

Internationalisation of Businesses, Globalisation and Multinationalisation in the Nigerian Multinational Companies: An Antecedent

Abstract

This study examines the impact of Internationalisation of businesses, globalisation and multinationalisation on the corporate social responsibility of multinational companies in Nigeria. The study intends to investigate whether the MNC only pays lip service to CSR issues or it is really pursued and not just a reaction to the uprisings. As there is a comparatively dearth of literature on CSR especially on multinational companies operating in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, this study will add to the body of knowledge on CSR; as well as provide some insights into the CSR activities of multinational companies operating in Nigeria. The paper relying on secondary sources concludes that the multinational companies operating in Nigeria still need to go extra mile in their CSR especially when compared with what they do in their home countries.

Keywords: Internationalisation of businesses, globalisation, Nigerian multinational companies, corporate social responsibility, corporate social irresponsibility.

1. Introduction

The development of imperial and corporate social irresponsibilities began in Nigeria many centuries ago. The participation of the colonial companies in slave trade marked the beginning of corporate social irresponsibilities in the West African coast (Nigeria inclusive). In 1621, the Dutch West India Company was granted a royal charter and monopoly over the African slave trade until 1730; in 1880s the Royal Niger Company expanded its commercial operations over the Niger and Oil Rivers states of Nigeria, through the use of a quasi military force called the Royal Niger Company Constabulary that was formed in 1886 (Amujo, *et al*, 2011), the company was entangled in atrocious acts of corporate social irresponsibilities by fostering trade monopoly to oust merchant chiefs and their middlemen, deposition and exiling of merchant chiefs (Jaja, Nana, William Koko and others) that resisted its trade monopoly, killing people including women and destroying their property in warfare (Amujo, *et al*, 2011).

The forerunner of the Royal Niger Company, the United Africa Company, was formed in 1879. It must be emphasised that during this time the Niger Delta and Oil Rivers areas of Nigeria were rich in palm oil, palm kernel, indigo and other produces, which Britain's Industrial Revolution needed to survive. Between 1900 and

1960 some multinational oil corporations such as Shell D'Arcy Mobil, Chevron and others that came into Nigeria sustained the horrible tradition of corporate misbehaviour of the Royal Niger Company in the region. Their records of social irresponsibilities characterised by environmental pollution, gas flaring, oil spillage, social and human rights abuse, killing and destruction of property and use of divide and rule to vitiate organised mass struggle against their monumental evils in the region (Amujo, *et al.*, 2011).

Joseph (1978) describes Nigeria as the investor's heaven and the most sufficiently endowed territory carved out by the European colonisers, although the living standards of most of its citizens differed from that of the other 80% of Africa's black population. This is because as at 2008 the population which was about 150,000,000 people, (2006 census), the enormous expanse of land, -the country has a total land area of 4047 km, more than twice the size of California and 923,768 sq km land area, a the land area comprising of 13,000sq km of water and 910,768 sq km of land- her large reserves of crude oil and natural gas (Nigeria is among the top six crude oil exporters in the World) as well as the availability of other mineral and natural resources (Schatzl, 1969; Sachs and Warner, 2001). Nigeria has 22 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and about 22 billion of crude oil reserves. (See crude oil and natural gas in Nigeria).

Despite the above statistics, the GDP is just about \$191.4 billion (2006est - see GDP in Nigeria). Nigeria was ranked 157 out of 177 nations in the HDI ranking of countries' capacities in 2006. This was recently reported in the Human Development Report (HDR). The Human Development Index (HDI) is compiled annually by the UNDP and HDR represents the estimate of the country development capacity (Orabuchi, 2006). From the above statistics, Nigeria and Nigerians have no business with poverty; unfortunately the multinational companies (both during the colonial period and up till now) exploited the resources without putting anything back to both the immediate communities where these resources are located and the society (Nigeria) at large.

