

The African State under Globalisation: Security, Transnational Corporations, and the Environment

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Abstract

The 21st century is and remains principally an era of globalisation. As good as this whole idea of globalisation phonetically sounds, all facets of globalisation—from economic, social, political, to cultural dimensions of it—are not fascinating but gloomy for the state in the global South, especially Africa. A particular context where the Africa state has suffered enormous stress is its environment. Thus, this paper worried by this simply question: Why is the environment in Africa so plundered and impoverished? The paper asserts that the principal explanation for such a gloomy state of the environment in Africa under globalisation is that a corporate octopus, the Transnational Corporation (TNC), whose economic fortunes dwarf most African states is and remains the principal foot-soldier of globalisation that helps to wreak havoc on the environment in Africa. The paper, essentially being qualitative, discovers that in a century of globalisation dominated by TNCs, the state in Africa and its environment stands dwarfed in all of globalisation's numerous facets, mostly the economic domain where the environment of resource-rich indigenous peoples suffers from incalculable burdens in course of exploration/mining, exploitation, transportation, gas flaring and storage. The paper concludes in agreeing that whereas globalisation and the Breton Wood institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Centre) work in concert and so are relevant in the prevailing economic order, a reformed World Bank in the typology of an International Asset Agency (IAA) that will ensure equity and ecological balance in global economic relations, especially in relations to Africa's environmental needs be evolved.

Keywords: African state, globalisation, security, TNCs, environment

Introduction

The 21st century is principally the era of globalisation. It is the “intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens, 1991, p.64). But why is it that humanity's efforts at progress in fashioning globalisation with a wide acceptance is selective in distributing the benefits and discomforts therein? Can scholarship, politics and the private sector provide plausible explanations? If there

are no explanations, is it that globalisation is hemisphere bias and if it is bias, who are the principal foot-soldiers that undertake such a discriminatory globalisation?

This paper identifies the Transnational Corporation (TNC) as globalisation's main culprit that works relentlessly in either comforting or suffocating the environment in hemispheres North and South respectively (de Grauwe, & Camerman, 2002; Wonkeror, 2016). The necessity to examine globalisation in this paper stems from the fact that, the TNC remains the principal agent of globalisation with diverse impacts on the environment (Hymer, 1979; Gilpin, 1987; Bassey, 1997). The positive or negative impacts of TNCs on the environment are widely acknowledged in the locations where they operate (O' Faircheallaigh, & Ali, 2008). To the extent that the TNC wields such enormous influence in the present global configuration of economic, political, and social events, the environment and by extension the African is not an exception, but has long been incorporated into the global capitalist system (Jeyifo, 2009).

Africa's incorporation into global capitalist system no doubt has grave and detrimental consequences on the populace as it is being orchestrated by the operations of TNCs and which manifest in diverse negativities: resource depletion, stressed environments, undermined indigenous peoples rich in natural resources, government's unbridled avidity for oil rents/royalties, an unholy marriage between governments and TNCs, etc., that often results in a disconnect between governments and their citizens. It is in such context that this paper anchors on globalisation and its impact on the sovereign statehood of African states and their environment.

Organisationally, this paper after this introduction begins with Section II on a review of extant literature on the state retreat/centric debates of globalisation on the Westphalia state with a more emphatic discourse on economic globalisation. Section III undertakes the core of the paper—the state in Africa under globalisation' with emphasis on the environment, the commons, and marketised/commercialised security, etc. Section IV concludes the paper.

Globalisation: The Debate on State Centralism and Retreat

Globalisation has been diversely studied and interpreted. For Hirst and Thompson (1996), globalisation is a fashionable concept in the social sciences, a core dictum in the

prescriptions of management gurus, and a catch-phrase for journalists and politicians of every stripe. The United Nations Human Development Report (1999, p.1) argues that globalisation “is not new, but the present era has distinctive features. Shrinking space, shrinking time and disappearing borders are linking people’s lives more deeply, more intensely, more immediately than ever before”. Satirically, Adedokun (n.d) observes that “...rather than being a new or original one, past records indicate that it was exhumed by world political leaders from the grave of history and became popularised by scholars which now dressed it in modern attire”.

