GLOBALIZATION AND CONFLICT IN AFRICA: INSIGHTS FROM THE NIGER DELTA CRISIS

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Abstract

Undoubtedly, Africa is one continent that has had its fair share of the impact of the all-embracing and contradictory process of Globalization. Against the position of neo-liberal scholars and apologists who present globalization as a remedy to all socio-economic and political challenges, the African reality has not been encouraging and favourable especially its linkage to different theatres of conflict on the continent. It is in the light of this that the research studied the interplay and impact between globalization and conflict on the people, societies and states of Africa. To achieve this objective, the study makes use of secondary data. And to give theoretical direction to the research work the study is based on the Marxian Structural Conflict Theory. To concretize our argument, the Niger Delta resource and environmental conflict situation is used as the papers' case study. After an exhaustive analysis of the available data, the discourse comes to the conclusion that globalization has acted and continues to act as a stimulant to the various conflict situations in Africa. And that this interplay has brought a lot of hardship, pain and agony to the people and societies of the African continent.


Introduction

The phenomenon of globalization is undoubtedly one of the most debated, contested and controversial processes among scholars, statemen and nations of the world (Ake, 1995; Scholte, 1997; Nnoli, 2000; Toyo, 2007; Ebaye, 2012). This conflicting perceptions and perspectives to globalization is quite understandable because as a socio-economic and political process, it has a polarizing and contradictory impact on the countries and people of the world; a phenomenon that has created an island of winners (wealth) in the Western Industrialized World and at the same time, an ocean of poverty, want and disenchantment (losers or victims) in the vast number of Less
Developed Countries (LDCs). As a result of its polarizing impact on the nations of the world, the scholarship on the phenomenon of globalization has been broken into two broad ideological camps - the neoliberal and radical Marxian or structuralist camps. While scholars of the neoliberal scholarship of the industrialized Western Nations argue that the global phenomenon is beneficial to all players (that is nations), scholars of the radical Marxian Thought assert it has been a major contributor to the crisis of development and socio-political instability of the LDCs.

Globalization may be a relatively new concept that has been in popular lexicon for a decade or so, but as a process of unifying or integrating the world, it is not a new development (Onyekpe, 2001). Africa’s encounter with globalization can be traced to the 15th century. This relationship has gone through several historical epochs from slavery to “free trade” or mercantile phase to colonialism and the present day post-colonial or neo-imperialist era. Over the years it has become clear that globalization is certainly not a benign force; Africa has experienced more of the dark side of it. Africa’s poor showing in the globalization process is less surprising when one considers the way and manner the continent was co-opted into the a global system, a system that was initiated and designed by the economically powerful nations specifically to serve their interest. According to Ake (1995:26), “the global order is ruled by an informal cabinet of the world’s economically most powerful countries, its law is the logic of the market, and status in this new order is a function of economic performance”. As such, Africa’s poor performance in the globalization game has a lot to do with the fringe and peripheral role assigned to it.

Globalization as a result of its intrusive and connective attributes, is considered as an accelerator of social change and likely catalyst for conflict, aggravating the tensions of many societies and possibly creating new ones (Ebaye, 2012:8). The relationship between globalization and conflict is more complex and subtle in ways not hitherto discussed. For Scholte (1997), it is a source of, or contributing factor to conflict. This is not farfetched from the fact that globalization is often
disruptive and inequitable in its effect and poses new challenges for existing public institutions. Implying that it has paradoxically, opened grounds for the oppressed to come together and protest against its subordination. According to Nnoli (2000), the great divide between those benefiting from globalization and those hurting from it accentuates the possibilities for conflict. Based on African states experience, the paper considers globalization as a major factor responsible for conflict; through its imposed neoliberal rules and policies, it has disarticulated the fragile governmental systems in Africa and seriously undermined the developmental status of African states. With globalization, the role of the state has been downsized, thereby undermining the capacity of the state for social provisioning, even when in the African context the role of the state is defined in developmental terms. The post-cold war era increased socio-political upheavals; this has exposed African states of their inadequacies and worsens their economic conditions thereby degenerating into conflicts. Countries such as Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda, etc have greatly experienced widespread and intense political unrest and conflict as a result of the unregulated and free play of forces and agents of globalization in these societies.

Thus the objectives of the paper is to examine the role globalization might have played and continues to play in African conflict situations with a particular focus on the Niger Delta resource conflict. The paper examines the relationship between the process of globalization and the deepening and protracted mineral resource conflict in the Niger Delta. Specifically, it examines the ways the social contradictions and scarcities of resources spawned by the unholy alliance between the Nigerian state and the global conglomerates operating in the Niger Delta region has provoked conflict.
CONCEPTUALIZING THE GLOBALIZATION – CONFLICT NEXUS

To investigate the literature on the interrelatedness between globalization and conflict, it is absolutely necessary that we briefly examine the scholarship on the two central variables of the study. According to Friedman (1991) in his book “the Nexus and the Olive Tree”, “Globalization is not just the only thing influencing event today, but to the extent that there is a Northern star and a worldwide shaping force, it is the system”. This comment comes in handy to illustrate the significance attached to the phenomenon of globalization – viewed as the mainforce shaping and moulding the world today. This statement also connotes the omni-presence and multidimensionality of this phenomenon encompassing and influencing all spheres of life through its system. Hardly is there sphere of our lives that is not affected by globalization. It is considered as the dominant buzz word in our today’s world. But in spite of its global nature and scope, globalization is devoid of consensus, agreeable and acceptable definition especially among scholars. The reason according to Kellner (1989):

The term is used in so many different contexts, by so many different people for so many purposes; that it is difficult to ascertain what is at stake in the globalization problematic, what function the term serves, and what effects it has for contemporary theory and politics.

