



The Impact of Multinational Enterprises on Global Governance: The Protests Movement View

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on secondary data and looks at the activities of Multinational Corporation and its impact on global governance from the protests movement point of view. Available data show that multinational corporations derive at least a quarter of their revenue outside their home countries. However, the debate is how significant do they contribute to development or involve in activities that lead to human and economic deprivation of host communities. The study reveals that the benefits are not enough compared to the damages. The multinational corporation uses global governance institutions to back up their interests and always get preferred treatment. The host communities who feel exploited are not happy but the multinational corporations are always innovative so, there is hope towards finding solutions. In this regard therefore, the relevant stakeholders should be engaged towards collective decision making and problem-solving in a participatory manner for effective global governance.

KEYWORDS: Multinational Corporation, protests movement, global governance, future.

INTRODUCTION

It is not something new that a company could have its resources in many nations as well as having grips on local markets of those countries where it operates as Multinational Corporation. However, the advent of globalization has brought in hot debate on whether Multinational Corporation significantly contributes toward global human and economic development or spreading inter-boarder human and economic deprivation.

A multinational corporation is an international corporation that derives at least a quarter of its revenues outside its home country (Thomas and Richard, 2015). Many multinational enterprises are based in developed nations. Host communities always cry foul against multinational corporations for economic exploitation and other wrong doings. They unfavourably dominates the markets. The market dominance of Multinational Corporation would make it difficult for smaller local companies to thrive and succeed. E.g. there is this argument that larger supermarkets squeeze out local corner stores. Many MNCs are criticized for using slave labour as workers and paid with very small wages (Miller, 2015). They are not known for treating people fairly, ignore rules and regulations and turn a blind eye to injustice in the work place. They become monopolies, pose great environmental threats etc. On the other hand, Multinational Corporation advocates say they create high-

paying jobs and technologically advanced goods in countries that otherwise would not have access to such opportunities or goods. They provide countries around the world with financial infrastructure to achieve economic and social development (Miller, 2015)

Multinational Corporations tend to establish operations in markets where their capital is most efficient or wages are lowest. By producing the same quality of goods at lower costs, MNCs reduce prices and increase the purchasing power of consumers worldwide. Establishing operations in many different countries, a multinational is able to take advantage of tax variations by putting in its business office in a nation where the tax rate is low—even if its operations are conducted elsewhere. The other benefits include spurring job growth in the local economies, potential increases in the country's tax revenues, and increased variety of goods. However, these acclaimed benefits are not enough compared to damages continually done by multinational corporation as pointed out by protests movement.

PROTESTS MOVEMENT

A protest (i.e. demonstration, remonstrations) is simply an expression of disapproval or objection towards an idea or action either of a political or economic nature. It could be from an individual expression of descent or mass demonstrations.

The protests movement or anti-Multinational Cooperation are social movements critical of economic, social, demographic and cultural activities of MNCs. Protests movement all of the world are justice seeking groups (Soror, 2012).

Partakers hinge their criticisms on several issues. MNCs are accused of placing profit maximization over work safety conditions and standards, labour hiring and compensation standards, environmental conservation, interference with national authorities such as the legislative, judiciary, executive arm of government and indeed, independence of state and state sovereignty among others.

These changes in global economy referred to as market fundamentalism (Soror, 2012) or Casino Capitalism (Strange, 2012) have become threats to host communities and national governments.

This is as a result of the unregulated political power of multinational corporations exercised through trade agreements and deregulated financial markets etc. This has led to resistance from the people whose livelihoods have often been threatened (Reifer in Podobnik, 2015). Examples of protests movement are, host communities, Non-Governmental Organizations, civil societies, nation states, volunteer organizations operating at national, regional and international levels, etc.

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Global Governance is also known as world governance. It is a movement geared at creating political cooperation among non-state actors (or transnational actors) with a view to negotiating responses to problems that affect more than one state or region (Benedict, 2015). It is all that arise from institutions, processes, rules, norms, formal agreements and informal collaboration that regulate activities of MNCs for the common good.

Some scholars are of the opinion that global governance is not working (Coenand Pegram, 2015). While others argue that global governance is constantly adapting by changing strategies and methods to solutions and developing new tools and measures to deal with issues that impact communities throughout the world (Held and Hale, 2011). They contend that the goal of global governance is to provide global public goods, e.g. peace, security, justice and mediation systems for conflict, functioning markets and unified standards for trade and industry.

The various debates about global governance have culminated into the Washington Consensus and Beijing Consensus.

