

Checkmating the Resurgence of Oil Violence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria



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Preface

This book is a collection of excellent academic materials by experienced and renowned scholars who have critically analyzed the devastating age-long oil violence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. Beyond examining the origin and nature of the conflict, it also emphasizes the way forward for the Niger Delta, based on the various empirical studies by the contributors on the current developments in the region. Some of the chapters extensively interrogated the peace and development implications of President Yar'Adua's amnesty policy on the Niger Delta since 2009.

Although 'subdued oil violence' has been around for several decades, the emergence of organized non-state armed groups in the 1990s has added a new and explosive dimension to the Delta imbroglio. Violent protests and the threat of outright rebellion against the state are now ubiquitous. Clearly, environmental activism and militancy are a direct response to the cumulative years of sustained environmental degradation, despoliation, hazards, impunity, human rights violations, repression, underdevelopment and outright neglect of the region by the Nigerian state and the multinational oil companies. Since the Niger Delta conflict is not a one-sided issue but a complexity of many interrelated problems, this book will not only expose students, researchers, professionals and statesmen/policy makers to the current developments in the region, but it also provide answers to some pertinent contemporary questions concerning the 'oil gift', which has become a curse to the host communities of the Niger Delta in Nigeria.

We owe a profound debt of gratitude to many for making this edited book a huge success, most especially our colleagues and contributors for their diligence and cooperation. We warmly recommend this book to students, scholars of African politics and conflict studies.

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Chapter 1: Understanding the Context of Oil Violence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

By

Victor Ojakorotu and Lysias Dodd Gilbert

Introduction

Violence has been defined by the World Health Organization's (WHO) *World Report on Violence and Health* as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (WHO, 2002: 5). In the context of this paper however, oil violence can be defined as, the deliberate deployment of instruments of physical force by the various stakeholders in the oil industry in Nigeria, for the achievement of their respective objectives and goals with regards to the exploration, exploitation and appropriation of crude oil and its accruable benefits in the Niger Delta region.

Since the 1990s, oil violence in the Niger Delta region has constituted festering sores on the thumbs of the Nigerian state, the Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs), and the Niger Delta communities. Due to pervasive underdevelopment occasioned by blatant environmental pollution and despoliation, political marginalization and outright neglect by the Nigerian state and the MNOCs, oil related agitations commenced in the region in an attempt to compel the state and MNOCs to remedy the injustices meted to the Niger Deltans since the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities at Oloibiri in 1956. However, the monocultural, rentier Nigerian state in collaboration with the MNOCs, have consistently and persistently unleashed a reign of violence on the Niger Delta in a failed attempt to militarily repress and crush legitimate protests and therefore dissuade the delta minorities from constituting a hindrance to the continuous flow of its rents from oil exploration, exploitation and appropriation. Several dastardly special police/military units have been formed and used for the 'invasion', occupation, harassment, torment, suppression and outright destruction of some Delta communities to 'teach them a lesson'. A few pointers will suffice:

- The Nigeria Mobile Police Force (MOPOL) was used to brutally quell a peaceful youth protest against Shell at Umuechem in Rivers state, and the Community was virtually destroyed on 31 October 1990; 80 people were killed and about 500 houses were leveled, thus triggering an unprecedented number of Internally Displaced People (IDP) in the history of that community (ICG, 2006a: 6-7).
- The Rivers State Internal Security Task Force, a well-armed military outfit, was primarily formed for the repression, suppression, harassment, humiliation, arrest and unlawful detention of members of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and its supporters, during MOSOP's campaign against Shell and self-determination in Ogoniland between 1993 and 1996. Apart from the unconstitutional execution of the Ogoni nine-Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight Ogoni

compatriots, the force, which virtually metamorphosed to an army of occupation raped, tortured, maimed, looted and summarily executed about 2000 people extra-judicially (HRW, 1999: 9; Adeola 2001: 40).¹

- A combined team of MOPOL and the Nigerian Army was used for the invasion of Choba community to suppress a protest against WILBROS (a foreign oil servicing firm) in 1999; 10 people were killed, 25 women raped and the communities were temporarily deserted (CLO, 2002: 50-61).
- In January 1999, a state of emergency was declared by the Federal Government of Nigeria in Bayelsa state and heavily armed military personnel with armored vehicles were deployed to fight the Niger Deltans, especially the IYC and Egbesu Boys of Africa (Sesay, et al, 2003).
- Also in November 1999, the Nigerian state through an operation codenamed Hakuri 2, embarked on one of its most sordid genocidal escapades in the Delta region by using the army to invade Odi community, the second largest town in Bayelsa state after Amassoma; at least 1000 people were brutally murdered, several others were declared missing, all houses except three were destroyed, the community was deserted, and property worth millions of naira were destroyed (CLO, 2002: 67-74).
- In 2003, an army of occupation known as the Joint Task Force (JTF) codenamed Operation Restore Hope was formed in 2003, for the consistent, persistent and aggressive suppression of oil related protests in the Niger Delta. The JTF is made up of about 4,000 troops (Ikelegbe, 2005).
- In October 2005, Odioma was also invaded by the JTF, and at least 17 people were killed, including a two year old child (ICG, 2006a: 7).

It was against this backdrop of repressive militarization of the Delta region and the perpetration of sordid human rights abuses that several ethnic Environmental Movement Organizations (EMOs) and armed non-state youth organizations emerged in a bid to counter the continued harassment, intimidation, rape, oppression and repression of the Niger Deltans by the Nigerian state and its collaborative partners-the MNOCs, and to further internationalize and elevate the plight of the delta minorities to a prime position in both internal and international discourse. EMOs such as: MOSOP, Urhobo Youth Movement (UYOMO), Ikwerre Youth Movement (IYM), and Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) materialized. In addition, non-state armed groups like: the Federated Niger Delta Izon Communities (FNDIC), the Membutu Boys, the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Coalition for Militant Action (COMA), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and the Martyrs Brigade, also sprouted in the region. Clearly, this scenario led to “the democratisation of the means of violence (...the state monopoly of the violence means of destruction has been undercut by the widespread deployment of arms locally by militia and other militants)” (Watts, 2007: 642); as various non-state armed groups proliferated and wielded lethal

¹ See Ike Okonta, 2000. ‘The Lingering Crises in Nigeria’s Niger Delta and Suggestions for a Peaceful Solution.’ Available at: http://www.cdd.org.uk/resources/workingpapers/niger_delta_eng.htm. [Accessed on 10 October 2007].

Small and Light Weapons (SALW) with which they disrupted and destroyed the petroleum infrastructure of the MNOCs, attacked and inflicted severe damages on the state security forces in a bid to checkmate their wanton escapades in the region, and also wreaked havoc on numerous Niger Delta communities. By the end of 2004 for example, it was estimated that there were about 1 to 3 million SALW in Nigeria – predominantly in the Niger Delta (Agboton-Johnson, Ebo & Mazal, 2004). This of course may have increased in the subsequent years due to the proliferation of armed groups and upsurge in the tempo of oil violence in the Delta region.

It is important to note however, that the Nigerian state has implemented some half-hearted constitutional and institutional measures as deliberate efforts geared towards the resolution of the region's infrastructural underdevelopment. Typical examples include:

- ❖ The Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) established in 1961 by the Niger Delta Development Act (1961) based on the recommendations of the Willink's Commission.
- ❖ The Oil and Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) created by Decree 23 of 1992.
- ❖ The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) set up in 2000.
- ❖ The Niger Delta Regional Master Plan launched on 27 March 2007; two months to the end of Obasanjo's eight year administration.
- ❖ The Ministry of Niger Delta formed in 2008.

Laudable as these efforts appeared, they were however superficial and characterized by insincerity and lack of adequate political will by successive administrations to decisively tackle the fundamental issues involved in oil violence in the Niger Delta. Cognizant of the fact that these measures have not genuinely addressed the essential environmental cum politico-economic dehumanizing conditions of the Niger Delta, and that they are considered at best as stopgap methods which were purposefully deployed by the Nigerian state to give the erroneous impression that it is truly resolving the concerns of the region; oil violence became amplified and sustained as non-state armed groups slugged it out with the state security forces ably supported by the MNOCs.² Thus oil violence continued unabated in the region until the granting of general amnesty to those involved in armed struggle in the Niger Delta, by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua on 25 June 2009.

The Fundamental Issues

Oil violence in the Niger Delta region revolves around some salient fundamental issues, which the Nigerian state has not summoned the much needed political will to tackle since crude oil was struck in Oloibiri (present day Bayelsa state) in 1956. These include:

² Gilbert, LD. Ethnic Militias and Conflict in the Niger Delta Region: The International Dimensions (Forthcoming).

Environmental Pollution and Despoliation: MNOCs have been massively involved in the production of crude oil in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, since 1956 when Shell British Petroleum successfully discovered oil in commercial quantities at Oloibiri in present-day Bayelsa state of Nigeria. Ever since, Shell (Shell Petroleum Development Company, an affiliate of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group)³, which produces more than 40 percent of crude oil, Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU), Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL), Nigerian Agip Oil Company Limited (NAOC), Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited (EPNL), and Texaco Overseas Petroleum Company of Nigeria Unlimited (TOPCON), have been operating in the region on the basis of joint venture agreements with the Nigerian government through NNPC. After five consecutive decades of oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta, it is estimated that these MNOCs have with the Nigerian state jointly earned well over \$600 billion dollars (over 60 trillion naira) from the sale of crude oil between 1958 and 2008 (Gilbert, 2009).

However, massive oil wealth has not translated into development in the Niger Delta. Instead, it has caused large-scale environmental contamination, dilapidation, and outright desolation through dredging, construction of access canals to create paths to installations, oil spillages, gas flaring, oil well blowouts, improper disposal of drilling mud, and pipeline leakages and vandalization (Ojakorotu and Okeke-Uzodike, 2006: 96-97). For example, between 1976 and 1996, it was estimated that well over 60,000 oil spills occurred in the region, and about 2,369,471 barrels of crude oil leaked into the environment. In addition, Shell alone acknowledged that it spilled about 106,000 barrels from Jones creek between 1997 and 1998 (Eyinla and Ukpo, 2006).

Similarly, statistics reveal that Shell, MPNU, NAOC, CNL, and EPNL are the worst offenders in the condemnable act of gas flaring which releases poisonous carbon dioxide and methane from not less than 275 flow stations in the Niger Delta. Moreover, statistics prove that these MNOCs flare not less than 75 % of the crude-associated gas, which translates to about 2.5 billion cubic feet daily in the Niger Delta. This is valued at \$2.5 billion annually and represents 40% of Africa's natural gas consumption (ICG, 2006b:21; Watts, 2008:43).

Furthermore, oil prospecting and exploitation operations pollute the aquifer (underground water) and the environment, especially through the process of cuttings re-injection⁴ used for several years by some drilling waste management companies, in collaboration with the MNOCs. Several waste management companies deceitfully dumped the wastes in rivers, seas and the environment, while giving the impression that they were reinjected into old oil wells; this was before the introduction and use of the current method of filtration.

Consequently, there is a high level of farmland and aquatic species destruction. The Niger Deltans, who were originally farmers and fishermen, have their means of livelihood destroyed; as there is loss of fertile farmland, decline in agricultural produce, migration, loss and destruction of aquatic resources, contamination of natural sources of drinking water, atmospheric pollution, rapid corrosion of roofing sheets (acid rain),

³ In Nigeria, Shell consists of the following affiliates: Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC), Shell Nigeria Exploration and Production Company (SNEPCO), Shell Nigeria Oil Products (SNOP), and Shell Nigeria Gas Limited (SNG).

⁴ Cuttings re-injection is the process of pumping back drill waste (mud) into old oil wells.

gradual extinction and migration of wildlife, general biodiversity destruction and massive rural/urban migration.

Legislations of Disempowerment and Subjugation: The realization that oil is a veritable source of wealth and the fact that it is found in the part of Nigeria largely inhabited by the southern minorities,⁵ spurred the Nigerian state into the promulgation of some questionable legislations, which were specifically used for the disempowerment and exploitation of the Niger Deltans. Some relevant examples include:

- Decree No. 51 of 1969, which was used to transfer the ownership of the totality of petroleum products in the delta region to the Federal government of Nigeria.
- The Land Use Decree of 1978, which also vested land ownership in Nigeria in the Federal government and its accredited agents; thereby dispossessing the delta people of ownership and occupancy rights to their lands.

These laws are systematically deployed as instruments of emasculation, subjugation, domination and expropriation of the Delta resources by the Nigerian state, which has been in the firm grip of the triumvirate major ethnic groups⁶ in Nigeria, since the attainment of political independence in 1960. Quite unfortunately, these obnoxious legislations are still operational in Nigeria till date, despite the vociferous violent condemnations against their continued applications by the delta people and some other well-meaning Nigerians.

Politics of Marginalization and Exclusion: Alarming, despite the fact that the Delta region “accounts for over ninety percent of the country's export earnings, 40 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and at least eighty percent of her annual income” (Ikelegbe, 2005)⁷, there has been a conscious and deliberate policy geared towards the subordination (marginalization/sidelining) of vital issues affecting them; their elimination (exclusion) from the enjoyment of the oil proceeds derived from their land; and the virtual ‘prohibition’ (exclusion) of Niger Deltans from assuming the leadership of the Nigerian state.⁸ The domination, marginalization and exclusion of the delta ethnic minorities was a colonial creation, which was perfected, legitimized and institutionalized by successive Nigerian administrations controlled by the three dominant ethnic groups, especially the Hausa/Fulani. According to Babawale (2001:2):

⁵ It was believed by the governing elites from the major ethnic groups in Nigeria that the Niger Delta people would not pose any security threat to the predatory interests of the Nigerian state due to their minority status (See Ike Okonta, 2000 op cit).

⁶ By virtue of their population, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo are the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are located in the northern, western and eastern parts of Nigeria respectively.

⁷ Gilbert, LD. *Op cit*

⁸ With the exception of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, the current Acting President of Nigeria, no other person from the region has been allowed to assume the leadership of this country at the level of vice president and president. Worthy of note also is the fact that Dr. Jonathan was a product of oil violence and providence. Despite the obvious incapacitation of Yar'Adua, there is an orchestrated move to bar him from assuming the full status of the president, and the Chairman of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has hastily and verbally ‘prohibited’ him from seeking election into the office of the president on the platform of the party next year (2011).

Among the minorities; the cry of marginalization has been louder. Years of military dictatorship have also resulted in an increasing hegemonisation of the dominant Hausa-Fulani faction to the near-exclusion of the other two contenders for power, the Igbo and the Yoruba. Invariably ...the minorities groups have been complaining bitterly about their exclusion from power and their marginalisation in allocation of national resources. The southern minorities believe and rightly too, that they deserve to take control of oil revenue, which are largely extracted from their communities instead of the tokenism they receive in form of revenue allocation from the federation account.

The orchestrated, skewed and superfluous centralization of the Nigerian federalism by consecutive military and civilian regimes directed mainly by the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo respectively, ensured the expropriation of valuable resources from the delta region for the development of other parts of Nigeria. The principle of derivation, which was hitherto based on fifty percent resource allocation to region (state) of origin, was abrogated; rather, new variables suddenly sprang up as the bases for the allocation of resources to states; and this was obviously to the detriment of the socio-economic development of the delta region and its people, and would not have been practicable if crude oil were to be largely exploited from the geographical territory of any of the majority ethnic groups, especially the Hausa/Fulani. It was only after several years of peaceful and violent protests by Niger Deltans; and shedding of their innocent blood, that the Nigerian state 'benevolently' agreed to the 13% derivation, which was enshrined in the 1999 constitution.

Pervasive Poverty and Underdevelopment: Over fifty years of ecological degradation and despoliation, the use of detestable legal instruments of subjugation and domination, and the intentional marginalization, denial and exclusion of the delta minorities, cumulatively foisted a specter of unemployment, poverty and massive underdevelopment on the Niger Delta region. Despite the substantial contribution of the Delta region to the socio-economic development of Nigeria, it is indeed paradoxical when one juxtaposes the monumental poverty and underdevelopment in the region vis-à-vis its colossal input to national wealth.

These are some of the underlying issues on which oil violence in the Niger Delta is predicated and unless they are realistically addressed, violence in the region will resurrect soon and could become a progressively engulfing and destructive tornado; the situation is potentially tragic.

Outline of the Book

Against this backdrop therefore, this edited book is a contribution to the search for durable panaceas for checkmating the resurgence of oil violence in the Niger Delta. It is a project initiated for the advancement of the prospects of an enduring peace, security and stability in the region; and also a contribution to conflict studies in Africa. Cognizant of the de-escalation of conflict and its associated criminalities as a result of the amnesty granted by the Yar'Adua's administration to armed non-state actors involved in oil violence in the Delta, it is incumbent on the Nigerian state, the MNOCs, the Niger

Deltans and well meaning Nigerians to collaboratively devise and embark on the implementation of pragmatic policies geared towards the sustainability of peace and security; so as to discourage the resumption of violence in the region. It is in this context that the various writers interrogate the diverse issues pertaining to oil violence in the Niger Delta and proffered solutions for its resolution.

The book is organized into eleven chapters. This chapter one sets the context for understanding the fundamental issues and actors involved in oil violence in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The significant focus of this contextual chapter is to summarize the underlying factors responsible for the continuation of oil violence in the Delta region and to draw attention to the fact that unless these issues are pragmatically tackled, violence will restart at a more dangerous level in the Delta region.

In chapter two, Alafuro Epelle in his paper titled *Taming the Monster: Critical Issues in Arresting the Orgy of Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria*, unraveled the critical issues behind oil violence in the Niger Delta. Using the Lockean social contract theory as his framework for analysis, he posited that oil violence in the Delta region is largely a manifestation of the processes of state failure and collapse. It is indicative of the peoples' insurgency against the Nigerian state, which has not been able to faithfully deliver on its terms of the social contract to the delta people. Therefore according to him, for oil violence to be properly tackled, there must be a complete reorganization and refocusing of the Nigerian state. Furthermore, there must be justice, adequate funding of development projects, the political will to punish criminals accordingly, checking arms running in the region and creation of employment opportunities for the youths.

Chapter three with the title: *Amnesty in a Vacuum: The Unending Insurgency in the Niger Delta of Nigeria* was co-authored by David Adeyemo and 'Lanre Olu-Adeyemi. They questioned the rationalization behind the granting of amnesty by the Yar'Ádua's administration in the first place because there was no armistice between the 'belligerents' involved in the delta conflict, as it generally happens in war situations. They argued therefore that, this is a case of amnesty in a vacuum. Additionally, they opined that unsolicited political amnesty is a soft-sell solution that is too militant-centered. Finally, it is their view that, for the achievement of durable peace and stability, the Nigerian government should move beyond the militant-centered amnesty to addressing the issues of fiscal federalism, environmental rights and resource control as solutions to oil violence in the Niger Delta.

Youth Militancy, Amnesty and Security in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, written by Lysias Dodd Gilbert is the title of chapter four. With the use of relevant examples, he analytically argues that oil violence in the Delta region had negative spillover effects, which led to increased insecurity in other geo-political zones of Nigeria and some parts of the Gulf of Guinea. Besides, he contended that notwithstanding the current presidential amnesty granted to militant youths and the de-escalation of conflicts, without the accompaniment of massive infrastructural development, accelerated poverty alleviation palliatives, the restructuring of the unjust revenue allocation formula, the gradual diversification of Nigeria's monocultural economy, the general redressing of the accumulated years of marginalization, exclusion and environmental injustices of the past, Nigeria may likely witness the resurgence of a more devastating oil violence in the region, with reverberating deleterious consequences for the security of the West African

sub region and the Gulf of Guinea.

In Chapter five Akpomuvire Mukoro and Obukohwo Abraham Egbadju in their jointly authored article titled *Security Contradictions: Bane of Reactions of Oil Producing Communities and the Unending Crisis in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria*, posited that oil violence in the Niger Delta is caused basically by the contradiction in the conception and application of security in the relationship between the Delta communities on one hand, and the Nigerian state and MNOCs on the other hand. Finally, they concluded that the Nigerian government should re-assess its sensitivity, sincerity and sensibility to the plight of the suffering people in the Niger-Delta, shun the use of maximum force against the protesting people and ensure the provision and guarantee of adequate security in the interest of the delta people.

Chapter Six, written by Victor Ojatorotu is titled: *Militants and Oil Violence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria: Any Implication for Security in Nigeria?* In this chapter, Ojatorotu explicates the negative security repercussions of oil violence in the Niger Delta from the multi-dimensional perspectives of the Niger Delta, the Nigerian state and the MNOCs. According to him, while the Nigerian state and the MNOCs subscribe to the traditional state-centric perspective of security, the local people of the region and other stake holders in the region consider human security as paramount. Therefore, it is the clash of these two security conceptions that have perpetuated oil violence in the region over the years. Furthermore, he asserted that, notwithstanding the prevalent injustices in the delta region, the proliferation of militant groups with questionable credentials at a point symbolized the degeneration of the oil violence to the despicable level of sheer opportunism. Therefore, he opined that there should be an urgent demilitarization of the region, and the diversification of the economy.

In chapter seven, Francis Nwonwu in his paper titled: *The Politics of Oil Exploitation: Rationalising on the Coexistence of Oil Wealth and Extreme Poverty in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria*, extensively analysed the paradoxical juxtaposition of extreme wealth and acute poverty in the Niger Delta. He argued that though the actions of the armed non-state actors are unconstitutional but they are inevitabilities that were allowed to happen out of the deliberate actions and inactions of both the MNOCs and the Nigerian state. Finally, he acknowledged that oil violence is not the solution to the Delta debacle; rather the resolution lies in concerted negotiations and compromises from the relevant stakeholders.

Emmanuel J. C. Duru wrote chapter eight with the title: *The Politics of Oil in the Niger Delta*. This study examines the various dimensions of oil violence in the Niger Delta and argues that the politics of oil in the Niger Delta highlights more profound national challenges with which the Nigerian state will have to contain, most especially, issues of fiscal federalism, minority rights, resource allocation and poverty alleviation.

Chapter nine titled: *The Niger Delta Child and the Future of National Integration in Nigeria: A Prognostic Analysis*, was jointly authored by Frank-Collins Nnamdi Okafor and Mike C. Oddih. It examines the future of the Niger Delta child in Nigeria with respect to national integration, and concludes that based on the monumental level of destruction, killings, maiming, rape, hatred, and distrust engendered by oil violence, future national integration in Nigeria is in danger. They therefore suggested the stoppage of state violence, qualitative rehabilitation and educational programmes of re-orientation for the Niger Delta child as potential solutions to this quagmire.

In chapter ten, Segun Ogungbemi in his article titled *The Conflict in the Niger Delta Region and National Interest* provides a lucid understanding of the conflict of interests at play in the Delta region. Furthermore, he concluded that the panacea to oil violence is the operation of an authentic democratic system laden with the moral and philosophical ingredients of good governance.

Finally, the book concludes with TO Akinbobola's article titled *Niger Delta Crisis: Implications on Nigeria's Domestic Economic Output*. With the use of vector autoregressive modeling technique which exposes oil shocks on other macroeconomic variables within the economy, he argues and proves that oil violence impacts negatively on the Nigerian economy.

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Chapter 2: Taming the Monster: Critical Issues in Arresting the Orgy of Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

By

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Introduction

More than ever before the Niger Delta region and its people are embroiled in a paradox of contradiction: expropriated and exploited by the oil multinational corporations (OMNCs) operating in the area and a protective rentier state, she is also under the excruciating pangs of a phase of rage from the youths who have imploded on her under the guise of taking their pound of flesh from the earlier named group.

Consequently, the Niger Delta people, much to their chagrin now exist within the context of “two rights which make a wrong” (Ibeanu, 2008) – a collaborative duo of the OMNCs and the Nigerian state on the one hand who due to series of obnoxious legislations, omissions and commissions have been ripping them off of their God-given resources, and on the other hand an array of youth groups whose modern tactics of warfare against the former include kidnap for ransom of innocent people, pipe-line blow ups, illegal oil bunkering, raping, and killing or maiming of innocent civilian population in the region.

Historically, while struggles by youths for societal acceptance are as old as mankind, demands for environmental rights and reparation is of a much more recent origin. In the Niger Delta which constitutes the purview of our study, adequate corpus of literature exist documenting the exuberance of youth groups agitating for a niche in the scheme of things either at the village level, the local government level or at the various state levels. Indeed, sequel to their psychological disposition, especially with age counting on their side, it is not surprising seeing youths championing universal causes which adults have been reluctant to pursue. Following from the above, it is therefore not surprising to observe that almost every civil society group in Nigeria (especially those involved in rights agitation) has a youth arm that functions as the vanguard body of the organization.

In accordance with the above context, and more in response to their extempore manner of behaviour, youth groups are challenging the OMNCs, and the Nigerian state on environmental rights abuses, resource control and the right to self determination. However, scenario has thrown up a lot of latent and unpalatable consequences for the rest of society. Under the guise of taming the youths and ensuring societal equilibrium, the state itself has been involved in several excesses that exacerbates rather than extenuate the orgy of restiveness.

How far the above thematic issues have combined with our pattern of politics to pervert our youths into the *modus Vivendi* they now exhibit will form the context in which this study is located. In doing this, the paper intends to first explore the phenomenon of youth restiveness in the Niger Delta through the Marxist political economy method noted for its primacy to material conditions; its study of antecedents to issues; its belief that social phenomena are inter-related; and its insistence that social reality is dynamic (Ake, 1983:1-4).

Conceptual Framework

Youth Restiveness: A detailed discussion of the concept will not detain us here since it is a phenomenon that has become very ubiquitous. Suffice it to say however that though there may be no universally acceptable definition of who constitutes a youth, its operationalization is also culture-bound. Consequently, while youths can be seen as young men and women who are no longer children, but not yet adults, other have gone ahead to give a definitive age bracket to youths as those within the age range of 15-30 years. In fact, in some cultures in Nigeria it may not be out of place to see people (especially men) of even 40-45 years of age claiming youth membership. Hence the concept of youth is a relative one: a person is a youth if he or she believes so.

On the other hand, youth restiveness refers to a plethora of activities expressed in the form of hostage taking of foreign nationals, local oil workers and citizens for ransom; oil pipe-line blow ups; illegal bunkering; peaceful or violent demonstration; bombing of public places, etc, in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

Political Economy of Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta

In the Niger Delta, effervescent youth groups in their onslaught against the Nigerian state and OMNCs have always been seen as their source of inspiration and bench-mark, Major Isaac Adaka Boro's revolution of mid-1960's. Boro, a young graduate of University of Nigeria, Nsukka and a police officer from Kaiama Town in present Bayelsa State had in 1966 taken up arms against his fatherland in protestation against the massive expropriation, deprivation, squalor and neglect meted out on the people from where crude oil is being produced (Boro, 1982). Though the "revolution" lasted for twelve days culminating in his death during the ensuing civil war of 1967, yet his agitations – as naïve as it may seem – set the tone for what has today been circumspectly tagged "resource control" (Agbese, 1990:31).

As treasonable as Boro's attack on the Nigerian state was interpreted to mean and as calamitous as it turned out to be, it strikes a chord in rational minds on the need to critically review the report of the Henry Willink's Commission set up by the departing colonial masters to pry into the fears of the minority ethnic groups in the emerging Nigerian federation. At the London Constitutional Conference of 1958 convened as part of the preparatory arrangements for Nigeria's flag independence, Chief Harold Dappa-Biriye leader of the "Rivers Movement" a Pan-Niger Delta activists group, had made a case for the creation of more states in the then Eastern region (especially a Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers State) and the right to resource control for the people (Epelle and Isike 2005:122-3). Unfortunately the Commission in its widely pilloried report came out with an apparently Hobson's choice recommendation: either we accept a concoctional arrangement to cater for our needs or, if more states are to be created in the region, then political independence is to be delayed beyond the already earmarked date of 1960. The preferred choice for the elites masquerading under the name of nationalists was the latter, and obviously nobody would have expected anything else from a group of persons who at that time were already angling for the leeway for primitive accumulation soon to be bequeathed by the departing British colonialists. Consequently, in our haste for political

independence our leaders set the stage for the political hara-kiri and youth implosion that followed. But this is just one aspect of the crises.