Apparently, the cause for confusion in the definition of the concept is on one hand, the ambiguity and multifacetedness of the term, varying in meaning according to the context in which it is used on another hand. It is based on this conceptual ambiguity that the section decided to examine the views of several scholars on the phenomenon of globalization.

When seen from the point of view of worldwide process of change, globalization refers to all those processes by which the people of the world are incorporated into a single global society. According Alapiki (2005), this change is accompanied by the intensification of worldwide social relations
which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa. Simply put, according to Onyekpa (2001), globalization is the process of making anything, issue, idea, practices, policy, system of governance, etc, global, worldwide or universal. It is in line with this mode of thought that Scholte (1997) posits that:

Globalization refers to processes whereby social relations acquire relatively distanceless and borderless qualities, so that human lives are increasingly played out in the world as a single place. Social relations, that is, the countless and complex ways that people interact with and affect each other are more and more being conducted and organised on the basis of planetary unit. By the same token country locations, and in particular the boundaries between territorial states, are some important senses becoming less central to our lives... Globalization is thus an ongoing trend whereby the world has in many respects and at a generally accelerating rate become one relatively borderless social sphere.

It is in the light of the above assertion that Hughes (2001) presents globalization as a qualitatively distinct process because of its essential de-territorialisation or, stated in reverse, supra-territorialisation of social interaction. That is to say, globalization are processes which increasingly reconfigure social space from and beyond nations of delineated territory, and transcend existing physical and human borders imposed upon social interaction. For instance, global financial transaction facilitated by information communication technology (ICT) can now often operate without reference to physical territorial distance or human imposed territorial barriers. It is as a result of this that globalization is seen as a process of reinforcement and extension of the international flux of commerce, capital, technology and labour force.

A similar viewpoint refers to institutional changes, which are brought about in the society by the increase of these flows and the development of the transnational corporations (Adekugbe, 2004; Aderonke & David, 2012). What is obvious is that the perspective stresses the weakening of the regulating function of the national or sovereign states. A more extreme version of this perspective views globalization as the disappearance of the state in its economic dimensions, while a subtler
version considers globalization just as the loss of an important portion of the economic sovereignty. Yet another perspective refers to the growing homogenization of certain processes and decisions like the introduction of global standards in the production of goods (Adekugbe, 2004)

It is noteworthy to point out that although geography and distance still matter, it is nevertheless the case that globalization is synonymous with a process of time and space compression – literally a shrinking world – in which the sources of even seemingly local developments, from unemployment to ethnic, socio-economic and political conflicts, may be traced to distance conditions or decisions. It is in this respect that McGraw (2010) averred that globalization embodies a process of de-territorialization; as social, political and economic activities are increasingly “stretched” across the globe, they become in significant sense no longer organized solely according to a strictly territorial logic. Transnational terrorists and criminal networks, for instance, operate both locally and globally. National economic space, under condition of globalization, is no longer coterminous with national territorial space since for example many of American and EU largest companies have their headquarters abroad, while many domestic companies now outsource their production in less developed territories such as China, South East Asian nations, South America and Africa among other destinations. This is not to argue that territory and boarders are now irrelevant, but rather to acknowledge that under conditions of globalization their relative significance as constrains upon social action and the exercise of power is declining.

A “shrinking world” implies those sites of power and the subjects of power quite literally maybe continent apart. This development is what McGraw (2010) refers to as relative denationalization. This implies that globalization involves the deal that power, whether economic, political and cultural or military is increasingly organized and exercised at distance; power is organized and exercised on a transnational, trans-regional, or transcontinental basis. Apparently, states no longer
have a monopoly of power resources whether economic, coercive, or political. In today’s highly globalized world, states are forced to share power resources with emerging non-state actors and entities.

From the political economy perspective, globalization involves a set of market oriented structures and processes that lead to the benefit and empowerment of a relatively small number of societies and at the same time, the impoverishment and weakening of a large number of nations especially African states. This often ignored conceptualization of the term engenders and facilitates the conditions of vulnerability, dependency, poverty, underdevelopment, social conflicts and erosion of the sovereignty of large number of government and nations of the Third World. For the purpose of our research, it is imperative that globalization is regarded as a contradictory process; one characterized by a lot of paradox. This is so because globalization over the years has created a tiny Island of wealth and prosperity (in the advanced capitalist world) and at the same time an ocean of poverty, deprivation and misery among peoples, societies and states of the Southern Hemisphere.

Our proposition is that it is this condition of poverty; deprivation and want facilitated by globalization that inevitably leads to various forms of conflicts in Africa and other regions of the Third World. Furthermore, a similar point that needs to be emphasized is that the phenomenon is not a natural and benign process of history as the neoliberal apologists would want us to believe. It is deliberately planned; it is a product of neo-liberal policies designed, driven and promoted by Western capitalist nations. This is basically the reason why scholars of the Marxian political economy view globalization as a platform for the domination and exploitation of the weaker nations of the Third World by the industrially advanced capitalist societies.

Like globalization, the concept of conflict is also devoid of generally agreeable and consensus definition. It is a term that has been given several interpretations over the years by scholars of
diverse background based on their experiences and ideological orientations. Some view conflict as “destructive and unwarranted” actions of groups (Igwe, 1997, cited in Okpalaobi, 2014:35). Conversely, Anyakoha (1998 cited in Okpalaobi, 2014:35) sees conflict as a social event which though destructive but leads to positive changes at last. While McEnny (1985 cited in Okpalaobi, 2014:35) sees conflict as the overt coercive interaction of contending collectivities. It has also been observed that conflict and contact among people, are unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions and an expression of the basic fact of human interdependence (Zartman, 1991:370). Though there are vast number of perspectives on the concept, for our purpose we will dwell more on extant literature that perceives conflicts as hostilities that lead to the use of physical force or power or threatened action against another person or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of deprivation.

