

# Globalization and Environmental Degradation of the Niger Delta

## Region of Nigeria

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### Abstract

This paper examined and analyzed globalization and environmental degradation of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The objective is to determine the impact of globalization on the environment of Niger Delta. The paper posited that globalization is more of a curse than a blessing to the Niger Delta Region. This is because, while it opens the region up for more foreign investment opportunities, it also creates avenues through which the regions environment and eco-system is degraded and thus worsen the environmental and developmental crises of the region. Thus, behind its economic prospects lie the seeds of more environmental hazards.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Niger-Delta, Environmental degradation, Oil, Resources

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is again the cynosure of the global eye following the recent crises in the Niger-Delta region. The crises spanning from struggles driven by the quest for equal access to critical oil resources and power, self determination, ethnic autonomy, revenue allocation politics and the decentralization of a hegemonic federal power in the context of shrinking oil reserves (Obi, 2006). The region known to be one of the most blessed in human and material resources and fetched Nigeria over 90% of its revenue is however, left in its trail poverty, frustration and underdevelopment. The Niger Delta, which derives its name from River Niger, is one of the world largest wetlands covering some 70,000km<sup>2</sup> formed by the accumulation of sedimentary deposits transported by the Niger and Benue Rivers (Azaiki, 2007:1, World Bank Report; 1993:1). The Niger Delta Communities have settled in the area for many millennia with the Ijaws being the oldest group, having lived there for over 7,000 years (Alagoa, 2000:3). Geographically, the Niger Delta consist of areas identified with deltaic characteristics in the southern part of Nigeria which include Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta State) and parts of Akwa Ibom, cross River, Edo and Ondo states. This means, the idea of categorizing all oil producing states as Niger Delta is wrong. Over 7 million Nigerians inhabit the area with over 20 ethnic groups and about 800 communities (Okoko and Ibaba 1997:57).

The Niger Delta 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 (Tell, February 18, 2008:33). The oil Industry in the Niger Delta is dominated by multinational corporations such as chevron Texaco, Exxon-Mobil, Total, Agip, SPDC, ELF and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Presently, there are over 600 oil fields 5,284 Onshore and Offshore oil wells, 10 Export Terminals, 275 flow stations, 4 refineries and Liquefied National Gas project (Lubeck, Watts & Lipschutz, 2007:5). As at 2007, statistics shows that about 23,183.9 billion barracks of crude oil were said to have been produced in the Niger Delta which amounts to a staggering national revenue of 29.8 trillion naira (Tell, February 18, 2008:28). Paradoxically, despite this tremendous natural resource base, the Niger Delta region represents one of the extreme situations of poverty and underdevelopment. Infrastructural development is very low, while poverty and unemployment level is about 80%, and unemployment ranks 85%. Access to basic social amenities is very limited. Indeed the region falls below the national average in all measures or indicators of development (Ibaba, 2005:13-14). The cost of living in the Niger Delta is very high and even the prices of petroleum producers are some of the highest in the country. Various attempt to redress the situation have resulted to government failing to play the role of a father and resorted to brutalization of the peace of the Niger-Delta through her impatience with, and violent intolerance of protest against the quagmire in the sub-region.

The arrest, trial and sentencing to death of Isaac Boro and his colleagues for their protest against the suppression of the Izon in particular and the Niger Delta in general in 1966, the inspired murder of the Ogoni four as a preface to the judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues in 1995; the murderous sack of Kaiama in 1998 on the first anniversary of the "Kaiama Declaration"; the massacre of Odi in 1999 are simply a dimension of that violent intolerance of protest (Ekpebu, 2008). Thus, these acts of violence could have been targeted at oil corporations and the federal government whom are the primary beneficiaries of the oil region at the expense of the local people, the truth of the matter is that, the crises which had taking a different shape are intended to be heard around the world, and has drawn not only national recognition, but had captured international attention as well. The paper seeks to examine the influences of globalization to the Niger Delta crises, the terrain at which the crises occur, i.e. the Niger Delta, the nature of the Nigerian State, activities of the

key players, Oil theft in the region, the effect of the crises to global oil price. The paper employs descriptive and analytical method in examining globalization and the crisis in the Niger Delta. Secondary data is used to source for information. These include relevant textbooks, journals, magazines, newspaper and internet.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