The point being made in the preceding paragraph becomes more plausible when it is recalled that the early wave of youth restiveness in the 1990s is explained as deriving from deep-seated dis-satisfaction on account of how the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta are being treated by the Nigerian state and the OMNCs. Epelle (2004:17) recounts how in November 1990, the people of Umuechem in Etche local government area of Rivers State embarked on a peaceful demonstration in protestation against decades of neglect, deprivation, and devastation by the oil giant, Shell. Needless to say they were aptly “reprimanded” for daring to attack the source through which the rentier ruling class draws its economic clout. As recorded by Onyeagucha (1997:5), 90 Umuechem people lost their lives in the process while 500 houses were burnt down by anti-riot policemen called in to deal with the protesters. Incidentally, several years after the confrontation, Umuechem, a town of over 10,000 people now has a hospital that has never treated a patient, secondary school that has never conducted a teaching and learning activity, and a women centre in which women have never held a meeting (Aaron, 2008:272). It is difficult to rationalize why a scenario like this will not spark off youth restiveness in any community or region.

The Ogonis too in Rivers State is another example of an ethnic group where the miasma of youth restiveness could logically be linked with the extractive activities of the OMNCs and the Nigerian state. In January 1993, the Ogonis under the aegis of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) had issued a one-month ultimatum to Shell to leave their land due to the latter’s intransigence to pay them compensation and royalties, but they were ignored by the latter. Hence with the active support of their youth arm, the National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP), they embarked on a peaceful protest against the oil multinational. Government in its response to the issues raised by the protesting rural people decided to kill a fly with a sledge hammer. By the time the dust raised by the Rivers state internal security task force in the area had settled more than 2,000 Ogoni men and women had been killed, 8,000 forced into exile, more than 27 villages burnt down and to crown their woes 13 prominent sons of the land (including award-winning playwright, Ken Saro-Wiwa) murdered (Onyeagucha, 1997:6; Epelle, 2004:170; Folarin, 2007:38-54).

Today, there exists a peace of the grave-yard situation in Ogoni land, but it is only axiomatic to believe that with unmet expectations further violence may not be ruled out from protagonists in the area (Folarin, 2007:55-6).

The situation in the two ethnic groups examined above is reproduced in all oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta (Yerin, 2007:24). With a mono-cultural economy it is obvious that more than two-third of the people of the Niger Delta live in rural areas. For this hapless majority their lot is exacerbated by oil exploration activities which has denuded the soil of its nutrients, induced migratory pressures and devastated the local economy. On the other hand, urban dwellers may also not be that fortunate as our experience has shown, for though the rural populace lack basically all the social amenities that make life worth living, yet the high rate of population explosion in the city aggravates the problem of the smattering public utilities existing there. The consequence of this pressure on the few infrastructural facilities in the city is one of the root causes of youth restiveness in the region. This is because with a lot of street children in the city and

not much employment opportunities to gainfully engage them, they become easy recruits to militant groups and other deviant organizations. Even in the city itself the shocking contrast between the commodious lifestyle of oil company staff and the near impecunious standing of the ordinary city dweller; the readily available and functional nature of social amenities in the oil companies' staff quarters and the lack of these amenities in the rural slums is enough to arouse the restive genes in our youths.

The OMNCs also court the ire of the youths through their *divide et impera* method of compensation management. Some OMNCs like Shell and Chevron have been implicated severally in bribing some local chiefs and potentates in order to get them to undermine the collective resolve of their community to ensure environmental justice and equity from oil prospecting companies. Some of these iconoclastic elites batter off community slot in OMNCs employment lists, while others sell off community land unilaterally and pockets the proceeds alone. The negative consequences of these are normally youth restiveness manifesting itself in arson, killings, self exile, and fleeing of ancestral homes.

Beyond the issue of frustration, marginalization and deprivation exhaustively discussed above which draws logically from our political economy thesis that every social problem has a history and that they derive essentially from mankind's instinct to subsist and reproduce himself; other factors that constitute a necessary and sufficient condition for youth restiveness in the Niger Delta include the zero-sum nature of our politics and the brazen display of unnecessary opulence by our politicians. Taking the former issue first, our pattern of politics since the era of flag independence in 1960 has remained essentially unchanged: intense contestation for power, brute force, electoral robbery, and winner-takes-all elections. In this bizarre struggle for political power our leaders employ every available means to get into elective positions (Ake, 1985:10; 2000:61-62). Youths are employed as political thugs to maim, abduct, threaten and harass political opponents. They are also under instruction to kill recalcitrant and principled opponents and voters, rig elections and produce fake but facsimile election results. And to effectively do this they are armed and trained on light and heavy weapon handling. Expectedly at the end of the elections not all the weapons are returned to the politician's armoury; some find their ways into the streets where they are put to ex-post facto use by the youths.

A related scenario that plays itself out is that some of these youths who are hired and trained as political thugs by political power seekers are not adequately compensated at the end of the electioneering period, and with the guns and other lethal weapons in their hands they take their pound of flesh not only from the perfidious politicians but also from the rest of us (Tamunoebi, 2007:7).

Politicians have also accentuated the problem of youth restiveness by the unbridled and taunting manner in which they flaunt in our faces our collective resources corruptly cornered from the public till. In a country where, according to United Nations Human Development Report for 2006, more than 60% of the population exist on less than one dollar (US\$1) per day then it will be inappropriate not to expect more than mere grumblings from the socially disadvantaged group of the population.

Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta: Beyond the Political Economy Model

It will be crude and mono-casual to analyze a phenomenon as monstrous as youth restiveness from only the political economy paradigm because some other nebulous but no less significant factors also contribute to the problem. Some of these factors are the demonological factor, biological factor and psychological factor.

The demonological factor is evident when we see youths who are driven by no other cause to engage in breach of public peace than the devil. Here, youths whose hearts have been seared by the red-hot iron of the devil attack, maim or kill innocent, defenseless citizens while under the spell of a blood-tasty evil spirit. There is also the possibility that youths under demonic influence may have been bewitched by sorcerers, necromancers, or wizards who are interested in causing mayhem in the society. Normally, such youths, when sober or in police custody, tend to regret the social impact of their actions and plead for clemency.

The biological theory, according to Olumati (2008:254), posits that some individuals are more prone to anti-social tendencies than others due to their genetic make-up. Some of these persons have such physical characteristics as excessive long arms, hairiness, large jaws, extra toes/fingers, big heads, etc. Such persons by virtue of these “extra” genetic features are easily irritable, pugnacious and above all restive. Youths who possess any of these characteristics are more likely to be easily agitated into action once any of the issues raised in our political economy discourse is breached.

Psychological factors that can cause youths to engage in anti-social behaviors stem from improper socialization leading to a situation where the individual begins to see abnormal events around him as acceptable social procedures since those in his immediate environment tend to engage in them. Examples of this situation exist among children from broken homes, or children brought up in homes with high incidence of domestic violence. Certainly, children from this kind of background are prone to engage in deviant acts.

Lastly, some sociological factors that can also spark off restiveness among youths include land disputes between families in a community, or boundary disputes between villages in the region. Each of these instances as experience has shown can be exploited either by war-hungry elders/chiefs in the community or inflamed by the youths themselves especially in a country like ours where there is a high unemployment rate among the youths. Chieftaincy succession disputes in some communities are also volatile issues that have fanned the embers of youth restiveness in the region as they are easily recruited, armed and positioned by contestants to aid them in their inordinate desire to ascend the coveted throne.

Framework of Analysis: Lockean Social Contract Theory.

John Locke (1632-1704), an English man, wrote his major work on political theory “*The Second Treatise of Government*” (1690) at the dawn of the English Glorious Revolution of 1688. Hence, unlike his fellow English man, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who lived and wrote in the turbulent years preceding the revolution, Locke’s primary concern in his writing was not on how to restore order in a *state of nature* where the lives of men was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”, but on providing a justification for government

by consent (that is limited government) and a right to revolution where the government fails.

Consequently, unlike Hobbes, who in his *LEVIATHAN* (1651) had argued that men in his conjectural *state of nature* were animalistic, appetitive and driven only by the morbid passion to satisfy their selfish needs, Locke posited in his political theory that men in a state of nature are capable of rational thought and of moderate, practical behavior even without a government (Deutsch, 1974:89).

According to Locke, the *state of nature* is one of “peace, goodwill, mutual assistance and preservation” (quoted in Sabine and Thorson, 1973:485), in which all men were equal and born with some natural rights. Some of these natural rights include the right to own and dispose of their God-given properties as they think fit within the bounds of the law of nature (Macpherson 1962: 13).

Since this state of nature was “social” but lacking in the “political” it means that some persons will naturally infringe on the rights of others. The powers to restrain transgressors and restore social order would have been left to each individual to execute, but since men are avaricious there was the need to set up a civil-society based on their collective consent to which they will voluntarily submit themselves. Invariably the civil society so established is for the greater assurance of the preservation of their lives, liberty and property. The civil society when established can set up whatever frame of government it wants and change it whenever it feels that the government is not ruling according to its desires.

In summary, Locke’s thesis on the doctrine of government by consent was to defend the individual’s moral right to revolution, hence in his treatise he had insisted on the right to resist tyrannical governments (Sabine and Thorson, 1973:483), for according to him, if government is established basically to protect the life, liberty and, more importantly, property of men, then any government that does not fulfill this obligation must be resisted. Not surprisingly, Locke’s theory became the tonic for the colonists’ agitations against imperialist Britain in the years leading to the American revolution of 1774 (Macpherson, 1962:7).

The first import of the above discussed theoretical framework for our present analysis is to justify the fact that all the three tiers of government in Nigeria (federal, state and local) are set up by the citizenry and owe their continuous existence to the periodic mandate of the citizens. This is Locke’s incontrovertible thesis!

Second, these governments are set up by the collective will of the citizens to protect their lives, liberty and property. Man’s acquisitive tendencies in the state of nature are likely to make him infringe on other people’s properties (whether God-given or laboriously acquired) and government’s main duty is to mediate amicably between the aggressor and the oppressor – not to take sides.

Thirdly, sequel to the above, Locke’s theory is unequivocal in its insistence that once a government reneges in its duty to safeguard the interest of its citizens, the latter has the right to resist its tyrannical, biased, prejudicial or cavalier tendencies. This is the logic on which this paper is built: its hunch is that youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region especially those drawing from the political economy problematique are reflections of the level of discontent by the most vocal part of the population to draw government’s attention to its abdication of its assigned duties.

Put slightly differently, youth restiveness in the region is more likely a reflection of the crises of state failure and collapse currently being witnessed in the country (Thomas, 2008:275-279), than a product of conservative rationalization of demonological and biological factors. Consequently, our conviction is that any realistic attempt to attack and subdue the problem must take as its watershed the decomposition or reconstitution of the state to assume a people-focused position in the scheme of things. The Nigerian state should be able to tame the OMNCs and make them to operate the policy of best business practices as is obtainable globally. They (the OMNCs) should constantly exhibit corporate social responsibility in their areas of operation bearing in mind that the oil minerals they are mining are properties of the inhabitants of the area where they operate and who are morally justified to call them to order in the event of any breach of the memorandum of understanding signed by both parties.

Consequences of Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

Ikelegbe (2001:13) in his authoritative work on the dysfunctional activities of civil societies in Nigeria noted regrettably that:

The IYC (Ijaw Youth Council) with its conglomeration of numerous youth groups has tended to lose control, and its activities and those of youths now extend to the killing of state security officials and the kidnapping and ransom seeking of oil company employees. (Emphasis mine).

Before reaching this scathing conclusion, Ikelegbe had argued that earlier youth activities in the Niger Delta were predicated on the belief that the solution to the Niger Delta problem lies in the convocation of a sovereign national conference made up of equal representatives of the various ethnic groups in the country (Obari, 1999:1-2; Ikelegbe, 2001:12-3). In other words, the progenitors of the present youth groups were more interested in dialogues than in confrontation, but the intransigent attitude of the OMNCs to genuine demands of their host communities and the complicity of the Nigerian state in the unwholesome practices of the oil producing giants ignited the restive genes in the youths. Consequently, what started off as a peaceful, well-articulated and coordinated protest by various clan-based youth groups under the aegis of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) against the diabolical duo of the OMNCs and the Nigerian state has today been hijacked by opportunistic and amorphous youth groups, criminalized and converted into a veritable platform for hostage taking for ransom. It is doubtful if the original conveners of the conference that culminated in the Kaiama Declaration of December 11, 1998 envisioned this present scenario of Hobbesian state of nature and guerilla warfare brought upon us by gangsters masquerading as youth groups.

Today the entire Niger Delta and even beyond is wearing a toga of a society under siege, and the first consequence is fear, fear of everybody against everybody. Indeed as Thomas Hobbes had hypothesized about England in his LEVIATHAN (1651), every Niger Delta man or woman now lives with a twin brother: himself and fear.

Related to and deriving from fear is the problem of insecurity. Nowhere in the Niger Delta is sacred, safe or impenetrable to militant youths in search of hapless victims to be harried away as hostages, even churches have been desecrated and priests taken away until ransom is paid. In fact, hostages are now classified according to their values, with British and American citizens counting higher in terms of ransom value. The result of all

these is the present scenario of “*government by siren*” in which foreign nationals living in or visiting the region are now ferried in heavily guarded “white Maria” vehicles.

Night-life, the only opportunity in which city-dwellers unwind and cool off after the hustle and bustle of the working day, is now practically dead in the region. Staying out late now carries a “caveat emptor”; indeed, like the warning to cigarette smokers, there seems to be a muted message on the lips of everyone: “night-crawlers are likely to die young”. Needless to say that the real losers may not be only those in the entertainment and recreational industry, but the region in general.

Insecurity itself breeds divestment as nobody will be prepared to risk his life-saving in ventures which he is not sure to be alive to reap the fruits of his labor. As a corollary the once bubbling local economy built on oil and gas is almost crumbling as genuine investors have all fled the region for a safer environment. Daniel (2006:32) quoting Pastor Billy Harry, Vice President of the Port Harcourt Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, captured succinctly the problem under review:

Businesses are being shut and fear has taken over the entire investing community and this portends a great danger for the economy. Hostage taking is in bad taste; it makes the Niger Delta region look like a criminal axis replete with terror tactics.

The oil giant, Shell, earlier the major target of the hostage-taking youths has been forced to cut oil production by more than half in addition to the forced closure of all its installations in Ogoni land in the aftermath of its violent confrontations with the latter in the early 1990s.

With divestment also comes emigration. Most European governments have declared Niger Delta a high-risk area and evacuated its citizens living there. Foreign tourists no longer consider the region a veritable attractive spot in their itinerary. Even the indigenes themselves especially the high net-worth types now live in Abuja and Lagos preferring to visit the area unannounced and even at that, they still travel incognito.

Youth restiveness has led to so many avoidable deaths, villages burnt down and deserted, sacred places violated, and the once cherished convivial and fraternal relationship among Niger Delta people truncated.

Finally, as can be gleaned from our analysis above, restiveness has led to the flourishing of a new wave of profit making syndicates who kidnap innocent men, women and children for the purpose of exacting a huge ransom fee from their relations or the government. It may be necessary to re-iterate here that agitations for a regional resource control by youths under the umbrella of the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC) is not coterminous with or expressed through the medium of hostage-taking for ransom, for it is on record that many formal militant youth groups in the Niger Delta like Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP) have openly decried hostage taking. Hence, hostage taking for ransom by youth groups in the region is for private purposes. It benefits only the few youths involved along with their collaborators in government who masquerade as negotiators and cajole the government officials to dole out millions of naira as ransom fee to the boys in the creek.

Having come this far, the question is where lies the solution? Answers to this will form the concluding part of the work.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Political Leadership: Leadership is all about influence; inspiring and motivating people to aspire towards the efficient achievement of organizational objectives. Where this influence is a corruptive and debilitating one the organization suffers. This is the case with Nigeria. Our leaders have been uninspiring, corrupt, nepotic, selfish, avaricious and, above all, pharisaic.

Indeed nearly fifty years after political independence the trouble with Nigeria still remains, as argued by Achebe (1983:1), the problem of leadership.

Sequel to the above, it is only axiomatic to accept the plank offered us by our framework of analysis that the current wave of youth restiveness in the region is the people's revolt against a government that has betrayed the spirit of the social contract. Consequently, we make a hunch that if there is transparency and accountability in government at all levels of government the spate of youth restiveness will subside. For now there is no moral basis in proselytizing the youths to stop kidnapping innocent citizens for money when government officials are crudely employing state power for primitive accumulation. The one cannot check the other. Professor Julius Ihonvbere, a world renown political scientist and member of the Presidential Technical Committee on the Niger Delta that has just submitted its report to President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua acknowledged in a recent interview with a Sunday Vanguard reporter that the solution to the Niger Delta problem lies with leadership. His comment is worth quoting *in extenso*:

For the region, it is a question of leadership; generating and sustaining leadership at all levels to ensure that resources are properly deployed; that policies and programmes are prioritized and monitored to make sure that the people are carried along in the implementation of policies and programmes to ensure that the process of development is sustainable and holistic (Ebegbulem 2009:10).

Political will: Beyond the issue of people-oriented governance, the Nigeria state must "muster the political will and courage to prosecute individuals and corporate organizations who perpetrate conflicts in the communities" (Opukri and Etekpe, 2008:145). There should be no sacred cows. This will send a message to kidnapers and war-mongering groups in the state. So far we are yet to hear of any big-name militant or kidnapper nabbed by the security agents in the state. We are also yet to see the government stamp its foot down against OMNCs that flout environmental regulations like the gas flaring legislation or sabotage our labor laws through casualisation and contract labour. All these must be in place if militant youths are to be convinced to sheath their sword.

Justice: Justice being the idea of giving each man his due is most needed in the Niger Delta region where the goose that lays the golden egg is treated with disdain by those that nourish themselves with the nutrients from the egg. Justice for the Niger Delta inhabitants implies that fiscal federalism will be the basis for revenue allocation in the country. If areas like Rivers State that produce crude oil are given the right to mine the oil and pay taxes to the federal government, or derivation principles are used for fiscal appropriations in the country it is likely that more resources will flow into the region and this will on the long run help douse revolutionary sentiments in militant youths.

Demilitarization of the theatre of struggle: It is an old maxim that violence cannot check violence. In fact, violence has never been known to solve any problem, and the case of Niger Delta youth militants cannot be an exception (Ekponta, 2008:37). Militarizing the region with combat ready armoured personnel carriers, police helicopters, members of the Joint Task Force and the like will only help to infuriate both the genuine freedom fighters and the criminal elements in the struggle. The result will be a vicious circle of violence begetting violence.

Checking arms running in the region: Youth restiveness cannot be perpetrated or even sustained for long without a dependable source of arms and ammunitions. The militants need a stable supply of ammunition and constant replenishing of their armoury to successfully engage the police and armed forces in any confrontation. They also need arms to threaten and hijack their victims. So, if governments at both the state and federal levels can close the routes through which these sophisticated ammunitions are freighted to the militants the incidence of youth restiveness will reduce to the nearest minimum.

Creation of employment opportunities for the youths: An idle mind, they say, is the devil's workshop. Government must see the task of providing jobs for its citizens as part of its responsibilities in the social contract. The erroneous belief that government has no business creating employment opportunities for its people are diversionary, evasive, defeatist and amounts to mere buck-passing of its justiciable obligation to the private sector. Though it is a known fact that some militants who have tasted the alluring quick cash that comes from hostage taking, may not want to quit the lucrative "business" no matter how much jobs you provide, yet we must start from somewhere. At least, it is an incontrovertible fact that those youths who were forced by the dire circumstance they found themselves to join anti-social groups will choose more decent jobs once such opportunity presents itself. The oil multinationals must also help in this regard. Instead of exacerbating the tensed atmosphere in the state by the constant retrenchment, casualization and contracting of labour while declaring huge profits at their annual general meetings, they can do more to stop youth restiveness by employing qualified indigenes of the region.

Adequate funding of development projects in the state: The solution to the problem of youth restiveness in the region does not lie in the creation of an amorphous Ministry of Niger Delta and other phoney contraptions that has become the pastime of the Nigerian state but the in genuine funding of the bodies and agencies charged with the responsibility of developing the area. Granted that some of the funds allocated to these bodies are embezzled by officials yet, they all have a history of under-funding or withholding of funds. According to Agbo (2008:19), the problem of government in the Niger Delta region is likely to be exacerbated by the current 2009 budget of the federal government. This is because:

While the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC, got N27.12 billion for its operations, the Ministry of the Niger Delta got N50 billion. Their joint budget is less than the N79 billion allocations for the NDDC in 2008 (Agbo, 2008:19).

Invariably what President Yar'Adua wisely did was to create a new Ministry of Niger Delta, divide the allocation originally meant for the NDDC between her and the Ministry and remove N2 billion out of it for other use- a "wisdom" that has the tendency of

retarding development pace in the region on the long run. The result, if traced, is likely to dovetail in youth restiveness caused by inadequate developmental projects in the region. ***Lastly, education (not mass learning), public enlightenment and social rehabilitation*** for repentant militants are also other panaceas to the menace of youth restiveness in the region. Education, they say, makes a man easy to lead and very difficult to confuse. A well educated population will understand and appreciate their role in history and the fact that passive resistance is most times more vocal and more effective than armed confrontation with the state. Public enlightenment programmes staged in both the villages and the cities will help diffuse tension between government and the youths on one hand and on the other hand imbue in them the futility of engaging the state and innocent adult population in armed combat. For repentant militants a well designed programme of skill acquisition and socio-economic rehabilitation should be accorded them like the biblical prodigal son so as to make those still involved in the risky and illicit business to have a re-think.

Finally, youth restiveness, as highlighted in the above discourse, is a hydra-headed problem that calls for a multifaceted and multi-sectoral approach by all stake-holders. The use of force to tackle it as we have seen is as puerile and wasteful as the use of such alternative dispute resolution mechanism like commissions of inquiry under whatever name (Chukwurah, 2008:9) or government amnesty programmes. We must however sound a caveat: none of the measures we recommended here is to be applied in isolation; they must all be applied contemporaneously and even at that the result initially may seem imperceptible but will be overwhelmingly effective at the end.

Youth restiveness, as any other aspect of human life, is a phase in the social history of the Niger Delta. Other societies have experienced it at one time or the other; and when they did, they did not just sit and wish it away. They tackled it frontally but tactfully. Today the relative peace enjoyed in Warri, Delta State was not achieved by the presence of military men in the city but by the people themselves who after a long war of attrition realized the enormity of the destruction they have wrought on themselves and consequently resolved to work for peace. Certainly, a time like this will soon come for the Niger Delta people if only the will to work toward it is shared by all stakeholders.

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Chapter 3: Amnesty in a Vacuum: The Unending Insurgency in the Niger Delta of Nigeria

By

David Adeyemo and ‘Lanre Olu–Adeyemi

Introduction

After decades of environmental abuse and human degradation coupled with unfulfilled promises of redress on the part of the State and Transnational oil companies; the agitations of the Niger Deltans have taken a violent and militant dimension. These militant activities have impacted gravely on national economy and security thus prompting the state to launch military attacks on the region intermittently. However, such military responses have done little to curtail the militant agitations in the Niger Delta and the Federal Government itself is far from winning the ‘war’. This logjam prompted the Yar’Adua administration to proclaim political amnesty to all those who have been involved in the Niger Delta conflict. Good as the amnesty offer sounds; it is not premised on any reasonable rationale and it unfortunately runs parallel to the Joint Task Force military operations of the Nigerian state in the Niger Delta region, thus confounding observers of the sincerity of the amnesty offer!

This paper is purely qualitative in its methodological thrust and it focuses on the Niger Delta crisis in a bid to show the epoch of the peaceful agitations that eventually turned violent and militant due to the lackadaisical attitude of the state and Transnational oil companies; the several opportunities to have resolved the crisis as well as the vacuumed amnesty and its rough edges.



Map of Nigeria numerically showing states typically considered part of the Niger Delta region: 1.

Abia 2. Akwa Ibom 3. Bayelsa 4. Cross River 5. Delta, 6. Edo 7. Imo 8. Ondo, 9.

Rivers

Frustration and Deprivation – A Theoretical Explanation of the Niger Delta Crisis

This paper succinctly combines the Frustration Aggression Theory and Theory of Relative Deprivation to buttress the militant and violent dimension of the Niger Delta crisis.

The original formulation of the Frustration Aggression hypothesis by Dollard et al (1939), concentrated on the limited interference with an expected attainment of a desired goal on hostile (emotional) aggression. Developments since then have shown that the frustration-aggression hypothesis is intended to suggest to the student of human nature that when he sees aggression he should

turn a suspicious eye on possibilities that the organism or group is confronted with frustration; and that when he views interference with individual or group habits, he should be on the look-out for, among other things, aggression (Green, 1941).

The frustration aggression theory states that aggression is caused by frustration. When someone is prevented from reaching his target, he becomes frustrated. This frustration then can turn into aggression when something triggers it (Berkowitz, 1980). Aggression is usually directed towards the cause of the frustration, but if this is not possible, the aggression may be displaced onto another person or object.

The Niger Deltans have for so long craved to enjoy the proceeds of the oil deposit in their lands. Unfortunately, what they get in return is pollution and environmental damage caused by activities of the oil Companies. The frustration emanating from the insensitivity of the state and oil companies eventually turned the region into a complex operating environment, characterized by intra and inter ethnic conflict, conflict between the communities and the oil companies and conflict between armed groups and the oil companies and Nigerian security forces. According to the Amnesty International 2009 Report:

The fact that the people of the Niger Delta have not benefited from oil wealth is only part of the story. Widespread and unchecked human rights violations related to the oil industry have pushed many people deeper into poverty and deprivation, fuelled conflict and led to a pervasive sense of powerlessness and frustration. The multi-dimensional crisis is driven by the actions of the security forces and militant groups, extensive pollution of land and water, corruption, corporate failures and bad practice and serious government neglect.



This photograph shows the aftermath of an oil pipeline leak and subsequent fire in the southern Nigerian village of Goi, in the Niger delta region, 2004. Amnesty International has said that the pollution caused by half a century of oil extraction in Nigeria is one of the world's most disturbing examples of the curse of natural resources.

Thus, it is appropriate to aver that when people perceive that they are being prevented from achieving a goal, their frustration is likely to turn to aggression. As seen in the extant Niger Delta issue, the hitherto peaceful region have snowballed into crisis because for over half a century, the closer they get to their goal of enjoying the proceeds of oil which nature deposited in their land, the greater the excitement and expectation of the pleasure. However, the closer they are, the more frustrated they get by being held back.

Similarly, relative deprivation is the experience of being deprived of something to which one believes oneself to be entitled to have (Walker and Smith, 2001). Relative deprivation refers to the discontent people feel when they

compare their positions to those of similarly situated and find that they have less than their peers. It is a condition that is measured by comparing one group's situation to the situations of those who are more advantaged (Bayert, 1999). Schaefer (2008) explains it as "the conscious experience of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities" while Bayertz (1999) ascribes it to the social sciences for describing feelings or measures of economic, political, or social deprivation that are relative rather than absolute. The concept of relative deprivation has important consequences for both behavior and attitudes, including feelings of stress, political attitudes, and participation in collective action.

According to Kenda (2005), "relative deprivation may also be temporal; that is, a group that experiences economic growth or an expansion of rights, followed by stagnation or recession of those processes may experience 'relative deprivation.'" Such phenomena are also known as *unfulfilled rising expectations*. Social scientists, particularly political scientists and sociologists, have cited 'relative deprivation' (especially temporal relative deprivation) as a potential cause of social movements and deviance, leading to extreme situations to political violence such as rioting, terrorism and civil wars or social deviance such as crime (Gurr, 1970) According to this theory, social movements arise when people feel deprived of what they perceive as their 'fair share' (Rose, 1982) and similarly, individuals engage in deviant behaviors when their institutional means do not match cultural goals. (Merton, 1938).