These analyses never reach a consensus definition of globalisation because it is a classic example of what is termed in the social sciences as a ‘contested concept’ that suffers from a multiplicity of definitions. Yet Scholte (2008, p.1471) posits that though “definition is not everything, but everything involves definition. Knowledge of globalisation is substantially a function of how the word is defined. The dissection of globalisation must include a careful and critical examination of the term itself”. Scholte (2008) cautions that a thorough understanding of globalisation is a sine-qua-non for it will give an academic precision, guide and direction to further research.

So, what is it that lies in the word globalisation? The political economist, Strange (1995) describes globalisation as a term adopted by scholars who aggregate almost everything—clothes, sports and entertainment, food and drink, etc, without consideration or differentiation of what is important to what is trivial. From Strange’ (1995) conclusion, it is obvious that there is so much fuzz around globalisation. Scholte (2002, 2008) agrees to so much fuzz surrounding efforts at defining globalisation. In spite of the lack of a consensus definition of the term, globalisation “means that events occurring in one part of the globe can affect, and be affected by events occurring in other, distant parts of the globe. Often, as individuals we remain unaware of our role in this process and its ramifications” (Thomas, 2001, p.577). However, this paper adopts Ranney’s (2001, p.430) definition of globalisation that:

globalisation refers to the integrated cross border organisation of economic activity, led by transnational economic actors, including transnational corporations from both developed and developing countries and institutional investors, achieved by the rapid expansion international trade, capital flows and technology transfers, and facilitated by the revolutions in

telecommunications and information technology. Globalisation is an ongoing and evolving process.

Globalisation and the state have elicited enormous scholarly debate, it has successfully polarised the academic community. There are three contending scholarly viewpoints to this debate. The first set of scholarship under the umbrella term '*Retreat of the State*' with Susan Strange as the key apostle believe that with globalisation in full swing, the Westphalia state is shrinking in influence and power (Ohmae, 1995; Schmidt, 1995; Strange, 1996; Cohen, 1996; Sassen, 1996; Matthews, 1997; Sur, 1997; Armstrong, 1998; Garrett, 1998; Smith, 2003; Thomas, 2007). The argument often advanced by these scholars is that a number of issue areas that were hitherto the exclusivity of the state is now shared with other emergent non-state actors; especially TNCs, Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), etc.

The second group is the '*State-centric*' scholarship who remaining resolute regard proponents of '*Retreat of the State*' as not only suffering from exaggeration but also asserts that the state exists and no amount of conceptual restructuring can dissolve it and even regulating globalisation itself (Nettl, 1968; Evans, 1997; Rodrik, 1997; Weiss, 1997, 1999, 2000; Hirst & Thompson, 2000; Goodhart, 2001; Newell, 2002; Hobson & Ramesh, 2002; Yergin & Stanislaw, 2002; Gerace, 2004; Raab, et al, 2008).

Finally, a third group often called '*state transformation*', scholarship did not subscribe to a zero-sum view of globalisation but instead asserts that both groups (i.e., '*state-retreat*' or '*state-centric*' versions) can take place simultaneously. This group contends that in the era of globalisation, states do not lose out or gain entirely but rather a midway in gaining some respects and losing in other respects. According to this group state transformation is ongoing but that it plays differently with dissimilar or unidentical results for all states (Mann, 1997; Slaughter, 1997; Scholte, 1997; Gorg & Hirsch, 1998; Haslam, 1999; Johnson, 2002; Held & McGrew, 2003; Sorensen, 2008).

Consequent upon the fact that every myth stem from a fact, the above debate and what group stands to be vindicated was unravelled by the intervention of the state in the economic bail-out of economic giants Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors Corporation, etc., in the United States (Leipziger, 2010; Post Crisis World Institute, 2010); which indicates that, "governments in all countries have been thrust back onto centre stage as markets have either failed to function or gyrated greatly, making it difficult for businesses

to operate” (Leipziger, 2010, p.11). However, the triumph of the United States as a First World state is in contrast to the prevailing circumstances in the global South and that remains the thrust of this paper: that while the state in the global North under globalisation is resurgent, the state in the global South; especially Africa under globalisation is in retreat.

