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Globalization, Multinational Oil Corporations And Development: A Conceptual And Practical Overview

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Abstract

The inability of Nigeria to develop amidst all the indices that ordinarily should engender development has been a subject of intellectual discourse over the years. It is in this direction that this paper takes a critical look at the nexus between Multinational Corporation, globalization and development in Nigeria. It concludes that Multinational Corporation and globalization has not impacted positively on development in Nigeria. It also tenders some suggestion on the roadmap to development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Globalization, Multinational Oil Corporations and Development

Nigeria, a country in Sub Saharan Africa, rich in both natural and human resources, reel in abject poverty and underdevelopment. Underdevelopment manifests in the political, social and most prominently, economic spheres of the country. This painfully, has seriously impinged her overall development as she contends with developmental challenges since no sphere of her national life is spared. This was what Iyoha (2005) meant when he asked rhetorically in his inaugural lecture at the University of Benin; *When Will Africa's Sleeping Giant Awake?* Twin concepts of globalization and multinational oil corporations in Nigeria are common phenomena that one expects, would help enhance internal effort, this is however not the case.

Globalization

Globalization can be seen as a “comprehensive term used to describe the emergence of global society in which economic, political, environmental, and cultural events in one part of the world quickly come to have a telling effect on the people of other parts, (Jeffrey, 2005). This is to bring about the development of the world through integration and cooperation especially at the economic sphere. This, globalization is expected to achieve through the growing economic, political, technological and cultural linkages that connect individuals, communities, businesses and governments around the world.

Though opened to varied interpretation especially in the social sciences, globalization can roundly be seen as shrinking of the world through technology. Johan Norberg (2006) quoted in Kegley (2007:259) saw globalization as "the process by which people, information, trade, investment information, democracy and the market economy tend more to cross national boarders".

Globalization works through several networks of institution and one of such institutions is Multinational Corporations, a strand of which is Multinational Oil Corporation which form the crux of the study. They are found in virtually all sectors of an economy. Multinational corporations are transnational corporations that engage in business in more than one country by establishing a branch or affiliate in foreign lands. Known to be involved in virtually all sectors of a national economy as earlier observed, multinational corporations can be said to have arisen because of the leeway globalization provided. Despite the fact that they invest in host country through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), multinational corporations seek to protect their selfish economic interest and that of their home country in the name of making fair returns on their investment (Omoweh, 2005).

Development

This is a generic term that can be used to denote improvement in the condition of an individual, group, nation or a thing. It is usually associated with positive improvement. The concept of development, embrace a holistic advancement in the economy and overall wellbeing of an individual, a group or a nation to the extent that it would make life more meaningful. To Rodney (1972:1), development is a many sided process that depends on ones’ personal code of what is good or bad”. He however saw development as “increased capacity of a social group to regulate both internal and external relationships”; even as he refused to associate development with only the economic sphere of a nation. To Todaro (1981), “development is a multidimensional process involving the re-organization and re-orientation of entire economic and social system” while Schumpeter as quoted in Onyemeluke (1974), saw it as “only such changes in economic life as are not forced upon it from without but arises by its own initiatives from within". Seer (1972) wants development seen through the ability of a society to reduce the rate of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Development seen through the lens of The South Commission report (1993:13-14) can be said to be:

A process of self reliant growth achieved through the participation of the people under their own effort and participation, provide productive employment and satisfy the basic needs of all the people, any surplus being fairly shared. This implies that the basic goods and services such as food and shelter, basic education and health facilities and clean water must be accessible to all. In addition, development pre-supposes a democratic structure of government, together with its supporting individual's freedom of speech, organization, and publication, as well as a system of justice which protect all the people from actions inconsistent with just laws that are known and publicly accepted.

This has continued to elude Nigeria irrespective of her oil wealth, globalization and the negligible contribution of transnational oil corporations in her domain. Development manifests in the general improvement in the general way of life in a nation. This is usually achieved through a development plan (Imhanlahimi, 2000).