In one of the first formal definitions of the relative deprivation, Runciman (1966) noted that there are four preconditions of relative deprivation (of object X by person A):

- A does not have X
- A knows of other persons that have X
- A wants to have X
- A believes obtaining X is realistic

An attempt to apply Runciman's 1966 model to the Nigerian scenario is depicted below:

- The Niger Deltans does not have the basic good things of life; not enough to eat; die from preventable diseases; lack access to sanitation, educational facilities e.t.c., yet accounts for over 70% of Nigeria's GDP
- The Niger Delta knows other regions enjoy the basic good things of life; have enough to eat; have access to health facilities, educational infrastructures e.t.c.
- The Niger Delta wants to enjoy facilities that other regions of Nigeria enjoys consequent upon the Niger Delta's huge contributions to the GDP
- The Niger Delta believes that obtaining the basic good things of life is realistic.

State interventions in Minority Agitations: Success or failure

Minority agitations started in pre-independent Nigeria. Such fears which were loudly expressed at the 1953 and 1957 constitutional conference prompted the colonial government to establish the Willinks Commission in 1957. The Commission was to look into fears expressed by minority ethnic groups that the colonial imposed political structure would lead to the domination of the minority groups by the majority ethnic groups in the three regions of the federation. The minorities were therefore united by fear of neglect at the hands of a government who in any case put the needs of the majority first.

The recommendations of the report offered little practical support to the agitations expressed by the minority groups; also it is viewed as solidifying the administrative boundaries of the colonial government which were created with little attention given to centuries old ethnic boundaries (Africa Report, 2007).

Since the Willinks report, there have been:

- 1960 Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB)
- 1970 River Basin Development Authority (this was to develop the entire country's River Basins)
- 1993 Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) following report of Belgore Commission.
- 1998 Maj. Gen. Popoola Committee formed by Head of State, Gen Abdusalam to look into the problems of the Niger Delta. Report was not implemented.

- 2000 Act of the National Assembly forming the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)
- 2002 Lt. General Alexander Ogomudia Special Security Committee Report on Oil Producing Area - Not Implemented
- 2003 Presidential Committee on Peace and Reconciliation headed by Maj. Gen. A Mohammed (rtd), Chief of Staff to the president.
- April 2004 Standing Committee on Good Governance and Corporate Responsibility headed by Dr. Edmond Daukoru, Minister of State for Petroleum.
- July 2004 Presidential Standing Committee on the Niger Delta headed by Gov. James Ibori of Delta State.
- 2006: Presidential Committee on the Niger Delta, headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo.
- 2007: President Yaradua's 7 – Point Agenda (the Niger Delta security issue will be the primary focus under Security)
- 2008: Establishment of the Ministry of the Niger Delta

Much as the Nigerian State have set up committees to find lasting solutions to the Minority problems, especially in the Niger Delta region; very little positive results have been achieved. In fact, most of the committees had been mere talk shows while the reports of several others have not seen the light of the day. It is on record that the report of all committees set up between 2002 and 2007 are still been kept by the Government. The State often appears disoriented on how to approach the Niger Delta crisis. For instance, under Nigeria's

constitution, mineral resources (including oil) belong to the federal government. However the principle of derivation states that a certain percentage of oil revenues produced by a state is returned to the state from which the oil was obtained. This is meant to “compensate” the state from which the oil was obtained. When substantial amounts of oil first started being pumped in southern Nigeria in the late 1960s, 50% of revenues from oil were remitted back to the state of origin. However the increasingly powerful federal government and military regimes gradually decreased the derivation percentage until it fell to a miserly 2%. It was eventually raised to 13% by the time civilian democratic rule returned in 1999.

Since the Yar’Adua administration assumed office in May 2007, its initiatives for ending Delta violence have been ambiguous and at times incoherent. An early attempt to convene a Delta summit was aborted due to local opposition on the modus operandi and personalities to be engaged in the summit. Also, a May 2008 proposal that militants incorporate as security companies so they could be hired to guard pipelines and other oil installations met with public scepticism and militants’ rejection and never got off the ground. Again, the creation of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs in September 2008 initially drew mixed reactions, but low funding in the 2009 budget, an uncertain division of responsibilities with the existing Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and unclear guiding principles have cost it credibility, thus, compounding the failures of State intervention in minority Niger Delta agitations.

The Militant Dimension

Over the last twenty years various political movements and activists have emerged in opposition to the perceived injustices perpetrated upon the people of the Niger Delta by the government and the oil companies. These were usually nonviolent; Ken Saro-Wiwa was the most famous activist. Saro-Wiwa was an Ogoni poet-turned-activist who was executed by the Nigerian government in 1995 on what many believe to be deliberately false charges with the aim of silencing his vocal opposition to the oil interests in Nigeria. In Saro-Wiwa's footsteps came others who, having seen the government's reaction to nonviolent activism, advocated violence as resistance to what they regarded as the enslavement of their people.

Niger Delta agitation for a fairer distribution of oil revenues is nothing new. As far back as February 1966, a former police officer from the Delta named Jasper Adaka Boro was leading a rebellion on behalf of the Niger Delta. Boro recruited 40 men into an organisation known as the Niger Delta Volunteer Force. Boro gave his men training in the use of firearms and explosives in the creeks and bushes. On February 23, 1966 the men attacked a police station at Yenagoa, raided the armoury and kidnapped some officers including the police officer in command of the station. They also blew up oil pipelines, engaged the police in a gunfight and declared the Niger Delta an independent republic. The revolt was suppressed and Boro and his men were sentenced to death.

In the 1990s Ken Saro-Wiwa attempted a more peaceful agitation for compensation for environmental damage caused by oil drilling and a greater slice

of oil revenues. Saro-Wiwa's charisma and appeal for greater autonomy struck a dangerous nerve with Nigeria's then military regime which brooked no opposition and was hyper-sensitive to any threat or challenge (real and imagined) to its control of oil resources. Saro-Wiwa and his followers were sentenced to death by a Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal and hanged.

On return to civilian rule in 1999, the expression of the ethnic angers that have been bottled up for several years came to the fore (Olu-Adeyemi, 2008). Thus in the Niger Delta, youths began an armed campaign and demand for greater control of the oil resources from their land. Unlike armed resistance movements in other countries, the Niger Delta gangs are not one organization operating under a common leadership with unified ideology. There is no central chain of command like the IRA had or clearly defined political ideal. Rather the gangs are a loose eclectic mix of several aggrieved armed factions like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force. The gangs' modus operandi is reminiscent of other armed groups and guerrilla armies around the world. They operate and place themselves in the midst of heavily populated civilian areas, making it difficult to distinguish fighter and civilian. They also take advantage of their superior knowledge of dangerous and inhospitable home terrain. Their shadowy nature is an asset and a hindrance. While their mystique makes their detection and suppression difficult for the Nigerian security forces, it has also made them faceless and prevented them from making political progress. They lack a single articulate spokesperson who can speak for their cause such as a Gerry Adams

or Yasser Arafat. The multi-headed militant hydra is not easy for outsiders to understand. This is why the Niger Delta struggle is a peculiar struggle.



Picture shows typical Niger Delta Militants

For a long time, the militants have dared the Nigerian State through ceaseless attacks on persons, facilities and institutions. The list below contains some of the attacks since 2006.

2006

* Nine officials of the Italian petrol company Eni SpA were killed when armed members of MEND attacked Eni SpA's security forces in Port Harcourt.

* On May 10, 2006, an executive with the United States-based oil company Baker Hughes was shot and killed in the south-eastern city of Port Harcourt.

* On June 2, 2006 a Norwegian rig offshore Nigeria was attacked and 16 crew members were kidnapped.

* On August 20, 2006, 10 MEND members were killed by the Nigerian military. The members were working on releasing a Royal Dutch Shell hostage.

* On October 2, 2006, 10 Nigerian soldiers were killed off the shore of the Niger Delta in their patrol boat by a MEND mortar shell. Earlier that day a Nigerian/Royal Dutch Shell convoy was attacked in the Port Harcourt region resulting in some people being wounded.

* On October 3, 2006, a militant group abducted four Scots, a Malaysian, an Indonesian and a Romanian from a bar in Akwa Ibom state.

* On October 4, 2006, Nigerian soldiers attacked a militant camp, in the ensuing battle 9 Nigerian soldiers were killed.

* On November 22, 2006, Nigerian soldiers attempted a rescue of kidnapped oil workers which resulted in one soldier being killed.

2007

* On May 1, 2007, MEND attacked Chevron's Oloibiri floating production, storage, and offloading vessel off southern Bayelsa state.

* On May 3, 2007, MEND seized eight foreign hostages from another offshore vessel. The hostages were released less than 24 hours later, stating they had intended to destroy the vessel and did not want more hostages.

* On May 8, 2007, three major oil pipelines (one in Brass and two in the Akasa area) were attacked, shutting down oil production and cutting power to a facility run by Italian oil company Agip, part of the ENI energy group.

2008

* On May 3, 2008, MEND militants attacked Shell-operated pipelines in Nigeria, forcing the company to halt 170,000 barrels a day of exports of Bonny Light crude.

* On June 20, 2008, MEND naval forces attacked the Shell-operated Bonga oil platform, shutting down 10% of Nigeria's oil production in one fell swoop.

* On September 14, 2008, MEND inaugurated Operation Hurricane Barbarossa with an ongoing string of militant attacks to bring down the oil industry in Rivers State.

* In September 2008, MEND released a statement proclaiming that their militants had launched an "oil war" throughout the Niger Delta against both pipelines and oil production facilities, and the Nigerian soldiers that protect them. In the statement MEND claimed to have killed 22 Nigerian soldiers in one attack against a Chevron-owned oil platform. The Nigerian government confirmed that their troops were attacked in numerous locations, but said that all assaults were repelled with the infliction of heavy casualties on the militants.

* On September 27, a week after declaring an oil war and destroying several significant oil production and transportation hubs in the delta, the group declared a ceasefire until "further notice" upon the intervention of Ijaw and other elders in the region.

2009

* MEND called off its ceasefire on January 30, 2009.

* On May 15, 2009, a military operation undertaken by a Joint Task Force (JTF) began against MEND. It came in response to the kidnapping of Nigerian soldiers and foreign sailors in the Delta region.

* On June 18, MEND claimed they had blown up a Shell pipeline, as a warning to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev who was arriving to Nigeria the next day and to any potential foreign investors

* MEND carried out its first attack in Lagos late July 11. Rebels attacked and set on fire the Atlas Cove Jetty on Tarkwa Bay, which is a major oil hub for Nigeria.

The hidden danger is that if the status quo does not change, the gangs will be tempted to become increasingly daring and amplify their violence. Now that Lagos had been attacked, they may extend their operations to non-riverine areas and major population centres like Abuja, Kano and Ibadan, thus, exacerbating the crisis. The IRA and Palestinian groups used the intensification of violence as a political tool. Originally operating almost exclusively within Northern Ireland, the IRA took its bombing campaign to the streets of England in cities like Birmingham and London and in two separate failed attacks, nearly succeeded in assassinating the entire leadership of the English government. The Palestinians of Hamas and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades similarly decided to take their struggle from the alley ways of the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza into the streets of Israel . They carried out suicide bombings inside Israel as a way of bringing their grievances to the doorstep of every single Israeli.

The Amnesty offer: Matters Arising

The assault on the Niger Delta by Nigerian Military continues to elicit mixed reactions from within and outside the country. The obvious economic implications of the action appear also to be weighing in on the country's economy that is reliant on Oil. But, would the political amnesty remedy the situation ?

The political amnesty is expected to persuade the militants to stop the insurgency but the amnesty is a big venture that has several rough sides. On resumption of office on May 29, 2009, The President made the Niger Delta crisis one of his key agenda for rapid response. He began by appointing a 45-man technical committee. The committee was to simply fish out all the various reports on the Niger Delta from the 1957 Sir Henry Willinks Commission through the 2002 General Ogomudia Panel to the 2007 Niger Delta Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee. The president wanted the committee to harmonise the recommendations of the various committees for him to begin action.

The resulting report recommended amnesty for militant leaders within a comprehensive demobilisation, disarmament and rehabilitation (DDR) program; an increased allocation of oil revenue to the Delta; urgent improvement of infrastructure and human welfare services; and new institutions for the region's longer-term development. While it did not address all aspects of the crisis, its proposals were sufficiently comprehensive to serve as a catalyst. The Technical Committee also urged the government to issue a White Paper by 1 January 2009 outlining strategies for rapid implementation of its recommendations. Yar'Adua's statement at the time that the government would implement those recommendations it found "acceptable" raised apprehensions in the Delta and across civil society that it would carry out only what was politically convenient.

The first matter arising from the over N50 billion (fifty billion naira) amnesty that is expected to be operative between August 6, 2009 and October 4, 2009 is

the fact that it follows no known conventional pattern. According to Adejumobi (2009):

Political amnesty is usually a product of two contexts.

The first is a negotiated settlement in which two warring parties have arrived at a dead-end in their conflict, and decide to settle their differences politically. The second context is one of a victor's amnesty in which a party overwhelms the other, claims victory and decides to be magnanimous in victory by offering amnesty to some or all of the combatants on the defeated side.

In line with the above, there is neither a negotiated settlement in the Niger Delta nor a victor's benevolence of any kind. There is no peace truce and the federal government has not won the military battle in the creeks in spite of its heavy artillery and weaponry. Why then offer an amnesty in a vacuum?

The second matter arising is that the amnesty runs in parallel with the controversial Joint Task Force military operations of the Nigerian state in the region. Thirdly, the activities of the militias seem to have advanced since the proclamation as evinced in the July 11 2009 militant attack on Atlas Cove Jetty on Tarkwa Bay, Lagos. The Jetty is a major oil hub for Nigeria.

The Fourth is that the option of an unsolicited political amnesty at resolving the Niger Delta conflict had turned out to be a cheap, soft sell solution. No wonder the major militant groups have simply either disregarded or castigated it. The

fifth matter arising is that the amnesty is Militant-centered! The truth is that militancy is the poor excuse for not developing the Niger Delta but what would an amnesty offer kidnappers, who the police said, made \$100 million as ransom in three years? (Africa Report, 2007). Yet, militancy is not the only problem in the Niger Delta but the amnesty is silent on how to ensure that the inhabitants of the region benefit from oil exploration, which has denied them other viable economic activity.

The fact remains that the Niger Delta is akin to Sachs concept - "poverty trap"; where poor health, poor education and poor infrastructure reinforce one another. The best amnesty therefore will be the total development of the area and improvement of lives of its people. The sixth matter arising is that there is a climate of mutual suspicion and distrust between the Government and the militants based on past experiences. This is in no small measure an albatross for the proclaimed amnesty. The seventh matter arising is that the militants may be personally less enthusiastic about the amnesty because it would not adequately make up for the life of luxury they have been used to with the cash bonanza from illegal oil bunkering activities and ransoms from kidnaps. This probably informs the interest of the militants to get the State into an arm buy back deal.

Conclusion

The amnesty is regrettably petite on concrete programmes to redress the state of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. It would have been better if the government had released a detailed, measurable and time-bound plan to

address the urgent development needs of the Niger Delta at the same time that it announced the amnesty. Focusing on the militants rather than implementing the numerous developmental programmes that have been recommended overtime by the plethora of committees that have looked into the Niger Delta issues will not likely have positive impact. The Yar'Adua administration's amnesty is a tentative step towards confronting the Niger Delta crisis but it has to be deepened and sustained by a focused development agenda for the region. If Nigeria wastes the present opportunity, worse violence and lawlessness is highly likely.

Recommendations

In the immediate, the Nigerian state must genuinely engage all actors in the Niger Delta region through an inclusive dialogue (not only their governors and traditional rulers, but also the organised interests and social forces across the region as well as the militant groups). The Nigerian state must appreciate what the Niger Delta wants, and how it wants to co-exist in a peaceful and prosperous federation.

Afterwards, the State will have to create ample space for Fiscal Federalism, Resource Control and Environmental rights to thrive. It is after all these that one will be comfortable that the Niger Delta region will settle for an amnesty with the Nigerian State.

The first area of focus should be Fiscal Federalism. Nigeria needs to put in place an arrangement that promotes fiscal federalism. This is a situation in which those who produce, either by dint of hard work or design of nature, are rewarded

rather than made to suffer, as is presently the case. There is need to adopt fiscal federalism through a review of the revenue allocation formula in order to make more resources available to the states and local governments. It will also be necessary to allow oil producing communities to control proceeds from oil extracted from their land while paying taxes/royalties to the federal government.

Nigeria must engage in negotiations with a broad-based delegation of Niger Deltans from the region's ethnic councils, religious groups and other civil society organisations. The terms of reference for the talks should focus on expanded local resource control as called for by the Special Committee on Oil Producing Areas in 2002; further, the venue for negotiations should be a location within the Niger Delta to allow for greater transparency and local participation, and if talks need to break off into smaller groups to address problems of individual communities, efforts should be taken to keep the process transparent.

Also, the Environmental Rights of the Niger Delta people must be catered for. The organic farming technique widely used in the Niger Delta is highly susceptible to environmental changes affecting the soil, water and or deforestation because it is not technologically inspired, but rather land and labour intensive. Oil extraction and production has led to adverse environmental impact on the soil, forest and water of the Niger Delta communities. This has ultimately affected peasant agriculture in a variety of ways, which ultimately have caused problems of environmental refugees. These environmental issues have enormous challenges to the existence of the people of the Niger Delta. Some of

the environmental issues are: Contamination of Streams and Rivers; The problem of Oil Spill; Forest Destruction and Bio-diversity loss; Environmental Effect of Gas Flaring and effluent Discharge and Disposal from the refinery. All the above issues have led to gross socio-economic underdevelopment of the Niger Delta communities. Only the respect for Environmental Rights can guide against this. Once the above had been done, the Nigerian State and Niger Delta militants would have come to a point of negotiated settlement, thus, setting the stage for mutual political amnesty from both parties.

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Chapter 4: Youth Militancy, Amnesty and Security in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.⁹

By

Lysias Dodd Gilbert

Introduction

On 23 February 1966, Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro of the Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS), made up of 159 youths, took up arms against the Nigerian state as a result of the injustice, marginalization, and political exclusion suffered by the Ijaws and other Niger Delta indigenes in the immediate post-colonial Nigeria. Though the “12 Day Revolution” of Boro’s NDVS was decisively crushed and neutralized by the Nigerian state, it marked the beginning of youth militancy in the Niger Delta. Several years of oppressive unitary military dictatorships worsened the plight of the Niger Delta and led to the emergence of the late Ken Saro-Wiwa’s led Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). Despite the avowed commitment of MOSOP to the principle of nonviolence, a well-armed military outfit was expressly formed to repress the protests organized by MOSOP and the Ogoni people, and numerous people were killed via summary executions by the military. Even after the dastardly hanging of Ken and eight Ogoni activists by the Nigerian state on 10 November 1995, more people were still killed, tortured, humiliated, detained, women were raped and the Ogonis were subjected to continued harassment.

The hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa was a pointer to the fact that nonviolent tactics had failed catastrophically to persuade the state and the multinational oil companies (MNOCs) to proactively engage with the Niger Deltans on the salient issues of environmental despoliation, degradation, neglect, politics of exclusion and other forms of injustices imposed on them since the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities at Oloibiri in 1956. Consequently, after the death of the tyrannical Sani Abacha in 1998 and the subsequent democratization process, youths in the Niger Delta resorted to the formation of armed militant groups for the purpose of advancing the cause of the Niger Delta. Sprouting across Niger Delta are several militant groups and armed gangs such as: the Movement for the Survival of Izon Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), Niger Delta Freedom Fighter (NDF), the Federated Niger Delta Izon Communities (FNDIC), the Membutu Boys, the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Militant Force Squad (NDMFS), Niger Delta Coastal Guerillas (NDCG), South-South Liberation Movement (SSLM), Movement for the Sovereign State of the Niger Delta (MSSND), the Niger Delta Strike Force (NDSF), the November 1895 Movement, ELIMOTU, the Arogbo Freedom Fighters, Iduwini Volunteer Force (IVF), the Niger Delta People’s Salvation Front (NDPSF), the Coalition for Militant Action (COMA), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta

⁹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Joint Africa Institute of South Africa/South African Association of Political Studies (AISA/SAAPS) Colloquium, Burgers Park Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa, 15-16 October 2009.

(MEND), the Martyrs Brigade. Some of the armed gangs and cults include: Akaso Marine, Asawana, Black Axe, Black Braziers, Buccaneers, Columbians, Cyprus Marine, D12, Deadly Underdogs, Dey Gbam, Deywell, Elegem Face, Germans, Greenlanders, Icelanders, Italians 2001, KKK, Mafia Lords, Okomera, Outlaws, Vikings, Vultures, Wayingi Marine and several others with criminal inclinations.¹⁰

The resultant effect is that the Niger Delta became a hotbed for the proliferation of dangerous Small Arms and Light Weapon (SALW), resistance, armed conflicts, intensive hostilities, militancy, and criminalities. Youth militias, gangs and cults rose in arms against the Nigerian state and her partners, the MNOC's. Characteristically, the Nigerian state responded with a high level of militarization, violence and repression, until on 25 June 2009, when President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua granted amnesty¹¹ to all youths involved in militancy in the Delta region.

This article based on field research and data from secondary sources therefore argues that, the escalation of youth militancy in the Delta region of Nigeria has created a high level of insecurity not only in the area but also in other geo-political zones of Nigeria and some parts of the Gulf of Guinea. Furthermore, it posits that notwithstanding the current presidential amnesty granted to the militant youths and the de-escalation of conflicts, without the accompaniment of massive infrastructural development, accelerated poverty alleviation palliatives, the restructuring of the unjust revenue allocation formula, and the general redressing of the accumulated environmental injustices of the past, Nigeria may likely witness the resurgence of a more devastating youth militancy in the region, with reverberating deleterious consequences for the security of the West African sub region and the Gulf of Guinea.

Understanding the Dynamics of Youth Militancy in the Niger Delta

Located in the West African sub-region and the Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with a population figure of over 140 million people. The country is also endowed with enormous natural resources, principal amongst which is crude oil, which is found in the Niger Delta. Covering a geographical region of not less than 70,000 square kilometers, and inhabited by over 31 million people, the Niger Delta¹² has remained Nigeria's major source of wealth for over four consecutive decades. It produces the totality of Nigeria's crude oil and gas resources, which accounts for over 90% of the country's export earnings, 40% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and at least 80% of her annual income from the colossal oil infrastructure consisting of "300 fields, 5,284 wells, 7,000 kilometers of pipelines, ten export terminals, 275 flow stations, ten gas plants, four refineries and a massive liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector (Watts, 2008: 43). Ironically, the region was ignored and marginalized by both the Nigerian State and the multinational oil companies (MNOCs), which includes: Shell (Shell Petroleum Development Company, an affiliate of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group), which

¹⁰ It is generally estimated that there are over 116 militant groups including gangs in Rivers state alone.

¹¹ The amnesty period lasted from 6th August to 4th October 2009.

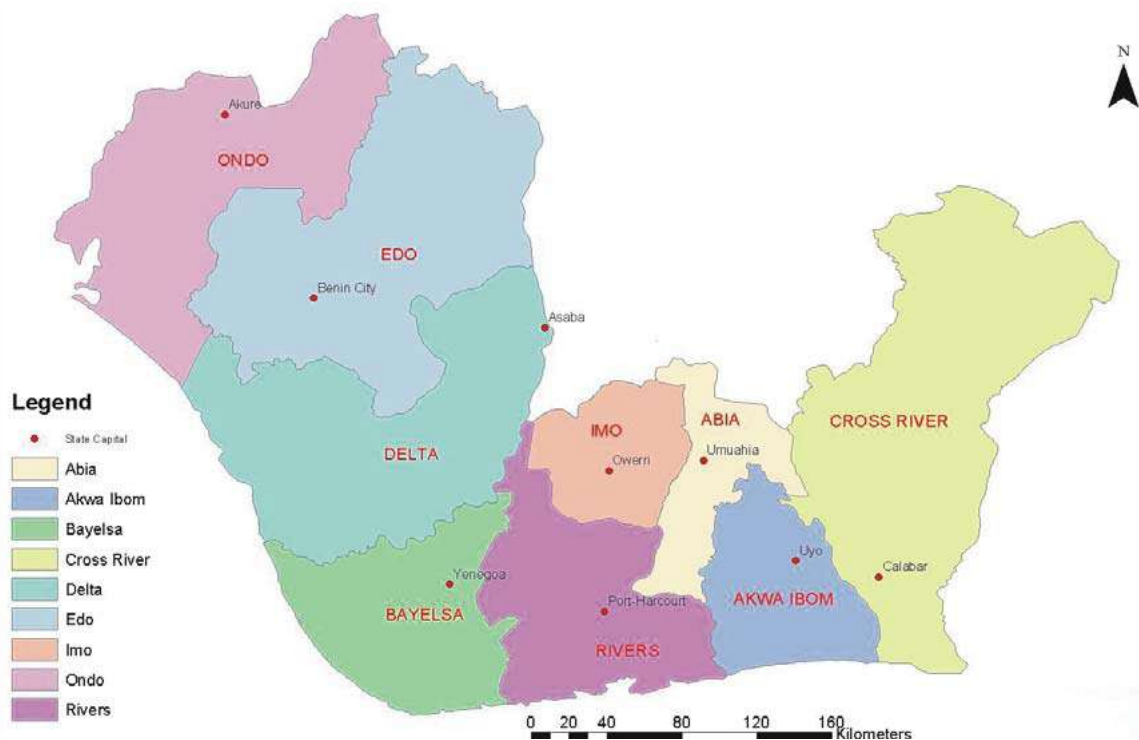
¹² The Niger Delta consists of nine states: Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers, and 185 local government areas in Nigeria. However, Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers states collectively account for the bulk of Nigeria's oil production.

produces more than 40 percent of crude oil, Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU), Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL), Nigerian Agip Oil Company Limited (NAOC), Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited (EPNL), and Texaco Overseas Petroleum Company of Nigeria Unlimited (TOPCON) that have been operating in the region on the basis of joint venture agreements with the Nigerian government through Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Several peaceful and non-violent attempts to draw their attention to the plight of the Niger Delta were unsuccessful. Until recently, the MNOCs virtually

disregarded and treated with contempt the demands of the oil producing communities. Rather, they provided logistic and material support to state security services, which granted them protection for continued operations and viciously repressed the host communities for daring to speak out (Offi, 1996: 17). A typical example was the Umuechem massacre on 31 October 1990, where at least 80 people were killed and about 495 houses burnt as a result of SPDC's rash invitation of Nigeria Mobile Police (MOPOL) to "fight" youths on a peaceful protest (ICG, 2006: 6).

Consequently, general underdevelopment, and ecological pollution and devastation became the conspicuous features of the region. As the contradiction of marginalization, environmental pollution, biodiversity destruction, and overbearing poverty (amidst abundant wealth generation) became increasingly unbearable to the people of the Delta region, youths initially resorted to the formation of a plethora of militant ethnic Environmental Movement Organizations (EMOs) for

Figure 1: Showing States of the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria.



Source: Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan, 2007.

the purpose of championing the cause of the Niger Delta (Ikelegbe, 2001: 440-442; Omeje, 2006: 479). Flowering across the Niger Delta were militant youth movements such as: Isoko National Youth Movement (INYM), Movement for the Survival of Itsekiri Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN), Urhobo Youth Movement (UYOMO), Egi Youth Federation (EYF), Ikwerre Youth Movement (IYM), and Ijaw Youth Council (IYC)—(an umbrella organization for all Ijaw youths).