What these successive viewpoints point to is that globalisation affects people, states, regions, continents and even hemispheres diversely. Having said that, the status of most African states is peculiarly different in that while the Westphalian state contraption refers to states that were built from within (e.g., Western Europe, North America, etc.), most states in Africa were built from outside by colonial creation. This manner in the birth of sovereign statehood in most African states is not without side effects. First, it denies them ‘state-ness’ in that they became sovereign by recognition through decolonisation. Second, nationhood was as well denied. African states were colonial creations without due diligence to homogeneity in ethnic, tribal, religious, linguistic affiliations, etc. Third, African states as colonial creations are also stifled by weak economies consummated by an amalgamation of heterogeneous primitive agriculture, an informal petty urban sector and modern industry that is externally directed (Sorensen, 2008).

Globalisation’s impact on African states further manifests in what may be considered in economic, cultural, technological and political dimensions. Yergin & Stanislaw (2002, p.383) argue that “globalisation, though often attacked or applauded as a thing, it is more accurately a process”. For McGrew and Lewis (in Jarblad, 2003, p.3) globalisation is a “process that contributes to fundamental changes in the relationship between markets and states...it is an economic process with political consequences”. Globalisation is a multidimensional process (Raab, et al, 2008) which involves the political aspect (Scholte, 2008), the economic domain (Tanzi, 1997; Kutting, 2004), the cultural angle (Giddens, 2002; Lechner, 2007; Viotti & Kauppi, 2007; D’Anieri, 2010; Wonkeryor, & Sunwabe, 2016) to the technological sphere (Kamalu, & Kamalu, 2016). For want of brevity and space the next section reviews the economic dimension of globalisation alone.

The State in Africa under Globalisation

A set of scholarship assesses globalisation as a good thing not just for economic growth alone but also for non-economic agendas (Frankel, 2007). They assert further that it is a fallacy that globalisation means the triumph of giant companies and that globalisation is destroying the environment which they respectively describe as nonsense and not a reality (Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 2007). What is clear in such scholarly discourses is that literature on globalisation is not hemisphere blind. It is in this context that this section identifies and discusses the state in Africa in an era of globalisation starting with the TNC as globalisation's foot-soldier.

a. TNCs and State Sovereignty in Africa

The TNC is an octopus in an era of globalisation that spreads from its home state with tentacles that enables it to spread abroad (Sampson, 1985; Bakan, 2004). The operations of TNCs create opportunities and challenges in both home and host states' governments (Aburish, 1994; Cummis & Beasant, 2005; Kieh, 2016). Conflict of interests between TNCs and host governments often result in conflict between the host government and home government; especially where the host government embarks on nationalisation. In this respect, the role of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the internal politics of Chile that led to the 11 September 1973 coup d'état to overthrow Chile's 28th president, Salvador Guillermo Allende Gossens is ever green (Todd & Bloch, 2003).

In order to avoid appropriation/nationalisation of assets of TNCs, top executives of TNCs often reside control and strategic decisions at its headquarters at the home state. Such highhandedness creates what is called the '*branch factory syndrome*', where strategic technology and most productive assets remain at home whereas inferior technology and less productive assets are transferred to host states, the branch factory (Balaam, & Dillman 2011).

In other times, collaborations are noticeable in relations among TNCs, home and host states. In Nigeria, the state is both the initiator and collaborator in joint venture operations (Biersteker, 1987). For example, among other joint ventures, the state in Nigeria is a key stakeholder in the Shell/NNPC/Agip//Elf joint venture. However, where such collaborations exist, TNCs work in unison with the host government under

favourable economic conditions (i.e., in laxer health, environmental, labour and tax regulations). Under such circumstances, both parties benefit from the subsisting economic relations—the TNC in profit, and the host government in rents/royalties (Goldstein, 2001; Nnoli, 2006; Stiglitz, 2006). One worrisome aspect of the TNC/host government relations is that the rents/royalties accruable to host governments are dependent on what is declared as total production by the TNC; a further leverage that is inimical to the profit margin of host governments (Hubert, 2017).