Multinational Oil Corporations

Multinational Corporation especially Oil Corporation, stand at the heart of the debate over the merits of global economic integration which globalization fosters. To most people, Multinational Oil Corporations and transnational corporations in general, are the outstretched hand of globalization. This view was expressed by Purkitt (2001) when she enthused thus:

In the public mind, globalization and Multinational Corporations are closely related. The stereotype has giant companies shifting production from one country to another n search of the well being of either the high wage workers that stand to lose their jobs or the low paid ones who will be lifted.

According to Papp (2002:95), Multinational Corporation is a corporation that has its headquarters or centre of operation in one country and owns and operates other branches or subsets of itself in other countries. Multinational corporations are primary actors on the world stage, Adams (1985:393).

MNOCs, Globalization and Development in Nigeria: A Short Treatise

Oil as a natural resources of great economic value to any nation, was first discovered in Nigeria in 1956 at Oloibiri, present day Bayelsa State in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. This discovery was made by Shell-BP as the sole concessionaire at this time. Consequently, Nigeria joined the league of oil producing countries when in 1958; the first oil field that produced 5,100 barrel per day (bpd) came on stream. After 1960, exploration right in both onshore and offshore areas of adjoining Niger Delta regions was extended to other Multinational Oil Corporations in the country. The picture painted above is that of a country that became neck-deep involved in the exploration and exploitation of oil as natural resources to bolster her economic fortune but remained entangled in quagmiric developmental challenges since oil was discovered in her shores. Available statistical data posited that Nigeria actually reaped quite a lot from the sale of oil since it was first discovered in 1956. It is however ironical that commensurate level of development was not achieved consequently.

Prior to the discovery of oil in Nigeria, the Nigerian economy thrived on the basis of Agriculture. Then, the economy was greatly supported by the complimentary role agricultural products such as ground nut, oil palm and cocoa played in the nation's economic life (Iyoha, 2005).

The story however changed when oil was discovered and the Petroleum Industry given birth to. Oil wealth has since then remained the greatest foreign exchange earner for the country (Yesufu, 1996). This made the petroleum industry to be of such strategic importance and vital to her economy. Importance attached to the petroleum industry was so much that other sectors such as agriculture, transportation, manufacturing and the extractive industries, were sacrificed.

Despite the oil wealth and reliance on same to the detriment of other sectors such as agriculture and the extractive industries, Nigeria remain underdeveloped and a peripheral state in line with world system theory. She remains largely underdeveloped in virtually all remarkable sectors. The scenario became so disturbing when considered against the backdrop of the fact that Malaysia, that collected palm oil seed from Nigeria in the 1970s, is now well placed in the developmental pedestal than Nigeria.

Burdened by structural imbalance, Nigeria is far from the pre-condition for take-off as postulated by Rostow in his stages of economic growth theory. While Nigeria cannot be said to be traditional society, she cannot be equally be said to have achieved the pre-condition for take-off that expects a radical change in three non-industrial sectors of transport, agriculture and foreign trade. The desired development in these vital sectors, suffer neglect in Nigeria. This painted a picture of a country that is far from the take-off stage which is the crucial stage of development for any nation characterized by a rise in productive investment and savings from 5% or less to 10% or more. The reverse remains the case in Nigeria. Savings and investment remain low in Nigeria. A picture of decline in her economic fortune was painted by Orhiakhi (Undated) when he observed that "Unlike the first two decades after independence in 1960 when the Nigerian economy witnessed some expansion, the last two decades have witnessed progressive decline in its productive and service sectors."