However, the successful return of Nigeria to a democratic dispensation on 29 May 1999 marked a major turning point in the subsequent brazenness of youth militancy in the Niger Delta. In addition, politicians especially of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the three core Niger Delta states (Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers), fanned the flames of youth militancy by the recruitment and supply of arms to militants, gangs and cults for the purpose of rigging of elections, intimidation, harassment and outright assassination of political opponents. Principal amongst them were Asari Dokubo and Tom Ateke's groups, which were obviously sponsored by the Peter Odili's government in Rivers state. However, when Dokubo and Odili fell out after the 2003 elections, he quickly turned to the art of populism by transforming his followers into NDPVF, which adopted an "overtly political rhetoric, identifying itself in opposition to the perceived marginalization and neglect of the Niger Delta and framing its activities in terms of strident political demands" (HRW, 2008: 57). The subsequent hegemonic and survivalist-competition between Dokubo's and Ateke's NDPVF and NDV respectively, compromised the security situation in Rivers state, triggered an unprecedented increase in the global price of crude oil above \$50, and led to the loss of several lives and properties of the Deltans (HRW, 2005: 2-3).

The arrest of Dokubo in 2005 led to the formation of a more deadly and faceless youth group known as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which sought to unite some militant groups in the region, embarked on a systematic strategy of disruption of MNOC infrastructure and activities, and the kidnapping of foreign oil workers as an extra legal method and bargaining weapon for negotiation, and redressing the political cum socio-economic dehumanizing conditions of the Niger Delta. However, no one gave consideration to the colossal destruction, perversion and virtual criminalities youth militancy degenerated to thereafter. These include the following:

□ **Destruction and Vandalization of Petroleum Infrastructure**

The formation of MEND by delta youths led to the systematic disruption and destruction of the massive petroleum infrastructure in the delta region in particular and Nigeria in general. In an attempt to paralyze the ability of the Nigerian state to export crude oil, MEND embarked on the strategic destruction of some of the petroleum facilities jointly owned by MNOCs and the Nigerian state with a high level of unprecedented regularity, precision and intensity. A few pointers will suffice:

- On January 11 2006, MEND destroyed a major crude oil pipeline operated by SPDC at Forcados in Delta state and about 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil were lost.

- On January 11 2006, SPDC facility was attacked in Port Harcourt, Rivers state: 17 soldiers were killed and unidentified number of youths and SPDC staff were also killed.
- On February 18 2006, youths under the auspices of MEND attacked and routed JTF men on Wilbross barge 318, and “destroyed the offshore Forcados crude loading platform, the Ekeremore-Yeye manifold and the NNPC Escravos-Lagos gas pipeline in Chanomi Creek” (Watts, 2007: 647).
- By the end of June 2006, about 19 attacks were carried out on MNOCs and over \$2.18 billion were lost.
- While the Nigerian economy lost \$6.8 billion between 1999 and 2005, by November 2006, SPDC reported that the losses had increased to \$9 billion since January 2006 (that was \$61 million dollars per day) due to youth militancy.
- The report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND) shows that \$27.2 billion were lost due to sabotage by youth militancy in 2006; \$18.8 billion were lost in 2007 and \$20.7 was lost in the first nine months of 2008.
- In addition, TCND also stated that over 1000 persons were killed in the first seven months of 2008.
- By the first quarter of 2009, the quantity of oil produced by Nigeria had dropped from the pre-2006 figure of 2.6 million bpd to less than 2.0 million bpd, due to youth militancy.

Despite the huge militarization of the delta region by the Nigerian state through the Joint Task Force (JTF)¹³, there was monumental instability in the region which posed a major national security concern to the Nigerian state.

□ **Hostage Taking**

When hostage-taking was started by MEND in early 2006, it was basically for the purpose of drawing official and global attention to the pervasive environmental, political cum socio-economic injustices prevalent in the oil-rich region of Niger Delta, and its emphasis was on foreigners working for the MNOCs. In a deliberate attempt to rattle the Nigerian state and bargain for the release of Chief Diepreye Alamiesegha and Alhaji Asari Dokubo (two notable Ijaw sons) who were arrested in 2005 for money laundering and treasonable felony respectively, MEND embarked on series of kidnapping of expatriate workers. Typical examples include the following:

- On 10 January 2006, four SPDC foreign workers were kidnapped from the EA oil field. They were released after twenty days.
- On January 11 2006, four expatriate workers of Tidex Nigeria Limited, a contracting firm with SPDC were abducted at a community close to Ekeremor in Bayelsa State.

¹³ JTF also codenamed ‘Operation Restore Hope’ is a combined state force specially created for the pacification of the Niger Delta. It is composed of troops from the Air Force, Army, Navy and Mobile Police.

- On 18 February 2006, MEND abducted nine foreign workers employed by WILBROS at SPDC's Forcados oil terminal. The abducted workers were released in batches after several weeks of intense negotiations involving some MNOCs, the Nigerian state, representatives of the US and British governments, some militants and some prominent Ijaw leaders (Okonta, 2007).

Ostensibly, it was in the course of negotiations between the militants, MNOCs and officials of the Nigerian state for the release of the nine foreign WILBROS workers taken hostage by MEND at SPDC's Forcados oil terminal, that government officials offered irresistible amount of foreign currency to the 'freedom fighters' in place of their demands. The money was collected and the abductees were released but hostage taking as an arm-twisting method by Niger Delta militants to extract commitment from the Nigerian state and MNOCs took a dangerously downward slide and the line between it and pure criminality became blurred. Its motivations and outcome became solely pecuniary, as several youths got involved in the business for their personal enrichment.

Consequently, there was rampant multiplicity of armed gangs, militias and cult groups whose main purpose appears to be their involvement in the highly lucrative criminal business of hostage taking for ransom instead of fighting for the redress of the blatant injustices in the Delta region. By the end of January 2009, it was estimated that the total number of youths involved in one form of militancy or the other was close to 50,000¹⁴- more than 50% of the Nigerian Armed Forces, which was about 85,000 personnel as at 2007. These youths were armed with over 250,000 assorted weapons made up of various rifles, bazookas, grenade launchers and rockets, excluding ammunitions and over or about 6,000 weapons stolen and/or 'bought' from the Nigerian army armory (The Guardian, 2009: 5 October). Due to the exodus of expatriate workers from the Niger Delta, these well armed militant youths shifted their focus to children, the elderly, relatives of politicians and ordinary citizens of the region who appeared to have lucrative ransom value. Relevant examples embrace the under-listed:

- Between 26th June and 12th July 2007, three innocent children were unconscionably kidnapped for ransom in Rivers state. The first was Michael Stewart, the son of Linda Stewart, a member of the Rivers State House of Assembly from Okrika, who was abducted from a private school in Port Harcourt, and was only released when a ransom of about \$42, 373 (N5 million) was paid; followed by Margaret Hills, a three year-old Briton with a Nigerian mother, who was taken hostage on 5th July 2007. Her abductors initially demanded \$50 million dollars. On 12th July 2007, two-year-old Samuel Amadi, son of Eze Francis Amadi, the traditional ruler of Iriebe community in Obio/Akpor Local Government council of Rivers state was kidnapped. His kidnappers called his father and at first asked for \$423,729 (N50 million).
- Madam Cecelia Omehia, the mother of Celestine Omehia, the immediate past Governor of Rivers state was abducted shortly before his swearing in ceremony as governor on 29th May 2007.

¹⁴ A top Nigerian security personnel disclosed this to the author during his field research in the Niger Delta in January 2009.

- Isaac Kekemeke, former secretary to the Ondo state government, was kidnapped for six hours on 5th November 2007.
- Pa Mba, a 75 year old father of Christian Mba, the former member representing Andoni Local Government area in Rivers state House of Assembly was taken on 2nd December 2007.
- December 9th 2007, was the turn of 80 year old Pa Simeon Ebebi, the traditional ruler of Aleibiri Kingdom, and father of the Deputy Governor of Bayelsa state, Mr. Perembowei Ebebi who was kidnapped by armed groups.
- Margaret Seinye Lulu Briggs, wife of an Ijaw oil magnate, Chief Lulu Briggs was also abducted on February 6, 2008.
- January 5, 2009 also witnessed the hijacking of Elechi Amadi, a retired Captain, novelist and 75 year old elder statesman in Rivers State.
- Gladys Daukoru, wife of Edmond Daukoru, former petroleum minister, who is now the traditional ruler of Nembe in Bayelsa State, was seized on February 2, 2009, and a whopping sum of \$2.5 million ransom was allegedly paid as ransom.
- As recent as 11 September 2009, seven kidnappers (culprits) were arrested and paraded for the abduction of Mrs. Rosaline Eruani, mother of the state Commissioner for Health, Dr. Azipabu Eruani. They were paid about \$18,750 (N3 million), to secure the release of their victim. Amongst them were two policemen and a relation of the commissioner.

According to *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*; about 400 (citizens and foreigners) persons were taken hostage in an estimated 100 incidents in 2007.¹⁵ In 2008, over 300 persons were abducted in the first nine months, and in Rivers state alone, between January and February 2009, more than seven indigenes were kidnapped. Definitely, youth militancy had become a major source of instability and security threat not only to expatriates and MNOC workers but also to the delta people whose cause youths were supposed to be fighting in the first place.

□ Oil Theft

The involvement of delta militant youths in the **environmentally** unfriendly act of oil theft popularly known as illegal oil bunkering is another major source of insecurity both to the Niger Deltans and Nigeria. This criminal but economically lucrative act involves the process whereby oil is siphoned from Nigeria's petroleum infrastructure into barges and transported from the creeks to standby ships offshore for sale and refining in other countries of the world. Illegal bunkering also includes the stealing of condensate and other refined petroleum products like kerosene and diesel from vandalized pipelines,

¹⁵ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, '2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices',

which are usually sold at the local markets. It was estimated that Nigeria loses between 70,000 and 300, 000 barrels of crude oil per day to oil theft (ICG, 2006: 8). In corroboration of this fact, TCND reported that Nigeria lost about \$1.9 billion (N283 billion) to illegal oil bunkering in 2006 and \$3 billion (N430 billion) in the first seven months of 2008.

Though oil theft has been on for years, but the massive involvement of Delta militant youths gave it a disreputable boost and made it one of the main sources of instability in the delta region. In addition, it became a veritable source of income for the purchase of more sophisticated arms and ammunition. At the outset, their participation in this highly beneficial business entailed the provision of armed escort for barges from the creeks to the high sea, where the stolen oil was siphoned into large tankers (ship) for onward transportation to foreign countries. However, with time, their commercial, financial cum technical capacities increased. Consequently, they became consolidated in the business through the acquisition of more sophisticated weapons, equipment and construction of several small scale refineries. According to JTF, out of an estimated 411 illegal refineries operational in the Delta region, 111 were destroyed in July 2008 (Davies, 2009: 151-152).

Furthermore, some militant youths are known to have fought fiercely for the control of bunkering territories and routes leading to the death of several people, and carried out reprisal acts of vandalism against oil infrastructure when arrested by the state security services. For example, it is widely held that the intense fighting that led to the loss of several lives and properties, between Dokubo's NDPVF and Ateke's NDV in 2004 was also connected with the control of bunkering routes at Cawthorne Channel in Rivers state; and on 1st March 2009, some armed groups blew up the Escravos crude oil pipeline, located between Yokri (an Ijaw community) in Ogulagha kingdom and Ogidigben, (an Itsekiri community) in Warri South-West local government area of Delta state, because their barges filled with stolen oil were apprehended by the JTF in January 2009.

Table: 1 Value of Nigeria's Average Daily Oil Production Stolen and Shut-in 2000-2008

Year	Av. Price Bonny Light Crude (USD)	Volume Stolen bpd	Value of Oil Stolen (USD)	Assumed Production Shut-in bpd	Value of Production Shut-in (USD)	Daily Av. Stolen & Shut-in	Total Value (USD)
2000	28.49			250,000	\$2.6 billion		
2001	24.50			200,000	\$1.8 billion		
2002	25.15			370,000	\$3.4 billion		
2003	28.76	300,000	\$3.2 billion	350,000	\$3.7 billion	650,000	\$6.9 billion
2004	38.27	300,000	\$4.2 billion	230,000	\$3.2 billion	530,000	\$6.4 billion
2005	55.67	250,000	\$5.1 billion	180,000	\$3.7 billion	430,000	\$8.8 billion
2006	66.84	100,000	\$2.4 billion	600,000	\$14.6 billion	700,000	\$17.0 billion
2007	75.14	100,000	\$2.7 billion	600,000	\$16.5 billion	700,000	\$19.2 billion
2008	115.81	150,000	\$6.3 billion	650,000	\$27.5 billion	800,000	\$33.8 billion

Source: Stephen Davis, 2009.

□ **Intra/Inter-Gang Wars and Doubtful Use by Political Elites**

Intra and inter-gang turf wars within and between youth militant groups was also one of the salient fact of instability in the delta region and its environs. According to Augustine Ikelegbe, "...factionalization, leadership crises and conflicts among the youth groups have resulted in violent and bloody fighting" (Ikelegbe, 2006: 118). A few pointers include:

- The internal disagreements, betrayals and assassinations within Ateke Tom's Icelanders (which later metamorphosed to NDV), led to the formation of Soboma George's Outlaw gang in 2005.
- The brutal 2007 post-election conflict in Port Harcourt, eastern part of the delta region, and Rivers state in general, was as a result of the inter gang warfare between Ateke Tom's NDV (ably supported by other gangs such as: Axemen, Bush Boys, Deebam and Klansmen), and Soboma George's Outlaw. More than 100 people were killed.

In addition, the doubtful use of militant youths by political elites for the violent intimidation and assassination of political opponents, and outright electoral rigging in favor of the ruling party was one of the conspicuous causes of insecurity in the Niger Delta. The 2003 and 2007 general elections, were characterized by massive violence and electoral fraud perpetrated by youths in the delta region to give victories to politicians especially from the ruling PDP. Several youth groups were mobilized, paid, armed and deployed during the elections. Typical examples were:

- In Nembe (Bassambri) and Oporoma, towns in Bayelsa state, youths were also violently deployed for political purposes during the 2003 elections and this resulted to the loss of several lives (ICG, 2006: 3).

- Soboma George's (Outlaw) group was openly courted and sponsored by the Odili and ill-fated Celestine Omehia's government before and during the 2007 elections in Rivers state.

The blatant injustices meted to the deltans by the MNOCs and the Nigerian state, coupled with the high level of impoverishment and unemployment in the delta region, predisposed youths to participation in various kinds of unlawful acts which gave rise to insecurity in the region, and spilled over to other geo-political zones of Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. It was against this backdrop that the Nigerian President announced the amnesty package to the restive delta youths in June 2009.

Effects of Youth Militancy in other Geo-Political Zones of Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea

Despite the negative socio-economic impact of youth militancy on Nigeria, the culture of impunity as a result of political patronages and the pecuniary rewards enjoyed by some delta youths involved in the act of hostage taking, became an attraction to some youths and citizens from other geo-political¹⁶ zones of Nigeria, especially the South-East. Due to its proximity to the delta region (South-South),¹⁷ the South-East geo-political zone¹⁸ is ostensibly, the most affected by the malady of kidnapping for ransom.

Youths armed with sophisticated weapons are on the prowl hijacking several people in exchange for large sums of money and thereby increasing the level of insecurity in the geo-political zone. In Anambra state for example, Dr. (Mrs.) Ego Uzozie (the Commissioner for Women Affairs) was kidnapped in 2006 and later released after payment of ransom; Dr Tochukwu Mbachu, Chairman of the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) in Anambra State, was equally abducted in 2008 and ransom paid for his freedom; Chief Anthony O. Erukeme, a notable businessman was taken hostage and freed after money exchanged hands; Chief Pius Ogbuawa, a prominent businessman was also hijacked and released only after paying huge sum of money; in the first week of January 2009, the younger brother to Chief Barth Onugbolu, former Speaker of Anambra state House of Assembly, was abducted and freed after the payment of \$20, 666.2 (N2.5 million); on 16th August 2009, a popular Nollywood actor and former broadcaster, Chief Pete Edochie was kidnapped for financial gains (\$375,000-N60 million was initially demanded for his release); and on 23rd August 2009, Chief Godwin Okeke (known as

16 Though not constitutionally recognized, for political expediency Nigeria is divided into six geo-political zones.

17 The South-South consists of six states namely: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo and Rivers. Three of these states (Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers) are usually designated as the core delta states because of their geographical location in the heart of the delta, and the fact that they collectively account for the bulk of Nigeria's oil production.

18 The South-East zone consists of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states. However, Abia and Imo are also categorized as Niger Delta states.

G.U.O), a popular Onitsha based transporter and industrialist was also abducted (Ujumadu, 2009).

It is also worth mentioning that, hostage taking for financial gratification is equally considered a booming business in other states of the south-east zone. Some Abia state indigenes interviewed confirmed that they did not travel home during the 2008 Christmas holiday due to the alarming insecurities associated with hostage taking.¹⁹ On 15 January 2009, the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) president handed over to the Abia state government a list of 15 members of the legal profession who had been kidnapped. The list included magistrates, judges and the Solicitor General of Abia State, who was violently kidnapped and only regained his freedom when ransom was paid. Disturbed by the embarrassing security crisis precipitated by kidnapers in the state, the governor Chief Theodore Orji called a meeting of traditional rulers, local government chairmen and other stakeholders and appealed to them to concertedly join in the effort to rid the state of hijackers. He noted that:

It is bad when you can no longer move about freely. Nightlife is lost, as people are afraid to go out. I am not even at rest whenever I am outside the state as I always think of who might have been kidnapped again. And when the victims are released, they don't give information about their travails (Azeez, 2009: http://www.tribune.com.ng/05012009/fri/igbo_feat.html).

However, Abia kidnapers are perhaps unperturbed by all the security arrangements geared towards checkmating their criminal activities. Recent victims of kidnap in the state include: two Indian expatriates working at Dana Company, abducted on 11 September 2009; Prof. Stephen Emejuaiwe, Chairman of the State Independent Electoral Commission; Chief Felix Anyansi Agwu, Chairman of Enyimba International Football; Chief Monday Ejegbu, a state lawmaker (Udejah et al, 2009).

Similarly, Eboinyi, Enugu and Imo states are undergoing the pangs of insecurity due to kidnapping. A few pointers will suffice:

- On April 6 2009, an Italian expatriate engineer, known as Joseph, working with Marlum Construction, a company that executes projects at the new Abakaliki capital development city was kidnapped in Eboinyi state, and the sum of \$882,353 (N150 million) was demanded (Agbo, 2009).
- On 9th April 2009, Mr. Kingsley Osuala, the South-East Regional Manager of Guaranty Trust Bank Plc, was abducted in Enugu state, and the sum of \$280,000 (N50 million) was named as the price for his freedom.
- In Imo state, several people including the following have been recently kidnapped: Frank Nneji, ABC Transport boss; Chief Peter Orji, former Commissioner of Works and Transport; Eze Chijioke Okwara, the traditional ruler of (Eshi) Nkwerre, Rev. Fr. Matthew Cherian, an Indian Catholic Priest on a

¹⁹ Using the purposive random sampling technique, I conducted personal interviews with 10 respondents each from Abia and Imo states between December 2008 and January 2009 in Port Harcourt, Rivers state of Nigeria.

missionary work in Nigeria, and Cyril Anyanwu, the Special Adviser to Governor Ohakim on Due Process (Udejah et al, *ibid*).

Surprisingly, kidnapping and its attendant insecurity are also being replicated by youths in the South-West and North Central geo-political zones of Nigeria. On 21st May 2009, Honorable Hudewu Suru Avoseh, representing Badagry Constituency II, in Lagos state House of Assembly was abducted; in July 2009, a 14 year boy was also kidnapped at Ikotun in Lagos state and the gang of four youths in their mid twenties collected \$2,500 (N400, 000) as ransom before he was released; between 1st and 4th August 2009, seven people were kidnapped in Ekiti state of South West Nigeria (Suleiman, 2009).

Furthermore, in North Central Nigeria, the capital city Abuja, Benue, and Kaduna states are equally grappling with the cankerworm of hostage taking. The State Security Service (SSS) announced on 17th September 2009, that it stymied attempts to kidnap Dr. Sam Egwu, the Federal Minister of Education, and Adetokunbo Kayode his counterpart in the Ministry of Labor by three university youths and a fifty-eight year old man in Abuja (Taiwo, 2009). In Benue state, an octogenarian, Chief Simon Shango, a former Chairman of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was kidnapped in September 2009; and in Kaduna state, Julie Mulligan, a Canadian citizen was hijacked on 14th April, 2009; while the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Mr. Waje Yayok, was recently abducted on 21st September 2009, by unidentified persons demanding a ransom of \$250,000, which is equivalent to N40 million.

In a rich but poor country, where there is a high level of poverty and unemployment occasioned by corruption and poor governance, and about 70% of the people live below \$1 per day, it is perhaps not surprising that notwithstanding the negative security consequences of hostage taking, youths in virtually all geo-political zones of Nigeria have embraced it as a way of sustaining themselves in the harsh economic environment. Ostensibly, it was against this backdrop of pecuniary considerations that some delta youths gladly offered their services as mercenaries for a fee of \$5,000, in an ill-advised attempt to violently overthrow the government of President Theodore Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea in March 2005 and February 2009 respectively (Ushigiale, 2009). Clearly, the successful overthrow of a legitimately constituted government in Equatorial Guinea by militant delta youths would have bolstered their credibility and ushered in an era of grave insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, as the insurgency could have spilled over to Cameroon, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe and all countries in the region where there are suppressed agitations for regime change.

Furthermore, youth militancy in the delta region characterized by unprecedented criminalities, compromised the security situation in Nigerian territorial waters and made it the second most hazardous in 2008. Besides, it is reported that militant youths launched not less than eight offensive attacks against Cameroun, between 2007 and 2009 (ICG, 2009: 5-6). Therefore, the current unprecedented de-escalation of youth militancy in the delta region, occasioned by the amnesty granted by Umaru Yar'Adua enhances the security of not only Nigeria but also the Gulf of Guinea.

Youth Militancy, Amnesty and Security in the Niger Delta

The use of amnesty by the Nigerian government as a strategic state policy for diffusing youth militancy in the Niger Delta started in 1967 when General Yakubu Gowon pardoned late Isaac Adaka Boro and his key NDVF lieutenants who were sentenced to death as a result of their insurgency in February 1966. Subsequently, the Nigerian state signed a peace accord with militant delta youths led by Asari's (NDPVF) and Tom's (NDV) in October 2004 during Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's presidency. The terms of the accord also included a general pardon for all youths who took up arms against the federation, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programme (DDR), and the promise of 4,000 jobs (Hazen & Horner, 2007: 95). Within a period of eight months (October 2004 – June 2005), over 5000 weapons were collected through the demobilization programme, and there was marked reduction in youth militancy during that brief period. However, there was noticeable lack of transparency and insincerity on the part of the Nigerian state as officials were apparently only interested in the disarmament programme as a stand-alone act. Jobs were not provided for the reintegration of the youths, the underlying root causes of youth militancy in the delta region were also not tackled and eventually, Asari was arrested in September 2005.

Against this backdrop therefore, the announcement of an amnesty for militant delta youths by President Yar'Adua's administration in June 2009 was not novel and was not surprisingly, initially greeted with a high level of skepticism by most people (particularly youths) in the region. Nevertheless, as prominent Niger Deltans including the governor of Bayelsa state, Timipre Sylva, and Timi Alaibe, honorary special adviser to President Umaru Yar'Adua on Niger Delta, reassured the youths of government's sincerity in addressing the injustices in the region, coupled with the release of Henry Okah,²⁰ about 15,000 militants cautiously but progressively accepted the amnesty and turned in their arms and ammunitions. A few pointers will suffice:

- Having released Henry Okah (13 July 2009), who was supposedly the leader of MEND, on 7th August 2009 thirty-two (32) militant youth leaders from Bayelsa state led by Victor Ebikabowei popularly known as General Boyloaf embraced the amnesty and publicly surrendered their weapons on 22 August 2009. The Presidential Amnesty Implementation Committee recorded a total number of 520 assorted arms, 16 gunboats, and 95,970 rounds of ammunition.
- On the 13th August 2009, Soboma George of Outlaws cult group led twenty (20) militants to accept the amnesty and surrendered 36 weapons in Rivers state. Ateke Tom and Fara Dagogo of NDV and NDSF respectively, turned in their arms also on 3rd October 2009.
- In Delta state, Government Ekpemupolo (aka Tompolo or GOC), a key militant of MEND accepted the amnesty on 3rd October 2009 and surrendered over 50 different weapons, heaps of dynamites, tear gases and several boxes of ammunitions, on 4th October 2009, the last day of the amnesty programme.

²⁰ Henry Okah, the putative leader of MEND was released on the 13th of July 2009.

Currently, the heightened insecurity hitherto precipitated by youth militancy in the region has reduced significantly as virtually all known delta militant youths have accepted the amnesty and surrendered their weapons by the expiration date on 4th October 2009. Interestingly, Nigeria's oil production capacity which was about 1.2 million bpd at the height of militancy rose to 2.4 million bpd (more than the 1.7 million bpd OPEC Quota) due to cessation of hostilities by youths in the region and several MNOCs and construction companies have returned to the region. It is expedient therefore that, the current positive security development should be sustained and possibly improved upon. Nevertheless, cognizant of the fact that Yar'Adua's government is yet to unveil a holistic post-amnesty plan, what are the prospects of checkmating the resurgence of youth militancy and ensuring sustainable security in the delta region?

Table 2: Synopsis of Key Militants that Accepted the Amnesty in 2009.

S/NO	Names	Date of Acceptance	Estimated Arms and Ammunitions Surrendered
1.	Solomon Ndigbara alias Osama bin Laden.	26 June 2009	Gave up 11 arms and 1,000 ammunitions.
2.	Henry Okah	13 July 2009	Though the supposed leader of MEND, Okah did not surrender any arm because he had been arrested in Angola and extradited to Nigeria since February 2008; where he was detained and was facing closed trial on 62 count charges.
3.	Victor Ben Ebikabowei alias General Boyloaf and 31 other militants; including Africa Owei, Joshua Macaiver and Ezizi Ogunboss.	7 August 2009	Surrendered an assortment of arms totalling 520, ammunitions valued at 95,970 rounds and 16 gunboats.
4.	Soboma George of Outlaws cult group.	13 August 2009	Surrendered 36 assorted weapons.
5.	Kile Selky Torughedi (Young Shall Grow).	5 September 2009	Gave up an assortment of arms totalling 100 weapons, ammunitions worth 100, 000 rounds and 3 gunboats.
6.	Ateke Tom of NDV.	1 October 2009	Exact number is unknown but it included: anti-aircraft launchers, GPMG, AK-47 rifles, Mark 4 rifles, pistons and loads of ammunition.
7.	Mafimisebi Othello and the Gwama Boys of Ilaje.	3 October 2009	Surrendered different weapons, such as: sub-machine guns, AK-47 rifles, hundreds of live ammunition and arrows.
8.	Biibo Ajube, second in command to Tompolo.	3 October 2009	Surrendered several AK-47 rifles, heaps of ammunitions, hand grenades, rocket launchers and explosives.
9.	Fara Dagogo of NDSF	3 October 2009	Exact number is unknown but it also

			included: anti-aircraft launchers, GPMG, AK-47 rifles, Mark 4 rifles, pistols and loads of ammunition.
10.	Government Ekpemupolo (aka Tompolo or GOC), a key militant of MEND.	3 October 2009	Surrendered over 117 assorted weapons, 20 bullet proof jackets, numerous boxes of ammunitions, 26 camouflage uniforms, loads of dynamites, tear gases on 4 th October 2009; the last day of the amnesty.

Source: Compiled by the author in January 2010.