A Royal Charter was handed to the Royal Niger Company (RNC), which therefore made it the first real multinational company in Nigeria on 4 March 1886 (Pearson, 1971). Royal Niger Company (RNC) (the first British multinational company in Nigeria), was more interested in exploiting the resources (human and natural) of the country as much as possible and with limited costs (Ukpabi, 1987). As a commercial organisation, profit-making was paramount to the company, we are not then surprised that the company handed over its trading territories to the British government in 1900 for just £865,000 (Crowther, 1968; Burns and Burns,

1973). The issue of CSR was therefore not taken seriously; unfortunately this was handed over to subsequent multinational companies.

2. Theoretical background: Definitions, explanations and the history of the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Formal writings on the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) date back to about sixty years ago; this was when the business communities started to show some concerns about the communities where their businesses were located (Carroll, 1999). It should be pointed out that as far back as 1930's some elements of concerns appeared to have been shown especially by writers such as Barnard (1938); Clark (1939) and Kreps (1940). The modern era of CSR was in the 1950's according to Carroll (1999) when Bowen (1953:44) quoted that the Fortune Magazine asked some business executive about their social responsibilities. He (1953:6) defines CSR as 'the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of actions which are desirable in terms of objectives and values of our societies'; Healds (1970) bought into this definition. This was why Carroll (1999:270) referred to him, Howard Bowen as the 'Father of Corporate Social Responsibility'.

The inadequacies of the 1950's definitions brought about Davis' (1960:70) definition of CSR which is: 'businessmen's decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the firm's direct economic or technical interest'. He (1960:70) further suggested that Social Responsibility is a 'nebulous idea' which should be seen in a managerial context and that some socially responsible business decisions can only be justified by a long and complicated process of reasoning as having a good chance of bringing long-run gain to the firm, thus paying it for its socially responsible outlook. He concluded by bringing forward his 'Iron Law of Responsibility'. Other writers of his era included Frederick (1960), Walton (1967), Davis & Blomstrom (1966) and McGuire (1963:144) who suggested that 'the idea of Social Responsibility supposes that the corporation has not only economic and legal obligations but also certain responsibility to society which extend beyond these obligations'.

The major issue that dominated the 1970 era was the introduction of 'corporate social performance' (Carroll, 1977). Seith (1975:70) distinguished between 'social responsibility' and 'social responsiveness'; social obligation to him is 'corporate behaviour in response to market forces or legal constrain'. Seith (1975:62) was

of the opinion that social responsibility goes beyond social obligation and that ‘social responsibility implies bringing corporate behaviour up to a level where it is congruent with the prevailing social norms, values, and expectations of performance’; he (1975) concluded that while social obligation is proscriptive in nature, social responsibility is prescriptive.

The 1980 era was ushered in by Jones (1980:59-60) who suggested that CSR is the ‘notion that corporations have an obligation to constituent groups in society other than stockholders and beyond that prescribed by law and union contract’. Carroll (1983: 604) added that CSR is ‘composed of four parts: economic, legal, ethical and voluntary or philanthropic’. Carroll (1999:284) concluded that the 1980 era witnessed few definitions but more researches with alternative themes. Attentions were focused on measurement initiatives as well as theoretical developments in the 1990’s up till the beginning of 2000 (Carroll, 1999: 292; Aupperle, *et. al*, 1985).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) according to Amaeshi *et al* (2006) is how and why businesses should put some of their gains to the communities where they are located. If the above explains/defines CSR to do otherwise makes the organisation irresponsible which is what this paper sets out to address. Corporate social responsibility according to Carroll (1998), evolved in the 1950s and developed in the 1970s but became well entrenched into the business literature in the 1990s. Bowen (1953: 6) suggested that CSR is the “obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values.” The World Business Council for Sustainable Development as quoted by Swanson (2002:1) saw CSR as ‘the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life’.

This study will therefore investigate those ‘commitment of business’ which are expected to ‘contribute to sustainable economic development, working with the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life’; which unfortunately the multinational oil companies operating in Nigeria have knowingly or unknowingly ignored; this is what unfortunately made them to be socially irresponsible. There is no doubt about the fact that business organisations are trying everything possible to balance the conflict of demands from communities, governments, pressure groups and other stakeholders about the role business organisations

122 should play in the economic development of the country as a whole, environmental improvement as well as
123 social development of the communities where they operate (Leonard, 2003).