Oil wealth and development in Nigeria, this remained a very disturbing phenomenon. Development not forthcoming and the black-gold remain a source of conflict especially in the Niger Delta. This made it ironic because oil as natural resources of great economic value, was supposed to engender development but in the case of Nigeria, it failed to do that. While it can be said that MNOCs in Nigeria have failed to contribute their expected quota to the development of the country, cases of environmental destructions by same MNCs in the oil sector of the Nigerian economy can also be established. This section will concentrates on the activities of Royal Dutch Shell in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Shell started its oil production in commercial quantity in the Delta in 1958. Although Shell often claims that its operations are carried out according to the highest environmental standards (Human Rights Watch, 1999:56), a growing body of evidence suggests that Shell has largely contributed to the process of environmental deterioration in Nigeria. This has painfully, had a toll on the nation's overall development.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1998) 'noted with alarm the extent of the devastation that oil exploration has done to the environment and quality of life in areas such as Ogoni land where oil has been discovered and extracted without due regard to the health and well-being of the people and their environment…'. This re-awakes the issue of corporate social responsibility and adherence to corporate business practice by Oil Corporation in the Nigeria. While the recklessness with which oil exploration business is done in Nigeria is apart from been absurd can be said to be despicable, it is pertinent to observe that such fragrant disregard for national laws by oil corporations cannot happen in the US or Venezuela. According to Elias Courson (2009), "The environmental abuse continues at the production level when "unneeded" gas is flared indiscriminately and the transportation stage when channels are created that allow for salt water intrusion into fresh water (the people's source of drinking water) or when the crude or refined products are pumped through pipes that are old and rusty resulting in leakages/blow-outs/spills that pollute the fragile ecosystem.

The network of oil infrastructure: oil pipelines, flow-stations, rigs, terminals and wellheads that criss-cross the entire Niger Delta region places further pressure on the relatively scarce land in the face of growing population pressures. There can be no telling the pain associated with oil exploration which is never commensurate with the development of the host communities and the country by extension. This can aptly be seen in the activities of the "oil majors" in the region that operates with utter impunity. Shell's hazardous environmental practices in the Niger-Delta include gas flaring, oil spills and deforestation. Gas flaring is a frequent occurrence in the Niger-Delta. In the year 2000, 95% of extracted natural gas was flared in Ogoniland, a section of the Niger-Delta, compared to a mere 0.4% flared in the entire US (Shinsato, 2005:7). The consequences of gas flares on the ecology, climate and local inhabitants are alarming. Gas flaring contributes to acid rain which poisons portable water, stunts crop growth, and damages the ecosystem (Essential Action, 2000: sec 1). Moreover, the extremely high levels of carbon dioxide and methane gases that are released into the atmosphere are a significant source of global warming. This perhaps explains why Nigeria's oil fields are responsible for more global warming effects than the combined oil fields of the rest of the world (Ake, 1996:34). Although Shell and the other oil MNCs are aware of all these environmental hazards of their operations, they still opt for flaring, not because of its effectiveness in yielding good results but because it is by far the cheapest alternative. This further confirms the pollution haven thesis that the profit-driven motives of MNCs would make them compromise the environmental protection of developing countries to further their narrow commercial interest.

Effective environmental policies are particularly significant because in their absence, good environmental practices by multinationals (which are a common practice in developed nations) are often not followed in many developing countries. For instance, not only did Shell conduct different environmental surveys before the commissioning of its pipelines from Stanlow in Cheshire to Mossmoran in Scotland, but also, many other elaborate measures were taken to accommodate environmental concerns. On the contrary, 'the Ogonis have never seen, let alone been consulted over, an environmental impact assessment' (Maglio and Moesinger, 1994). Instead, Shell has developed a cheaper way of dealing with by-products from oil drilling in the Delta region in the form of indiscriminate dumping (Hutchful, 1985, cited in Maglio and Moesinger, ibid), we can thus say that the perceived benefits of MNCs notwithstanding, the experience of Nigeria is strikingly consistent with the view that Shell has caused much harm on the environment in the country. We can thus deduce that Multinational Oil Corporations as agents of globalization play vital role in Nigeria's economy that painfully never engendered her development. Apart from those in the oil sector, others such as Coco-Cola and United African Company (UAC) in the consumer goods sector, Glaxowelcome & Pfizer in the pharmaceutical sector and Citibank in the banking enclave, Multinational Corporation hold sway in our national economy.