Conclusion: Checkmating the Resurgence of Youth Militancy in the Niger Delta

To the extent that the key actors involved in youth militancy in the delta region have embraced the amnesty programme and ‘surrendered their arms’, it can be justifiably asserted that it was highly successful. Clearly, without a congenial atmosphere of peace devoid of instability and criminalities, there can be no meaningful development. Nonetheless, it is worthy of note that, any credible policy aimed at checkmating the resurgence of youth militancy and ensuring the sustainability of peace and security in the Niger Delta must pragmatically address the underlying causes of the agitations in the first instance. Such recurring issues as: underdevelopment, poverty, unemployment, access to and equitable distribution of resources, and environmental degradation and destruction should be handled with a high level of transparency, honesty and urgency. Experience from the amnesty granted to militants in 2004 is symptomatic of the insincerity and non-committal attitude of the Nigerian state towards the holistic resolution of the root causes of the delta conflicts. However, since Yar’Adua’s administration has indicated interest in resolving the imbroglio, it is important that it refers back to the TCND’s report submitted since December 2008. Despite some criticisms of the report, its recommendations could be adjusted and used as a realistic starting point for the resolution of the delta conflicts. The Technical Committee’s recommendations cover some salient issues concerning youth militancy in the delta region: They include:

- Review of some laws which are generally believed to be inimical to the development of the Niger Delta people.
- Discouragement of the establishment of new militant camps and exposure of criminals.
- Increase of derivation revenues to 25 per cent (that is additional 12 per cent for the Delta states).
- Creation of State Oil Producing Area Development Commissions for accelerated development.
- Establishment of a Niger Delta Special Infrastructure Intervention Fund for immediate capital projects.
- Creation of a Niger Delta Futures Trust Fund and its community equivalent – the Community Trust Fund.
- Establishment by 2010 of a regulation that compels oil companies to have insurance bonds against environmental pollution, strengthening independent

- regulation of oil pollution and work towards an effective environmental impact assessment mechanism, among others.
- Formation of a Multi-Stakeholder Niger Delta Policy and Project Compliance Monitoring Agency to monitor implementation of these recommendations and other programmes in the Niger Delta (TNCND, 2008).

Furthermore, due to the sordid human rights violations by the JTF, there is an urgent need for the demilitarization of the delta region; the regular police force should be adequately motivated and equipped for effective performance of their constitutional duties in the region. In addition, it is worthy of note that some significant issues that should equally be addressed include the following:

- ❖ The conscientious and credible rehabilitation of the militants and not just the unsustainable practice of payment of monthly allowances to them. This should be done with the aim of equipping them with alternative realistic and viable youth empowerment means of livelihood, and the provision of employments/loans or grants for small scale businesses (for them) so as to properly reintegrate them into the civil society, and discourage their relapse into opportunistic militancy/violence. The federal government should drop its 'monopoly of wisdom stance' and seek advice, assistance and collaboration with experienced and relevant international NGOs, states and institutions to promote the DDR, and accelerated development in the region. It is only by so doing that the DDR process would be successfully completed; otherwise the 'partially disarmed', demobilized, and disappointed hungry unemployed delta youths stand the chance of unleashing more devastating mayhem on the socio-economic cum political fabric of Nigeria and its environs.
- ❖ Related to the above is the need for the provision of employment and skills acquisition/ economic empowerment schemes for delta youths in general. With the monumental level of underemployment and unemployment, and the availability of several 'unsurrendered' weapons, the Niger Delta is awash with a mass of frustrated youths that could be easily persuaded, recruited and used for a more devastating round of militancy in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.
- ❖ Furthermore, the Federal government should mobilize and mandate relevant intelligence agencies to comb the Niger Delta states and mop up hidden or unsurrendered arms and ammunitions. Perhaps, what the Federal government should have done at the beginning of the amnesty period was to have persuaded the militants to lead security operatives to their respective armories, instead of convincing them to surrender their weapons themselves. Clearly, this created a security loophole which was capitalized on by some militants, who may not have surrendered the totality of their weapons. If the resurgence of youth militancy must be checked, there is a dire need to rid the region of the over 3 million SALWs that have caused over 75,000 deaths in the last 10 years.
- ❖ Besides, it is imperative that government should check the use of the demobilized or other delta youths by political elites in the forth coming elections. In Bayelsa state for example, there is a high level of politicization of the amnesty as militants are virtually divided into two political camps: Governor Timipre and Alaibe – two

- gubernatorial candidates for the 2011 elections. Cognizant of the fact that several delta youths were purposefully financially empowered and armed for the expression of electoral violence and malpractices in the 2003 and 2007 general elections by politicians, if a repetition is allowed to prevail before, during and after the 2011 elections, of course there would definitely be a resurgence of youth militancy in the delta region. Because after the elections, it would be difficult for the political godfathers to retrieve the arms and ammunitions from the youths.
- ❖ The current ill-health of President Yar'Adua should not be used as an excuse for the derailment of the post-amnesty agenda of the Nigerian state with regards to the Delta youths and region. Since a prominent feature of public administration is continuity, political power should be constitutionally²¹ handed over to the Vice-President (Dr. Goodluck Jonathan), to enable him unveil the government's post-amnesty plan and embark on its aggressive implementation forthwith. The (continued) refusal of Yar'Adua to handover to Jonathan (who is from a core Niger Delta state-Bayelsa), despite the obvious constitutional provision, is symptomatic of the deliberate politics of denial, exclusion, marginalization and oppression orchestrated and perpetrated against the Niger Delta minorities by successive administrations controlled by the three major ethnicities since independence. If this unconstitutionality is successfully sustained, it is axiomatic that there would be a resurgence of youth militancy because the message perhaps would indisputably clear: the Niger Delta minorities are not entitled to the presidency of the country, regardless of the fact that the development and economic sustenance of the Nigerian state is being borne by the region for well over four consecutive decades. As a matter of urgency, Yar'Adua should be impeached for breaching an important constitutional provision (Section 145) and virtually throwing the country into politico-constitutional crisis. Furthermore, his current health travails renders him physically unfit and therefore constitutionally impeachable in accordance to section 144 of the same Nigerian constitution.
 - ❖ In addition to ensuring that MNOCs engage in good corporate social responsibility practices, it is necessary to impress on them, as a matter of deliberate policy, to massively employ and train people of Niger Delta extraction for effective technical and managerial positions. This will eventually ensure that they become stakeholders in the companies and thereby act as one of the 'insurance mechanisms' that would deter delta youths from disrupting their (MNOCs) activities in the future.
 - ❖ Moreover, the Nigerian state should pragmatically diversify its economy, as over reliance on petroleum rents from the Niger Delta are the major reasons why the state desperately represses the deltans at the slightest provocation. The urgent diversification of the Nigerian economy will trigger qualitative development and bring to an end its rentier, predatory and beleaguered disposition. The

²¹ Section 145 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, makes it mandatory for the president to transmit a declaration to the leaders of both chambers of the federal legislature whenever he is proceeding on vacation or unable to discharge his constitutional functions due to one reason or the other. This of course paves way for the vice-president to discharge his functions as the Acting President. Unfortunately, Yar'Adua left Nigeria to seek medical attention in Saudi Arabia since 23 November 2009 without fulfilling section 145 of the constitution; and has been out of the country for close to 60 days now.

development of agricultural and mineral resources from other parts of Nigeria will help in the provision of employment for several people, and also ensure the shifting of the undue attention and emphasis being placed on oil and gas from the Niger Delta.

- ❖ Likewise, there is need for the eventual increase of the derivation revenues to fifty percent as it was in the pre-petroleum era in Nigeria. This would to a great extent help to erase the general impression created by the Nigerian state when it abrogated the fifty percent derivation principle; that because they are minorities, the Niger Deltans are inconsequential, can be denied their legitimate entitlements, and militarily crushed whenever they protest (no matter how peaceful the protests might be). However, due to the profligacy and kleptocratic disposition of some 'elected' representatives of the Delta people, the constitutional imperativeness for the involvement of legitimate stakeholders from the various communities (region) in the management of the fund cannot be over emphasized.
- ❖ Additionally, there is also the urgent need for the convocation of a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) for the renegotiation of the protocols of association, and possibly the restructuring of the country. As a polyglot of nations forcefully concocted by British colonialism, Nigeria, despite being independent for about fifty years, is still saddled with several fundamental national issues that may only require a well planned and constitutionally programmed SNC to resolve; but not in the likeness of the ill-fated, ill-conceived and deceitfully contrived National Political Reforms Conference (NPRC) organized by the Obasanjo's administration in 2005, in an attempt to ensure the elongation of his tenure in office. Delegates to such conference (SNC) should be the true representatives of the respective ethnicities from the grassroots; this will ensure that the conference is not hijacked by some of the corrupt politicians who found themselves in power through the deliberate manipulation of the electoral process. Since it is glaring that due to the multiplicity of ethnicities in the Delta region, secession has never been one of the explicit options of their numerous agitations (even after Boro's 12 day secessionist attempt, he later fought gallantly for the unity of the Nigerian federation during the Nigerian/Biafran civil war and died in action on 17 May 1968), it is imperative therefore for the various ethnic groups in Nigeria (including the delta nationalities) to meet and deliberatively decide on their terms of co-existence, which they will be bound to respect. This would definitely assist in assuaging the negative attitude of Nigerians and especially the Niger Deltans towards the 'fedro-centralized' constitutions imposed on them by successive military regimes.

Finally, it is important to suggest at this juncture, that concentrating on the repentant militants as the only post-amnesty plan for sustainable security is tantamount to false triumphalism and highly momentary, because there could be a resurgence of more daring and violent youths who might not only worsen the security situation of Nigeria but also the Gulf of Guinea. It is instructive therefore that, all credible stakeholders such as, state governments, local governments, legitimate community representatives, traditional rulers, MNOCs, oil servicing companies, relevant NGOs, CBOs, the press and militants

(including MEND and NDPVF)²² should be engaged in the drive towards checkmating the rebirth of youth militancy in the delta region.

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²² Field research by the author confirms that MEND and NDPVF are the most consistent and credible youth militant groups truly championing the cause of the delta people.

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Chapter 5: Security Contradictions: Bane of Reactions of Oil Producing Communities and the Unending Crisis in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

By

Akpomuvire Mukoro & Egbadju, Obukohwo Abraham

Introduction

There are so many fundamental issues demanding urgent and serious attention in Nigeria today. One of such fundamental issues is the issue concerning oil-related crisis in the Niger Delta. That the Niger Delta region is richly blessed with oil, gas and other natural resources is not in doubt; and is not disturbing either. Again, that oil has become a key player and sustainer of the economic growth and development of Nigeria as a country since 1958 till date (Watts and Lubeck, 1983:106) is indisputable. The oil in question is nature's gift to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Ideally, the people of the region are supposed to enjoy from the revenue that oil generates in terms of their socio-economic and structural development of the region that produces the oil.

However, a cursory reading of socio-economic realities in the Niger Delta reveals that revenue generated from oil of the Niger Delta, on which the life of the Nigerian economy depends has not been adequately used to cause adequate structural and socio-economic development in the Niger Delta region that produces the oil. Indeed, poverty, deprivation and life-insecurity pervade the Niger Delta region. In the midst of poverty and deprivation, the people, of the region always feel insecure and they have sought ways to protest and confront the forces of injustice that tend to threaten the life-security. Today, the oil multinationals and the people of the host oil-communities are enmeshed in serious crisis arising from the actions and inactions of the oil multinational companies operating in the Niger Delta region on the one hand, and the people of the oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta against the Nigerian state on the other hand.

The people of the region had in the past made series of legal and constitutional efforts to convince the Nigerian government to develop the region. Some of the patriotic people of the region made sacrifices with their lives in the cause of the struggle. But in

the end, the region only gets palliatives. Since the 1980s through 2005 and climaxing in 2009, the people of the oil-producing communities seem to have resolved collectively to take a rather dangerous approach to protest their collective frustration through exhibition of collective aggressive behaviour; knowing very well that the Nigerian states and its oil business collaborators (the oil multinationals) are not willing and ready to provide life-sustaining opportunities and possibilities for them; even when their land, their waters their rivers and their environment have been badly destroyed and degraded due to the hazards constituted by the activities of oil industry in the region. The people's means of livelihood are been threatened and so their lives are not secured. In the quest for security, they make moves to confront the multinationals who have come to siphon their God-given wealth. In confronting the oil-multinationals (who have the backing of the Nigerian government) a serious security crisis ensued in which the Nigerian state is drawn into the scene. The crisis then exposes the Nigerian state's interest and sincerity in upholding the security of lives of the people of the oil producing communities and their property and the security of the multinational capitalist exploiters.

The major objectives of the study include one, to highlight the issue of security contradiction as a fresh matter, but a core factor that seems to have been ignored in the understanding and resolution of the unending crisis in the Niger Delta region. Two to evolve a theoretical framework and recommend feasible strategies to resolve the recurring oil related crisis in the Niger Delta.

Statement of the problem

That the activities, actions and inactions of oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have elicited crisis relations between the people of the oil producing communities and the oil companies is not in doubt. Again, that the crisis has been lingering and appears to defy solutions that have been put in place to address it is not also in doubt. Infact, serious efforts have been made by scholars, analysts and a lot of commentators on the Niger Delta crisis. Bulk of the existing literature on the Niger Delta crisis is awash with analysis and theories of marginalization, structural underdevelopment, poverty, socio-economic inequality and unemployment as the bane of the crisis. Most of the available literatures tend to ignore the factor of security contradiction as a precipitate of the unending crisis of the Niger Delta. This is what this paper captures as the missing link and a fresh matter that can not be wished away for a proper understanding and resolution of the unending crisis in the Niger Delta. What then constitute the problems of this paper are: why has oil-related crisis in the Niger Delta

persisted? Aside from the issue of marginalization and structural underdevelopment of the region, what other issue is still missing or unsolved that has made the crisis in the region persist? When and how does security contradiction become an issue or a new science in the Niger Delta crisis? What implication does the issue of security contradiction have for the unending crisis in the Niger Delta? Would the resolution of the issue of security contradiction together with the issues of marginalization, structural underdevelopment, socio-economic deprivation and poverty put an end to the unending crisis in the Niger Delta? What other options are still available to resolve and put an end to the unending oil-related crisis in the Niger Delta? The major challenge of this paper is to investigate the problems delineated and to seek answers to them.

Basic Assumptions

- a. The skewed federal system in Nigeria tends to undermine the security interest of minority groups in the country.
- b. Security contradiction is a precipitate of the unending crisis as applied to the Niger Delta region.
- c. The resolution of the basic elements of security contradiction is harbinger to the resolution of the unending crisis in the Niger Delta.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper derives from the frustration – aggression theory. It is informed directly by the works of Ted Gurr (1967), Ivo Feierabend, Rosalind Feierabend and Betty Nesvold (1971). The frustration – aggression hypothesis was formulated originally by John Dillard et al. The fundamental thrust of this theory is that “the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise that the existence of frustration leads to some form of aggression”. In Gurr’s own analysis, he proposes that:

- a. The potential for collective violence is a function of the extent and intensity of shared discontents among members of society, and;
- b. The potential for violence is a function of the degree to which such shared discontents are blamed on the political system and its agents.

The fundamental departure here is collective violence or any violent behaviour exhibited by a group or collectivity for political, social or economic objectives or a combination of objectives against a political system or circumstance; which is thought to represent the source of the collective shared discontent. Gurr explains further that

“discontent arising from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic instigating condition for participants in collective violence”; with relative deprivation defined as the “perceived discrepancy between men’s value expectations and value capabilities”. These value expectations, as Gurr explains represent the “goods and conditions of life to which people believed they are rightly entitled”, while value capabilities are the “goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining and maintaining, given the social means available to them”. These value capabilities have both an immediate and futuristic dimensions. What all these boil down to is that the exhibition of aggression or aggressive behaviour by a collectivity or group is a precipitate of an underlying frustration and discontent.

The Feierabends and Nesvold utilizing this same theory in a separate work propose that “systematic frustration” leads to aggression. That is, frustration collectivity experienced by the members of a polity and which is caused by the political system under which they live induces the tendency to resort to political aggression. In their view, collective frustration arises principally from the inability of the political system to satisfy or guarantee the attainment and maintenance of the social goals, aspirations and values of the people.

When a people recognize the discrepancy between their initial social goals and their present level of attainment, that is, when achievement falls below set goals, they experience a sense of collective frustration (Fawole, 1994:12-13). This situation is further compounded when a people perceive that any future attainment of their social goals will be hampered not by their own inabilities but by the political system. Their collective frustration may then find expression in aggressive behaviour directed at the political system and its agents, which are perceived to be the source of their discontent.

The aggressive behaviour exhibited by the people in the oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta region against the Nigerian state and its petro-business allies (the oil multinationals) fits perfectly into the frustration-aggression theoretical framework. The people in the oil-bearing communities have for a very long time been deprived of their means of livelihood; even in the midst of the fact that the resources from their soil are exploited and the revenues carted away to provide social and capital infrastructural facilities to develop other regions and for financing huge budgets of the Nigerian

government; and leaving the region and its people impoverished and wallowing in poverty and pains. These are people whose agro-based livelihoods and indeed their life security are dependent on the environment; but their farmlands, rivers, creeks, fish, forest and ecological features are being destroyed and degraded by the activities of oil exploration and exploitation carried out in the area. The hope of the inhabitants of the region is dying at the turn of each day. They no longer feel secured in the midst of poverty and glaring deprivation. They have become frustrated since the political system and its allies are not doing enough to breathe life into the people and the region. The collective discontents of the inhabitants of the region are well shared. They are ready to intensify struggles to confront the forces standing to deny or deprive them the goods and conditions of life security. This is exactly the instigating condition that underlies the pattern of aggressive behaviour exhibited by the people of the oil-bearing communities in the Niger Delta against the Nigerian state and its allies, the oil multinationals.

Location of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria

The Niger Delta of Nigeria is situated in the central part of Southern Nigeria. It is located between Midwest and Eastern parts of Nigeria. The region is a heterogeneous, multi-culturally diverse area of 70,000 square kilometers (Saro-Wiwa, 1995:165; Tamuno 1999:51) with over 20 different ethnic groups including those of Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Bini, Ukwuani, Ibibio, Efik, Andoni, Anang, Ogoni, Igbo, Yoruba and Ogba (Dike, 1965:25; Ikime, 1972; Onosode, 2003). The Niger Delta is one of the largest wetland in the world comparable to the Mekong, the Amazon and Ganges (Manby, 1999a: 53; Onosode; 2003:8). It is home of the oil-producing communities in Nigeria.

Apart from being richly endowed with oil and gas deposits, the region is blessed with fertile agricultural land, abundant rivers as well as creeks, fish, forest and human resources. A complex bio-diversity and other biological and ecological features also support the Niger Delta. Three distinct ecological zones predominate in the Niger Delta region. These are thick mangrove forests bordering the sandy coastal areas that in turn border the Atlantic coast. There are fresh-water swamps and lastly, the dry land (Owolabi and Okwechime, 2007). The forests support most of the farming (CRP, 1999:12).

The Niger Delta is spread across six states namely Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Edo, Akwa Ibom and Ondo. Over time, the region has enlisted Cross-River, Abia and Imo states (for political reasons). Of the major ethnic groups in the region, namely the Ogoni, Urhobo, and Itsekiri, the Ijaw (Izon) constitutes by far the Delta's largest ethnic group with over 500 communities spread across the states. The Niger Delta has over 800 oil-bearing communities and has an estimated population of about 31 million people (Kemedi 2003:7).

Some issues at the Heart of Reactions of the People of the Niger Delta Region.

The Niger Delta region stands out as the treasure base of the Nigerian state. It provides over 80 percent of government's revenues, 95 percent of export receipts, and 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings (Owolabi and Okwechime, 2007:1-40). For over four decades oil industry activities in terms of building or construction of oil-related facilities such as refineries, petro-chemical plants, pipelines, flow stations, terminal, dual carriage ways and staff-housing estates have been carried out in the region. All these activities have put over-bearing stress on the available land in the region (Owolabi and Okwechime, *ibid*; Turner, 1980; Turner, 2001; Etu-Efeotor 1997; Manby, 1999a) this created serious land crisis in the region.

Apart from the usual land crisis, oil-related activities have destroyed or degraded the environment, and there are no corresponding efforts to plough back good amount of revenue being generated from the region to provide visible and durable structural development for the region. This placed huge socio-economic burden on the inhabitants of the region. Oil spillage and gas flaring are common but dangerous features of the oil industry activities. The health of the local inhabitants of the region has been grossly compromised in the face of the harmful emission of the by-products of the oil exploration activities. Ken Saro-Wiwa was quick to point out the debilitating effects of pains and agony of the inhabitants of the communities where oil exploration activities are carried out specifically in Ogoni land. According to him:

The Ogoni are embattled and imperiled since oil was discovered in the area in 1958, they have been victims of a deadly ecological war in which no blood is spilled, no bones are broken and no one is maimed. But the people die all the time. Men, women, children

are at risk; plants, wildlife and fish are destroyed, the air and water are poisoned, and finally the land dies. Today Ogoni has been reduced to a waste land (1995:131).

From Saro-Wiwa's observation, the activities of oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta region pose serious death trap to the people of the region and the immediate oil-host communities in particular. It is the case that after carrying out the oil exploration activities with the attendant hazards, the inhabitants of the Niger Delta region face an uphill task trying to eke out a living. In such circumstance, the question of human and environmental security presents a precarious situation for the people in the Niger Delta (Griffiths and O'Callaghan', 2002). This is the situation that the people have been contending with for decades.

Indeed, the negative effects of oil spills on the Niger Delta environment are untold and have been well documented (Idoniboye and Andy 1985: 311-314; Ikein, 1990: 131; Taiwo and Aina, 1991: 55-58; Oyebadejo and Ugbaja, 1995:12-15; Ikporukpo, 1999:15; Frynas, 2000:158-162). For example Ikein (1990) and Manby (1999 a) observe that the incidences of water-borne and other types of diseases have been on the increase among the inhabitants of the Niger Delta region. The annoying aspect of the whole matter is that it seems that the multi-national oil companies operating in the region as well as the Federal Government of Nigeria are not convinced of the harmful effects and threats to the existence of Niger Deltans. It is the people's perception of insensitivity of the Nigerian government and its allies (the multi-national oil companies) to their plight that has increased the intensity to take up arms and fight against the "perceived enemies" to their comfortable existence and livelihood as a people – the Nigerian Government and the multi-nationals operating in the region are the perceived enemies. Therefore, no matter the perspective from which one views the situation of the reactions from the inhabitants of the Niger Delta region, the issue boils down to a people's struggle to ensure their existence. The approaches that the people of the region may have employed might be considered wrong or right in certain academic circles. But the fact remains that the man who wears the shoe knows where it pinches. The people of the region have been left to their fate for a very long time. The few palliative measures put in place (short term of course) by the Nigerian Government to pacify the people of the region; such as the

setting up of the various commissions including the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA), Oil and Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and now, the establishment of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs by the present Musa Yar' Adua-led Nigerian Government, and the offer of amnesty to militants in the region who would lay down their arms, only represent clever ploys by the Nigerian Government to dodge the real problem of the Niger Delta people, especially the problems faced daily by the communities where the oil exploration and exploitation activities are directly taking place. Two issues that have dominated the struggle of the people in oil producing communities of the Niger Delta have been simply stated – the problem of marginalization and that of structural underdevelopment of the area that produces the wealth that the life of this nation depends largely on. These two issues have been exhaustively discussed but not much attention has been devoted to the issue of security contradiction in most of the existing literatures on the Niger Delta crisis.

Indeed, even when the Nigerian Government has acknowledged that the economic survival of the country depends largely on oil, when it declared that “oil and gas industry remains the backbone of our economy; contributing over 30% of GDP, 85% of Government revenues and over 90% of foreign exchange earnings” (ThisDay, May 29, 2009:4), the government has not been able to invest enough to guarantee life and security for the poverty stricken people of the Niger Delta region nor provided enough for the structural and human development of the communities from where the oil is got.

The riverine parts of the Niger Delta region lacks good roads, good portable water, good health facilities, electricity, housing, educational facilities and employment opportunities in the area; whereas, the same people are aware that the oil revenues generated from their area financed the huge expenditure on the provision of social and capital infrastructural facilities in the 1970s, especially in Lagos, Kaduna, the then capital of Northern region of Nigeria; then the construction of Abuja, the federal capital territory, and for paying huge salaries to politicians in Abuja.

But, poverty level and unemployment in the Niger Delta region grow higher unabated (Manby, 1999b; IDEA, 2000; Eteng, 1998:20; Gbadegesin, 1998; Owolabi and Okwechime, 2007). The people cannot feel secured in the midst of poverty and glaring

deprivation. Therefore, to intensify efforts to confront the forces standing to deny them the full enjoyment of the proceeds from the wealth in the region is expected. The approach does not matter. The approach will only matter if the lots of the people have been improved upon and the hopes for their human and socio-economic securities are guaranteed. The bitter truth of the matter is that, the inadequate government's intervention to alleviate the suffering of the poverty-stricken people of the Niger Delta exposed the people, particularly the able-bodied youths of the region and make them susceptible to any form of militant recruitment in order to eke out a living. In the process of resorting to militancy, the people see any force challenging them as suspect and security threat to their chances of life survival.

The people of the region are very much aware that most urban development in major cities in this country today, can be traced to the remote villages where oil gush out day and night. The struggle to be in political office in Nigeria now, is to gain opportunity to share in the oil money. But to make genuine plans to plough back a good percentage of the revenues generated from oil to develop these remote villages and make the inhabitants of the area live a minimum comfortable life seems not to appeal to the "collaborators" in the oil business in the area- the Nigerian Government and the oil multinational companies. This is the crux of the matter. So, it does appear that the Nigerian state does not only issue out as a collaborator, but a security threat and ready facilitator of international capitalism.

Security Perceptions and the Basic Elements of Security Contradiction in the Niger Delta

The crisis in the Niger Delta has been that of land rights, and oil-related crisis. It has elicited serious national security challenges confronting the Nigerian state. This issue of security as it concerns the oil crisis in the Niger Delta is problematic. The issue of security in the Niger Delta in relation to oil exploration and exploitation on the one hand, and the reactions of irate youths of the oil-bearing communities in the Niger Delta region is what is captured in this paper as security contradiction. Ibeanu (2005:25) slyly writes on a contradiction of securities. He attempts to explain that the perception of what constitutes security to the Nigerian state and its oil business allies (Oil Multi-Nationals) is

markedly different from the perception the people of the oil-producing communities have. While the state and the oil companies perceive security in terms of carrying out the oil exploration activities without being interrupted in any form; not minding the effects of their operations on the inhabitants of the communities and the environment in which they operate, the people of the oil-producing communities view security as the possibility and capacity that their livelihood and environment are not threatened or impoverished as a consequence of oil exploration activities in their area. This paper draws from Ibeanu's thesis of a contradiction securities. At either level of operation of these contradictions, there are passions or sentiments attached. There is always a manifest-passion of the Nigerian state's preference to ensure security of the multinationals wherever there was crisis between them and the local communities in Nigeria; and ignore sub-national passion. On the other hand, the local communities that produce the oil often evoke general sentiment of micro-nationalism.

It is fair to understand that the human security, in the context of the Niger Delta oil-crisis largely centres on the impact of oil industry activities on a people whose agro-based livelihoods are dependent on the environment (Owolabi and Okwechime, 2007). Again, it is the cardinal duty of the state (nay, the Nigerian state) to strive to promote the socio-economic development and well being of the citizens of the country and to protect them; regardless of their location in the country. Recent events in the Niger Delta crisis with regard to the struggle by irate youths of the oil-producing communities involving attack on oil installations, hostage-taking and kidnapping vis-à-vis the reprisal response of the Nigerian state through the use of maximum military option (Joint Task Force) against the people of the oil producing communities who are protesting against perceived injustice, readily provides a platform for assessing and underscoring the politics and the basic element of security contradiction in the Nigerian state in relation to the Niger Delta crisis.