Often, this relation is cautiously guided to continue for both parties to profit from and where such favourable economic climate is threatened, TNCs'¹ leverage is a threat to relocate its capital elsewhere. However, such a mutual TNC-host government relationship is usually inimical to indigenous people because an unholy agreement is often concluded where:

MNCs seek host governments that will let the MNC keep more of wealth; governments seek MNCs that will let the government keep more. With many MNCs and quite a few governments involved in such negotiations, there is a sort of market process at work in the worldwide investment decisions of MNCs. (Goldstein 2001, p.428)

It is this rare leverage that explains that "...the nation state as it has existed for nearly two centuries is being undermined...the ability of national governments to decide their exchange rates, interest rate, trade flows, investment and output has been savagely crippled by market forces" (Ranney, 2001, p.440).

Security is one subject of critical value to the workings of global capital (i.e., TNCs). TNCs' diversity in capital and wide spread in operations compels global capital to simultaneously solicit for security from home and host governments. The various oil TNCs operating in Nigeria are into security provision agreements with the security agencies in Nigeria to secure its facilities and personnel. And where host governments fail, home governments are requested to provide security as it is epitomised in one of the parties to the 'Trinity of Colonialism' (commerce/trade, government and mission/church) in colonial Nigeria. The then Royal Niger Company under George Tubman Goldie was instructive in compelling the British Government in sending naval warships to provide security for British economic interests (Anene, 1966). President George Walker Bush of the United States, at the peak of the Niger Delta crisis, did not only supply military hardware to the Nigerian government, but also ordered naval warships

to navigate the Gulf of Guinea to secure America's economic interests (Rowell, et al, 2005; Lubeck, et al, 2007; Melber, 2009).

Finally, a key component of TNCs/host government security cooperation in Africa is the security alliance between them such that an attack in form of protest on one by a community is interpreted as an attack/protest on both. By extension, an assault on a community in form of environmental hazards such as gas flares, oil spills, etc., by TNC or host government is equally interpreted as an assault by both on the community (Drohan, 2003; Nnoli, 2006).

An interesting point of emphasis in the discourse so far is that the interest of the TNC in profit making as its primacy and the African state whose primacy is in rents/royalties through taxation is harmonised; being a key explanation for the TNC to undermine the state by threat of relocating its capital elsewhere and the state to reduce its regulatory capacities over the TNC in order to profit from the presence of global capital (Korten, 2001).

b. The TNC and the Environment in Africa

Harmonised interest in profits and in rents/royalties by the TNC and African states respectively represents a harmonised blindness towards the environment. TNCs and African states in rare instances demonstrate care for the environment. However, this is short-lived in that when the profit or revenue margin/yields from oil and gas is inevitable in meeting basic needs of governance, then the environment and its inhabitants in human, fauna and flora becomes subservient to the hierarchy of things of African states (Igiebor, 2014).

The negative influence on the African state through the TNC, among others is most impactful on indigenous peoples rich in natural resources (Igiebor, 2014). The assault of globalisation through the TNC is that "land, the most cherished possession of indigenous peoples, was systematically appropriated or more accurately stolen from them. Indigenous peoples were stripped of their livelihood and even worse of their culture, identity and dignity. They were dismissed as primitive, uncivilised and uneducable" (Nau, 2009, p.448).

Indigenous peoples in Africa have forfeited a great deal to globalisation (Thomas, & Saravanamuttu, 1989). In Nigeria, indigenous peoples habiting oil/gas cum arable land have encountered first hand brutality from the state in Nigeria and her collaborator, the TNC. For instance, Nigeria's unpopular Land Use Act appropriated all lands to the state in Nigeria and by so doing farming communities in resource rich environments are compelled to vacate arable lands for oil/gas operations with no or little compensations often determined by the Nigerian state.

In Cameroon, trade in forest products (such as timber, herbs) have resulted in arable land and forests axed down for economic reasons (Nikolakis & Innes, 2014). Regrettably, the totality of these economic activities is blind to forest health (Liebhold & Wingfield, 2014) and the eventual deforestation and forest degradation that indigenous people are to live with (Besong, 1992).