### Globalization

The review of related literature on the concept of "globalization" reveals that is the greater movement of people, goods, capital and ideas due to increased economic integration which in turn is propelled by increased trade and investment. It is more or less like moving towards living on a borderless world. According to Jan Scholte (1997) globalization refers to processes whereby social relations acquire relatively distance – less 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 organized on the bases of a planetary unit. Globalisation is a complex process. According to Aina, (1996:5), globalisation has "created new conditions of proximity, intensity, and even intimacy with what used to be distant faraway worlds". Yet, it is possible to isolate different perspectives regarding this process. From an "economic" perspective, globalisation is a process of "the transformation of the capitalist world system", within an expansionist logic that drives it to further exploitation and accumulation (Wilkin: 1996: 229).

This view has been criticized on the basis of its linearity. While admitting that in a sense, "the global capitalist system has evidently become more structurally interlocked", Marshall (1996: 894 895) asserts that, "it is not enough to argue that global capitalism is undergoing an epochal shift. Capitalist accumulation was globalist in its expression long before the changeover from machino- to systemo facturing". In the same manner, the assumption that globalisation is "dissolving" international borders, and rendering the nation state and traditional concepts of sovereignty irrelevant or obsolete (Ohmae, 1995, 1996; Drezner, 1998: 209), has been rejected by those insisting that globalisation is still far from a linear, uniform or homogenising process (Boyer and Drache, 1996; Zyman, 1996; Saurin, 1996).

Of late, there is even talk of a globalisation "model" in crisis (Bello, 1998: 10 17). There are others, who see globalisation as being emblematic of an "unfinished project" hinged on "enduring national foundations and emerging regional realities" and more of a label "that points at expanding market interconnections in the form of investments, financial networks and trade" (Zyman, 1996: 157). Another important contribution to the ongoing debate is that by Mittleman (1995:275), who interprets global restructuring as a "market driven and multidimensional process, [in which] globalisation renders obsolete invented divisions of the world into developed and developing countries, industrialised and industrialising nations, and core and periphery." (Cited in Saurin, 1996b: 679). But clearly recent global transformations are not uniform in their reach or impact. Nor would the same forces operate in all areas of globalisation. Indeed, globalisation is as complex as it is ideological, and great care must be taken to address its specifics. As such, the focus here will be more on the social response to "economic" globalisation and its implications for Africa.

The issue of how Africans are responding to "the production and reproduction of their own lives, including the global structuring of production and reproduction"(Saurin, 1996b: 661). By the same token country locations, and in particular the boundaries between territorial states, are in some important senses becoming less central to our lives, although they do remain significant globalization is thus an on-going trend whereby the world has – in many respects and at a generally accelerating rate become one relatively borderless social sphere". Whereas the above definition views globalization from social relations perspective, United Nations relates it in economic context. That is, "the reduction and removal of barriers between national borders in order to facilitate the flow of goods, capital, services and labour .... although considerable barriers remain to the flow of labour..." Aja Akpuru-Aja and Emeribe (2000) went further to define it in international political economy perspective, that is, "globalization reflects the greater openness of national and international economies to greater flows of trade, finance, capital, high technology, foreign direct investment (FDI), and market integration offerings. The engineering mechanism of globalization remains the revolution in science and technology, particularly as it affects transportation and electro-communication systems. The net result is the creation of a global village, a single market system, a global factory and global office. One result of globalization is grotesque and dangerous polarization between peoples and countries benefiting from the system and those that are merely recipients and reactionaries of the effects". Saskia Sassen (2006) argue that a good part of a globalization consists of an enormous variety of micro-process that begin to denationalize what had been constructed as national – whether policies, capital, political subjectivities, urban spaces, temporal frames, or any other of a variety of dynamics and domains.