It is a sacred duty of the Nigerian state to protect the Nigerian citizens and ensure security of their lives and property, even in emergency situations. It is also incumbent on the Nigerian state to protect and ensure security of multi-nationals operating in Nigeria. But the protection of the citizens of Nigeria should count more important. Therefore, conventional wisdom would suggest that where the protection and security of Nigerian

citizens is at crossroads with that of multinationals, operating in Nigeria, the Nigerian government has a sacrosanct duty to ensure that the protection and security of the lives and property of the citizens of Nigeria is uppermost. Regrettably, this has not been the case in Nigeria with reference to the crisis that has ensued between the oil host communities and the multinational oil companies.

It is possible to tag the emerging trends in the activities of irate youths (militants) in the Niger Delta region to be “criminal”. That might just be hypothetical. An understanding of the skewed federal system we have in Nigeria, and the repressive nature of the Nigerian state, appeal to reason that the possibility of expression of sub-national passions and agitation at one time or the other cannot be ruled out. It is instructive to recall that whenever there was a misunderstanding between multinational oil companies and their host communities in Nigeria, the Nigerian government has always taken side with the multinationals and has in each case sacrificed the security of lives and property of the protesting Niger Delta people, who are direct citizens of Nigeria for that matter. This is why the multinationals have accustomed preference for inviting the security forces in Nigeria against the Niger Deltans (who are the true and already suffering citizens of Nigeria) whenever there was a misunderstanding between oil multinationals and the local communities in Nigeria. The truth again is that whenever the security forces were invited, casualties and sacking of entire villages or communities were their landmarks. Owolabi and Okwechime (2007) provide representative cases that can be readily made reference to: Iko-Shell clash (1987), the Oboburu-Elf clash (1989), the Umuechem Massacre (1990), the Uzere-Shell clash (1992), the Ogoni-Shell clash (1990-1999), the Kaiama bloodbath (1998), the Odi and Choba killings (1999) and the Kokodiagbene, Kurutie, Okerenkoko, Oporoza-genocide orchestrated by the JTF (2009). This may not be the end. Recent events of Nigerian Government- sponsored military attack against the Niger Delta protesters under the guise of government’s security response in the region are widely reported. See evidence in selected cases reported in selected dailies in the table below:

S/N	Selected/representative cases of Nigerian government sponsored military attack against protesting oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta.	Source
1	War in Niger Delta: final assault... federal troops intensifying	<i>Sun</i> , May 18, 2009:1&6

	bombing of Ijaw villages	
2	Niger Delta militant war not over	<i>Sun</i> , May 23, 2009:1&6
3	Government acquires six gunboats to fight militants	<i>The Nation</i> , April 30, 2009:10
4	10 soldiers, 22 militants feared dead in clash, 18 civilians too.	<i>The Nation</i> , May 16, 2009:1&45
5	We've lost over 200 people – Ijaw Chief... only militants have been killed – JTF.	<i>The Nation</i> , May 30, 2009:1&45
6	Crisis in the Niger Delta: Army recovers bodies of officers, 14 others.	<i>The Nation</i> , June 11, 2009:1-2
7	JTF kills six militants in Rivers	<i>Vanguard</i> , April 29, 2009:1&5
8	War in Warri: 35 feared dead, over 40 injured as JTF bombs militants, Ijaw Communities.	<i>Vanguard</i> May 16, 2009: 1&5
9	War in the creeks: JTF bombed more Ijaw communities.	<i>Vanguard</i> May 18, 2009:1&5
10	War in creeks: more bloodbaths a fresh JTF attack.	<i>Vanguard</i> May 19, 2009: 1&5
11	War in the creeks: JTF pounds Okerenkoko, Opuedebubor	<i>Vanguard</i> May 20, 2009: 1&5
12	War in the creeks: Tompolo wanted, MEND order ceasefire.	<i>Vanguard</i> May 25, 2009: 1&5
13	War in the creeks: JTF recovers uniform of missing lieutenant.	<i>Vanguard</i> May 26, 2009: 1&5
14	98 year-old dies of shock from JTF explosives	<i>Vanguard</i> May 27, 2009: 8&9
15	War in the creeks: Militant leader shot dead	<i>Vanguard</i> May 28, 2009: 1&5
16	N-Delta crisis still unresolved	<i>Vanguard</i> June 3, 2009: 44-45
17	Niger Delta crisis: Counting the losses	<i>Vanguard</i> June 7, 2009: 38-39
18	War in the creeks: War moves to Bayelsa... several villagers, soldier injured	<i>Vanguard</i> June 13, 2009: 1&5
19	Fed. Govt threatens militants over fresh attacks	<i>Vanguard</i> Dec. 23, 2009: 1&5

Source: Compiled by the authors

The above evidence presented clearly shows Nigerian Government's preference to undermine the security of life and the people of the oil communities in the Niger Delta yet, the Government is interested in the security of the source of its economic gain from the region and the security of its oil business allies – the multinationals. It will be hard for one to give credit to the Nigerian state in a situation where it resorts to use of maximum

military attack to kill and eliminate both militants and the poor defenceless civilians in the oil communities alike. Where the Nigerian government runs amok to the extent of killing livestock, destroying residential buildings, desecrating places of religious worship and bombing hospitals where victims are taken to for medical treatment, as evidenced in the reports presented above, one cannot but imagine the element of security contradiction exhibited by the Nigeria state in the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta people are Nigerian citizens that Nigerian government owes a duty to provide and guarantee their security at all times. But here is a case of the government killing its own citizens, whose security the same government has not been able to guarantee. This is the bane of the unending crisis in the relations between the host oil communities, the oil multinationals and the Nigerian state. Until this is recognized and resolved, the crisis in the Niger Delta may continue to rear up. At the moment, the amnesty granted to the Niger Delta militants is only a “break-time period”. Resumption of hostilities is still imminent. The reason being peddled by the Nigerian government; that no responsible government will sit back and watch an important part of it, “a veritable cash cow” as the Niger Delta, impoverished into nothingness, or that the federal government cannot sit back and watch lawless groups hold it to ransom is porous and unacceptable. Here, again the question of security contradiction in the Nigerian state re-appears. The question that follows is: whose security interest is the Nigerian government fighting to protect in the Niger Delta region.

Conclusion

The crisis in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been lingering; especially against the backdrop of continued or renewed agitations by the people of the region over what they have often referred to as injustice suffered by the region within the context of the Nigerian state. In this paper the place called the Niger Delta is identified. The activities of the oil industry in the region as evidences have shown, have elicited crisis between the host communities and the oil multinationals across time. The agitations or struggles by the people of the region have presented great security concern for both the region and the Nigerian state. In the resolution of security issue in the region, the Nigerian government has adopted mixed approaches but with higher preference for total force most of the time against the Niger Delta protesters rather than guarantee their security. This is where the

question of security contradiction comes in. There appears to be adamancy on the part of both the irate youths (militants) in the region and the Nigerian government to work out and agree on the concept of security concern and security programme for the region. This is another factor in the security contradiction. It is the argument of this paper that the problem of the Niger Delta has been clearly and variously stated; but successive Nigerian governments have shown insensitivity and insensibility to the plight of the people of the region. Successive governments in Nigeria have continually been avoiding the real issues on ground and pretending to be drawing master plans without cogent programme of security for the people of the oil producing communities.

In the estimation of the people of the oil producing communities, government's security tactics cannot guarantee security for the region. This is where the problem lies. What makes meaning to the Nigerian state as security concern in the Niger Delta region is at variance with what the oil communities conceive and believe in as their security concern. If this continues, it is the conclusion of this paper that the end to the oil-related crisis in the Niger Delta is not in sight yet.

Recommendations

To resolve the Niger Delta oil-related crisis and the security contradictions, this paper recommends as follows:

- 1 The Nigerian government should at all time assume and maintain a paternalistic posture. That way the government must be genuinely committed to the protection and security of Nigerians living in the oil-producing region. Resorting to killing Nigerians in the oil producing communities whenever there was over-stretched agitation should not be considered as a good option at all; no matter the level of the local people's agitation. Already, the people and their land have been impoverished, they are poverty stricken and frustrated. To react, the way they are doing now should be expected. Government must not ignore the sanctity and security of lives of Nigerians that it swore to protect.
- 2 There is need for the Nigerian government to engage all stake holders in the oil bearing communities and the oil multinationals in a round table talk for all parties to work out a workable joint security programme for the region. The people must

- be involved in negotiating, designing and executing security programmes for the region. The people of the oil communities, especially the irate youths must not be sidelined. They are important in the scheme. They have their ideas of what can guarantee security in the region. Most of them are intellectuals in their own right. A situation where the government alone comes with its own security programme for the Nigerian Delta region without inputs from the people of the region cannot resolve the issue of contradiction of the security in the region in all fairness. There will always be clash and contradictions.
- 3 There is need to review the Nigerian constitution to make provision for the inclusion of oil-bearing communities as stakeholders in terms of decision-making and control of the economic resources derived from the region. This might be a long-term solution, but there is need for it. Again, obnoxious acts such as the land use act of 1978 should be revoked. That is one of the basic legislations used to deny the people their rights to make claims to their land and which tend to deny the people not only the right of control over the resources that pertain to the land but even to engage in direct negotiations with the oil prospecting companies operating in the region.
 - 4 Youth empowerment schemes, well packaged to commit the youths in the region and keep them busy from roaming about idle-minded should be accorded priority in government's programmes for the region. Government could do this in conjunction with assistance from the oil multi-national companies operating in the region through employment of the youths in security jobs in the area.
 - 5 Government and oil companies need to devise regulatory mechanisms to ensure that allocation and compensation to the oil-bearing communities actually get to the people of the communities. This again should involve inputs from the people of the oil producing communities.

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Chapter 6: Militants and Oil Violence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria: Any Implication for Security in Nigeria?

Victor Ojakorotu²³

Introduction

The crisis in the Niger Delta of Nigeria is attracting increasing international attention due both to the growing security threat it portends for the Nigerian state and, particularly, its impact on international oil prices. Although the Niger Delta problem has been around for several decades, the emergence of organized and militant pressure groups in the 1990s has added a new dimension to the crisis in the region. Protests and the threat of outright rebellion against the state are now ubiquitous. Environmental activism and militancy are a direct response to the impunity, human rights violations, and perceived neglect of the region by the Nigerian state on one hand and sustained environmental hazards imposed on local Niger Delta communities as a result of the oil production activities of multinational oil companies on the other.

From contemporary global perspective, the dramatic upsurge in violent confrontation and protests against the state and oil multinationals in the 1990s coincided with the end of the Cold War and the de-emphasizing of 'high politics' for 'low politics'. In essence, 'soft' issues such as the environment, gender equity and equality, human rights, democracy and good governance have attained primacy on the international agenda. International concern over the crisis in the Niger Delta, including its attendant social and humanitarian implications, can be located in the context of this global attitudinal shift.

The internationalization of the Niger Delta crisis derives partly from the systematic publicity and struggle of the environmentalist, the late Ken Saro-Wiwa. Saro-Wiwa not only succeeded in directing the attention of the international community to the plight of the people of the Niger Delta but also – through his advocacy – paved the way for robust international/civil society engagement with the issues at the core of the crisis in the region. This fact has been illustrated by the intervention of organizations such as Amnesty International, Green Peace Movement, Rainforest Action Group, the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations. Such intervention effectively internationalized the Niger Delta crisis.

More recently, the crisis has taken a new turn with increasing criminalization of the conflict, leading to questions as to why the problem is seemingly spiraling out of control. The spate of criminality (and possible external links to this phenomenon) has given rise to the question around the implications that the Niger Delta problem has for international (regional and global) peace and security. Also worth probing is how the Nigerian government can (re)gain the initiative by finding sustainable solutions to the problem.

Resistance Groups in the Niger Delta.

The Civil society is recognized as an agent of transformation in Africa in the post cold war era. Over the years they were suppressed by authoritarian civilian regimes and

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military dictatorships but the global wave of democracy have allowed them to re-emerged as an important actor in politics and governance. While others would argue that state repression under successive military regimes, the civil society landscape was solid and accounted for the scope and space of democratic transitions. It is wrong to assume that they emerged with democracy, although democracy may have expanded the political space for more involvement. Their emergence was met with antagonism from the state, therefore the central hypothesis of the civil society is that “it is the force for societal resistance to state excesses and the centerpiece organizationally, materially and ideologically of the social movements and protests for reforms and change” (Ikelegbe, 2005). It must be pointed out that it is not only the state that opposed the civil society but private corporations also constrain civil society” (Ikelegbe, 2005: ?). Therefore, in third world countries like Nigeria “where powerful multinational corporations hold rein, collaboration between them and the state may constitute a situation of double jeopardy in terms of repression of civil society” (Ikelegbe, 2005: ?). This precisely is what operates in the Niger Delta, the violence in the region predates the independence of Nigeria “with the agitation for separate states in the 1950s and 1960s that eventually led to the establishment of the Minorities Commission in 1956, right through to attempts by minority group politicians in the Second Republic to organize and wrest political power from the majority” (Conflict Trend, 2000: ?). The Niger Delta people through the formation of social movements in the 1990s have strongly drawn the world’s attention to their plight and to their quest for self-determination.

The emergence of social movements in the Niger Delta (as elsewhere) can be contextualized within theoretical constructs which explicate the basis for their existence as well as their *modus operandi*. Expressed differently, social mobilization theories attempt to explain the emergence, objectives, methods and tactics of groups opposed to either the government or transnational forces. Often, these social groupings forge relationships across national frontiers with a view to internationalizing their activities and/or the issues they are seek to address. Given that social movement activity transcends national boundaries, Tarrow identifies four modes of action that define these social networks’ overall character. These are: *movement diffusion* (i.e. temporary interactions that generate similar movement in another state); *transnational issue networks* (enduring information exchange between main actors within the social movement circle); *political exchange* (the networking of social groupings in a number of societies); and *transnational social movements* (interactions between groups with shared visions and ideals). Tarrow’s typology approximates the character of social movement activity in the Niger Delta.

Generally, the emergence of social movements and the internationalization of their activities stem from a number of factors. These include but not limited to the global wave of democracy and democratization, the ascendance of liberal ideological issues pertaining to the environment, human rights and minority rights, and the revolution in information and communications technology with its attendant integration of the world economies (Batliwala, 2004). These variables, which also underscore civil society action, combined with local factors to engender the formation and continued existence as well as the transnationalization of social movements in Nigeria. At the level of national politics, the Babangida democratic transition provided the context for growing political opportunities which the civil society explored. In addition, widespread ad-hoc protests

among groups at the grassroots level engendered the formation of cohesive platforms through which local agitation for social service was conducted. With regard to the Niger Delta, the grievances of the oil communities against the government and the multinational oil companies provided the impetus for social mobilization often (but not always) along ethnic lines. The foregoing found expression in increase in minority political activity at the elite level, lobbies, the formation of coalitions, and local community agitation for more revenues derived from oil wealth at one end and for resource control at the other (Esajere, 1992). The local peoples' determination to pursue these issues arose from:

“[the] increasing de-nationalization of the state on a global scale [which] has seen the rise of sub-state identities being the fulcrum of group rights and citizenship claims. These groups in the quest for their collective, but particularistic interests adopt all techniques including the use of violence” (Adejumobi, 2003:?)

The social movements in the Niger Delta emerged as a result of environmental degradation and political insensitivity of the Nigerian state and most of these movements targeted Shell as a means of forcing the Nigerian state to change her policies in the region.

These movements' positions were underpinned by the fact that Shell was the biggest and the most visible foreign oil multinational onshore. Once they could wrestle Shell, other oil companies operating in the region would follow and this underlined the activities of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) in the early 1990s. There were numerous social movements that emerged in this period of study apart from our case study MOSOP and IYC, and some of these are the Urhobo Progressive Union (UPU), Isoko Development Union (IDU), Egbesu²⁴ Boys of Africa (EBA), and Council for Ikwerre Nationality among others.

Therefore, in order to capture the attention of the international community, MOSOP, one of the early social movements in the region had to use the language of “rights” and built in the international fora the image of the Nigerian state and Shell as violators of human rights. The movement also established offices in Europe and America, facilitated visits by researchers and journalists to Ogoni, and its propaganda outfit was well run to achieve its targets. Apart from the people of the Niger Delta, there are other segments of the Nigerian populace that aligned with the Federal Government to argue that there are no bases for (the occurrence of) conflicts in the region. However, an in-depth analysis has shown that these oil-bearing communities have been crucial in holding the fragile unity of Nigeria as a nation for over four decades. They have sacrificed in terms of resources, rights, environmental and ecological hazards. Their involvement in this conflict was to compel the Federal Government and the multinational oil companies to accord priority to their plight. The frustration arising from the forceful attitude of the Federal Government and oil companies to bring them to submission underlines their quest for self-determination and autonomy. All they were interested in originally was to be part of the Nigerian state where their rights of existence including opportunities would be guaranteed.

²⁴ It is an Ijaw cult which they believe gives them supernatural powers that protect them against gunshots or other harms.

The government's perception of these struggles generated a hot controversy, appropriately to the issues at stake. These conflicts are very sensitive issues that demand a diplomatic approach towards settlement. Unfortunately, the government had been only forthcoming in making sure that its hegemonic status is forcefully imposed and maintained in order to sustain the profit interest. These factors are exposed by the authoritarian manner that the state promulgated decrees stripping communities of any right over the land and resources. At another level the multinational oil companies do not accommodate the interests of the oil-bearing communities as they (MNOCs) are products of capitalism. They are more concerned about how to use the least opportunity that guarantees the security of their capital and interest. They have in most cases rendered ineffective government institutions charged with responsibilities of environmental protection thereby giving them almost unrestrained access to the resources of the region.

State & Oil Company Response to Resistance Groups in the Niger Delta

“Year after year, we were clenched in tyrannical chains and led through a dark alley of perpetual political and social deprivation. Strangers in our own country! Inevitably, therefore, the day would come for us to fight for our long-denied right to self-determination.” —Isaac Adaka Boro, *The Twelve-Day Revolution*

Nigeria today faces a considerable pressure from both local and international sources over its policy and response to the Niger Delta crisis which have been subjects of intense debate and heated controversies. It is therefore necessary to consider some of the state and oil multinational response as a measure to ensure uninterrupted oil activities. For the sustenance of oil flows in the region, the Nigerian state (in collaboration with oil companies) put in place regular security arrangements and special task forces. This informed the establishment of the notorious and brutal task force known as the Rivers State Internal Security Force, a special military force created on the eve of MOSOP's protest against oil production in Ogoni. Similarly, the core states of the Niger Delta also formed their own special security forces with different names e.g. “Operation Salvage” (created by Bayelsa State to protect oil installations) and “Operation Flush” (established by Rivers State).

The Nigerian state and oil companies have at different times emphasized their commitment to the forceful protection of oil companies' activities and installations. This underscored the states leaders' pronouncements of warning against the disruption of oil production since oil is the lifeblood of the country. Indeed the former Petroleum Minister during the Abacha regime, Dan Etete, at various times spoke against violent protest from the local people, insisting that “the present [Abacha's] administration will not tolerate a situation where every political grievance is taken out on oil installations and operations of oil companies” and that community leaders should restrain their youths from such acts (Human Right Watch, 1999: ?). Similarly, he stated in 1998 that the destruction of oil companies' property would meet the full wrath of the law since the state was (and still is) in a joint partnership with the foreign oil companies. It was against this backdrop that several militant/resistant groups emerged to protest the militarization and injustices being perpetrated by the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies (MNOCs) against the Niger Deltans. Commenting on this, Lysias Gilbert posited that:

Since the death of General Sani Abacha in 1998 ..., these ethnic youth militant movements (MEND) have threatened at different times to shut down oil installations, violently disrupted the operations of the MNOCs and, in some instances, engaged the state security forces in armed encounters (Gilbert, 2007: 1).

However, notwithstanding the prevalent injustices in the delta region, the proliferation of militant groups with questionable credentials at a point symbolized the degeneration of the struggle to the despicable level of sheer opportunism. Commenting further on this sad trend, Gilbert stated that:

Clearly, regardless of its original justification, the current militancy in the Niger Delta appears to have been perverted, misdirected and criminalized by opportunists. It appears that the recent upsurge and near geometric attraction to armed conflicts and violence by ethnic militias, may have been motivated by crass economic opportunism and profiteering, through hostage taking for fat ransoms and illegal oil bunkering with their external commercial networks (ibid: 2).

It is also worth mentioning that, aside the militarization of the region by the state and oil companies to sustain regular flow of oil, the state also initiated or established institutions to address the demand of the people but the question is how effective are these bodies? Some of them are:

- 1960–1966: Niger Delta Development Board
- 1972–1994: Niger Delta River Basin Authority
- 1992–1999: Oil and Minerals Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC)
- 1998: Petro Trust Fund, Popoola Committee Review
- 2000: Niger Delta Development Commission
- 2008: Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs
- 2009: Amnesty to the militants

Generally, see below the response of the state, oil companies and local communities to the activities of oil multinationals.

Table 1: Response of the Nigerian State, Oil Companies and Local Communities to the Activities of Oil Multinationals in the Niger Delta

Human rights Violation	The response of the oil companies	The response of the state	The reactions of the communities
Pollution of water	Initiation of community development projects	Militarization of the communities	Making representation to the government

Destruction of farmland	Supply of arms to the states as a measures of protecting facilities	Divide and rule tactics in the communities	Embracing dialogue
Destruction of aquatic lives	Very lukewarm, at times non-chalant, and discouraging	Settlement of the elites and community leaders	Peaceful demonstrations
Destruction of wildlife		Establishment of some dysfunctional bodies	Hostage taking
Poor living conditions	Provision of casual jobs	Interventionist agency response: OMPADEC/NDDC	Armed confrontations/Reaching out to international community

Source: Compiled by the author in 2005.

Security implication of the Niger Delta crisis

With the end of the Cold War, there have been renewed academic rigours to reconceptualise the term ‘security’. This would allow “policymakers and scholars to think about security as something more than the military defence of state interests and territory” (Paris, 2001). Second, military threats have been the dominant focus of security to the neglect of other areas (Buzan, 1983; Cable, 1995; Mastanduno, 1998; Nye & Lynn, 1998). Leading this new approach at considering issues of security in new light is Barry Buzan (1983), he seeks to put forward an idea that security should encompass military, political, economic, societal and environmental norms. By doing this, Buzan had constructed a strong landing pad for both ideas and policy making to flourish because not long , the first major statement concerning human security appeared in the 1994 Human Development report, an annual publication of the United Nations Development programme (UNDP) (Paris, 2001). What is human security? It is said to have two main aspects. It means first safety from such chronic threats as hunger, diseases and repression. Second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life –whether in homes, in jobs or in communities (UNDP, 1994). The UNDP report further define security in four essential characteristics of human security and these are:

- Human Security is a Universal concern. The motion of human security is not limited to the poor or rich countries. It recognises that there are common threats to all people and these include: unemployment, crime, pollution, drugs and human rights violations.
- The Components of human security are interdependent; they are not territorially limited anymore. Famine, floods, pollution, terrorism, ethnic disputes and social

integration longer can be considered isolated events confined within national borders; they have an impact across the globe.

- Human security is easier to ensure through early prevention than later intervention. When balanced, the cost of preventive measure is less than the costs of dealing with the aftermath of a security breach. For instance, rather than trying to stem the tide of death and diseases after a disaster, prior emphasis on primary health care may lessen the potential damage to the population.
- Human security is people –centred. Human security is concerned with how people live and breath, how they exercise choice, how much access they have to opportunities and whether they live in conflict or peace (UNDP, 1994).

However, the security situation in the region can be viewed from two divergent, mutually exclusive security conceptions held by the two principal actors in the crisis. While the Nigerian state and the oil multinationals subscribe to the traditional state-centric perspective of security, the local people of the region and other stake holders in the region consider *human security* as paramount. The clash of these two security conceptions perpetuates conflict in the region over the years.

The traditionalist, state-centric notion of security have over the years informed the repressive militarization of the region. Examples of state repression, in the form of the destruction of communities by state security forces, abound: Umuechem (1990 and 1993); Uwheru (2004); Egbema (2004); Olugbobiri and Ikebiri (2004); and Odioma (2005). The invasion and the destruction of Odi by security forces in 1999 has been the most repressive onslaught on any community in the Niger Delta.

On the other hand, the human security paradigm is a broader conception of security that recognizes and accommodates a wider range of issues of human concern such as “security from poverty, disease, famine, illiteracy, environmental despoliation, and unemployment, which singly or jointly contribute to the impairments of human existence.” These are the *real* concerns in the Niger Delta. It was in a similar vein that Isike (2008) advocates a paradigm shift that contextualises the Niger Delta conflict in a different light – the human security point of view. This shift from the authoritarian, state-centric view to the notion of human security is premised on the fact that “people are the means and end of the development process.” That said, this paradigm shift necessitates compromises on both sides: the Federal Government’s demilitarization of the Niger Delta and the Niger Deltans’ repudiation of violence and their recognition of “the state’s role as the primary mode of organization and development”. The fact remains that state militarization and militarist actions by Niger Delta groups have been counterproductive.

Therefore, the Nigerian contexts, with the recent developments in the Niger Delta region have shown that the proliferation of arms is partly responsible for the continuation of the conflict. This informed the inauguration of the national committee on the proliferation and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in the year 2000 amid escalation of violence in the region. But it is rather intriguing that these arms are imported from the developed nations that at different international fora have argued for peace in Africa (Ojakorotu & Uzodike, 2006).

Some of the impacts of the militias operation include:

- Up to 150,000 barrels of crude oil were being stolen daily by militants and their local and foreign collaborators since 2008.
- The militants had gathered enough military hardware to terrorize other ethnic nationalities in the region, notably the Itsekiri and Urhobo sustain instability in the Niger Delta and proliferate small arms for robbery and piracy in the Delta region and throughout the country.
- From 2008 till date 33 Joint Task Force, JTF, personnel had been killed, 38 missing, 55 wounded, while 5 military gunboats had been destroyed, 3 seized, 24 automatic weapons and 579 rounds of ammunition captured.
- The militants have, with surface-to-air missiles been making efforts to shoot down one naval helicopter and air force helicopter.
- On May 13, 2009, members of the JTF on routine escort duties around Chanomi creek were ambushed by a militant group, killing 11 soldiers. Prior to this, the militants hijacked an NNPC chartered tanker, CMSPIRIT, with both local and foreign crew, some of which were tortured to death and the rest held hostage.
- The JTF Search and Rescue team sent to free them was again attacked by the militants. A total of 18 soldiers were either dead or missing, including one Lt. Colonel and one army Major.

Table 2: Selected Cases of Abductions/Kidnapping for Ransom (2002–2003)

S/N	Action/ Date	MNC/Oil Servicing Co.	Youth Group/Ethnic Group/State	Ascertained Purpose	Outcome
1	Hostage taking of 10 workers/ April 2002	Shell	Militant Youth Gang, Ekeremor LGA, Ijaw/ Bayelsa State	Ransom Demand for NGN 3.1m.	Resulted from failure to yield to alleged frivolous demands
2	Kidnap of staff/ June 29–July 2003	Oil Servicing Co. working for Shell	Ijaw youth militants in Bomadi/Burutu LGAs/ Delta State	Demand for NGN 25.4m	State Government Intervention/ Negotiated release after 14 days
3	Kidnap of 9 crew & 4 military escorts of oil barges/ November 11–13 2003		Ijaw Militants	Ransom/ Other demands	Released 2 days later after threats by State Government/ Security Agencies

4	Kidnap of 14 workers/ November 2003	Chevron Texaco	Militant Ijaw youths/ Bayelsa State	Ransom demands	Intervention of State Government
5	Kidnap of 19 oil workers	Nobel Drilling/Prospecting.	Ijaw Militias/ Delta State	Ransom demands	Intervention of State Government
6	Kidnap of 7 workers/ November 28– December 2003	Bredero Shaw Oil Servicing Co. (Shell)	Militant Ijaw Youths/ Delta State	Ransom demands for USD 5m.	State Government Intervention/ Negotiation
7	Murder of 7 workers & military personnel/ April 2004	Chevron Texaco	Militant youths along Benin River area/ Delta State	--	--

- Source: Augustine Ikelegbe, 2005, “The Economy of Conflict in the Oil Rich Niger Delta Region of Nigeria”, *Nordic Journal of African studies* 14(2):208-234

Concluding Remarks

Not to be over emphasized is the need for both government and the oil communities in the Niger Delta to embrace dialogue. The present crisis in the region is partly being fuelled by the lingering militarist disposition on both sides. The Nigerian political life has been militarized for several years since independence, no thanks to years of military rule. This military phenomenon has inculcated a culture of violence in the society. The frequent deployment of military forces to the Niger Delta to quell local riots in recent years has equally further militarized local ethnic militia. Even the present democratic government is not spared, as recent invasion of communities in the Niger Delta by military forces has shown. Therefore, in order to stem this tide of violence and armed confrontation in the region, government should systematically de-emphasize the use of maximum force, and embrace the aggrieved communities in meaningful dialogue. However, this could only be achieved by tolerance from both sides.