A sad tale of forest degradation is commonly told from the Congo Basin resulting from the extension of infrastructure for transport, markets, population growth, provision of public services as water network, electricity networks, the need for expansion of agriculture, the extraction of timber for commercial reasons, poles, firewood, etc. (Tchatchou, et al, 2005). There is intense biodiversity maladjustment in environments inhabited by indigenous people occasioned by State/TNC collaboration where "...there is growing evidence that we are now in the midst of a sixth mass extinction...the Earth's sixth wave of mass extinction is the first precipitated by the activities of mankind" (Burns, 2007, p.81). It is obvious that indigenous peoples; especially farming communities have suffered simultaneously habitat destruction and displacement to give way for industrialisation, being a momentum, which has gained enormous political significance among states in Africa (HRW, 2012; Basu, 2008).

The state in Africa is virtually in a comatose for being unable to manage economic and environmental matters within its domain (Basu, 2007). It is rather unfortunate that "modern development creates refugees" with the African state highly decimated by global capital (Basu, 2007, p.1285). It is a perverse development indicative that:

...our world society is presently on a non-sustainable course...because we are rapidly advancing along this non-sustainable course, the world's environmental problems will get resolved, in one way or another, within the lifetimes of the children and young adults alive today. The only question is whether they will become resolved in pleasant ways of our own choice, in

unpleasant ways not of our choice, such as warfare, genocide starvation, disease epidemic, and collapses of societies. While all of those grim phenomena have been endemic to humanity throughout our history, their frequency increases with environmental degradation, population pressure and resulting poverty and political instability. (Stiglitz, 2006, p.184)

c. The Commons and TNCs in Africa

Security remains a key component of the operations of global capital. Security as it is discussed here is premised on the relationship between people and their natural environment. There is security in maintaining harmony between human activities and the immediate environment in its atmosphere, hydrosphere, geosphere and biosphere forms (Shiva, 2008). The necessity to establish and in maintaining this equilibrium lies in man's desire for quality air, arable soil, and portable water amongst others.

While this balance is indisputable, globalisation through TNC's intensive deployment of sophisticated technology has greatly upset the equilibrium. This is because "natural circles of purification can absorb only a limited amount of certain artificial substances before ecological damage is done" (Kornblum, et al, 2012, p.510). There is a limit to water pollution where the carriage capacity of streams, lakes, rivers, etc., to purify themselves is exceeded. Air pollution occurs where rain, snow and wind cannot remove substances deposited in them by means of technology (Kornblum, et al, 2012).

Technology, though with propound advantages to humanity, however, equally remains a key burden. Oil and gas operations require a germane technological acumen to extract. TNCs remain a major user of technology and if not all their operations adversely impact on air, soil and water qualities. Numerous wars and conflicts have been waged within and between states on account of threats and paucity of these commons (Mubangizi, 2009). Climate change resulting from the emission of fossil fuels by the activities of TNCs has caused enormous concerns for states and organisations alike.

Aside climate change and its adverse vagaries in flooding, sea level rise, drought, deforestation, etc., globalisation has adversely impacted on health on account of greater global mobility, poverty on account of excessive liberalisation, financial instability resulting from global economic meltdown, unbridled unemployment resulting from global mobility of labour and its resultant reactions in xenophobic attacks on fellow Africans in South Africa in the recent past (Thomas, & Saravanamuttu, 1989; Scholte,

2005). Little wonder, the meetings of the IMF, World Bank and the WTO are greeted with intense protests just as the Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO from November 30 to December 3 1999 in Seattle, Washington DC (Jawara, & Kwa, 2003) and in Genoa, 2001 where a protester died (Stiglitz, 2002).

d. TNCs and Marketised/Commercialised Security in Africa

Security as used here refers to the privatisation or commercialisation of physical security either as a part but mostly away from the conventional armed forces provided by the Westphalian state (Scahill, 2007). Security in its commercialised context is premised on security provided by military mercenaries, Private Security Companies (PSCs), Private Military Companies (PMCs) and security assistance provided by foreign states (Gumedze, 2007).