Broadly speaking, conflicts arise from the pursuit of divergent interest, goals and aspirations by individuals and/ or groups in defined social and physical environments. This viewpoint is in line with one of the most quoted and acceptable definitions of conflict as given by Coser (1956:12). He views conflict as “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals.” He expatiated on this, noting that conflict emerges whenever one party perceives that one or more goals or purposes or means of achieving a goal or preferences is being threatened by the activities of one or more parties. The parties may be seeking to expand into the same physical sphere, or more abstractly, into the same field of influence or behaviour (1956:8).

In an environment of scarcity of resources, conflict may also be caused by frustration in the interaction and struggle for the valued resources. The concept is validated daily over access to a variety of limited resources which are created and distributed within defined establishments and locations; such as chairmanship position, power and status, graze land or grassland, water, mineral
resources, water spots for animals and pasture routes, jurisdiction of chiefs and kings, leadership of political parties, etc. Conflicts are real and serve in the above circumstances in the achievement of goals or the maintenance of claims. Thus, individuals and groups define a situation of conflict with reference to objective considerations.

According to Kellner (1989:167)s scarce resources are major causes of conflict between individuals and groups within political systems and among nations. As he puts it, “the control and use of (natural) resources lie at the heart of the deepening crisis in the world today”. He describes this crisis as separating the world into axis of material comfort and abundance and a large sections of humanity (that is the LDCs) characterized by want, poverty and misery. According to Scarborough (1998), in situations where existing structures are tilted in favour of one group while putting the others at a disadvantage, where cultures are seen as exclusive; where holders of certain powers or privileges are refusing to acknowledge the rights of others to be different; or where people find it difficult to identify with the political and economic ideas of a political regime, the chances are that conflicts will emerge and escalate if nothing is done to correct such anomalies.

The interplay between globalization and conflict is a complex and controversial one. There is no consensus among scholars on the nature of the relationship between globalization and conflict. For the purpose of this discourse we shall examine this linkage by presenting the arguments of the two schools of thought: The liberal perspective and the dependency theory (otherwise known as the structuralists).

The liberals (Fikuyama, 1989; Blainey, 1973) argue that highly globalized countries (that is countries that depend heavily on international trade and investment) are likely to experience higher economic growth, greater affluence, more democracy and increasingly peaceful conditions at home and abroad. According to the liberals, economic globalization is the main cause of economic
development which leads to more mature democracy and more stable political system. The argument is that high level of economic development, achieved through economic globalization is able to provide most of the needs of the citizenry. And because citizen’s needs are met by their governments they will have no incentive to engage in violent protest and rebellion against their governments. In other words, economic globalization is a platform for a more peaceful domestic political system.

Contemporary liberals derived their theoretical direction from early liberal progenitors such as Adam Smith, Montesquieu, David Ricardo, Jeremy Bentham and Richard Cobden among others. These early liberals also argued that mutual trade and economic interdependence provide a stimulus for cooperative and harmonious behaviour among peoples and nations. In our contemporary times, liberals like Fukuyama (1989) are major advocates of aggressive globalization characterized by “less state, more market”. In his analysis of the relationship between free trade and interstate relations, he argues that strong trade link between nations raise the level of economic development in rich as well as poor nations alike. He opines that a high level of economic development increases the chances of democratic governance, and the existence of democracy in turn reduces the likelihood of war against other countries with democratic governments. This is in line with Chua (2004) argument that link political globalization (that engenders democracy) with a more harmonious and peaceful domestic polity.

Apparently, the liberal school of thought holds that a high degree of openness in the economy will strengthen the level of economic development. A prosperous country has a greater likelihood of having a democratic form of government; the final link in the chain is that both democracy and a high level of economic development have a positive effect on domestic and international peace. As a result, a scholar like Bussman and Schneider (2007) therefore concluded that the more globalized a country is, the less internal conflict it will experience.
In sharp contrast to the liberal theoretical paradigm, scholars of the dependency (or structural) model (Waters, 1995; Barber, 1995; Boswell & Dixon, 1990; Gurr, 1970) argue that high level of globalization (that is high levels of trade and investment) tends to generate greater economic inequality, social injustice, unresponsive state institutions and social deprivation. These scholars argue that globalization is often disruptive and inequitable in its effects and this has posed new challenges to existing public institutions. According to these scholars, globalization broadly understood, is an accelerator of social change and as such acts as a catalyst for conflict, aggravating the tension in any given society and even creating new ones.

Galtung (1971) gives an explanation on how high external economic dependence leads to socio-economic inequality, deprivation and conflict. He argues that the penetration of foreign capital into peripheral economies leads to exploitation of local human and natural resources and to the repatriation of profit back to the imperial centres. This process results in impoverishment, inequality and misery in the peripheral societies. The production of raw materials in poor regions of the world like Africa, according to Galtung (1971) serves to prevent competence building and the economy remains export oriented; that is, the economy exists to service the ever expanding industries of the developed industrialized countries; in the process of producing raw materials for the industries of the developed world, asymmetric ties are created between the local elites and foreign interests, this contributes to income inequality and poor standard of living in the LDCs.

Hegre and Gleditsch (2001) also identified neoliberal policy of globalization as a major instigators or stimulators of inequality, deprivation and socio-political upheaval and conflict. They argue that economic liberalization and deregulation, privatization policy, removal of subsidies on public services, openness and free trade necessitated by economic globalization have mainly brought about deprivation, misery and inequality as well as wasteful, reckless and unsustainable exploration of natural resources in the peripheries. They opine that globalization creates an
environment of widespread poverty, inequality and social injustice through its policies of labour rationalization (or downsizing), deregulation, liberalisation and less government intervention in the socio-economic lives of its citizenry. This was evidently demonstrated in the 1980s when most African countries embraced the IMF imposed structural adjustment programmes (SAP); all states that swallowed the bitter pills of SAP came out worse off with lots of socio-political upheavals and instability.