WASHINGTON CONSENSUS

Washington Consensus is observed to be carefully crafted array of economic conceptualizations strengthened by various professionals and influential international organizations such as European Union, United States, World bank and International Monetary Fund. The principles were asserted

by John Williamson in 1989. It involves a set of ten principles which support free trade, bailout for free trade and specialization where one has comparative advantage which by implication means that developing countries sticks to production of primary goods.

Williamson can be conceptualized as policy recommendations as outlined by Pettinger (2017) which implies that;

1. Little government borrowing. This is a strategy to avoid fiscal deficits in respect to GDP.
2. Changing of government public approach to spending by stopping the funding of subsidies that do not relate to primary issues of health, education and infrastructure.
3. Having tax redirection that increase ways of sourcing it without burden to citizens
4. Allowing market forces determine interest rate with moderations.
5. Eliminate monopoly in exchange rate.
6. Allowing full globalization take place in an economy.
7. Broadmindedness of inward foreign direct investment
8. State should get less involved in running business.
9. Liberalization of the economy with better corporate governance framework
10. Stronger property protection legal security.

A critical look at the principle shows that it does not favour developing countries efforts to economic growth and it leaves them at perpetual low level of development. More so, low government borrowing is not also appropriate because only very little could be achieved especially during recession. Unnecessary cuts affect critical provision of government social service. This has led China to develop what is acceptable to them in order to redefine policy appropriate for them and the multinationals that wish to cooperate with them. The Beijing consensus is the creation of the Chinese.

BEIJING CONSENSUS

This is a simple model which involves political and economic policies of the People's Republic of China (PRC). It has its origin to 1976 as instituted by Deng Xiaoping after Zedong. The principle emphasis the need to approach business based on the model because it is important to the economy. It introduces soft loans with no attached conditions. The Beijing model is unapologetic and promotes intensive use of Chinese firms as preferred firms in project implementations. Their technology and employment of the citizens is paramount. They maliciously do not transfer knowledge and skill to others. They do not recognize Taiwan as a sovereign nation. To work with China successfully means full political support in the United Nation and other unions (Huang, 2011; Turin, 2010).

The Washington Consensus and Beijing Consensus shows therefore that global governance seems to be at crossroads in respect to developing nations as neither the Washington consensus nor Beijing consensus would serve the interest of developing nations like Nigeria.

FUTURE OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The future depends much on the aforementioned goals. Jinseep Jang et al. (2016) assert that global governance shall be mainly shaped by five facts – individual empowerment, increasing awareness of human security, liberal world political paradigm, international power shift and institutional strengthening.

The future global governance has to include the above mentioned five facts which neither Beijing nor Washington fails short of. The Chinese Beijing Consensus does not help matters as it is shaped towards their selfish business interest. It maliciously refuses transfer of knowledge to developing nations as stated in the policy of operation of the Consensus document.

Some of the institutions of global governance are: The United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, International Criminal Court (ICC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Others are, African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCFTA), European Union (EU), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) etc.

MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION AND PROTESTS MOVEMENT

Recently, the multinational corporations have come under heavy criticism across the globe. Here in Nigeria in particular, there are evidences of such criticism escalating into diverse levels and magnitude of protests. The incidences in Ogoni land in the Niger-delta are still very fresh in memory. Who would not protest if there are worsen and repressive conditions of locals such that there is continuous gas flaring which has terrible health issues associated with it and the environment is not spared either. Gas flaring is as dangerous as roasting human flesh just like one roast meat or fish at an elevated hot intensity (Oluwaniyi, 2018). There are other various incidences that instigated such protests identified such as:

Activities of Dutch Shell Company and Oil spillage in Ogoni land in Nigeria

The activities of Dutch Shell Company in the Niger-delta leave much to be desired. The company has involved in oil spillage from 1989 to date. It has recorded an estimated 221 spills per year in their area of engagement which is an average of 7350 barrels per year (SPDC Nigeria Brief, May 1995). The spillage has contaminated many natural habitations of both human and animal bio-ecosystems. The spillage challenges have created pollution and have given rise to wastelands and rendered many people jobless and

without a means of livelihood. The activities led to degradation and also poverty (Kadafa, 2012; Celestine, 2003; Tolulope, 2004). Over the years these occurrences have generated attention and many recent protests.