Norom Chomsky (2006) opine that the word globalization is also used, in a doctrinal sense to describe the neoliberal form of economic globalization. Whereas, Thomas L. Friedman examined the impact of the "flattening" of the world and argue that globalised trade, outsourcing, supply-changing and political forces have changed the world permanently, for both better and worse. He contend that the pace of globalization is

quickening, and will continue to have a growing impact on business organization and practice. Herman E. Daly (2006) went further to differentiate between globalization and internationalization. Although they are used interchangeably, but he argued that there is a significant formal difference between them. In his words, "the term internationalization refers the importance of international trade, relations, treaties etc. Owing to the (hypothetical) immobility of labour and capital between or among nations". Thus, globalization is the sharing of goods, services, knowledge and cultures between people and countries, but in recent years improved technologies and a reduction of barriers means the speed of exchange is much faster. It provides opportunities and challenges. Bigger markets can mean bigger profit which leads to greater wealth for investing in development and reducing poverty in many countries. Weak domestic policies, institutions and infrastructure and trade barriers can restrict a country's ability to take advantages of the changes. Each country makes decisions and policies that position them to maximize the benefits and minimize the challenges presented by globalization.

### **The Niger Delta Region**

The Niger Delta is the "gold mine" of the Nigerian oil industry. It accounts for over 70% of Nigeria's on shore oil and upstream operations. According to Khan (1994: 40) "Since oil was discovered at Oloibiri, the Niger Delta basin has proved to be the most prolific producing area in Nigeria, containing seventy eight oil fields, including the largest, Forcados and Yorke". In a region where land scarcity is rampant the exploration, production and transportation of oil means that oil installations and operations occupy a lot of physical space (at the expense of the indigenous land owners), and has had a pronounced impact on the environment. Also because the Niger Delta has been subjected to both onshore and offshore operations for over four decades, the social relations of oil production has penetrated the social structure of the local communities and defined their place, largely as the "excluded, the alienated, and the exploited" in the larger Nigerian society. The critical issues therefore are: what is the social impact of oil production in the Niger Delta, and how does this "produce" resource scarcities, and conflict; who controls, and has access to, the resources being produced from this area; and who bears the environmental costs of oil production? These issues define the conflictual relations prevailing in Nigeria's oil industry today. The major players in this saga are the oil multinationals (which mine and produce the oil), the Nigerian 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.

However, the central role of oil multinationals in the global economy as suppliers of very cheap source energy, makes them a central player not only in the global accumulation of capital. They are even more strategically so in the context of a global political economy that "simultaneously concentrates wealth and energy both in certain locales and at certain social levels by extracting and dispossessing from other locales and social levels" (Saurin, 1996a: 87). 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. What constitutes the "global context remains an empty abstraction unless mediated, translated towards concrete settings where we can discern concrete actors" (Binsbergen: 1997). Therefore, this paper analyses the concrete situation in the Niger Delta, the "golden goose" of the Nigerian oil industry. It focuses on the various contending interests/social forces in the Niger Delta as a source of "discrimination, exploitation, degradation and abuse of rights." Globalization itself has to be understood not just within the context of the restructuring of global capitalism and the shrinking of time and space through the use of technology, but within the context of the deepening economic crisis in Africa and its pervasive adverse political and social ramifications. Applied to the situation of the Niger Delta, we are faced with an interesting situation in which "both forces of extraction and resistance connect the local to the global, and assume complex forms in which social networks/coalitions can be located within, or connect with two or more levels" (Obi, 1998a). As such the conflicts are waged, not just in the oil communities, but beyond - at the national and global levels. It is important to capture the role of the oil-dependent state in mediating such conflicts, in which it is itself an active protagonists. The immersion of Nigeria in an economic and external debt crisis since the mid 1980s has weakened the state vis a vis global capital. At the same time, the heavy demands of economic adjustment and debt servicing have committed the state to promoting the expansion of investments in the oil industry and the intensification of oil extraction (and consequently far greater environmental degradation of the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta).

The 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 interests 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. At stake is not only the issue of power and control of the environment for oil production and capital accumulation, the distribution of oil rents 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 oil interests, but also with the power of the state itself.