Despite the oil wealth and reliance on same to the detriment of other sectors such as agriculture and the extractive industries, Nigeria remain underdeveloped and a peripheral state in line with world system theory. She remains largely underdeveloped in virtually all remarkable sectors. The scenario became so disturbing when considered against the backdrop of the fact that Malaysia, that collected palm oil seed from Nigeria in the 1970s, is now well placed in the developmental pedestal than Nigeria. Growth as a measure of sustained increase in output or Gross Domestic Product in any state/Nation, help to provide an indication of potential improvements in the living standards and quality of life of a people. This remains negatively skewed in Nigeria despite her oil wealth. Poverty pervade the land, her per capital income remain one of the lowest in the whole world and her economy greatly sapped of the energy needed for development because it lacked investment as an impetus for development (Iyoha, 2005:19). All efforts made in the past in form of development plans never saw the light of the day as they remain vitiated by lack of adequate capital for investment needed to drive the economy and make same auto-centric for development.

Burdened by structural imbalance, Nigeria is far from the pre-condition for take-off as postulated by W.W. Rostow in his stages of economic growth theory. While Nigeria cannot be said to be at the traditional society, she cannot be equally be said to have achieved the pre-condition for take-off that expects a radical change in three non-industrial sectors of transport, agriculture and foreign trade. The desired development in these vital sectors, suffer neglect in Nigeria. This painted a picture of a country that is far from the take-off stage which is the crucial stage of development for any nation characterized by a rise in productive investment and savings from 5% or less to 10% or more. The reverse remains the case in Nigeria. Savings and investment remain low in Nigeria. A picture of decline in her economic fortune was painted by Orhiakhi (undated) when he observed that "Unlike the first two decades after independence in 1960 when the Nigerian economy witnessed some expansion, the last two decades have witnessed progressive decline in its productive and service sectors."

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Several policy initiatives to address the defective structure and inefficiencies were taken, but poorly implemented and sometimes contradictory (with cases of self-interest motivated reversals). These created new distortions and further weakened the inchoate institutions for policy implementation. The average Nigerian therefore, became so sensitive to petroleum oil and all the variables surrounding it, to the extent that any development in the international oil markets invites an almost instantaneous reaction from domestic economic agents and policy makers alike. This was aptly captured in the 2004 budget statement made by the then Nigerian Federal Minister of Finance (Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala), in which she stated, inter alia: "…We have suffered a great deal in this country from our inability or unwillingness to manage our oil resources properly. When oil prices are high like now, a great deal of optimism sets in and we tend to spend all that we earn to meet our admittedly tremendous needs…". In essence, policy formulation appears to respond to the oil situation or attempt to take advantage of it. The picture left was one of a country though endowed, but could not develop.

According to Akinboye (2008), "the heavy dependence of the country on crude oil exports has unprecedentedly exposed the economy to the boom-and-bust cycles and the concomitant unstable and unpredictable volume of revenue receivable by the government". This left the development question largely to the background of history. For instance, Nigeria's total export receipts from goods, services and transfers dropped from N10,899.6 million in 1979 to N7,884.2million in 1983. The country's import, at the same time increased from N9,890.1 million to N11.022.1million during the same period (CBN Economic and Financial Review 1981-1986). This also affects contributions to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For instance, as at 1999, oil and gas contributed 36.5% of the GDP, while agriculture (including livestock) accounted for 32.8%. In the same period, wholesale and retail trade contributed 16.6%, while manufacturing accounted for only 5.5% of the GDP (Anya, 2001:15). If the nation diversified her economy as Akinboye advised, there would have been a tremendous improvement in the developmental strides of the country. Reliance on oil mineral resources at the detriment of other sectors of the economy left the Nigerian economy vulnerably prostrate and too weak to chart the developmental course of the nation.

As events unfold in the world at political, economic and technological sphere, it is becoming obvious that the concept of globalization is not meant to favour the whole world equally. The fact that globalization affects different people and countries differently is not in doubt. Nigeria and most third world countries are definitely not among the favoured countries. This is not unconnected with economic and political reality these countries face at the moment. Globalization remains non-inclusive and thus leaves the developed countries of the North with an edge over the global southern countries. Koffi Annan (2000:6) had this in mind when he posited thus, "…the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people, instead of living billions of then is squalor".