EXXON MOBIL COMPANY AND DIVERSE ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA

Another case of oil spillage is the January, 1998, 40,000 barrels of oil split (SPDC Nigeria Brief, May 1995). This could irate any on in such locality given the corrosive effect of such spillage on the environment. Mobil staff and national head quarter is not located in such locality because of the anger against them that could lead to kidnapping of its workers as a protest against their failure. The insensitivity and insincerity of the Multinational Oil Corporation like Exxon Mobil has led to disaster intentionally perceived to be caused by their failure to honour agreements and leave up to the required operational etiquette, and local economic contribution. These inadequacies and failure of Nigerian state in monitoring abilities raises questions which have degenerate into protest of various dimensions (Oluwaniyi, 2018; Andebai and Basuo, 2013; Nwonu, Onodugo, Vincent, Agbaeze, Nwoba, 2019).

Activities of Chevron Company and Oil Dealings in Nigeria

Chevron is associated with passing pipelines through farmlands and indigenous people's homes causing environmental degradation issues. Their exploitative disposition is common knowledge. Their dredging has disrupted fresh water supply and fishing locations. Some youths could not take it anymore and they started to protest. With suspected Government collaboration, some communities were attacked in Ilaje and Ese-Eso local government of Ondo state. (Bustany and Wysham, 2000; Efejiro, 2019)

The protests movement takes on various features and resulting into even violent protest such as the criticism that reached a height in 1994 and 1995 which gave rise to government suppression and the protests movement for the Survival of the Ogoni Saro-Wiva and eight other activists in November 1995. (Berkley Citizen. Org. 2007, Odisu, 2015) Attacks on oil facilities by Niger-Delta Avengers, a militant group and other militias are violent form of protests and they have resulted to economic challenges that led to recession in Nigeria in 2015. The various militants have blown oil facilities as a form of protest to perceived repressive activities in their region by various players in the oil industries and government as an important player. (Oluwaniyi, 2018; Iyanam et al, 2021)

The protest activities and incidences form the challenges of multinational corporation failures and struggles to adhere to operational etiquette, global economic contribution, political influence, development of local industries as well as sustainment of local cultures and habitat.

Discussing about the various protests in Nigeria due to activities of Multinational Corporations without mentioning of extractive industry would not be complete. Therefore, the activities of a home grown multinational corporation; Dangote Nigeria plc would also be mentioned. The immediate host community of the cement company in Mbayion, Gboko local government of Benue state has suffered similar environmental degradation due to pollution by white soot (cement dust) occasioned by the extractive and processing activities of the Dangote Company. The insensitivity and actions of the company and perceived government connivance led to massacre in Gboko where soldiers killed seven people and abandoned victims’ families (Isine, 2014). In recent times, it was all over cyber space again as seven people were killed as Dangote deploys soldiers against protesting factory workers on account of labour and work place abuses, (Olubajo, 2021).

OPERATIONAL ETIQUETTE

One of the issues mostly criticized about Multinational Corporation is their operational etiquette. According to Diamond (2015) the critics of multinational corporations are questioning the effectiveness of work etiquette code. The operational etiquette code are single-handedly formulated, effectively maintain, refining, and self-policing by Multinational Corporation, simply because, the code always made to fall directly in their economic interest. Peter (2013) argued that most of the codes sponsored by multinational corporations are ones that do not facilitating business transactions, at least not directly. The protesters maintained that in most of the cases, the codes of conduct seem to seek promotion of social-responsibilities for MNCs to prevent harm or mistreatment of persons or local communities. However, in most of developing world the MNCs are not observing the codes as most of the harms or measurements mentioned in the code are not of concern for the corporate actor. In theory fundamentally drive to maximize profits, make many MNCs to overlook many principles and social justices, they are mostly being driven by other factors that can influence their economic benefits (Stephen, 2019).

Global Economic Contribution

The question being always asked is whether Multinational Corporation is the right way to go for global economic development? The critics of Multinational Corporation maintain that these corporations have undue political influence over governments, exploit developing nations, and create job losses. Though, the proponents of Multinational Corporation argued that there is a trade-off of globalization, the inter-boarders industries regulate global market price, make consumers to gain access to quality product at affordable prices. Fieldhouse (1986) cited in Peter (2013) argue that indigenous workers are likely to be sent abroad for more experiences and other benefits. However, protest against multinational corporations point at labour extortion, low wages, among other inconsistencies. Osvaldo (2012)

maintained that these corporations are developing monopoly for certain products, driving up prices for consumers, stifling competition, and inhibiting innovation. They are also said to have a detrimental effect on the environment because their operations may encourage land development and the depletion of local or natural resources.