In trying to achieve the research objectives, we decided to adopt the dependency model explanation of the linkage between globalization and conflicts. Africa has not fared well with globalization; Most Africa states are continuously battling with huge socio-economic and political challenges visited on them by globalization. Our reasoning is that most of the socio-economic and political upheavals and violence cannot in any meaningful way be explained without connecting them to the process of globalization. It is with this in mind that the paper will investigate the role of globalization in the resource based conflict in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

**Different Phases of Globalization and Conflict in Africa**

As earlier reiterated, globalization is not a recent phenomenon in the international system. It may be a new concept that gained popularity about two decades ago, but as a phenomenon in interstates relations, it could be traced to 15th century expansion or internationalization of Europe capitalism to the underdeveloped societies of the world. Imperatively, the process of globalization cannot in any meaningful way be separated from the development of capitalism; in other words, it was deliberately designed as a vehicle to project, consolidate and internationalize capitalism as a mode of politico-economic system.

African’s encounter with globalization can be traced to the subtle, forceful and violent integration into the international capitalist system. Africa’s first painful and sad experience with global
Europeans started in the era of European industrial revolution and the resulting Europe illegal and inhuman slave trade and political incursion into Africa. The next phase of Africa’s unfortunate experience with the globalization process was the unjust and haphard balkanization of the societies and peoples of the continent among competing European powers near the end of the 19th century. The long European colonial rule sowed seeds of ethno-religious discord in all occupied territories with different European stamps in the continent characterized by rapacious looting of its natural and mineral resources. The end of this era heralded the emergence of the post-colonial and cold war phase characterized by economically and politically weak, underdeveloped and dependent state structures in the continent that were torn apart and war ravaged by two ideologies – Western capitalism and Eastern Bloc communism. This era was also characterized by the propagation of neo-liberal economic philosophy and principles that further weaken the functionality and relevance of African states to the people of the continent. It is this western political and market oriented economic prescriptions, packaged to African states as panacea to all their social ills that have become the corner stone of contemporary globalization (Okpalaobi, 2014:35).

Specifically, four different phases of Africa’s incorporation into global capitalist system can be identified:

**First Period:** 1500 – 1800 (The Mercantile Phase)

**Second Phase:** 1800 – Colonial Period

**Third Phase:** 1950 – 1970 (New Colonial Phase)

**Fourth Period:** 1970 – Date (Post Imperial Phase)

The first phase took place prior to the era of colonization of most of the continent roughly between the middle of the 15th century and the middle of the 19th century. This phase itself has at least two stages - the early commercial incorporation and the inhuman era of slave trade. This period of carnage which lasted for about five hundred years (1500 – 1890) witnessed the
exportation of an estimated 22 million young and able bodied Africans to the Americas and Europe (Kanu, 2008; Ogot, 1999). Slave trade was a response to the demands of the industrial revolution of the Western Hemisphere; African labour was forcefully acquired to work in the new plantations in Americas in order to feed the emerging industries of Europe. This period was also an era of intense and prolong violent conflicts involving slave raids and wars between Europeans and Africans as well as among African societies.

The second phase of incorporation took place during the period of direct colonial domination roughly between 1884 and 1960. This era was characterized by the haphazard balkanization of Africa by competing European powers; the forceful and direct occupation, control and domination of African states as well as the reckless exploitation of the natural and mineral resources of the continent. It is also instructive to note that this phase was fundamentally responsible for the present Africa’s political map, economic structures and its disadvantaged position in the contemporary global division of labour that serves the interest of Western nations.

The third phase of Africa’s incorporation took place during the three decades between the beginning of its decolonization in the early 1960’s and the end of the cold war in 1991. The period witnessed wars of liberation in countries like Algeria, Mozambique and Angola; several cases of external powers intervention in African politics and conflict situations; and also reoccurring cases of cold war induced military coups on the continent.

The fourth phase of Africa’s incorporation which corresponds with the advent of new globalization, like the third phase, witnessed a significant reduction of the limited sovereignty of African States occasioned by the intrusive and aggressive nature of contemporary globalization driven by old Bretton Woods’s institutions like the international Momentary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and World Trade Organization. It was this period, especially in the 1970s and 1980s that Africa went through her worst economic challenges; a situation that left Sub-Saharan Africa
in debt-trap under the tutelage of the WB and IMF and ushered in a spate of riots and conflicts within and across the continent. By the end of the Cold War, precisely in 1990, a spate of ethno-religious (or sectarian) conflicts and civil disorder ravaged many African nations. This period was also marked by military inter-regnum in many African countries. Even most recently, Guinea, Sao Tome and Principle had military coups in 2003. The growing militarization of Africa assumed a more dangerous dimension in the proliferation and use of small arms, light weapons, the involvement of child soldiers and the struggle for the control of mineral resources in conflict theatres like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo DR, Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and Nigeria (Okpalaobi, 2014:36).

These globalization induced conflicts in Africa have undermined national solidarity, social cohesion and also adversely affected economic growth in the affected countries. And areas of conflict that have attracted global actors are the enormous mineral or natural resources of Africa. Global actors because of their insatiable appetite for the mineral and energy resources of Africa, have been virtually involved in all known cases of natural resource based violence and conflicts on the continent. We shall now turn to examine how globalization has complicated and prolonged the Niger Delta oil resources conflict in Nigeria.