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125 Internationalisation of Businesses, Globalisation and Multinationalisation has changed the face of CSR globally.
126 The meaning and the practice globally was subjected to various interpretations based on the culture of the
127 various countries; the meaning and practice of CSR is therefore socio-culturally embedded (Orpen, 1987;
128 Langlois and Schlegelmilch, 1990; Bennett, 1998). Unfortunately according to Amaeshi, (2006:1) ‘the
129 dominance of the West in shaping the CSR agenda, the contemporary CSR movement could be, arguably, said
130 to be largely founded on Anglo-American priorities’.

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132 Nigeria suffers from poor infrastructural development. The road networks are underdeveloped and there are a
133 host of communities and cities that are cut off from each other due to unassailable transportation networks. The
134 education system is under-funded and illiteracy rate is up to 40 percent. More than two-thirds of Nigerians are
135 poor. In 1980 an estimated 27 percent of Nigerians lived in poverty. By 1990, 70 percent of the population had
136 income of less than \$1 a day – and the figure has risen since then (NEEDS, 2005). Nigeria has one of the worst
137 health care systems in the world and the doctor-patient ratio is almost 1:1000(UNDP, Human Development
138 Index 2005). The public sector is very weak and on top of this, corruption by most government official by
139 colluding with the multinational companies officials makes the companies ‘hand outs’ to the chief’s and
140 assume that they (the companies) are involved in CSR activities (George *et al.*, 2011). Multinational
141 companies wishing to operate in Nigeria therefore face many constraints, including poor infrastructure,
142 particularly road networks and electricity supply; inadequate physical security; weak enforcement of contracts,
143 as well as incredibly high cost of finance including bribes to bank official. The above mentioned factors have
144 deterred some multinational companies from investing in Nigeria and induced many prospective multinational
145 companies to take their money and skills to other African countries especially South Africa (NEEDS, xv;
146 Amaechi, 2006).

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148 3. Multinational enterprises

149 Brooke & Remmers (1978) define a multinational company as a company that has productive activities other
150 than marketing in more than one country. They (1978) later broadened the definition to include any firm which
151 performs its main operation, either manufacture or the provision of a service in more than two countries. Jones

(2002) defines a multinational enterprise as one which undertakes direct foreign investment; it will own or control income-earning assets in at least more than one country, and in doing so will produce goods or services outside its country of origin; it must engage in international production. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1975) suggests that a multinational company is one whose enterprise involves more than one nation and that these activities may refer to assets, sales, production, employment or profits of foreign branches or affiliates. This source went on to state that most of these multinational companies are engaged in extractive and manufacturing activities.

Dunning (1975) perceives multinational firms as firms which own and control income-generating assets in more than one country. He (1975) also states that these multinational companies account for one fifth of the world's output excluding the centrally planned economies in 1971. He (1975) further states that in 1971, of the 613 World's largest companies, 437 accounted for four-fifths of the World's total sales and operated three or more foreign producing affiliates. He (1975) concludes that multinational corporations are among the most powerful economic institutions yet produced by private enterprise system.

One fact is common to all multinational enterprises and this is that business is carried out in other geographical areas outside the area of origin (Caves, 2007). Dunning (1988) enumerates the following justifications for this geographical movement: (1) capital is available in one geographical area while other factors of production like labour, or raw material are available in another geographical area or areas. (2) The scarcity or non availability of raw materials could be the push factor to wherever they could be found; this position is more justified if the costs of transporting the raw materials are enormous. For example British Telecom shifted its call centres to India; because most Asian countries have labour in abundance due to the high populations, therefore labour is cheap; this is the pull factor (Taylor and Bain, 2005; Getty, 2005).

(3). A company located in one geographical area could be contacted or invited by other business men (women) in another area to start production in their geographical area(s). (4). A company may take over companies that already have interests in other countries and some companies might go abroad if their valued customers move abroad. Such companies include banks, insurance companies, accounting firms and management consulting firms. (5) Some countries might ban the importation of some goods. (6) The foreign manufacturers of such goods in order to protect their market will have no choice than to move abroad especially if the host country offers some tax concessions like tax holiday, and zero duty on machineries.