## Environmental Crises

The question of "scarcity" of resources, resulting from the interaction of economic modes/forces and the ecosystem, or as a result of the pressures of overpopulation on shrinking resources and the implications for global (western) security, has dominated the discourse on environmental conflict in recent times (Obi, 1997c: 2-3). In this section, the focus is on the causal links between environmental/ resource scarcity and conflict, and on a critique of the orthodox environmental security analysis (and the neo-Malthusian perspective which fetishizes the "demographic trap").

Environmental conflict in recent times has been associated with how struggles over shrinking environmental resources-as a result of overuse, unfair distribution, misuse or degradation - build up the stresses which trigger conflict. According to Homer-Dixon (1996: 359): Scarcities of environmental resources - in particular cropland, fresh water, and forest - are contributing to mass violence in several areas of the world. While these "environmental scarcities" do not cause wars between countries, they do sometimes aggregate stresses within countries, helping stimulate ethnic clashes, urban unrest, and insurgencies. The other strand of the environmental scarcity thesis is neo-Malthusian, which links conflict to situations in which population growth overwhelms the local resource base. Rapid population growth beyond the limits of the carrying capacity of the ecosystem or "resource threshold", feeds into stresses which directly, or indirectly provoke conflict (Brown and Jacobson, 1986; Klare, 1996; Homer- Dixon, 1994). As a strategy for ensuring that less stress is placed on renewable resources and constructing a potential framework of global security, population growth control, especially fertility reduction in the developing world, is seen as an important part of the solution to the problem of environmental threats to (western) global security.

A social perspective on the environment (Redclift, 1989; Redclift and Benton, 1995, Saurin, 1996), exposes some of the limitations of the thesis of environmental scarcities. Rather than seeing environmental crises or scarcities as natural (Bush, 1997: 503-513), or the outcome of natural population increase (as if everyone had equal access to resources) it is useful to perceive the environment as being " socially constructed", as a " process rather than a form, as the result of a set of relationships between physical space, natural resources and a constantly changing pattern of economic forces" (Redclift, 1989: 79). This draws attention to the relationship between man and the ecology as resource base, and locates environmental conflict as the outcome of struggles between socio-economically defined groups for the control of resource(s) for profit, use, or distribution (Bookchin: 1992). In this way it is possible for a tiny fraction of the population (as is the case in all capitalist societies) to control a disproportionately large share of resources to the exclusion of the majority who have to struggle for the crumbs, or challenge the "hegemonic minority", in order to force through a project of redistribution.

How then can environmental conflict in Africa be located within the social theory of global environmental change? The answer lies in how the processes of globalisation have defined the conflictual "social" relations between the "possessors" and the "dispossessed". It also can be found in the situation in which smaller populations in the "highly" industrialised world enjoy the benefits of the transformation of, and transfer of Africa's resources through "globalised" structures of production and exchange, leaving behind resource scarcities and the intense struggles for larger chunks of fast shrinking resources waged at local, national and global levels (Obi, 1997). The situation in Africa has become desperate in view of the failure of structural adjustment and the deepening of environmental conflict in the continent (Bush, 1997: 504). If anything, adjustment has devalued Africa's resources in the global market place and in the process exposed most Africans to greater exploitation, poverty and alienation from the state.

The ways in which "globalised oil production and exchange" defines "resource scarcities", and sharpens social contradictions have played a significant role in the environmental conflicts still ravaging the Niger Delta. It is thus more analytically rewarding to focus on the environment as a contested terrain - an arena of local resistance in the oil producing communities against the exploitative and polluting activities of global oil capital.

## The Nigerian Oil Industry

A lot has been written on the Nigerian oil industry, and its political economy (Shatzl, 1969; Turner, 1980; Amu, 1982; Edogun, 1985; Hutchful, 1985; Onoh, 1993; Ikein, 1990; Soremekun and Obi, 1993, Ihonvbere and Shaw, 1988, Khan, 1994;Obi. 1994; 1997,1998), therefore there will be no attempt to replicate it here. Therefore the following discussion merely expounds on the structure of the oil industry, the state-oil nexus, and the global interface.