**The Role of Globalization in the Niger Delta Conflict**

There are two incontrovertible facts about the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: First, it is a region of strategic importance to both the domestic and international economies. Its oil and gas resources account for about 80 percent of total government revenue, 95 percent of foreign exchange earnings, 95 percent of National Budget and over 80 percent of National Wealth (Tell, February 18, 2008:33). Second, the Niger Delta is also a region of great and troubling paradox; it is home to stupendous wealth as well as inhuman poverty (Inoko&Imbua, 2008:643). The dilemma of the region is that, its wealth and riches have become a source of poverty, squalor, pain and curse to
the people of the oil bearing communities. The reality is that despite its invaluable contribution to the sustenance of the Nigerian State, the Niger Delta is now home to some of Africa’s poorest people and some of its worse cases of environmental destruction. Infrastructural development is almost non-existent, while poverty is 80 percent and unemployment is 85 percent. Indeed, the region falls below the national average in all measures or indicators of development (Ebienfa&Nwaodike 2010; Ibaba, 2005:13-14). Apparently in return for their generosity and patriotism, Nigeria has rewarded the Niger Delta with severe neglect and abandonment, political and economic deprivation, mindless looting of the revenue generated from the region, joblessness, biochemical poisoning and brutal military assaults that have led to wanton destruction of lives and property (Ejovi, Ebie&Akpokighe, 2014:147). Progress has been put on the reverse in most Niger Delta communities. For instance, the best the Nigerian state could do to immortalize Oloibiri (where oil was first discovered) thus far was to erect a commemorative pillar cum foundation for a non-existent Nigerian Institute for Oil and Gas Research besides the No.1 well in March 2001 (Ebienfa&Nwaodike, 2010). It is this vexed situation of socio-economic, political and environmental disempowerment, dispossession, alienation and injustice that has engendered and continues to sustain the oil resource conflict in the Niger Delta.

In agreement with scholars like Obi (1999 & 2010) and Ebienfa and Nwaodike (2010), the paper argues that the violence associated with the oil industry was initiated and is being sustained largely by the exogenous forces of globalization in collaboration with unpatriotic and irresponsible Nigerian political class. It is a truism that the involvement of global oil conglomerates and their unholy alliance with the Nigerian state has engendered a lot of social contradictions that have continued to provoke vexation and conflict in the oil rich region. The subordination and violation of the rights of the people of the oil bearing communities by Oil Multinational Companies (OMNCS) in partnership with the Nigerian state in their quest for profit is thus seen as a critical
and explosive element in the linkage between bad politics and the Niger Delta conflict (Obi, 1999:40). Apparently, the power relations of the OMNCs with the Nigerian state is said to be sophisticated, ruthless, hegemonical, secretive, unorthodox, exploitative, treacherous, greedy, opportunistic, criminal and corrupt (Watt, 1999; Obi, 2001). They are self-interested, insensitive and poorly responsive to local and regional dimensions of environmental issues. In the Niger Delta therefore, interest of the OMNCs is squarely profit maximization and they thus disregard existing global environmental regulations and laws and capitalize on the weak and ineffective law enforcement and implementation structures of the Nigerian state.

The fingers and influence of globalization are seen in all facets of the Niger Delta issue: Globalization has a critical role in oil exploration, operations and management; it is evident in the presence of diverse transnational actors in the oil and gas industry; it is involved in the Nigerian oil politics, that is in the formulation of its obnoxious laws and the allocation of its benefits (that is, the accruing revenue); it is a principal actor in the aggressive and criminal pollution of the Niger Delta environment- seen as ecocide committed against the people of the region; it is seen as a major instigator of the criminality and violence in the region; and as well as served as a platform for the internationalization of the Niger Delta peoples struggled and agitations for socio-economic, political and environmental justice within the Nigerian state.

In similar vein, Obi (1999:40), averred that the environmental conflict in the Nigerian oil industry, particularly in the Oil-rich region of the Niger Delta, is “globalized” in the presence of global actors in the local communities; the integration of the local communities via oil production into the global economic system and the connections being forced by local social movement to the global human rights agenda; and international human and environmental rights groups in the fight against the state-global oil alliance.
Even before the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in the 1950s and its eventually production, the Niger Delta communities because of their natural resources endowment had come under global influence owing to the entry of foreign MNCs which paved their way into the region. This entry which was facilitated by the Nigeria state has a long history. It can be traced to the colonial oil and mineral laws of 1887, 1907 and 1914 which vested the ownership of oil in the colonial state and gave an oil exploration monopoly in Nigeria to British conglomerates. However, in 1959, the oil exploration monopoly held by Shell-BP over the country was broken and other western oil companies were granted oil concessions (Kaur, 2014: 149; Obi, 2010:22). According to the Nigerian Oil and Gas Sector Reform Implementation Committee, OMNCs like Shell, Chevron Texaco, Exxon Mobil, Total and Agip, accounts for over 95% of Nigeria’s oil and gas production (Obi, 2010:224). These multinationals have greatly benefited from oil in the Niger Delta. For instance, Exxon Mobil, the World largest oil company announced a record profit for 2007 approximately 40.6 billion dollars with total company sales of more than 404 billion dollars (Obi, 2010:25).