Furthermore, the question of leadership in the Niger Delta struggle deserves some serious attention, while the distribution of government patronage and resources amongst communities and ethnic groups in the Niger Delta should also be addressed. The overwhelming reliance on oil and revenues derived from its exploitation has done more harm than good to the Nigerian state. Therefore, the government should diversify the economy as the neglect of other economic sectors like agriculture and tourism has remained a bane to Nigeria’s development over the years. Looking at the challenges posed by the Niger Delta crisis, Nigeria would risk further crisis and tension in the region if the state failed to accept dialogue and rational bargaining with the local people from

the region. On the other hand oil multinationals have a role to play in order to guarantee their operations in the Niger Delta. In addition, the Niger Delta problem cannot be resolved without dealing with the youths that have been at the forefront of the struggle since 1990s.

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Chapter 7: The Politics of Oil Exploitation: Rationalising the coexistence of oil wealth and extreme poverty in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

By

Francis Nwonwu

Introduction

The Niger Delta comprises nine oil and gas producing southern states of Nigeria, which include Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers States. It is the third largest wetland in the world after the Mississippi and the Pantanal (Shell Nigeria, 2006). It covers an area of about 70, 000 –112,000 sq km (NDDC, 2006) and comprises of 40 ethnic groups with an estimated population of 27 million. Over 40 % of the population is illiterate and two million of the youths are unemployed (NDDC, 2004).

The Niger Delta Region is the economic heartbeat of Nigeria. The region holds 100 % of the oil and gas deposits in the country and accounts for 90 % of the government's total revenue. Between 1999 and 2004, crude oil from Delta State alone contributed as much as \$37.643 billion to the Nigerian economy (Ofehe, 2005). Nigeria oil reserve stands at 35.9 billion barrels of oil and 160 trillion cu ft of gas reserve and ranks second only to Libya's 39 billion barrels. However, Nigeria is the highest oil producer in the continent at 2.5 million barrels per day (EIA, 2006).

Agriculture used to be the main stay of the Nigerian economy with the Niger Delta as the principal food and cash crop belt of the country. The region led in yam cassava, and plantain as well as oil palm, rubber and cocoa production in the country. Its long stretch of coastline also ranks it tops in fisheries production (NDDC, 2004). Yet, the Niger Delta region remains the poorest and least developed region in the country.

Oil a Curse or Blessing in Nigeria?

Agriculture was the main source of food and foreign exchange in Nigeria at independence in 1960. Although oil was discovered in 1956, its low price of about \$6 a barrel then did not place it in any prominent position of significance in contribution to the economy. The rising oil prices and attractive revenue earning caused Nigeria to completely switched attention to oil at the expense of agriculture. The country thus failed to adopt the principle of economic diversification. With the formation of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) cartel in early 1970s, Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and foreign reserve took an exponential trajectory. Revenue from oil was so huge that the then Head of State once said in a press conference "Money is not my problem it is how to spend it". Subsequent governments had money and lacked the prudence and thrift in spending it. Corruption

and gross mismanagement among the high echelon of leaders at the central, state and local government levels added their crushing weight on the single resource, oil-driven economy and precipitated an inexplicable level of poverty that looms large in the Niger Delta. The people of the region overwhelmed by poverty lament that: Their God-given oil on which they placed much hope has turned out to be a curse” and an instrument of oppression in the hands of the political elite and the ruling class (Long, 2007); and have impacted them negatively in the underlisted areas:

❖ **Impact on Agriculture and Fisheries Production**

Agriculture and fishing comprise 90 % of the non-oil economic activities and engage 50-60 % of the active labour force in the Niger Delta (Achi, 2003). The region is the natural belt for rubber, cocoa, oil palm and coconut tree crop production in the country. It is also the basket for the food crops cassava, yam and plantain. Today, oil exploitation has claimed much of the agricultural land and rendered others unusable through oil spills, gas flaring, and burning crude oil. The fisheries sector has also been decimated as oil rigs colonise certain waters and coastlines and render others unproductive from chemical pollution (See Figure 1). This is devastating for a region that depends largely on farming and fishing activities as the traditional occupation (Aaron, 2005).

❖ **The Health Hazards Posed by Oil and Gas-Related Pollutions**

The pollution has worsened the incidence and prevalence of respiratory diseases including asthma, abdominal diseases including gastroenteritis, and cancerous illnesses. The women of Ugbu Kingdom have accused Chevron and other oil companies of unceasingly digging artificial canals in their communities without conducting proper Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Consequently, ocean water infiltrates to contaminate their fresh water supplies. The seawater influx also damages vegetation; especially fisheries ecosystem thereby reducing catches from fishing in the area (Aluko, 2004). In addition to the social costs of the pollution, wastage from the daily flaring of gas is estimated to cost as much as \$3.6 million (Ofehe, 2005).



Figure 1. Panel A



Figure 1. Panel B

Figure 1. Fumes of smoke from burning crude oil in Gokana area of Ogoniland

Who owns the oil in Nigeria?

Nigeria operates a 60:40 joint venture (JV) agreement with the oil companies in oil exploitation in which the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) represents the Federal Government while SPDC represents the oil companies. Cases of protracted political unrests and inter tribal and inter ethnic violence instigated by oil exploiters to divert the attention of the people are common in the region. Past governments turned blind eyes on such developments in the Niger Delta, as such internal strife helps them to divide and rule the people to pillage their oil resources. Bad governance and bad policies with corruption have made Nigeria mortgage her ownership rights over oil to multinational oil companies under the guise of lack of technology and investment capital necessary for oil exploitation. The foreign multinational oil companies have taken control of the oil resources of the country in the pretext that they have both the capital and technology for investment in oil exploitation. The oil companies have colluded with government through the exploits of highly placed government functionaries to deprive the oil-producing communities and the Nigerian society of the benefits from their oil resources.

How Many Barrels of Oil are Equivalent to a Human Life in the Niger Delta?

The federal government perceives oil as its economic lifeline for which it is prepared to annihilate a clan or village to retain its control at all cost. The government would shed blood and has done so many times to safeguard its rights to appropriate oil-rich land and control oil exploitation in the country. It is an open secret that the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 in which an estimated two million people died was an unmistakable attempt to maintain the oil producing integrity of Nigeria by forcing Biafra, which encompasses the present Niger Delta back into Nigeria at all cost. The 1995 execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni activists on trumped up charges of treasonable felony was done to stop him from challenging the oil giant Shell from

exploiting oil from Ogoniland and thereby sabotaging government's and SPDC's huge revenue receipts from oil. In December 1998, the government massacred youths in Yenagoa, capital of Bayelsa State for demanding the control of the oil resources of their ancestral lands. The Federal Government unleashed the same mayhem on Kaiama in the same Bayelsa where youths had made a declaration demanding the control of their oil resources (Ransome-Kuti, Undated).

In the Niger Delta, disputes over ownership of oil-rich lands have erupted between communities in which hundreds of lives have been lost. Militant and militia groups have fought and killed themselves over right of representation of communities or over territorial control of oil enclaves or resources. Government security forces led by the Joint Task Force (JTF) are always called in at the slightest provocation to quell with brutal force skirmishes, which it suspects would threaten or interrupt oil production and deny it the flow of petrol dollars. Amnesty International reported that the Ugborodo community in Itsekiri, Delta State protested over the failure of Chevron Nigeria Oil Company to honour an agreement to provide electricity and water for the community and jobs for the youths in the community. Government reacted by sending armed troops against the defenceless civilians killing one man and injuring at least 30 others (Amnesty International, 2006). The massacre of civilians in Odi in 1999 and the destruction of houses in the fishing and trading centre of the historic Ijaw town Odioma in Bayelsa State in 2005 are examples of sheer brutality unleashed on civilians by the government. The Odioma debacle started as a dispute over ownership of the land for a proposed new oil well. Government's usual intervention left 17 people dead and two women raped including a 105 -year old woman and a two-year old child (Ransome-Kuti, Undated).

Oil Flowing from the Well of Extreme Poverty

There has been steady rise in Nigeria's oil revenue following escalating oil process. In 2004 alone the country scooped a whopping \$25 billion in direct revenue and a windfall of \$816 million from the sale of oil and gas. Revenue for 2005 was estimated to be around \$50 billion by the last quarter. It is estimated that between 1965 and 2000 the Federal Government earned US\$ 350 billion in oil revenue from the Niger Delta (Long, 2007). Furthermore over a 40-year period of oil exploitation in the Niger Delta Region, a staggering \$400 billion have accrued to the government in net profits (Ofehe, 2005). Nigeria's daily production from the Niger Delta brings earnings of upwards of US\$100 million a day to the government and the oil companies. In 2001, total revenue from on-shore oil production was equivalent to nearly US\$ 2 billion in current exchange values. In the same year, the 13 % revenue allocation to the oil-producing states was US\$800 million up from the 2000 allocation amount of US\$500 million (Earth Rights Institute, Undated). Furthermore, oil from the Niger Delta accounts for 20% of oil supply to the United States. This source is has become increasingly become of strategic importance following the conflict in the Middle East (Bisina, 2004).

The region that produces this amount of wealth has nothing but poverty to show for this huge contribution to the economy. Paradoxically, reports indicate that between 1960 and now as much as \$300-400 billion of the country's oil revenue has either been stolen or misappropriated by Nigerian officials (Bober, 2007). The anti-corruption unit set up by the government of Olusegun Obasanjo, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), confirms this when it reported that about \$500 billion, mainly from the oil sector has been stolen in Nigeria between 1960 and 2007. Out of this suspected amount only \$4 billion has been recovered in assets from fraudsters and corrupt officials in the past five year (da Costa, 2008).

Okonta asserts that the governors of the Niger Delta States loot the treasury with impunity because they rigged themselves into power in 1999 with the support and at the behest of powerful political patrons in Abuja (Okonta, 2006). According to him, even the new development initiatives such as Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and its successor the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) or the Council on Socio-Economic Development of Coastal States in the Niger Delta (COSEDECS) initiatives of government cannot proffer a solution. In his view, these agencies have been transformed into avenues to dispense perks and favours to the friends and relatives of the ruling party leadership in Abuja. Youth unemployment is high and as many as two million youths in the Niger Delta are unemployed and have lost hope, faith and dignity in life. For want of jobs the youths resort to hostage taking, bunkering and other oil-related crimes. It is reported that bunkering accounts for the theft of between 100-250 million barrels of oil per year (Remember Ken Saro-Wiwa, Undated).

Human Rights and Militia Groups in Niger Delta

The launching of Ogoni Bill of Rights in 1990 in protest against their marginalisation and lack of access to the resources of their land and the revenue that accrues from it, triggered off the conflict between the people of Ogoniland and SPDC, and emboldened the Ijaw youths December 1998 Kaiama Declaration; the Urhobo ethnic group's declaration spree and the Oron people of Cross River State pronouncement concerning the pollution of their coastal waters, rivers, creeks and streams through the dumping of poisonous substances in their deep ocean trenches.

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) adopted a nonviolent approach for their agitation for a fair share of the proceeds from oil, unlike its contemporaries but they were militarily repressed and violated. Today, Ogoniland is filled with danger written on every square kilometre of the land. Columns of dense smoke from burning crude oil oozing from burst pipes following many years of neglect greets visitors to Ogoniland (See Figure 1). In addition to the air pollution, water effluent discharges from the refinery at Eleme have high phenol contents that damage the creeks and other water bodies linked to the Onne Waterways in Ogoniland (Kpakol, 1999). The environmental meltdown in the area warrants that Ogoni would have been declared a disaster area. But the government continues to nurse a vendetta against the people for chasing Shell Oil Company away from their land.

The road to Ogoniland from Onne in the outskirts of the state capital Port Harcourt is a death trap. It is slippery, muddy, and dangerously meanders into both sides of the bush from what used to be a tarmac road (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Deplorable State of the Access Roads to Ogoniland

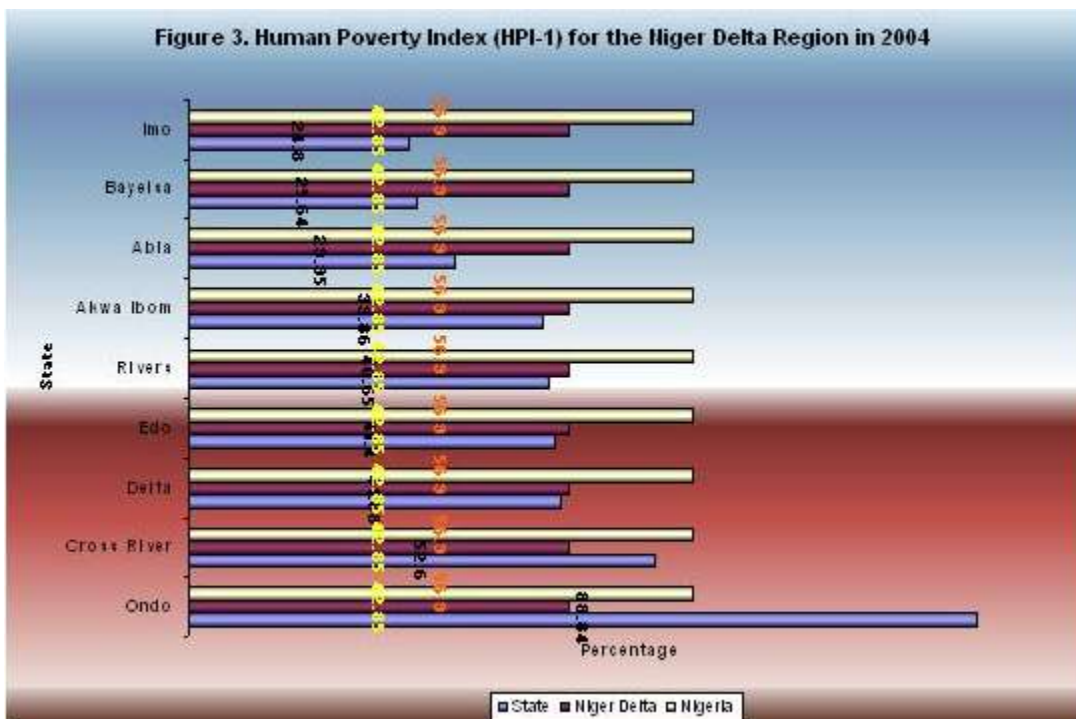
Threat from Poverty Related Health Hazards

The environmental disaster breeds malaria while poverty accentuates the prevalence of HIV/AIDS both of which increase infant mortality. Leakages from the labyrinth of oil pipelines that run through villages, farms, creeks and rivers contribute significantly to land and water pollution. The poverty conditions compel people to consume indiscriminately fish and marine products contaminated by oil spill or effluent discharge.

Nigeria is noted as the world's biggest offender in gas flaring in both proportionate and absolute terms. The country flares between 2 to 2.5 billion standard cubic feet (scf) of gas per day (Remember Ken Saro-Wiwa, Updated).

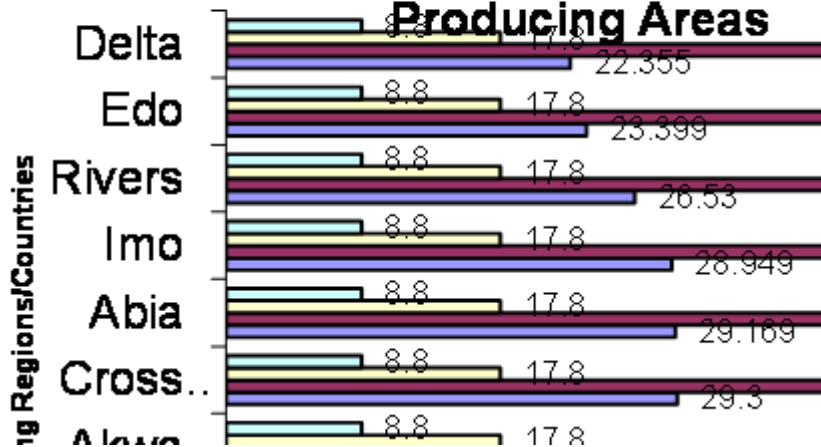
Okonta (2006: <http://www.dawodu.com/okonta5.htm>) described poverty in western Delta as “hamlets that rise up in the shape of flimsy huts on decayed wooden stilts, bracken greenish water ponds from which the bedraggled inhabitants drink, and polluted fishing creeks long denuded of life, to smack you rudely in the face”. He opines that the noxious arrogance of oil companies, coupled with the lackadaisical attitude of an irresponsible government at the prevalence of extreme indigence of the people that forced the people to resort to violence to alleviate or eliminate their unenviable nadir of extreme poverty. Many communities have therefore invoked and adopted John F. Kennedy’s dictum that “Those who make peaceful revolution impossible, make violent revolution inevitable”.

The Human Development Index (HDI) in the region eloquently depicts the magnitude of poverty in the region. The HDI value for the region, which stood at 0.564, was only slightly higher than national figure of 0.453 but is very low for an oil-producing region. The poverty index (HPI-1) measured from such indicators as the probability at birth of not surviving to age 40, adult literacy, percentage of population without access to improved water sources, and percentage of under-five children that are underweight is equally low. Data for 2004 ranges from a low 24.80 % in Imo State to a high of 88.84 % in Ondo State (Figure 3). The average of 42.85 % for the region is far less than the national average of 56.90 %.



But the region's HPI-1 values in 2004 of 28.82% is much higher than those of other oil producing states in the developing world e.g. Indonesia and Venezuela with values of 17.8 % and 8.8% respectively (UNDP, 2006) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Comparison of HPI-1 in Delta States with those of Other Producing Areas



The Militia Groups as Products of Politics and Poverty

The Niger Delta has become synonymous with armed militancy and gangsterism. Many of the militia groups are offshoots of political party supporters who were recruited and used for various forms of electoral malpractices by unscrupulous politicians; and abandoned after the elections. They cannot also disband following the dearth of alternative employment. They therefore resort to a vicious form of self-employment by forming armed gangs that would kidnap innocent men, women and children for some ransom. These brigades of armed militants that sprawl in creeks, swamps, and urban centres of the Niger Delta are not all philanthropic defenders of community or people's rights. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is one of such notorious militant groups dedicated to armed struggle against the exploitation and oppression of the people of Niger Delta and the degradation of their environment. The organization seeks indigenisation of Nigeria's oil as strategy to combat the endemic poverty in the Niger Delta. It also demands as of right, reparations from the national government for the pollution and damage caused by the oil industry. MEND is fighting for "total control" of the Niger Delta's oil wealth because according to its leader, the locals have not benefited from the riches under the ground, creeks and swamps of their land (MEND, Undated). Okonta in sympathy with the MEND mission submits that "behind the mask of the MEND militant is a political subject forced to pick up an AK47 to restore his rights as a citizen" (Okonta, 2006).

Government Reactions and Peace Plans

The previous governments used the instruments of intimidation and sheer force as solution to the crisis. However, the attitude of the new government of President Umaru Yar'Adua appears more reconciliatory than its predecessor. The government is already suing for peace in the Niger Delta and has met with the Niger Delta leaders in Abuja. The President pronounced that achieving peace in the Niger Delta would be a priority of his administration. Furthermore, having a former governor of Bayelsa State as Vice President is considered an additional merit that could bring his plan for peace into fruition. Bayelsa and Rivers States share commonality as key oil producers and most notorious hosts of the militant groups. In pursuit of peace, the Vice President soon after assumption of duty visited Okerenkoko in Delta State, an area considered to be one of the hotspots and the den of kidnappers, hostage takers, and diehard criminals in the Niger Delta Region (Niger Delta Standard, 2007). This visit is seen as reciprocation of the gesture of the militants who expressed their willingness to work with the new Federal Government if the government will meet their demands (Niger Delta Standard, 2007). Furthermore, the President empowered his Vice President to engage the services of renowned international peace negotiators to buttress the government's peace efforts in the region.

Conclusion

The Niger Delta conflict and crises and the battle to abate them have dragged on for decades and the end does not seem to be in sight. They are rooted in a deliberate tenacity of the government, the oil companies, and the communities not to yield on their respective stands. The federal government has become notorious for its enshrined strategy of systematic intimidation and flexing of muscle against the resource custodians, the Niger Delta people. This obnoxious attitude has been demonstrated in the "take it or leave it" snobbish behaviour and gross inconsistency in distribution of oil revenue. The effrontery of the Federal Government in diverting revenue from oil in the Niger Delta to developing other states in the country while ignoring their own development needs has attracted the vexation of the Niger Delta people especially the youths. The damage of their environment and destruction of their agricultural and fisheries sectors, and remorseless attitude of the oil companies is another bitter pill that the people have refused to swallow without question. State interventions have been intimidating, repressive, excessive and bear the semblance of mandatory annihilation. Government reactions to the crises in many cases are tantamount to killing an ant with a sledge hammer. The militancy demonstrated by the communities is a natural phenomenon that transmits into practicality the disenchantment and disillusionment of the people. The conflict in the Niger Delta is a storm that is fast developing into a hurricane. If it is not brought under control now it would have very devastating and deleterious consequences on the oil industry, foreign investments, the tourism industry, and the credibility of the federal government of Nigeria.

While not condoning the act of taking the laws into their own hands or challenging the sovereign authority of the Federal Government by the militants, one can blame government's dogmatic attitude for allowing the crisis escalate to the present level. The actions of the militia and militant groups as unconstitutional as they may be are inevitabilities that were allowed to happen out of the deliberate inaction of the oil companies and inappropriate actions from the government. This war definitely will not be won in the battlefield through the barrel of the gun. A conciliatory and negotiated settlement must be sought that will bring all parties to a negotiating table. If all concerned continue to assert their ego and remain recalcitrant over seeking an amicable solution or maintain the path of trying to quench a petrol fire with water, which adds rather than cuts off oxygen, the resulting inferno will be indiscriminately devastating.

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Chapter 8: The Politics of Oil in the Niger Delta

By

Emmanuel, J. C. Duru

Introduction

Oil production in Nigeria has been a mixed bag of fortune and misfortune, of blessings and curse, depending on who is feeling what effect. For the country, it has been a huge fortune. It is the source of her wealth, accounting for about 90 per cent of her foreign exchange earnings. It is the source from which governments at the federal, state and local levels fund all developmental programmes and projects (TELL, February 18, 2008).

Nigeria's membership of such important bodies as the World Petroleum Congress (WPC), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and African Petroleum Producers Association (APPA) has raised the country's profile internationally. In other words, that Nigeria is a force to reckon with in the comity of nations is, arguably, attributable to her being an oil producing country (Udeme Ekpo, 2004: 39).

For the oil-bearing communities in the Niger Delta, however, oil has been more of a curse than a blessing. In communities where oil exploration and production are carried out onshore, deforestation, erosion and destroyed farmlands are the main signposts for this gift of nature. Oil production activities in these communities have polluted creeks and destroyed aquatic life. And where there are spillages, losses would be unquantifiable in monetary terms. There is also the problem of acid rain, which destroys houses, which people living within the vicinity of oil exploration and production activities have to contend with everyday of their lives (Ray Ekpu, 2008; Dan Agbese, 1993).

Obviously, over 50 years of oil exploration and exploitation have occasioned environmental degradation and pollution, resulting in excruciating and brutalizing poverty, unemployment, disease, health hazards and even death among people living in this region (TELL, February 18, 2008). According to Azigbo (2008:18), the major culprits in these ugly situations are the oil multinationals and the insensitivity of successive governments at the centre.

Consequently, there has been for some time, which intensified since the late 1990s, the emergence of resistant organizations from various ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta to confront the oil multinationals and the Nigerian government. The restiveness which started on a mild note has since degenerated into a state of militancy, hostage-taking, destruction of oil installations, disruption of socio-economic activities and unparalleled violence, so that by 1998, the Niger Delta region had become a lawless zone (NDDC at a Glance, February, 2004).

At the root of the crisis in the Niger Delta have been the attempts by the indigenes of the region to control the oil resources located within their land. The struggle for the control of oil wealth by the indigenous population has a long history dating back to 1966 when the late Isaac Adaka Boro, attempted secession. It has been sustained since then with the agitation taking different forms and dimensions.

Thus, examining the dimensions of resource control in the Niger Delta is the central focus of this study. The paper argues that the politics of oil in the Niger Delta highlights more profound national challenges with which the Nigerian state will need to contend, most notably, issues of fiscal federalism, minority rights, resource allocation and poverty alleviation.

Defining the Niger Delta Region

For practical purposes, the Niger Delta region is defined as comprising the area covered by the natural delta of the Niger River and the areas to the East and West, which also produce oil. The natural limits of the Niger River Delta can be defined by its geology and hydrology. Its approximate northern boundaries are located close to the bifurcation of the Niger River at Aboh, while the Western and Eastern boundaries are around the Benue River and Imo River, respectively. The area covers approximately 25,000 square kilometers (www.nddconline.org).

The broader Niger Delta region, which includes all oil-producing areas and others considered relevant for reasons of administrative convenience, political expedience and development objectives, extends the land area to 75,000 square kilometers (UNDP 2006:19). It is this definition that is used by this study. Defined in this way, the Niger Delta consists of nine states (Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Rivers and Ondo) and 185 local government areas.

The region has some unique characteristics. For instance, it is one of the largest wetlands in the world and it is noted for its sandy coastal ridge barriers, brackish or shiny mangroves, fresh waters, permanent and seasonal swamp forests as well as low land rain forests. The whole area is traversed and criss-crossed by a large number of rivers, streams, canals and creeks, while the mainland is subjected to regions of flood by the various rivers (ERML, 2005).

The Niger Delta region is extremely heterogeneous with respect to culture and ethnicity. The five major linguistic and cultural groups – the Ijaw, Edo, Delta Cross, Yoruba and Igbo – are each composed of numerous sub-groups. The Ijaw, who are said to have the longest settlement history in Niger Delta, are the most complex linguistically. Each of the numerous clans of this group has some linguistic and cultural distinctiveness. In certain cases, villages in the same clan have linguistic differences. This group, which occupies virtually the whole of Bayelsa State, is also found in Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Edo and Ondo States.

The Edo group is made up of mainly the Isoko and Urhobo of Delta State, the Edo of Edo State, the Engenni and Apie-Atissa of Bayelsa State. Even within these groups, several sub-groups exist; many claim to have their own individual identity.

The Delta Cross comprises mainly the Ogoni, Ogbia, Abua and Obolo-Andoni in Rivers State. The most well known, especially internationally, is the Ogoni because of its agitation for resource control and autonomy. The ethno cultural complexity of the Niger Delta region is vividly illustrated by the fact that even a small ethnic group like the Ogoni (about 500,000 people) is made up of at least four cultural groups: the Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme (UNDP, 2006:22).

In spite of the fact that the Yoruba and Igbo are two of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, the related groups in the Niger Delta are some of the smallest there. The main Yoruba groups are the Itshekiri of Delta State, and the Ilaje and Ikale in the borderlands of Ondo State. The main Igbo groups are the Ikwerre, Ndoni, Egbema, Ogba and Ekpeye in Rivers State and the Ukwuani in Delta State (ANEIJ, 2004).