### *The Structure of the Oil Industry*

The structure of the Nigerian oil industry cannot be fully grasped without adequate knowledge of its background and evolution. Its main characteristics are extraversion, state dependence and multinational control. *The Concessionaire Era (1914-1969)* The Nigerian oil industry has its roots in the colonial state which, through the 1914 Colonial Minerals Ordinance, granted the monopoly of oil concessions in Nigeria to "British or British-

allied capital" (Lolomari: 1976: 14). This provided the legal framework for the exclusion of Nigerians from any meaningful participation in the industry, and in 1938 served as the basis for the granting of an oil exploration licence to Shell (Shell D'Arcy and later Shell-BP) covering the entire mainland of Nigeria, an area of 367,000 square miles (Shatzl, 1969: 24-26). From 1957, a few years to Nigeria's independence, Shell surrendered some of its oil acreage to other oil multinationals and the state, leaving it with a total land area of 16,000 square miles. This way, other oil multinationals such as Mobil, Gulf (now Chevron), Agip, Safrap (now Elf), Texaco and others gained a foothold in the Nigerian oil industry. At this point the oil industry, had no linkages with the rest of the Nigerian economy, save for the 50-50 profit sharing arrangement with the state under the rubric of the 1959 Petroleum Profits Tax Ordinance. As Amu (1982: 5), a former NNPC director, notes "under the concessionaire era, the oil industry was dominated by the oil multinationals, (and) government's role was limited to collecting rents and royalties from oil companies, and making laws to regulate the activities of the industry".

### ***State Participation and State Capitalism (1970-1985)***

In 1969 the Federal government of Nigeria, abrogated the 1914 Ordinance, and transferred the "control" and "ownership" of oil to the state. It similarly imposed OPEC terms on all companies operating in the Nigerian oil industry, and formally joined OPEC in 1971. From the early 1970s, the state set up its own oil corporation (1971) and acquired majority equity participation in the industry by entering into joint venture agreements with the oil multinationals operating in Nigeria. It took up 60 per cent equity ownership in all the operating companies (Elf, Agip/Philips, Gulf (Chevron), Mobil, Texaco, Pan Ocean) except Shell, of which it acquired 80 percent with the nationalisation of BP in 1979. The state later reduced its interest in BP to about 55 per cent, surrendering the remainder to Elf (10 percent), Agip (5 per cent) and Shell (30 per cent). These joint ventures have continued to account for the bulk of Nigeria's oil production and export. In the downstream sector, the state took over some oil marketing companies: Unipetrol (Esso), AP (BP), and National (the marketing arm of Shell). But this was not enough to displace the foreign giants of the domestic market (Mobil, Total, Agip, and Texaco). The "arm" of state capitalism in the Nigerian oil industry, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC, established in 1977), could not match the sophistication and monopoly of oil technology, as well as knowledge of global oil markets of the oil multinationals. Inevitably, therefore, the Nigerian state became dependent on the oil multinationals - its joint venture partners. This powerlessness was further compounded by intra-elite squabbles for access to oil wealth.

### ***Post-State Capitalism, Market led Era (1986 - Present)***

Despite the efforts of adjustment to "roll back the state", diversify the oil industry from the export of crude oil, and commercialise the NNPC, the structure of the oil industry has not changed from its extractive, dependent, and foreign dominated structure (Obi, 1997). The removal of "oil subsidies", rather than freeing resources for development, fed into corruption, inflation, immense social misery and widespread poverty. The industry itself deteriorated, as the state reinforced, rather than loosened its grip on the oil in the face of shrinking oil revenues. Its offer of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) to oil multinationals in 1986 and 1991, attracted fresh investments in the industry, but by 1997 the state was in arrears in the payment of its share under the joint venture agreements to the tune of hundreds of millions of naira. At the same time the NNPC lacked the will or means to "regulate, participate or compete" in the oil industry. The 1990s have been a period of unprecedented state dependence on oil multinationals to increase oil exploitation and provide more revenue for resolving the national crisis.