The protesters also point at imbalance pricing system across the globe due to attempt to offer similar standard that most developing nation cannot afford. Stephen (1988) cited in Stephen (2019) argued that the introduction of multinationals into a host country's economy may also lead to the downfall of smaller, local businesses. Activists have also claimed those multinationals breach ethical standards, accusing them of evading ethical laws and leveraging their business agenda with capital. There is now a widespread perception, especially outside of the rich countries, that the whole system of global governance that we have is fundamentally unfair. There are far too many parts of the world where there is no meaningful capacity to participate in the multinational system of economy and many nations play insignificant roles in growing their local industries to contribute toward global economy. The multinational corporations are breeding easily under the pretext and fact that reversing global integration altogether could lead to doing away with globalization, encourage clamping down the barriers on trade flows and financial flows as well as weaken the unstrengthen global governance.

POLITICAL INTERFERENCES

The protesters of multinational corporations accused them of political imbalance and gaining undue favourism. The extensive global value chains (GVCs) prevalent in today’s world economy have been driven by how MNCs structure their global operations through outsourcing and offshoring activities. In fact, their decisions have enormous implications for a wide range of policy issues—such as taxation, investment protection, and immigration—across many countries with different political and economic institutions. MNCs also may have strong political influence domestically. Indeed, their global economic dominance may go hand-in-hand with their powerful domestic political position.

Critics had it that the global connections of multinational corporations lead them to have distinct policy preferences from domestic firms. Among the few features that make the MNCs unique in political modification is the fact that they tend to be large and highly productive and also tend to be the largest exporters, with being employers for most highly skilled workers, and the largest spenders on Global Research and Development (Song & Milner, 2019). This gives them undue valuable position in any economy and in fact in developing economy they surpass the government control and dictate political direction and policies.

The uniqueness of MNCs has a close theoretical connection to the studies that examine firm level heterogeneity in their

engagement in international trade. In earlier work, Bernard, Jensen, and Lawrence (1995) cited in Walker and Christopher (2014) show that exporters in manufacturing are very different than purely domestic firms.

These MNCs sit atop the productivity ladder of all firms, being the largest, most capital and skill intensive, and the most innovative (Yildirim, 2018; Truex, 2014). Among MNCs, as theory implies, there exists variation in where they invest and how much. A “pecking order” arises where only the most productive firms invest in all types of foreign locations while the least productive firms invest in only the most productive locations (Yildirim, 2018). Although their numbers are small, they have a large presence within any economy. And because of these characteristics, they have been viewed as powerful actors within any country where they operate, whether their host or home one (Salacuse, 2010; Rodrik, 2018).

Thus, with their position in any national economy very few governments can dare them and only government in the developed economy can manage their excesses. Concerned individuals always point at the fact that government policies are being tilted to favour the multinational corporation. In some instances, opposition parties and protests movement do establish the significant roles played by multinational corporations in choosing national leaders, through formal endorsement of candidate with both financial and logistics backing. Thus, people usually kick based on the fact that such endorsement could be as result of promises from candidate to favour the MNCs at expense of their nations (Rodrik, 2018).

Again, it has long been recognized that firms will have different preferences depending on their ties to the international economy. Some research also suggests that MNCs increasingly prefer to have decisions made at the supranational level — that is, in international institutions like the WTO and IMF or at international tribunals like International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes — where they may have even greater influence than domestically (Rommel & Stefanie, 2018; Dan-Jumbo & Akpan, 2018). Other studies show that they are the most likely to lobby for national compliance in WTO Dispute Settlement rulings (Song & Milner 2019; Yildirim 2018). Above all, it is not impossible that for many politicians to emerge winners they usually offer MNCs incentives such as tax breaks, pledges of governmental assistance or subsidized infrastructure, or lax environmental and labor regulations. The truth is there may not have been any globalization if Multinational corporations do not exist, they remain an important factor in the processes of Globalization and influence global governance to their favour and interest of their business.

DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL INDUSTRIES

The proponents of multinational companies argued that companies that operate across national borders can provide

their host countries with many benefits such as employment opportunities and the latest technological innovations. Meanwhile, the protesters argued that the multinationals use their considerable size to select the most favorable conditions for their organization and they possess the potential to drive local operators out of business because local firms, on average, do not enjoy the same economies of scale. Multinational corporations (MNC) are enterprises that have control over assets, facilities and subsidiaries overseas in addition to their headquarters in the home country. In other words, they are global players with budgets to match. Due to their size and reach, MNCs have the power to influence both the world economy and local trading conditions in each of their host nations. For example, in Nigeria, the recent impasse between Twitter and the Nigerian Government saw the latter at the receiving end as most Nigerians lost their businesses and sources of livelihood and the national economy was threatened (Akinpelu, 2012).

