has not spared African countries, but caused enormous economic disruptions (<https://northafricapost.com/64205-africa-2023>). In this sense, we describe globalization as evolving within the African continent.

### **6.3 What does a 'fractured or evolving world mean to the AfCFTA**

The word 'fractured' in the English dictionary connotes a diagnosis requiring a treatment by a medical specialist. Something 'fractured' is a complete or partial break-in in a bone that requires a laboratory test or imaging and treatable by a medical professional; either short-term; or enabling the ailment to be treated within days, weeks or years. The condition is therefore a critical issue that needs emergency care – hence the symptom breeds pain and suffering with loss of functionality depending on the areas affected. Like the recent 77<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 77), in New York from the 19-23 of September, 2022, we are compelled to align the moments, speeches and calls to action of countries, particularly, those from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, about Africa regarding globalization. The gathering, attended by about 150 Heads of State and government remains the only place for countries to deliver their respective countries' views, challenges and arrive at a consensus on how to mitigate global challenges. And in an alarming assessment during the opening address of the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA, the Secretary General warned of how nation-states were at "gridlocked in colossal global dysfunction," and were not even ready despite the impacts of globalization to tackle the challenges. "Humanity's future and that of the planet is in peril and paralyzed," the Secretary-General continued – with conclusions that globalization was in decline, which means deglobalization is setting-in (Gutiérrez, 2022).

### 6.3.1 Any countdowns for Africa?

More on whether globalization is fractured or evolving; is a countdown (an assessment), to more than halfway of the UN's 2030 Development Agenda. To avert a deglobalizing world, calls are being echoed for faster progress toward achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is because no country is yet on track to achieve the 17 Goals by 2030, as the world continues to lose gains it has made over the years in health, food security, race/gender equality, and education, impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic, conflicts, and climate change. As if to underscore a fractured world, climate change has become a defining issue of our time and leaders from climate-vulnerable countries, particularly, those in Africa are at the mercy of climate catastrophes, which have plundered their harvest and also rendered their populations homeless (Appadurai, 1990).

### 6.3.2 Then the world is at gridlock

During the deliberations at the 77<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations, it was not only about Heads of state and Government; but diplomatic work, creative problem-solving and coalition-building also took place out-side the security zone by young people who were forced to deal with the impacts of world-wide crises they did not create. For the first time in the history of the General Assembly annual meetings, young people made it clear that they were no more going to sit aloof; while 'their world' was deglobalizing. To avert a deglobalizing world, young people are beginning to call for radical reductions to the planet's use of fossil fuels, conservations and the creation of a sustainable future for the globe's mankind. Are these efforts telling us that globalization is not dying but in a flux due to the impacts of the current 'economic' war between the United States and China; who are repositioning their economies into the twenty-first century. Another reason why globalization is in a flux is yet the impacts from the 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic, where responses to the economic devastation are being excluded through protectionist policies that have undoubtedly caused reversal of some trends of globalization.

## 7.0 What should we look for in AU's Regionalism?

In the light of the foregoing and for the African Union's African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to realize its potential and achieve a greater integration into the world economy through globalization, African countries must develop their comparative advantages and gain access to newer and more appropriate technologies. First, the African Union – unlike its predecessor – the Organization of African Union (OAU) is more functional and effective because it is equipped with a stronger administrative mechanism and employs functional as well as neo-functional means of establishing continental institution. Secondly, even though the institutions are not working along the lines as those of the European Union, they are progressively using institutionalism to achieve their set objectives. Confronted at this time in trying to deal with the impacts of globalization, the African Union must continue to open its markets which constitute the platform of globalization. Thirdly, while political, cultural, social and environmental aspects of globalization are no doubt important, the economic aspect is perceived to be the heart of globalization process. Fourthly, trade, finance and investment, and entrepreneurship are the heart of globalization process, and countries most active and benefiting most from globalization are the same ones with the largest share of global trade and investment. There are frequent fall-outs of globalization in Africa because of the heavy external debt burden on African economies within the context of their relatively open economies and significant progress in liberalizing their exchange and trade regimes.

Another excruciation is within the framework of World Bank and IMF-supported structural adjustment programmes, which has negatively impacted many African countries' ability to manage their individual economies.

In summary, the full implementation of the AfCFTA should accelerate African economies and promote economic dynamism among the AU member states. This development will also lead to the benefits associated with comparative advantages, larger economic blocs and the creation of regional value chains, which should quicken Africa's value addition to exports and industrialization trajectory. Lastly, and worth mentioning is with the limited involvement of African citizens and private sector players in regional and continental integration processes and dialogues. The limited involvement of the private sector in regional integration processes implies that the entrepreneurial aspect essential in driving innovation, productivity and enhancing production networks remains very much limited and makes industrialization impossible. Therefore, African governments as opposed to the private sector, remain the key drivers of regional integration processes. AfCFTA needs full support from African governments, private sector, civil society, and above all, the whole African people; so as to create an effective strategy for reducing heavy dependency on other global actors and unpredictable events that plunges African economies into crises from time to time.

## 8.0. Conclusion

Today's world, under the powerful forces of globalization is divided into regional trading blocs. We have in Asia – the (ASEAN); in Europe – the European Union (EU); North America – the American Free Trade Area (NAFTA); the Pacific Rim Area of Communities (APAC); and in Africa – (COMESA, Magbreb Union, ECOWAS, SADC, ECCAS, EAC, IGAD and CENSAD) have combined to establish the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Regional integration schemes have been established in Africa as a strategy for achieving greater cooperation, economic development and growth, and have always been implemented by the African Union. The African Union is the leading (Non-governmental) continental organization in Africa, which is building on an all-encompassing membership of 55 African nation-states. However, the AU's name-similarity to the European Union is misleading. The AU remains an international organization with some innovative feature taken from the United Nations. It is however far from its European namesake in structure. The AU Commission, unlike the similarly name of EU institution, functions as a secretariat with no powers of its own. More so, the African approach to integration is not based on supranational law; the commonly practiced norms of supra-state institutions. This strongly limits the authority of the AU's legal and judicial bodies to function like the EU. In general therefore, integration in the African context is based primarily on resolutions, statements and protocols as opposed to (supranational) legislation within the EU. This is so because African countries have not ceded sovereignty to the AU nor have the eight regional economic communities (RECs), constituted by the AU Constitutive Act done so in any measureable degree. More so, Africa has had a traumatized socio-economic and political history, orchestrated through violent colonial impositions, neo-colonialism, and capitalism and of recent globalization. Globalization has impacted Africans and African economies socially, economically, and culturally to a point, where African states cannot compete (in their own terms) in the global arena. To arrest the impacts of globalization, the African Union has engaged 55 nations intended to harness Africa's human and national resource base, add value to agro-processing and mineral beneficiation, so as to increase a broader capital diversification for inner-sectoral economic linkages. From this research, the impacts from globalization in Africa have rendered African

economies ‘fractured.’ More so, the impacts of the recent Corona Virus (Covid-19) renders globalization an evolving process that will pick up again, but that the world is not deglobalizing. Indeed, the recent climate debates, the war in Russia against Ukraine and the implications of the gridlock in the world on how to tackle most of these problems means globalization is evolving. Globalization will revolve from where it is now until Africa is able to put its house in order to overcome the impacts being currently unleashed on the continent.

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<sup>i</sup> Apart from the political system, most were divided during the colonization (“balkanization”) of the African continent during 1886-1887 by the Portugal, The United Kingdom, France, Belgium, and Germany.