This is a new form of marketised/commercialised security network which in their operations and functions overlap with the core of military services provided by the Westphalian state in Africa (Avant, 2005; Singer, 2007). In an era of globalisation, PSCs/PMCs have provided troops in support of the conventional military in battling insurgencies. In the recent past, several insurgencies and even civil wars in Africa were aided by troops from the 'Executive Outcomes', and the 'Sandline International' as PSCs/PMCs in the Sierra Leonean and Angolan civil wars and the then crisis in Papua New Guinea (Avant, 2006).

Though the services sold by these PSCs/PMCs strengthen several states' security architecture, a good sunk of states delegitimised them. For example, South Africa's 1998 'Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act', outrightly banned PSCs/PMCs. Nigeria at the turn of the Fourth Republic in 1999 with the President Olusegun Obasanjo led federal government sealed military training contractual agreements with the United States to provide foreign military training for Nigerian troops.

However, as later events unfold, pockets of opposition to the training pact; especially from the intelligentsia and even from the then Chief of Army Staff, General Victor Malu, called for the abrogation of the pact, arguing the training was one exercise too many in exposing Nigeria's critical security architecture to a foreign power. Under President Goodluck Jonathan, Abuja cancelled military training agreement with Washington D.C. in

combating Boko Haram insurgencies in North-East Nigeria on account of differences between the two countries on Washington D.C.'s refusal to sell arms to Nigeria to combat Boko Haram insurgency citing Leahy Law provisions in prohibiting the U.S. from selling arms to states culpable in human rights violations (Lawal, 2014).

Private Security Companies (PSCs) are a phenomenon whose presence is copiously acknowledged worldwide (Dunigan, & Petersohn, 2015). However, PSCs are often delegitimised on account of their debilitating impacts on the military capacity of weak/falling states—the fact that PSCs do harm to the security space of states in policy implementation (Dunigan, 2011) and in the proliferation of small arms (Ibeanu, & Mohammed, 2005) and lastly, PSCs strengthens rentier states in creating a disconnect between government and citizens. Under these circumstances, this paper asserts that with the globalisation of PSCs, the state in Africa undergoes two concurrent challenges: first, the security efficiency and second the power of the state is both eroded (Kieh, 2016b).

Conclusion

This paper investigated the impact of economic globalisation on the state in Africa and its environment. The paper averred that globalisation, especially its economic variant, undermines/dwarfs the African state and its environment through its octopus in TNCs. No doubt, at every point in course of resource extraction and transformation by adding value to extracted resources, the environment and resource host communities are assaulted and impoverished/pauperised.

Whereas, the foregoing is widely noted and unpleasantly encountered by indigenous peoples rich in natural resources, it is a consensus belief that the process of globalisation has been undermining the modern nation-state in economic, political and cultural domains. Thus, nobody denies the existence of globalisation, nor its impact on the Westphalian state. For emphasis's sake, no single group, critics or non-critics of globalisation condemn the concept in its entirety, instead, critics opine that the way globalisation is currently carried on be changed.

To this extent, the question as to whether globalisation is a saint or the devil is the debate over what the best rules are for governing the global economy so that its

advantages can grow while its problems can be solved (Jawara & Kwa, 2003). It is in this context that, this paper adopts the position of Wallerstein (1974, 1979) who sees the current world-system as driven primarily by economic imperatives stressing the global character of contemporary capitalism though with continuing significance of the state.

Thus, to strengthen the African state in an era of globalisation, African states must adopt introspective measures in integrating their economic, social and political relations and present a unified front in their relations with the global North (Roy, 2000). To achieve these feats, African states must drastically pursue the following measures:

- i. Regional integration efforts must be aggressively intensified in order to strengthen inter-African trade relations,
- ii. Regional integration efforts must deliberately initiate or improved on technological, manufacturing, and industrial sectors of their respective economies,
- iii. Rather than relying the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank should be adopted as a substitute and should be revamped to a position strong enough to finance Africa's economic endeavours (Bond, 2006), and,
- iv. Rather than the World Trade Organisation, an African variant should be evolved to harmonise trade disputes among African states.

Notes

1. In this paper TNCs and MNCs means corporations with corporate headquarters in their home country; however, with global presence in branches. This paper adopts TNCs instead of MNCs because the United Nations adopted it and International Relations scholarship has as well adopted it.

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