Apparently, from the foregoing, the principal players in the Niger Delta saga are OMNCs (which mine and produce the oil), the Nigeria state (which depends on oil for 80% of its revenue, and over 95% of the country’s foreign exchange earnings), and the communities (and social movements) of the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta (Obi, 1999:42). However, the central role of oil multinationals in the global economy as suppliers of very cheap source of energy makes them a central player not only in the global accumulation of capital. They are even more strategically so in context of a global political economy that “simultaneously concentrates wealth and energy both on certain locals and at certain social levels by extracting and dispossessing from other locales and social levels” (Saurin, 1996:87, cited in Obi, 1999:42). It is this globally structured social relation of production that defines the Niger Delta as “a locale and social level of dispossession”, and dialectically, a site of local resistance.
From all indication, the relationship among the three major actors in the Niger Delta situation is an unequally and conflicting one; a relationship that puts the oil bearing communities at the mercy of the unholy partnership between the oil conglomerates and the Nigerian state. And for one to understand why the Nigeria state would project and protect the interest of foreign capital against that of its citizenry, there is the need to locate it at the nature of the Nigerian state and its ruling class. As a decadent, underdeveloped and irresponsible capitalist state, the Nigerian state through obnoxious legislation promotes and protects the interest of the dominant, ruling class and that of the foreign class. The obnoxious laws that govern the oil industry such as the Petroleum Act of 1969, Land use Act of 1978, etc, disempower and prevent the Niger Deltans from benefiting from the resources produced in their domains (Ebiefafa\&Nwaodike, 2010).

This Nigerian dominant class romance and over-dependent and subservient relationship with foreign capital at the expense of the Nigeria populace, have made scholars to severally describe the Nigerian state as exploitative, cruel and irresponsible (Ake, 1981); illegitimate, oppressive and repressive (Okaba, 2003); weak, captured, dependent and hegemonic (Orugbani, 2002); factionalized and privatized by a class of Kleptocratic elites to protect their tenuous relationship to the productive forces (Efemini, 2004) and lacks autonomy (Ake, 2002). As a result of the above features, it is therefore less surprising that the Nigerian people are short changed, alienated and disconnected from the Nigerian state.

Likewise in the Niger Delta Saga, the Nigerian state has been playing the compromising and unpatriotic role of protecting the interest of global oil conglomerates against the legitimate demands of Niger Deltans for better quality of life and environmental justice. Over the years, the Federal Government of Nigeria has promulgated laws that have disempowered and dispossessed the oil bearing communities of their rights to the ownership and control of nature given resources.
All this is done to create an environment for an unhindered and smooth extraction and exploitation of the oil and gas resources in the region by OMNCs.

However, the presence of these obnoxious laws and the militarization of the region have not in any way prevented or stopped the agitations, protests and violent insurgency against the Nigerian state and their collaborators, the global oil multinationals. According to Obi (1999:41), this vexed situation in the Niger Delta has engendered a conflict between the forces of extraction and resistance. And it is this conflict between the opposing forces that connects the local (that is, the region) to the global, and assumes complex forms in which social networks can be located within, or connected with two or more levels. As such the conflicts are waged not just in the oil communities, but also at the national and global levels.

The Nigerian state is therefore compelled to mediate the attendant conflicts at all three levels: the global, national and local in a manner that is broadly protective of the interest of global capital, and safeguards its own interest in a manner that will secure the balance of social forces within the ruling class, as well as the reproduction of its hegemonic bloc. According to Obi (1999:42), at stake is not only the issue of power and control of the environment for oil production and capital accumulation, the distribution of oil rent or surplus in favour of the ruling class and related interests, but also the critical one of equation of state to oil power. Thus, the social forces of local resistance in the Niger Delta seeking to block extraction from, expropriation and degradation of their environment have had to contend, not just with the might of the transnational global interests, but also with the power of the state itself.

Thus one way through which globalization as represented by global oil conglomerates has instigated and complicated the Niger Delta situation, is through its meddlesomeness in national as well was as local politics. Through their control of the governing class these oil multinationals over the years have been able to ensure that federal laws and policies, especially those of the oil
industry are designed and tailored to protect their interest against the national interest of the Nigerian state. It is for this reason that conspiracy theorists have attributed the inability of the National Assembly to pass the critical Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) over the years to the behind the scene lobbying by OMNCs to prevent its passage.

Likewise, the oil multinationals on several occasions have been implicated in local conflicts through their pay offs to “pro-company” groups, elites, militias and chiefs. Such pay offs have either been the object of conflicts or division within and between communities, while some of it have ended up for the payment of arms to unleash further violence on the groups or the oil companies themselves (Obi, 2005:18). These divide and rule tactics and impunity of the oil conglomerates has been one critical element that has fuelled the crisis in the region.

The globalization instigated resource conflict in the oil rich Niger Delta is also expressed in the form of the push and pull of social movements (or forces) intent on blocking continued oil extraction (and degradation) and impoverishment of the environment, and those seeking to demobilized and suppress the forces of local resistance in order to ensure the uninterrupted exploitation of oil. As such wanton exploitation of the environment continues, backed by state repression, the conflict over oil resources and land (and water) from which oil is mined is exacerbated and transformed into a struggle for power over oil production and the distribution of the benefits accruing from it (Obi, 1999:42).

In the Niger Delta, the interest of the oil multinational is squarely profit maximization, and as such they have over the years flouted all existing global environmental laws and standards. Globalization has also revealed that naked and surface gas flaming, non-challant attitude to oil spillage cases, surface pipe laying, etc are not obtainable in western countries where same oil corporations operate. The gravity of the situation is under covered by the fact that the land and waters, as well as the plant and faunae of the Niger Delta are exposed to toxic hydrocarbon waste
discharged by the oil industry. In fact, there are abundant empirical evidence to this effect even though Shell and other oil multinationals have continued to deny responsibility. According to Rowell (1994:12, cited in Obi, 1999:43), about 40% of shell’s spill world – wide have occurred in the Niger Delta, while Shell has blamed the high incidence on sabotage by aggrieved people of the oil bearing communities. However, a study by the Nigerian Ministry of Petroleum Resources puts “the largest cause of spill as equipment malfunction” (38%), and “corrosion of equipment” (21%) (Oyekan, 1991, cited in Obi, 1999:43). Reports from the World Bank study indicate the concentrations of dissolved petroleum hydrocarbons in bodies of water in the Niger Delta are up to fifty times greater than European and US Standard of safe drinking/domestic water. The report further revealed that “as much as 76% of all the natural gas from petroleum production in Nigeria is flared, compared to 0.6 in the US, 4.3 in the UK and 21% in Libya. The flaring is a serious hazard. The same World Bank Report revealed that the emission of CO\textsubscript{2} from gas flaring in Nigerian releases 35 million tons of CO\textsubscript{2} a year and 12 million tons of methane, which means it contributes more to global warning than the rest of the world put together (Obi, 1999:43)