As pointed out below, the state's total dependence on a commodity (oil) it did not control, its vulnerability to the oil multinationals (particularly Shell, which produced roughly half of Nigeria's oil), and the volatile global oil market were to have dire implications for the environmental conflicts that swept across the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta in the 1980s and 1990s.

### **The State - Oil Nexus**

The linkage between oil and the Nigerian state has received considerable scholarly attention (Ihonvberc and Shaw, 1988; Graf, 1988, Obi, 1997d: 11-14). A lot of emphasis has been placed on the rentier context of this linkage in which the state, excluded from production, is reduced to a mere collector of rent from the oil multinationals. This formulation captures just the form of the state-oil linkage; it fails to address its content. While states are important as "primary mechanisms for securing specific social, economic and political orders in particular geographic domains,... (they) are best seen as a site of conflict between these conflicting social forces, rather than the coherent and homogenous representative of nations as collective entities". (Wilkin, 1996: 231) The starting point of any fruitful analysis of the state-oil nexus should therefore regard the state as a source of class struggle, as well as a mediator of class struggle. While the state-oil nexus captures the dependence of the Nigerian state on the oil surplus (and its integration into global oil relations), it recognises that its role of mediation is not linear, but rather reflects the divisions within the ranks of the domestic ruling class and the

balance of social forces in society generally (Obi, 1997b: 141). It is this heterogeneous national ruling class (Lubeck and Watts, 1995: 210), and its global partners, that have privatised the Nigerian "oil-rich" state. For example, within the national ruling class are factions from the oil minorities who find themselves always marginalised by the factions from the larger ethnic groups. They are often co-opted into the power and patronage networks of the ruling class but in general they are excluded from the direct exercise of power, as well as control of and access to the oil wealth. The factions from the oil minorities divide into two main groups: those who are willing to continue in their traditional "place" as appendages of the ruling class in exchange for a share of the "oil pie"; and those who seek a radical re-negotiation of this role on the ground that the rich oil resources of Nigeria are located in their home "territory". It is the second faction that has successfully mobilized and transformed the social forces in the Niger Delta into a potent weapon for challenging the social relations that have formed in the oil economy. It is in this sense that we would define the Nigerian state as contested terrain - "the sum total of relations arising from the global character of oil production, a site of constant struggles for access to power and primitive accumulation"(Obi, 1997b: 142). The "unity" (which is formal) and the reproduction of this state depends, to a large extent, on the oil multinationals (especially Shell which accounts for 51 per cent of Nigeria's total oil production) that produce oil-the very life-blood of the state and one of the critical sinews in global capital accumulation.

An important point to note is that the centralisation of oil power has itself become a contested issue. On the one hand, it has become a contentious issue between those who seek to maintain the status quo and those who seek its decentralisation in order to address issues of equity and social justice. On other hand, it is an issue between the pressure to maintain the status quo and the social forces which seek a larger share of federal (oil) revenues on the basis of derivation (Soremekun and Obi, 1993: 209-231; Obi, 1998). The challenge to "distributive inequities" thus constitutes a critical element in the struggles of the oil minorities who seek greater access to a larger share of the oil wealth..

