

Review

Role of Globalization in Generating Conflicts in Niger Delta

Sarabjit Kaur

Associate Professor, University Institute of Legal Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India.

E-mail: sarab_jit14@yahoo.com

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Globalization is a complex and a multifaceted concept. Due to the fact that it cuts across almost all disciplines, each of the disciplines provides varying definitions and interpretations for the concept. In this paper, the focus is on the economic aspect of globalization. Globalization therefore is seen as increasing economic interdependence among the countries of the world. This interdependence has both positive and negative aspects. The present paper studies the negative aspect of globalization in the case of Niger Delta. While economic interdependence has facilitated the harnessing of the resources of the region but if one studies the overall activities of the multinational companies, one finds that they have contributed to the worsening of the economic conditions of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta. This has generated a feeling of deprivation which has found its outlet in various forms of conflicts.

Key Words: Globalization, Economic, Niger Delta, Poverty, Frustration, Conflicts

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a process of advancement and increase in interaction among the world's countries and peoples facilitated by progressive technological changes in locomotion, communication, political and military power, knowledge and skills as well as interfacing of cultural and value systems and practices. Globalization is not a value-free, innocent, self determining process. It is an international socio-politico-economic and cultural permeation process facilitated by policies of governments, private corporations, international agencies and civil society organizations it essentially seeks to enhance and deploy a country's economic, political, technological, ideological and military power and influence for competitive domination in the world. Some countries are taking it as a big problem and therefore

missing the opportunities it is offering, while others have grabbed it as a movement offering developmental potential and used it to advance their growth and development and their self interest, whether it be national or personal. While some are taking it as a dangerous process of exploitation where rich countries and big international corporations are getting bigger and richer at the expense of the poor ones and a sort of fulfillment of "man to man is a wolf", others are seeing it as the final pin in the process of positive socio-politico-economic mutually beneficial global integration. It is important to note, optimistically that globalization offers great opportunities. However, it is probably more important to be clear about the negative aspects of globalization and the fact that its benefits are very unevenly shared and it

costs are unevenly distributed among across and within countries. Globalization therefore is a two sided coin. The present paper on the basis of the review of existing literature will direct its efforts towards studying the negative role which globalization has played in generating conflicts in the Niger Delta. This area is blessed with rich natural resources and is a home of numerous ethnic groups. The resources of the region have been extracted with the help of multinational companies. The economic interdependence has certainly facilitated the harnessing of the natural resources like oil. But if one studies overall the activities of these multinational companies, one finds that they have operated in such a manner that has really not befitted the masses of the region. Rather their activities have exaggerated the miseries of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta. The region has not experienced any development. The external economic ties have not only posed serious environmental threat but have also led to the worsening of the economic position of the inhabitants. The people are struggling with poverty and problems like unemployment. All this has generated a feeling of deprivation amongst the ethnic groups inhabiting the area. This has generated frustration amongst them which in turn has created grounds for the outbreak of various conflicts.

The paper therefore will consist of two main sections-Section-1, in which an effort will be made to understand the idea of globalization. This section will also provide briefly an insight of the Niger delta in term of its resources. In Section II the focus will be laid on understanding the negative role played by globalization and how this has created conditions in generating conflicts in the region. The details of each section follows-

Section: 1 Concept of Globalization and Insight into Niger Delta

One of the most popular concepts in recent times is globalization. Globalization is a complex and multifaceted concept. Due to the fact that it cuts across almost all disciplines, each of the disciplines provides varying definitions and interpretations for the concept. Although the existence of globalization has been demonstrated in empirical case studies, its definition still remains vague, elusive and even contradictory. The lack of an essential definition has contributed, at least partially to keep globalization as a highly contested subject. Cesare Poppi notes that:

The literature stemming from the debate on globalization has grown in the last decade beyond any individual's capability of extracting a workable definition of the concept. In a sense, the meaning of the concept is self-evident, in

another, it is vague and obscure as its reaches are wide and constantly shifting. Perhaps, more than any other concept, globalization is the debate about it (Adesina, 2012:193)