Thus, in addition to contributing to the economic woes of the people of the Niger Delta, the operations of global actors in the region have also contributed to environmental devastation. Gas flaring, oil and water pollution, bush burnings and the emission of carbon monoxide are all fallouts of the reckless operations of oil multinationals in the Niger Delta. For instance, the extremely high temperature that gas flaring produces has made living in many oil bearing communities nearby impossible. Oil exploration and exploitation have also caused the alteration of habitats, biodiversity loss and deforestation and shortage of land and water supply. And since farming is the main economic activity of the affected communities, with 60% of the population dependent on the natural environment for its livelihood, oil generated environmental pollution which affects farming and fishing, makes it extremely difficult for the inhabitants to earn a living (Kaur, 2014:149).
The pertinent question is why are these global oil conglomerates so irresponsible, reckless, lawless and ruthless with the Niger Delta Environment? Why are these multinationals which are responsible and law abiding in their respective home countries become so destructive to the environment of the Niger Delta? The answer has to do with the irresponsible, unpatriotic, dependent and weak nature of the Nigerian state. The state because of its compromising, parasitic and dependent relationship with international capital, has found it extremely difficult or better still, unwilling to put in place nationalistic laws and regulations that would have checked the excesses of these global oil giants.

The impurity of this global oil majors in their dealings with the people and environment of the Niger Delta has over the years created vexed and desperate situation in the region that has continued to fuel the violent protests and agitations in the Niger Delta. The agitations in the Niger Deltans which started on a civil and peaceful template have evolved into violent and armed insurgency as a result of the unresponsive and deaf nature of the Nigeria state. The inglorious killing by the Nigerian State of the Ogoni peace advocate and environmentalist, Ken SaroWiwa and the nine others, marked a turning point in the Niger Delta struggle for justice; it was at this point all hell was let loose in the region, as different agitating groups came to the realization that they cannot achieve their purpose through dialogue and peaceful means. Moreso, the dialogue option failed because the Nigerian state has refused to implement numerous blue prints for development of the region. As a result, this compelled the youths to militarize the resource control struggle to press home their demand. The most potent of these militant groups that successfully attracted global audience is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). To gain global attention, MEND has successfully launched series of daring raids into fortified oil installations onshore and offshore and kidnapped foreign oil workers, detonated explosive devices near oil compounds, and fought pitched battles on land and sea with the Nigeria’s military forces, and publicized its activities on various global media platforms. That is by using the internet to send
emails and images to the world’s leading news agencies and local newspapers and even taking journalists to its camps in the creeks of the Niger Delta. It also gained much international attention from its threat to cripple the Nigeria oil export (Obi, 2008:16, cited in Ebienta & Nwaodike, 2010). Obviously, the militants’ anger is against the government and oil companies which in tandem with the Oloibiri metaphor are held responsible for the plunder and pollution of the Nigeria Delta.

Another Niger Delta group that immensely made use of globalization to internationalize their objective for environmental justice is the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). The resistance of MOSOP to the forces of global oil capital is one of the most creative efforts by ordinary people to secure their rights against one of the world’s most powerful multinationals—shell. For the Ogonis, advancing the environmental and human rights agenda is a continuation of long standing struggle for self-determination in context of the Nigerian federalism. It was also an example of the universalization and legitimation of the global rights agenda in the Post-cold War era (the struggle for democracy, civil rights, minority rights and environmental rights) and the de-legitimation of military rule on a global scale. MOSOP succeeded in globalizing its struggle by connecting the Ogoni course into the global rights discourse on the universality of human rights and freedom, and thereby won the attention and support of significant sections of global civil society to the cause of local resistance (Obi, 1999:52). Through linkages with INGOs such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch Africa. Inter-Rights, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Rainforest Action Network, the Netherlands’ Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and a host of other NGOs, MOSOP was able to project shell’s sins and environmental atrocities to the global front burner and discourse (Obi, 1999:53).

Again, as a result of the interconnectedness brought about by the process of globalization, the militant activities of local resistant groups have also reverberated to the outside world through its impact on global oil price. Due to the interdependent and interconnectedness of the global
economy, activities in the sub-structure, directly affect the whole. It is thus factual that whereas globalization have facilitated the exploration and production of oil by multinationals from the West to the LDCs, it has also made it possible for the Niger Delta crisis to have an impact on the price of oil in the global market. The violent insurgency in the Niger Delta in several instances has made it impossible for Nigeria to meet up its quota of oil production under the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) arrangement. This has invariably led to several instances of reduction in the supply of global oil and hence increases in price. For instance, the period between 2006 and 2009 witnessed one of the most brutal and violent conflicts in the history of conflict management. As a result of heightened insecurity in the region, Nigeria’s oil production capacity dropped from 2 million bpd to misery 800,000 bpd. This invariably means a drop in the supply of oil to the global market as well as increase in the price of oil (Nwobueze & Inokoba, 2016:11).