### **Globalisation and Environmental Conflict in the Niger Delta**

Hardly a day passes, without reports in the international and local news media on the growing insurgency by armed militias in Nigeria's oil rich province, the Niger Delta. 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 economics. Secondly, it is a region of great and troubling paradox. It is an environment of great wealth as well as inhuman poverty (Inokoba and Imbua; 2008:643).The dilemma of the region is that, its wealth and riches has become a source of poverty, squalor and curse to the people of the oil bearing communities. The truth 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 worst cases of environmental destruction. 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 revenue generated from the region, joblessness, biochemical poisoning through pollution, brutal military assaults (as well as occupation) ([www.unitedIjawstates.com](http://www.unitedIjawstates.com)). Progress has been put in the reverse in most Niger Delta communities. For instance, the best Nigerian state could do to immortalize Oloibiri (where oil was first discovered) thus far has been the erection of a commemorative pillar cum foundation stone for a non-existent Nigerian institute for oil and Gas research besides the No. 1. Oil well in March 2001. It is truism that the power relations of the MNCs with their host states is said to be sophisticated, ruthless, hegemonical, secretive, unorthodox, exploitative, treacherous, greedy, opportunistic, criminalized and corrupt (Watts 1999, Obi 2001). They are self interested, insensitive and poorly responsive to local and regional dimensions of environmental issues (Warper 1996) and hostile to civil society (Makumbe, 1998). In the Niger Delta therefore, interest of the Oil multinational is squarely profit maximization and they thus disregard existing global environmental regulations and laws and capitalized in their weak and ineffective enforcement and implementation. Globalization has helped to reveal 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. Natural gas, a bye-product of crude oil extraction, could earn the Nigerian government huge revenues.

But companies choose to flare it, mainly due to the high cost associated with harnessing gas and low penalty that flaring attracts. And because of the weak and dependent nature of the Nigerian state, gas flaring has continued unabated. Moreso, the Oil Multinational Corporations through their policies 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 has ended up for the payment for arms to unleash further violence on the groups or the oil companies themselves (Obi, 2005:18). The impurity of oil multinationals, therefore have also fueled the crisis in the region. Therefore, it is not surprising that the consciousness of exploitation, marginalization and disempowerment has made the Niger Delta a region of deep rooted frustration, hence the escalating crisis. That is, the refusal of the Nigerian state to respond positively to the pens and placards of the Saro-Wiwa's era has created an environment of anger and

desperation. Moreso, the dialogue option have equally failed because the Nigerian state have refused to implement numerous blue prints for development in the region. The youths have militarilised the resource control struggle to press home their demands. The most potent militant group engaging in local resistance, but targeting a global audience is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). MEND has launched 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 Nigeria's military forces, and publicized its activities on various global media. That is by using the internet to send e-mails and images to the world's leading news agencies and local newspapers and even taking journalists to its camps in the swamps of the Niger Delta. It has however, gained most attention internationally by its threats to "cripple the Nigeria Oil export (Obi, 2008:16, Junger 2007, IRIN 2006). The advent of GSM in Nigeria, a product of globalization has improved communication. The militants are also using this medium to network and publicize their activities. Obviously, it appears that the militants anger is against government and oil companies which, in tandem with the Oloibiri metaphor are held responsible for the plunder and pollution of the Niger Delta.

### **Impact of the Niger Delta Crisis on Global Price of Oil**

Globalized oil is emblematic of the social relations arising from the globalization of oil production and accumulation. This reflects the growing interconnectedness, world-wide of the following: highly industrialized oil consuming countries and developing oil producing countries, oil multinationals and local oil producing communities, and global and local civil society (Obi, 2004:444).

Due to the inter dependent and interconnectedness of the global economy, activities in a sub-structure, directly affects the whole. It is thus factual that where as globalization have facilitated the exploration and production of oil by multinational corporations from the West in the developing countries, it has also made it possible for the Niger Delta crisis to have an impact in the price of oil in the global market. Nigeria is a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) since 1971, to maintain a favourable price for oil, OPEC allocated quotas for oil production to its members. The logic is that, unregulated production will lead to surplus oil for sale which win reduce the global price, while regulated production level will lead to stability and increase in the global oil price. Common sensically, the inability of any OPEC member state to meet up its quota of production will invariably result to the reduction in the supply of global oil and hence, increase in price. The production quota for Nigeria in 2008 was 2.45 million barracks per day. But presently, it is 3.2 million barriers per day (Tell, February 18, 2998:26, The Nation, Thursday May 21, 2009:2). Be that as it, the activities of militants in the Niger Delta has made it impossible for Nigeria to realize its quota for production. Infact, the spate of militancy in the Niger Delta has made Nigerian oil fields among the most dangerous in the world. As a result of insecurity of our national borders and the proliferation of arms, armed militant groups operating in the Niger Delta have graduated to a new level of lethality, technical and tactical sophistication. The availability of AK47's in the Niger Delta has increased tremendously and the militant groups likely poses remote detonation and night vision equipment, a well as anti-aircraft missiles (Ianaccone, A, 2007:2).Statistics shows that production sometimes decline to as low as 1.6million barrels per day (Newswatch, May 4, 2009:16), which alters the global price of oil.