He pointed the picture of the uneven nature of the impact of Globalization and how some benefit while others swim in abject lack. One can safely posit that Globalization would continue to leave third world countries impoverished. The fact that their internal development mechanism are destroyed to make way for Globalization which had never favoured them and not likely to, is all one need to conclude thus without fear of criticism. Third world countries with Nigeria inclusive can only benefit positively from globalization if only they can look inward and evolve a pragmatic development programme capable of setting them free from the underdevelopment quagmire. The solution lies in massive capital investment of available capital in key sectors of their economies simultaneously so that each sector would provide market for each other. This was the postulation of Nurske (1971:115-128) in his Balanced Growth Theory when he advocated thus:

The vicious circle can be broken by a more or less synchronized application of capital to a wide range of different industry. Here is an escape from the deadlock; there the result is an overall enlargement of the market. People working with more and more and better tools in a number of complementary projects become each other's customer.

Conclusion

In this study, an attempt was made to explain Nigeria's inability to develop despite her abundant human and natural resources. It equally examined the negative impact of globalization on Nigeria as well as the disruptive activities of Multinational Oil Corporations within her domain that engage in unwholesome trade practice of capital flight. Consequently, Nigeria still wallow in lack and abject poverty, unequal resource allocation, decayed and in most cases, non-existent infrastructural facilities and above all, the shame of been counted among the 17 poorest countries in the world while remaining Africa's highly indebted country. This made mockery of the very essence of natural resources she is endowed with. Though Nigeria has the highest population figure in Africa and is seen as "the Giant of Africa", her dream of accelerated national development turned out a mirage because of her inability to positively tap the impact of globalization and the unwholesome trade practice of multinational oil corporations within her shores.

With one fact borne in mind, globalization in Nigeria has failed to yield the expected result. Existential realities speak volume. The impact of globalization in Nigeria does not differ substantially from what obtains in most third world countries and African countries in particular. Available indices show abysmal developmental effort of the country in the face of globalization and oil wealth that attracted MNOCs in the first place. This view was aptly expressed by Ajayi when he observed that "Despite the substantial oil resources that have been spent during the last 20-30 years, there seems to be little today to show in terms of economic development and poverty reduction" (Ajayi.2003:5).

The nation's economy suffered untold hardship in the face of globalization that exposed her to the global capitalist economy unprepared and ready to be further exploited. This began with the near complete abandonment of her agricultural sectors which hitherto was the mainstay of the economy Adejugbe (1980:239). The situation got more worrisome as Ajayi further enthused thus:

I am worried that in spite of the enormous resources of this country its economic problems have multiplied since independence. While other African countries have made giant strides in *improving the lot of their people, Nigeria has not really made meaningful progress in spite of the relative abundant resources that it has been fortunate to have (Ajayi. 2005:11).*

There appears not to be anything to write home about her economic fortune as the economy lay prostrate. The progress made with revolution in the GSM sector is seen by many as signs of development in the country. The fact however remains that the use of GSM phone, remains the exclusive preserve of the rich in the society and not enough to measure development in any way or the impact of globalization on the Nigerian economy.

In the light of the discoveries from this study, it is pertinent that the following recommendations be made to help build/enrich the body of knowledge. This will also help government as well as these saddled with the responsibility of formulating state policies, to enact sound policies that can stand the test of time. Nigeria as well as other global south countries, should strive to develop their potentials to effectively and actively participate in the global economy that globalization represents. That way, they will remain well positioned to reap the benefits globalization wrought. Strict laws should be enacted by the National Assembly that will compel multinational oil corporations to apart from been socially responsible, obey basic business practice in line with global practice. A bold and pragmatic step must be made to redistribute global wealth along the line of needs and not that of inequality that hold sway today. That way, the exploited global south countries would be better placed to develop. An embargo should be placed on the amount of capital that Multinational Oil Corporations can send home. That way, host countries would be left with adequate resources for investment and by extension, develop. Development and the positive impact of globalization can only happen when home grown developmental policies are enacted to better tackle the issue of underdevelopment that plagues Nigeria today. Delinking as some suggested, would not make too much impact but altruistic partnership can bring a lot of developmental relief to the beleaguered Nigerian nation. The partnership for African Development programme, should be strengthened to make the development of Africa and Nigeria by extension, achieved.

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