Infact, it was this period of unrelenting violence that the Niger Delta was described as the most dangerous oil fields in the world. It is also important to note that without globalization it would have been almost impossible for militant groups in the region to access the lethal instruments of violence. The dark side of globalization that is characterized by corruption and illicit transnational exchange has made it possible for resistant groups to exchange stolen crude for sophisticated guns and ammunition that have sustained the insurgency.

One other area the forces of globalization have manifested in the Niger Delta situation is its connection with the criminal activity of oil theft (or illegal bunkering). Oil bunkering is a major factor in the Niger Delta crises. There are two basic typologies of bunkering in Nigerian oil industry; as the name implies, legal bunkering refers to the activities of those licensed to lift crude oil by the Federal Government of Nigeria. On the other hand, illegal bunkering connotes the activities of those who carryout bunkering without government authorization (Ebienfa & Nwaodike, 2010). This is what is generally referred to as oil theft.
The criminal activity of illegal bunkering which is mainly associated with militancy in the Niger Delta is a creation of the Nigerian state. The argument is that, those who are licensed to carry out bunkering legally are predominantly non-Niger Deltans. And second, those legal bunkers in collaboration with corrupt state officials and the oil companies introduced illegal bunkering into the oil business in order to defraud the Nigerian Government. The smuggling of Nigerian crude oil is estimated to account for as much as 35 per cent of the country’s oil exports, although estimates vary widely. The Federal Government sources, however, put the estimate of stolen oil at about 300,000 bpd (UNODC, 2005, cited in Inokoba & Ebienfa, 2013:108). Although oil theft at this scale requires sophisticated organization, and the complicity of state officials up to a very high level, it also flourishes amidst the poverty and a sense of injustice in the Niger Delta. People in many Niger Delta communities feel that they derive no benefit from the oil trade and may therefore collaborate with criminal networks in the illegal export of oil.

The complexity and transnational nature of the business of illegal bunkering is illustrated by it sheer number of players of various nationalities. While the Niger Delta youths may handle the local tapping and loading, international syndicates from Eastern Europe (such as Poles, Ukrainians, Romanians, Georgians, etc), Russia, Australia, Lebanon, Netherlands, France and new entrants like, Filipinos, Senegalese, Togolese and Ghanaians all play roles in financing, transporting and laundering the money associated with the illicit business (Garuba, 2010, cited in Inokoba, 2012:335). Criminal groups with links to militant groups in the Niger Delta carry out much of the stealing and trafficking in oil. According to a UNODU Report (2003, cited in Inokoba, 2012:335), oil is stolen by “hot tapping,” where an unauthorized secondary pipeline is attached to a company mainline in which the oil is flowing under pressure, or by “cold tapping”, which involves blowing up a pipeline and putting it out of use, which gives the criminals enough time to attach their spare pipeline. The stolen oil is eventually loaded into barges and tankers and sold in Nigeria and the surrounding regions (in Ghana, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, and even South Africa). This is one
major means through which globalization connects the criminal business of oil theft because crude oil tapped illegally by criminal gangs in the oil rich Niger Delta is sold to vessels awaiting offshore for onward shipment to the global market. And because stolen crude enjoys spot – market without capital cost, there is no gain saying the fact that illegal oil bunkering is conveniently the most profitable private business in present-day Nigeria (Inokoba&Ebienfa, 2013:110).

Apart from the economic loss and negative investment on onshore exploration and production, illegal oil bunkering fuels conflict, militancy and undermines the authority of the Nigerian state through increased arms proliferation and drug abuse which have destabilized the Niger Delta region. Today, virtually all militant groups in the Niger Delta are involved in oil theft business which is made possible by globalization. The fact is that because crude oil in the international black market is very cheap, criminally minded foreign business interests are ever ready to arm the militants in the Niger Delta in exchange for stolen crude oil. The violent insurgency in the region is thus driven and sustained by the proceeds from the lucrative oil theft business. Indeed, oil theft and smuggling like any other illicit trade in natural resources such as diamonds, apart from its drain on the fragile, mono-cultural economies of Africa states, is a real driver and instigator of violence and conflict in the continent as evidenced in the role this factor played in the Liberian, Sierra Leonean, Congo DR, Sudan and Angolan conflicts. And all these situations like the Niger Delta crisis were initiated and sustained by the connection of these natural resources to the intrusive and powerful forces of globalization.

**Conclusion**

Based on our investigation of the linkage of the forces of globalization and the protracted conflict situation in Nigeria’s Niger Delta, the paper came to the following conclusions. One, globalization is a major instigator of conflicts on the African continent. That is the involvement of forces of globalization has complicated and prolonged African conflict theatres through the introduction of
both continental and extra-continental actors, processes and as well as the continuous supply of instruments of violence. Second, that the forces and actors of globalization over the years have contributed to the further weakening, hollowing and corrupting of the government process and structures in Africa. As a result of the intrusive, penetrative and strangulating effects of globalization on public policies and governance processes, most African states have become less nationalistic, less responsible and less responsive to the welfare, needs and concerns of their citizens. The Niger Delta reveals how the forces of globalization have succeeded in hijacking the public policy making processes through compromising governing class and employment of the coercive instrument of the state to disempower, alienate, brutalize and violate the socio-economic, political and environmental rights of the local populace.

Third, the situation in the Niger Delta has also revealed that the marriage between forces of globalization and conflict in Africa has bought a lot of hardship, pain and misery to the societies where these conflicts are located. In the Niger Delta like CongoDR, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan mineral resources that could have brought a lot of wealth and better living condition to the people have instead brought about mainly misery, pain and poverty to the affected societies. As a result of the romance between the force of globalization and the managers of the African state system, the continents’ enormous mineral resources have now become a source of curse and pain to the Africa people.

Reference


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