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183 This might be a way of encouraging industrialisation in the host country; if competitors move abroad others in
184 the same industry will have no choice than to move too. (7) Companies might move to avoid the problems of
185 commission agents or want to protect their patent rights. Companies operating in countries with strong
186 currency might buy up companies operating in countries with weaker currency cheap; this could be an
187 inducement to move abroad. For example Japanese companies are recently going abroad because of the fact
188 that their currency (yen) is presently (2008) very strong compared with other currencies; and some companies
189 were discovered to have moved abroad just for the prestige associated with operating abroad (Gorg and Strobi,
190 2001).

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192 **4. Methodology and methods**

193 This study will rely on the secondary sources of data collection as it traces the history of how economic
194 democracy came to Nigeria from the United Kingdom. Secondary data are usually historical and already
195 collected data that does not necessitate access to respondents or subjects (Ember and Levinson, 1991). This
196 source of data collection is becoming very popular in business researches, market survey, facts- findings,
197 model building, and among social scientists generally (Harris, 2001). The major advantage of this source of
198 data collection is in the fact that it is less expensive than the primary source of data collection; since it has
199 already been collected (Zikmund, 1984).

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201 If one also looks at the fact that nowhere in science do we start from the scratch, it is therefore a good source
202 of proceeding with a research even if one will still has to go back to the primary source; there is something
203 handy one can use as a starting point (Kaplan, 1964). One can also build on the researches already conducted
204 by other people using the secondary source as the basis of judgement. There are some instances where only the
205 secondary sources can be used and there was no way of considering primary source at all; for example a
206 researcher conducting researches into events that happened a long time ago has no other choice than to depend
207 on secondary source (Harris, 2001).

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209 **5. Findings**

210 The Oil and Gas (and to a lesser degree the manufacturing) multinational companies have dominated the
211 Nigerian CSR practices either for the right reasons or for wrong ones. Shell, for example, has in recent times

described their CSR practices in various terms to match with their intended strategies at each time – sustainable development, community investment, etc. According to Amaechi (2006:16) the CSR practices in the ‘Oil and Gas sector are mainly focussed on remedying the effects of their extraction activities on the local communities; therefore, the multinational companies operating in this sector have often provided free electricity, pipe-borne waters, hospitals, schools, etc’:. Unfortunately, these provisions have always been discontinued no sooner than they were initiated. Amaechi (2006:18-19) further reported that the ‘Christian Aid (2004) in its report on the activities of Shell in this region, for example, confirmed that some of the schools, hospitals and other social amenities claimed to be provided by some of the firms in this sector have been abandoned or did not meet the needs of the communities they were meant to support’.

The motivations by most multinational companies to carry out CSR are wide-ranging from reaction to market forces, globalization, consumer satisfaction, to response to civil society pressures; their activities are therefore noticeable as a result of their worldwide contacts. There is therefore, a higher incentive to protect their brands and investments through CSR; which can be achieved partially by avoiding the ‘noise’ from the civil society (Amaechi, 2006; George, *et. al*, 2011).

6. Conclusions

In fairness to the multinational companies operating in Nigeria, they have to deal with the lack of infrastructures, corruption and the culture of poverty in the country. They have to provide all the electricity they need, provide for water and hire or ‘bribe’ the security operatives to protect the lives and properties of their expatriate staff. They have to bribe the government officials to get their papers through and most importantly they have to ‘make comfortable’ the chief’s and the elders of the communities they operate (George, *et al*. 2011). The multinational companies operating in Nigeria inherited the CSR practices of their colonial predecessors to convince their home countries firms will not be an easy task, as the senior executives at the home companies will not be able to agree to do so as there are no precedent. We are therefore not surprise that most of the multinational companies operating in Nigeria view CSR practices as philanthropic and such practices are viewed by us as corporate social irresponsibility.

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