### **Oil Theft in the Niger Delta**

Oil Bunkering is a major factor in the Niger Delta crisis. There are two basic typologies of bunkering in the Nigerian oil industry, which include legal and illegal bunkering. As the name implies, legal bunkering refers to the activities of those licensed to lift crude oil by the Federal government. While illegal bunkering connotes the activities of those who carry out bunkering without government authorization. The illegal bunkering that presently characterize militant activities in the Niger Delta is a creation of the Nigerian State. The argument is that, those who are licenced to carry out bunkering legally are predominantly non-Niger Deltans. And secondly, those legal bunkers in collaboration with corrupt states officials and the oil companies introduce illegal bunkering in the region. Experience has shown and there is no denying the fact that, this infamous Nigerians and their foreign counterparts contacted able bodied unemployed youths in the Niger Delta to secure their illegal Bunkering barges to the high sea, where the crude oil is transferred to waiting vessels and money paid in hard currencies. The boys were then paid peanuts, and provided with arms to secure future trips from Customs and Naval patrols. As time goes on, the boys became conscious that, the job they are doing for their masters is highly profitable, and since they have mastered the trade, they decided to set up their own bunkering networks. Today, virtually all militant groups in the Niger Delta are involved in oil theft or bunkering which is made positive by globalization. All they need to do is to identify pipelines heading to the export terminals and then connect their drilling pipes to them. The violent insurgency in the region is thus driven by the lucrative oil smuggling business, and the proceeds are used to procure sophisticated arms and ammunitions.

There is a direct link between globalization and oil theft in the region, because, crude oil tapped by gangs in the oil rich Niger Delta is sold to vessels waiting offshore for onward shipment to the global market

(Gilbert, 2009:1). In February alone, the Nigerian military intercepted 22 barges of stolen crude oil in the creeks of the Niger Delta. Although President Umaru Yar'Adua has called for international action to stop the illegal oil trade, and to categorize stolen crude from Nigeria as blood oil, not much has been achieved in that regard. Foreign business interests are arming the militants in exchange for stolen crude oil. The fact is that the price for crude oil per barrel in the international black market is very cheap, hence western capitalist want the crude desperately and that has continue to fuel the crisis. Nigeria loses about 100,000 barrels of oil per day to crude oil theft and that translates to about 10 million dollars per day. The report of the Technical committee on the Niger Delta estimated that the country lost about N8.84 trillion or 61.6 trillion dollars to oil theft and sabotage in the volatile region between 2006 and 2008 (Newswatch, May 4, 2009:12).Crude oil is not sold in bottles, they use ships. Oil theft is therefore facilitated by the collaborating global actors which is a disadvantage of globalization.

## Conclusion

It is now glaring that whereas oil should have been a blessing to the Niger Delta, the fundamental character of the Nigerian State and the exploitative activities of the Oil multinationals have translated basically to negative effects. This comes in form of dislocation of the local economics, environmental degradation, inter and intra communal crisis, corruption, development crisis, looting and squandering of oil resources etc. The resource agitations and militant insurgency in the region is thus facilitated by the information of what is obtainable in other oil producing western states, hence the call for redress. But since the militants are feeding on their global bunkering networks to sustain the struggle, much need to be done (locally, nationally and internationally) urgently to curtail the crisis. The Nigerian State need to be committed to the development of the Niger Delta, especially, massive infrastructural development to open up the region. The multinational corporations should also abide by global environmental standards and better the lots of their host communities. And in terms of bunkering Nigeria should improve security especially in the high sea to delinks the bunkering networks. Again, those that have criminalized the struggle and their international collaborators must be brought to book, to allow oil to translate to regional prosperity.

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