While companies go transnational for myriad reasons, they all have a fundamental interest in optimizing their own value chain — shifting production to the location that offers the most favorable conditions for the organization. An MNC typically will look for locations that offer the cheapest resources and labor, a phenomenon known as global sourcing, before selling their products internationally and thus contributing to foreign trade, with little or nothing to offer the hosting nation. The global governance has failed in this regard as more and more regional governments are at the mercy of the multinational corporations to develop their indigenous firms. Rommel and Stefanie (2018) argued that the multinational corporation has come under heavy criticism across the globe. If there is any aspect where MNCs are good at, such aspect could be creation of domestic tension. Lee and Na-Kyung (2019), expressed that out-sourcing jobs overseas destroys jobs domestically, causing a variety of issues, which forced local industries to find new jobs, resulting in pay cuts or union degradation as well as lacking bargaining power. The protest of MNCs accused the firm of forcing the shifting in labor demand: “white-collar” employees at the expense of “blue-collar” workers who bear responsibility for exportation of production activities, while concentrating management, marketing, and Research & Development at the home base. The presence of Multinational Corporation in any nation especially the developing nation can impact economic issues such as decrease in tax revenue, reduction of exports and lower buying power. Lee (2018) expressed that MNCs are killing domestic industry by monopolizing the host country's market. In most cases, in order to make profit, MNCs may use natural resources of the host country and cause depletion of the resources as national and local governments often compete against one another to attract MNC facilities, with the expectation of increased tax revenue, employment, and economic activity. Such competition weakens both national and global governance, as the dictator of events remains the

multinational corporation that can transverse along international borders and influence happenings in many local economy.

SUSTENANCE OF LOCAL CULTURES

The influence of multinational corporations on cultures has over the years come under scrutiny of protesters. Rodrik (2018) argued that cross-border business activities of multinational corporations promote a global brand that intended to be visible and unforgettable, are obvious symbols of the spread of consumerism and the market and are seen as threats to local cultures and ways of life. The multinational corporation promote global brands, which contribute to “global culture,” reinforce concerns about homogenization and make who the “they” are very clear. Seemingly harmless intrusions of foreign culture can serve as larger symbols but may be a violation of local culture.

The protest movement sees globalization as an outcome of multinational corporations which meant to expand consumerism throughout the world resulting in increased homogenization of goods and with replacement of local products and local ways of life by mass-produced and mass-advertised consumer goods. Kim and Gabriele (2019) argued that there is no doubt that there are currently processes of cultural erasing, cultural cleansing and cultural distortion as results of opened windows among nations which multinational company served. Almost, every seconds of the day, the multinational corporations are responsible for cultural exportation from a region to others, especially, they introduce western world culture to various regions which subject their local culture into extinction or outdated. Kim and Osgood (2019) questioned the responsibility of Multinational Corporation in the aspects of cultural reawaking, cultural reviving or cultural stabilization in most of their host communities (Ivwurie, & Akpan, 2021).

It is obvious, that multinational corporations are making global governance highly incapable to monitor activities ongoing across the globe. The presence of MNC in most communities, responsible for widening of economic divides and narrowed cultural choices among host community. The protesters of multinational corporation argued that the world leaders need to recognize the fact that corporations are much more than purveyors of the products we all want; they are also the most powerful political forces of our time that alter our cultural heritages. The impact of globalization and multinational corporations are much more visible than they were in the past.

CONCLUSION

Global governance right now is often ineffective and where it is effective, it is often seen as unfair, and the existing institutions that have worked to some degree are increasingly under threat. Some countries usually make efforts to bend the MNC within their jurisdiction to obey the

laws of lands. But such efforts are usually seen as anti-progress as most MNCs will rather close-up and move to other places or reduce their services to skeletal form.

One of the central themes of the literature of neo-imperialism was that the locus of political and economic power, of decision making, was removed from national territory and national control. Thereby, limiting the power of global governance to nothing or ineffectiveness. Thus, the whole world now depends on an external source of power likely to be offered by Multinational Corporation which conversely reduced the global governance into powerlessness in terms of control of significant events. It is difficult to see how the democratic process and particularly participatory democracy can function at the international level. While civil society groups, including a large number of NGOs involved in the anti-globalization protest can serve as a countervailing force to MNCs, there is no reason to assume that they are any more broad based or accountable to national publics than are MNCs.

Multinational corporations are likely to keep their business as top as possible, only that there is need to effectively look into aspects of global governance that are capable of compelling the MNCs to think of host communities, in terms of coming up with various grassroots development plans, community friendly arrangements, cultural uplifting activities, as well as creation of jobs, wealth, and development for the survival of local industries and regional governments. In doing this, all relevant stakeholders should be involved towards collective decision making and problem solving in a transparent, accountable and participatory manner for effective global governance.

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