Simon Reich tries to understand this term in four different ways-historical, economic, sociological and technological. The historical definition of globalization places the events currently observed in the *longue duree*; in other words, what we experience today is not new, it has been going on for decades or centuries and it is bound to end like any other historical period (Dutceac, 2004:21). The most commonly accepted definition prioritizes the economic aspects. For example, Prakash and Hart define globalization as 'a set of processes leading to the integration of economic activity in factor, intermediate and final goods and services markets across geographical boundaries and the increased salience of cross border value chains in international economic flows' (Dutceac, 2004:21). The third way of understanding globalization is to define it in terms of technological advancements. The rapid improvements in communications and technology have made possible the compression of time and space (Dutceac, 2004:22). The fourth definition of globalization focuses on sociological and cultural aspect (Dutceac, 2004:22). Globalization is also a 'process by which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe' (McGrew and Lewis eds,1995:23). Shenkar and Luo (2004:199) According to Baker, Epstein and Pollin, globalization is nothing but globalized capitalism that has led to three things: 1) increase in international economic interactions 2) qualitative changes in the way nation-states operate within any country's economy and 3) decrease in power of nation-states and increase in the power of private business and market forces(Ishiyama, 2004:11).

For our present purpose, it becomes pertinent to focus on the economic aspect of globalization that is "reduction and removal of barriers between national borders in order to facilitate the flow of goods, capital, services and labour... (Ebienfa, 2010, pp: 2). Aja Akpuru-Aja and Emeribe by focusing on international political economy perspective defined globalization in terms of greater openness of national and international economies to greater flows of trade, finance, capital, high technology, foreign direct investment and market integration offerings(ibid,pp:3).We can therefore define globalization as increasing economic interdependence among the countries of the world in which there is created a multiplicity of linkages, interconnections and interdependence.

The greater economic interdependence has enabled the developing countries to harness their resources but this harnessing by external agencies has been done in

such a way that the benefits have not trickled down to the indigenous masses. The deprivation experienced by them has generated frustration which in turn has created fertile ground for the outbreak of conflicts which have posed severe challenge not just before the state but also to the operation of the multinational corporations. This can well be seen in the case of Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

An insight of the region shows that it is most blessed in terms of human and material resources. The Niger Delta, which derives its name from River Niger, is one of the world's largest wetlands, covering some 70,000 kms formed by the accumulation of sedimentary deposits transported by the Niger and Benue Rivers. It is the hub of oil and gas production in Nigeria, accounting for about 80% of total government revenue, 95% of foreign exchange earnings, 95% of National Budget and over 80% of National wealth (Ebienfa, 2010:2)

Section-II-Understanding the Negative Impact of Globalization and its Role in Generating Conflicts in Niger Delta

This resource rich area is inhabited by various ethnic groups like the Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Ikwere which are together referred as Southern minorities. These tribes owing to rich oil resources in their region have come under global influence owing to the entry of multinational companies which have paved their way into the region. This entry which has been facilitated by the Nigerian 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 or British allied firms. However by 1959, the oil exploration monopoly held by Shell-BP over the country was broken and other Western oil companies were granted oil concessions (Obi, 2010: 222). According to the Nigeria oil and Gas Sector Reform Implementation Committee, multinational oil corporations like -Shell, Chevron Texaco, Exxon Mobil, Total and Agip, account for over 95% of Nigeria's oil and gas production (Obi, 2010:224). These multinationals have greatly benefited from oil in the Niger Delta. Exxon Mobil, the world's largest oil company announced record profits for 2007 approximately 40.6 billion dollars with total company sales of more than 404 billion dollars (Obi, 2010: 225).

The globalized oil extraction while on one hand has enriched the multinationals and on the other hand, it has deepened the misery of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta. The region remains grossly underdeveloped, pauperized, marginalized and largely a poverty zone. The basic facilities and infrastructure of a modern society like potable water, electricity, health care facilities are lacking in the area. The underdevelopment is so severe, the

youth of the region are the hardest hit by lack of development. Unemployment is very high among the people of the Niger Delta as the oil companies do not have their employees from the region that produce oil but are from the non-oil producing region of Nigeria (Tuschieds, 2007:13). The oil companies care less about the welfare of the local people from where they drill oil. They give only a token to the communities which do not improve their standards of living. These companies often employ divide and rule tactics to cause dissatisfaction and conflict among and within communities through a divisive strategy of compensation payment. The oil companies are quite selective in terms of who they give "informal compensation or gratis". They may give to the traditional rulers in order to face off the youths in a community or to one community as against the other (Ujakorotu eds, 2009: 8-9).

According to Hutchful-"Shell and other oil companies have perpetuated regional and class inequalities by creating oil colonies in local areas where oil executives live quite lavishly in comparison to the impoverished conditions of the local communities"(Tuschi eds, 2007:13).

In addition to contributing to the economic woes of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta, the operation of global actors in the region has also contributed to the environmental degradation of the region. The region has been extremely polluted as a result of intensive oil exploration. Gas flaring, oil and water pollution, bush burnings and the emission of carbon monoxide are all the results of oil exploration endeavours. Gas flaring is one of the fundamental problems and contributes to climate change and the environmental degradation in the region. The extremely high temperatures that gas flares produce make living in many communities nearly impossible. Oil exploration and exploitation have also caused the alteration of habitats, biodiversity loss and deforestation and shortage in the land and water supply. And since farming is the main activity of the communities living in the Niger Delta region, 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 inhabitant to earn a living (Pavsic, 2012).

Besides the role played by external factors in worsening the conditions of the minorities of the Niger Delta, even at the domestic level the role played by the state has further added to the misery and exploitation of the inhabitants. The Nigerian state exercised little or no oversight over the activities of the oil multinationals and their domination of the oil industry in the period after independence. However during the civil war (1967-70) military rulers enacted decrees that vested the ownership of oil and gas in the Nigerian state. As a result of these decrees-The petroleum Act/Decrees no.1969 and The Land Use Act of 1978, the oil producing communities had

no legal claim to the ownership of oil produced from under their lands and waters, The people were further alienated after the country made transition from military to democratic governance. The control of oil was vested in the government of the federation. The revenues earned by the federation were allocated to the oil producing areas were not commensurate with their contributions and sacrifices in producing it. Rather than having a right to 50% of oil revenues as the basis of the derivation, principle of revenue allocation, their share was progressively reduced until it dropped to a mere 3% in the early 1980s. The minorities in the region therefore got a feeling that oil wealth is controlled by ethnic majority ruling elites from other non-oil producing parts of the country.

The awareness of amassing immense profits by the multinational companies and of the inappropriate policy of revenue allocation by the Nigerian state has generated a feeling of relative deprivation amongst the ethnic minorities. This deprivation experienced by them has generated frustration amongst them this frustration has found its outlet in various forms of conflicts in the region. The earliest violent attempt by an Ijaw militant, I. A. Boro that took place in February 1966 was to secede from Nigeria and establish a Niger Delta republic. By the 1970s and 1980s, the minorities living in the Niger Delta begun to mobilize against the so-called 'slick alliance' between the oil companies, the Nigerian state and the military (Pavsic). The foundational role in the movement was played by the Ogoni people and their leader Ken-Saro-Wiwa, in the 1990s. But soon other communities spread over Niger Delta region joined the movement. Among the most active were the Ijaw, who issued the Kaima Declaration in December 1998 and asked the federal government and oil companies to leave Ijawland and demanded "Ijaw control of Ijaw oil." All rebellions were violent, many people were killed or fled from their homes. The execution of nine Ogoni rights activists including Ken Sar-Wiwa, further unleashed conflicts between the state, oil companies and ethnic communities across the delta region. Oil production in the region was completely paralyzed between 1996 and 1998. Rebels mostly angry youths, seized oil wells, terminals and flow stations that belonged to the oil companies and took hostages for whom they demanded ransom. Their objective was to stop the oil production if they could not get their fair share from it.

The most recent and insurgent face of Ijaw pan-Delta resistance is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta. It is an amalgam of all arm bearing groups in the Niger Delta fighting for the control of oil revenue by indigenes of the Niger Delta who have had relatively no benefits from the exploitation of our mineral resources by the Nigerian government and oil companies (Obi, 2010: 231).

CONCLUSION

The history of the Niger delta is thus a history of conflicts and these conflicts will continue till both the external factors that is the multinational companies as well as the Nigerian state become responsive to the needs and desires of the people. The multinational companies should undertake their activities with a sense of responsibility. Besides they should try to seek the participation and co-operation of the indigenous tribes by involving them in activities they undertake in the region. The minorities of the region should be given an opportunity to have a share in benefits that occur as a result of exploitation of their resources. Besides, the multinationals, the Nigerian State should formulate policies and undertake steps that benefit the masses. A great part of the revenue earned by the state should be invested in the development of the region. This will not only generate a sense of satisfaction but will also put an end to poverty, misery and underdevelopment with which the region is presently gripped.

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