In 1991, the total population of all the nine states of the Niger Delta was 20.5 million. This was made up of 10.133 million males and 10.329 million females. The projected total population for 2005 was 28.9 million, rising to 39.2 million by 2015 and 45.7 million by 2020. The states with the highest population size are Rivers, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Imo. With the possible exception of Bayelsa and Cross River States, there are probably no significant differences in population sizes among the states (CPED, 2003: 33)

Available information on the age structure of the population of states in the Niger Delta region depicts a large segment of young people below 30 years of age. This group comprises 62.1 per cent of the population of the region, compared with 35.8 per cent of adults in the 30 to 69 years age bracket. Based on the 1991 census, there is almost an even distribution of population between men and women in the Niger Delta Region (see NDDC at a Glance, 2004). Though the 1991 census reports that in some states (Abia, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Edo and Imo), there are more females than males, the NDDC Regional Master Plan, reports that there are more males (54 per cent) than females (46 per cent).

Fishing and agriculture are the two major traditional occupations of the Niger Delta peoples. During the colonial era, forestry was introduced as a third major economic activity in the region. Today, though agriculture, fishing and forestry still account for about 44 per cent of employment, all three economic activities have declined since the ascendancy of the oil industry (UNDP, 2006:25).

The Politics of Oil in the Niger Delta

According to Ekpo (2004: 133), for more than four decades, the people of the Niger Delta had lived with the anomaly of having to feed on the crumbs of the national cake which is baked in their territory, but which is shared in the nation's capital – hundreds of kilometers away – with other Nigerians who know nothing about the negative effects of oil exploration and production as the highest beneficiaries. They had been content to accept the little handouts, which came their way, in forms of a few development projects, from the federal government.

If they were not satisfied with the situation, such dissatisfaction was expressed in subdued tones at public fora, whenever the opportunity presented itself. In extreme cases, especially when it concerned the youths of the area, dissatisfaction was often expressed through the use of violence – like disruption of the activities of oil companies operating in the area; kidnapping of oil workers with demands for ransom and vandalization of petroleum facilities to cause spillage for which communities would demand compensation.

These violent agitations in the Niger Delta have been informed by the desire of the people of this region to control the oil wealth and resources located within their land. This desire on the other hand has been occasioned by the pervasive feelings of decades of

abandonment among the people by the oil multinationals and successive governments at the centre.

The argument by the indigenes of the Niger Delta region over the years is that a people whose land produces the wealth that sustains the nation cannot be made to dwell in abject and excruciating poverty consequent upon environmental degradation and pollution resulting from oil production activities (See Newswatch, March 10, 2008; TELL, February 18, 2008). They have, therefore, in different ways been demanding for a fair share of the oil wealth to ensure poverty reduction, enhanced well-being, socio-economic infrastructural development of the area, or alternatively, be allowed to wholly control these oil resources (Newswatch, January 25, 1999:10).

On the part of the oil multinationals and the Nigerian governments, there have been accusations and counter accusations, of neglect and abandonment of the people whose lives have been frustrated and endangered by oil production activities. Though the government and oil companies have been offering tokenism, through the establishment of development intervention agencies (whose activities have largely been frustrated by poor funding), the people contend that such is not enough. The government and the oil companies are being accused of indirectly but purposely ensuring the poverty of the people and the underdevelopment of the area to enhance their (government's and oil companies') economic interests. These have over the years resulted in violent agitations of varying magnitude which date back to pre-colonial era.

According to Emmanuel Duru (1999: 100-103), the politics of oil merchandise produced the first nationalists in the Niger Delta. These were African merchants and rulers who insisted that the trade must bring a fair deal to the area. The commodities then were largely palm oil and slaves; the Europeans marked them as threat to legitimate trade and proceeded to terrorize and eliminate them. King William Dappa Pepple of Bonny was an early casualty in 1854. He was exiled by Consul Becroff to Fernando Po (Equatorial Guinea) and then to Clearance, though he was restored in 1861, he died five years later.

Another Niger Delta indigene who was immersed in the politics of oil and merchandise was King Jaja of Opobo, an ex-slave, shrewd but generous business man who paid off the European slave owners in order to buy freedom for the slaves. He was originally from Bonny, but an orchestrated squabble from a rival house saw him exiled to Opobo in Andoniland. Others who opposed the exploitative trade of the European merchants and paid for it were King Nana Olomu of Itshekiri in 1883 and Oba Oviraniyem Nogbaisi of Benin Empire in 1897.

The agitation continued until the post-colonial era. Precisely in 1966, according to Duru (1999), there was a 12 day revolution by a Niger Delta indigene named Isaac Adaka Boro. He led a small guerrilla army of Ijaw nationals to declare the "Niger Delta Republic". After 12 days, federal troops overcame Boro and his determined compatriots. He, Samuel Owonaru and Nottingham Dick were tried for treason and condemned to death on June 21, 1966.

After what seemed a period of quietness and silence, the Ogoni uprising erupted and lasted between 1990 and 1995. This period marked a new phase in the interesting interface of oil and minority politics between the Nigerian state and government and the peoples of the Niger Delta. According to Duru (1999), not since the rebellion of Boro and Co. declared a short-lived independence over oil related grievances, has any oil

producing community sought redress in ways which involved mobilized mass action and direct confrontation with the state as the Ogonis did. Ken Saro Wiwa, former playwright, social critic and one time federal administration of Bonny, who led the insurrection against Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC), along with eight others paid with their lives on November 10, 1995.

Shell in particular is alleged to have influenced its joint partner (the Nigerian state) in the oil trade in the execution of the “Ogoni nine” as they were popularly known. In an editorial commentary on November 13, 1995, the Guardian Newspaper states thus:

In the final tragic document on the Ogoni crisis, national and international global attention became focused on Shell Petroleum Development Corporation and other oil companies doing business in Niger Delta. Allegations and suspicious of complicity were raised against Shell in particular. Matters were not helped by statements emanating from Shell before and after the hanging. In desperate attempt to exonerate itself of guilt, Shell came off with the unfortunate impression that it cared more about being in good business than about the fate of the communities in which it exploits oil and allied products.

The experiences of Adaka Boro and Ken Saro Wiwa and their compatriots according to Ekpo (2004:133), showed that the political atmosphere, for the greater part of the period during which the country was under military rule, did not present opportunities for a more forceful approach to demands for equity, justice and fair play in the Niger Delta. But even in the current democratic dispensation, the story of Odi, Bayelsa state is not different.

Since the emergence of the Fourth Republic in 1999, agitations in the Niger Delta moved from demands for a fair share of the national cake to the right to have control over natural resources that are found in the area. The demand for “resource control” as it is popularly called, was championed by the governors of the Niger Delta States and the entire Conference of the Southern Governors. In one of its meetings in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital on September 20, 2001, the governors issued a communiqué in which they called for the adoption of what they referred to as true federalism. The communiqué read in part.

The conference noted with dissatisfaction that Nigeria is not practicing true federalism and urges the country to abide by the tenets of true federalism and fiscal autonomy for the federating states as well as proper devolution of power to the states (Ekpo, 2004: 135).

The agitation for resource control was naturally tied to the demand for the control of land and was hinged on the precedent during the First Republic, when the regions, which were then the federating units, had control over agricultural produce.

No issue has in Nigeria's recent history been contentious and controversial as the issue of resource control. People in Southern part of Nigeria saw it as the only answer to

the nagging question of how to guarantee justice and fair play in the handling of resources of nature, especially when exploration of such resources carry with it negative consequences on the environment. But many in the Northern part of Nigeria considered the agitation as an invitation of anarchy. They expressed the fear that behind the agitation for resource control is the suspicion of a grand design by states in the south with enormous wealth to seek independence from Nigeria. They, therefore, expressed preference for a stronger federal government that would be more responsible for all other parts of the country.

Caught in the clash of counter claims and charges the Federal Government under Obasanjo took the case for resource control to the Supreme Court. On April 5, 2002, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the federal Government which was asking for the determination of the rights of the federating state to control their natural resources.

Though a political settlement to the case between the federal and State governments was sort afterwards, the politics of oil in the Niger Delta has ever since assumed a more worrisome and violent dimensions, turning the region into a den of militants and lawlessness. The problem of militancy and violence in the Niger Delta manifests in two ways namely, disruption of oil and gas installations and facilities, and hostage-taking and kidnapping of oil workers. The militant groups in the region have carried out deadly and paralyzing attacks on oil and gas stations and facilities.

Statistics released by a non-governmental organization, the Niger Delta Development Monitoring and Corporate Watch (NIDDEMCO) shows that between 1999 and June, 2007, a total of 308 hostage incidents occurred in the region (The Tide, Tuesday, July 10, 2007). A breakdown of this record shows that Bayelsa state was on the lead with 131 incidents; Rivers State had 113; Delta State 45, while Akwa Ibom had the least record of 15. Unfortunately, the situation appears to be deteriorating by the day as the spate of hostage-taking and kidnapping incidents are one the increase (see Sunday Vanguard, February 10, 2008: 9; Saturday Sun, March 29, 2008: 10 and Vanguard, April 6, 2008)

Even at the face of threat to national security and the unity of the state, the Nigerian government is yet to fashion out a strategy to ensure a lasting solution to the problem of oil and minority politics in the Niger Delta (Newswatch, August, 2008: 14 - 26).

Conclusion

Obviously, the politics of oil in the Niger Delta highlights more profound national challenges with which the Nigerian state will have to contend, most notably, issues of fiscal federalism, minority rights, resources allocation and poverty alleviation (Cesarz, 2003).

A modest start in this direction is for the government and oil companies to make life more bearable in these oil bearing communities. This will require a massive infusion of funds into this region. And because this is expensive, the government and the oil companies shy away from the challenge or simply offer tokenism. Neither shying away nor tokenism can solve the problem of setting up schools, hospitals and industries in

these places so that life can be somewhat liveable, and those who take up arms against the state and us, for right or wrong reasons, may let us live in peace.

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Chapter 9: The Niger Delta Child and the Future of National Integration in Nigeria: A Prognostic Analysis²⁵

By
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Background to study

One of the recurrent decimals that have nearly eclipsed Nigeria's efforts at national integration is the Niger Delta imbroglio which started several years ago. For instance, it was reported that the chiefs of the people of the Niger Delta region protested the exploitation of the resources in the area as far back as 1899 (Ifeanacho and Nwagwu, 2009). Like many unanswered questions in human history, the current agitations, which *mysteriously* blossomed to armed confrontations and guerrilla warfare started as mere ideas in the minds of the intellectual revolutionaries. According to Akinkuotu (2009), Isaac Adaka Boro was the first to ask that question and later by Ken Saro Wiwa. With time, it got radicalized by the truly oppressed and later, snowballed into a national question. It created circumstantial victims and of course, political *jobbers*. It is no longer a mere crisis; it has adorned the toga of collateral damages, maiming, kidnappings and deaths, etc. The situation could no longer be distinguished from conventional warfare. Statistics show that there are about 26,000 militants in Delta state alone (AAPW Report 2007 in Agbo, 2009).

Economically, and as posited by Nwosu (2008), the Nigerian government losses millions of dollars every month to the violence; and in fact, this runs into billions of dollars every year as a result of stolen and shut-in activities. In 2003 alone, the government lost an estimated \$7 billion; by 2008, the amount had risen to almost \$34 billion; and then there is the cost to the multinational oil producing companies. When the human cost to the government and the companies are added, the real cost becomes almost incalculable.

Beneath the agonies of the vanquished, the victorious gunshots and celebrations of the victors lay the most innocent victim, the Niger Delta child, who in his childish innocence, watches helplessly as the forces of the state that is supposed to protect him fired and bombarded him and his people in a manner reminiscence of a genocide and Gestapo styles of Second World War. On May 29th 2009, for example, children who could not run when the federal military power force struck had no option than to turn to them (federal forces) for protection, but the soldiers injected them with chemicals so that they would go and die later, thus, preventing them from growing up to become militants (Women of Africa, 2009:1).

One of the most sensitive things here is that the only noise this child hears daily are those of the militants and federal bombs and gunshots; the environmental language he

²⁵ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Conference on the Niger Delta Crises, organised by the University of Monash, Johannesburg, South Africa, 6-7 November 2009.

knows and understand is that of the jungle where, according to Hobbes, 'life is nasty, brutish and short'. The child cannot understand why his parents once told him that Nigeria was his fatherland and why his teachers force him to stand up while the national anthem is recited.

At the centre of his confusion lies hatred as he feels the difference between him and other children in the same Nigerian entity as he mourns the deaths, scampers for security and scavenges for food in a land of plenty; he may strategize for vengeance at the opportune time. It is with this mindset that the child grows up into adulthood and expectedly, a community and possibly, national leader as the case may be.

The problematic is that there is great danger in future national integration in Nigeria when the child (dren) who survived the current mayhem, must have grown up with this type of experience and mindset to become stakeholders in future national integration process. The fear is that they might not be in the right frame of mind to discuss or implement integrating efforts as their past experiences would keep on reverberating in their sub-consciousness as recurrent nightmares. Thus, the prognostic approach of this study was necessitated by these facts as it looks critically and with a bird's eye-view into the future of national integration in a country that seems to have mortgaged its future unity to a monumental mistake called the Niger Delta quagmire.

The Niger Delta Child and National Integration: Conceptual Clarifications

a. The Nigerian and Niger Delta Child

A child, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is every human being below the age of 18 years. Biologically, a child is anyone in the developmental stage of childhood, between infancy and adulthood. The Child Right Act thus provides that:

such a child's best interests shall remain paramount in all considerations. A child shall be given such protection and care as is necessary for its well being, retaining the right to survival and development and to a name and registration at birth (UNICEF, 2007).

In African tradition, one may carry the stigma of a child until one has undergone the passage rites into manhood (Okorie in Barkindo et al, 2007). From the above definitions it becomes clear that a child is anyone who has not attained the age of maturity and who, on his own, cannot take some decisions and actions without the direction of others. The child is regarded innocent in his actions and is more or less under the provision and protection of others who do not exclude constituted authorities. It was in realization of this responsibility, for example, that in 1989, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which covers in its 54 articles all the rights of children on healthcare, education, and freedom from exploitation and the right to hold opinion, amongst others.

Generally, the Nigerian child in spite of the 2003 Child Rights Act has not been well treated. They are still subjected to physical and mental violence, sexual abuse, neglect and maltreatment while with parents or guardians. Apart from child labour, many Nigerian children are victims of human trafficking. A recent study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) showed that Nigeria lost about 4,000 children to traffickers. Thousands of them were recently labelled as witches in Akwa Ibom State, and exposed to demeaning and inhuman acts, including premature deaths. Educationally, Nigerian children have a bleak future. Recent statistics indicate that about 45 percent of school age children are out of school in the country. Those lucky to be in school are put in shanties and non-conducive environments that pass as classrooms. Some of them still go to school without food and in tattered clothing. In these schools, both the quantity and quality of instruction are far below expected standard. At birth, not many of them are lucky enough to survive the first few months due to the parlous health care system that engenders high level of infant mortality. Unfortunately, 25 percent of them die before they can reach five years of age from avoidable causes.

Even children that survived this level face the problem of malnutrition and stunted growth. They live in an unfriendly environment with little hope of attaining their aspirations in life. In most families, children's opinions do not count, as they are not tolerated. "Of course, the Nigerian child is not the son or daughter of the affluent few... With the obliteration of the middle class, the average Nigerian child is the poor one who is even lucky to have survived infant mortality" (ThisDay, 26 May 2009:1).

The Niger Delta child is a Nigerian child. He experiences all the excruciating conditions of that child in addition to the peculiar situation in the Nigerian Creeks. He refers to the teeming children population in the oil producing Niger Delta area of Nigeria made up of Abia, Bayelsa, Edo, Delta, Ondo, Cross River, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Imo states where for several decades, militant activities and their concomitant military actions have been taking place (However, militant activities could be said to be pronounced in Bayelsa, Delta, Cross River, Rivers and Akwa Ibom states). A UNDP Report (2009) stated that in reality, the Niger Delta could be seen as a region suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor, and endemic conflict. Thus, he is that child who does not understand why the government is at war with his people. Imperatively, the following could be regarded as the peculiar condition of the Niger Delta child:

- a. Impoverished, hungry and unkempt
- b. Malnourished and neglected
- c. Mostly out of school as a result of incessant crises and street hawker.
- d. So depressed as a result of the sense of being hated by other federating units.
- e. Insecure in the face of invading forces.
- f. Patriotic but sees no reason to be nationalistic
- g. Grossly unhappy with his fatherland
- h. Molested
- i. Potentials of being recruited into militant groups
- j. Cannot compete favourably with his counterparts from other zones

It could be added that for the purpose of this study the Niger Delta child and children would be used interchangeably.

b. National Integration

Integration could be seen as the process of creating the sense of commonality and tolerability that exist between and among people of various socio-cultural groups in a polity. According to Chaturvedi (2006:148), integration is the process of bringing together of the different groups which may have same rights in law but nevertheless have unequalled privileges and divided and desperate social and educational institutions. It implies the bringing of all such institutions or organizations together on one platform or to bring together all people regardless of creed, race and origin, with the intention of forming a unified civil society. It is in the light of this that Obasi (2003:205) surmises that integration is not only a form of synthesis among the elements of a possible political unity, it also always marks a triumph of centripetal over centrifugal forces. He therefore, identified the following as the inevitable characteristics of integration:

- a. It ought to be voluntary
- b. Must not be coerced
- c. The empirical factors warranting it must be accompanied by a sufficiently subjective awareness among the populace of its desirability.

Consequently, integration theory is any form of analysis about political units that tries to account for or make generalizations concerning the process and consequence of purposeful cooperation or outright unity between them, usually arising out of notions of objective interdependence or common goals and mutual interests, whether of states within the international system, groups within the state or any entities within larger political integrity, and intended to continuously optimize the potentials of the actors (Obasi, 2003). Hence the maximization of collective interest is the most important attraction to integration.

Theoretical Perspective

To provide an enabling analytical platform for effective analysis of the Niger Delta child and the future of national integration in Nigeria, the Nation-Building and Social Integration theory was used. The concept of Nation-Building came into limelight in political study between 1950s and 1960s and two of its earliest known proponents were Richard Bendix and Karl Deutsch. The theory explains the processes that led to the establishment of, and of course, consolidation of contemporary states unlike those states established on the bases of religion, race, culture, conquest, etc, that formed the organizing principles of the traditional state formation. Friedrich (1963) asserts that 'Nation-building' is an architectural metaphor which, strictly speaking, implies the existence of consciously acting agents such as architects, engineers, carpenters, and the like. However, as used by political scientists, the term covers not only conscious strategies initiated by state leaders but also unplanned societal change. Østerud (in Polsto, 1999) adds that the concept of 'Nation-Building' became for political science what 'industrialization' was to social economy: an indispensable tool for detecting, describing

and analyzing the macrohistorical and sociological dynamics that have produced the modern state. According to them, the traditional, pre-modern state was made up of isolated communities with parochial cultures at the “bottom” of society and a distant, aloof, state structure at ‘the top’, largely content with collecting taxes and keeping order. Through nation-building these two spheres were brought into more intimate contact with each other. Members of the local communities were drawn upwards into the larger society through education and political participation.

The state authorities, in turn, expanded their demands and obligations towards the members of society by offering a wide array of services and integrative social networks. The subjects of the monarch were gradually and imperceptibly turned into citizens of the nation-state. Sub-state cultures and loyalties either vanished or lost their political importance, superseded by loyalties toward the larger entity, the state.

Acton (1967:47), seemed to defer and was more inclined to see cultural diversity as a blessing for the members of society and a safeguard against tyranny:

The presence of different nations under the same sovereignty ... provides against the servility which flourishes under the shadow of a single authority, by balancing interests, multiplying associations, and giving the subject the restraint and support of a combined opinion.

Not unity and uniformity, but diversity and harmony ought to reign in society, Acton maintained. To Deutsch (1963) and his disciples, nation-building and national integration were but two sides of the same coin, indeed, simply two ways of describing the same process. A major object of nation-building was to weld the disparate population elements into a congruent whole, by forging new loyalties and identities at the national (state) level at the expense of localism and particularistic identification. Deutsch specified four stages by which he expected this process to take place: Open or latent resistance to political amalgamation into a common national state; minimal integration to the point of passive compliance with the orders of such an amalgamated government; deeper political integration to the point of active support for such a common state but with continuing ethnic or cultural group cohesion and diversity, and finally, the coincidence of political amalgamation and integration with the assimilation of all groups to a common language and culture.

From the foregoing, one may argue that Nigeria is undoubtedly, one of the modern states in search of national unity and integration which have been further punctured by the reality of the Niger Delta crises. The implication of the crises in terms of the Nigerian government’s role is that it mortgages future integrative processes and nation-building in the sense that the region would in fact find it difficult to partake most sincerely in integration efforts as the vindictive feelings about the present imbroglio will continue to haunt it like an unstoppable nightmare. This situation becomes more problematic when the current children of the region are put in the perspective of future leaders of the region and the nation in the wider future integrative processes.

The Niger Delta Child and the Future of National Integration in Nigeria: A Prognostic Analysis.

Nation-building is no simple process. History has demonstrated the difficult, complex, and varied developments needed to unite a people under a government and to create among them a stable cultural, economic, political, and social community. The process has been especially strenuous where the people to be united have included diverse, large groups distinguished by their own customs, language, or separate identity (Davies and Kalu-Nwizu, 2001). This is worse when such a polity is at war with itself.

Thus, the crises in the Niger Delta have great implications on future national integration in Nigeria. A prognostic insight into the situation exposes the reality of the moment to the effect that future integration in the country is in danger. This is consequent on the unprecedented level the problem has attained which practically is beyond the glittering attractions of current federal government's amnesty to the militants who incidentally are not the only aggrieved people in the area; the children are also angered.

The crises have killed and wounded souls, enslaved thousands of minds and battered bodies in Odioma, Odi, Ogoni, Umuechem, etc, and leaving in its stead, unsatisfactory feelings against the Nigerian nation. These feelings may be too old in the minds of the adults but a perpetual nightmare in those of the children of the area who would eventually become leaders in the nearest future.

With the benefit of hindsight which the above assertions have provided, it could be said that the issue of future integration or nation-building in Nigeria may be an effort in absolute futility, giving the fact that the present disenchanting Niger Delta children would definitely grow up to become national integration stakeholders and decision makers.

Little wonder why the nineteenth-century British Philosopher and Economist John Stuart Mill presaged the problems of Nigeria and federations like it. In elaborating on the federal form, Mill noted the need for integrating power among members. No single member group should, Mill said, have the power to override the expectations of other members. If a group had such power, it would dictate its will to all others, thus ending any effective federation in favor of single group dictatorship (in Davis and Kalu-Nwizu, 2001). The federal government by its actions is not only enforcing its obnoxious will on the people of the Niger Delta but also mortgages its own future existence.

According to Deutsch (in Polsto, 1999), a major object of nation-building and integration was to weld the disparate population elements into a congruent whole, by forging new loyalties and identities at the national (state) level at the expense of localism and particularistic identification. Deutsch specified four stages by which he expected this process to take place: Open or latent resistance to political amalgamation into a common national state; minimal integration to the point of passive compliance with the orders of such an amalgamated government; deeper political integration to the point of active support for such a common state but with continuing ethnic or cultural group cohesion and diversity, and finally, the coincidence of political amalgamation and integration with the assimilation of all groups to a common language and culture.

Obviously, current experiences of the children have shown that the future 'forging of new loyalties and identities at the national (state) level at the expense of localism and particularistic identification' may be difficult. This is because these children have been made to believe that they are no longer Nigerians following the spate of attacks on their communities by federal forces. Their loyalty is first to their communities and their

identity would continue to be that of a people once chastised and oppressed. The extent of attacks and damages in the area makes the assimilation of all groups to common culture a mirage. An eye witness account of just one of the military raids is really touchy:

At least 17 people died as a result of the attack, including young children and elderly people. Of these, 14 were reportedly burned to death, including Balasanyun Omieh, a woman said to be 105 years old, and two-year-old Inikio Omieye. Three people were said to have died of gunshot wounds, according to Amnesty International sources. Some people drowned when their canoe capsized as people tried to flee the attack in canoes or by swimming, mostly women and children. At least two women were allegedly raped and many people were injured. Cadbury George Omieh, Igno XXI, Amanyanabo (King) of Odioma, and other traditional rulers were whipped and forced to eat sand, amounting to torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment...’ (www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2005/amnesty-nga-)

On 27 May 2009, it was also reported that nine villages were destroyed and that Nigerian soldiers were heard boasting that they killed men, women and children and that those who were able to escape were driven into the bush where snakes and other dangerous animals killed them (Urhobo Historical Society, 2009). Hence, Nigeria is fighting an unjust war’ in the Niger Delta (Akinkuotu, 2009).

The implication of this situation is that the child who beheld this type of scenes would rather pay loyalty to his community which he saw as persecuted than a federal arrangement which once maltreated them. Thus, all the stages as enunciated by Deutsch (in Deutsch and Foltz, 1963) may not work in Nigeria going by the nature of pains expressed by this child in the hands of the invading forces. Of course, deeper political integration to the point of active support for such a common state but with continuing ethnic or cultural group cohesion and diversity, and the coincidence of political amalgamation and integration with the assimilation of all groups to a common language and culture becomes a herculean task.

Trust among the integrating units is one of the greatest conditions for integration and nation- building. There would be perpetual fear among the Niger Delta children that history might repeat itself and fear, which is the “...feel(ing) you get when you are afraid or worried that something bad is going to happen” (Longman, 2003:578) is not favourable to integrating process. The relationship that exists between the ethnic groups that make up the country already bears signs of suspicion which will be definitely exacerbated by the result of this unpalatable carryover.

The process of national integration also demands that the integrating units should not be coerced. However, the present bombardments and outright military actions in the region qualify the Nigerian forces as *Army of Occupation* and part of the coercive processes of the state. In the minds of the children in the area lay the destructive impression that their land and people have been conquered by alien forces. This is the impression they would continue to hold as they grow into adulthood. Lessons on cognitive learning process of the child shows that whatever a child learned at the point of recognition of objects and issues he holds on to maturity. In the creeks, the child feels he

is being coerced into a federation that is neither in his favour nor his people. There are doubts that the children who saw their parents massacred and homes destroyed would willingly or voluntarily agree to join forces with the 'killers' just for the sake of nation-building because "... deep down in the hearts of the restive youths ...are feelings of injustice...they feel hopeless and bitter..." (Nwuba, 2008:277). They also feel hated and unwanted by other federating units. Their self esteem is already low as they feel they cannot compete with children of other components of the Nigerian state.

Moreover, the empirical factors warranting integration must be accompanied by a sufficiently subjective awareness among the populace of its desirability. Thus, the desirability of an integrated Nigerian state remains questionable in the minds of the adults that witnessed as children the present situation in their homestead called the Niger Delta. It would be difficult to convince the people that building an integrated nation out of the present Nigeria would be of utmost benefit to all. To them its desirability is in question and bleak while its undesirability is emphasized.

If it were in nations with the prospects of proper national integration, the local communities were supposed to be drawn upwards into the larger society through education and political participation as demanded by the proponents of integration and nation-building. As both Niger Delta and Nigerian children, those in the Creeks suffer in double capacities. Statistics indicate that about 45 percent of school age children are out of school in the country. Those lucky to be in school are put in shanties and non-conducive environments that pass as classrooms. Some of them still go to school without food and in tattered clothing. In these schools, both the quantity and quality of instruction are far below expected standard (*Sun News*, 2009). If the general Nigerian situation is described thus, then that of the Creeks is more worrisome because most often the schools and facilities are closed down when those from other regions of the country are functioning.

In addition, political participation is also low in the area since the crises do not allow for proper political activities. In the 2007 elections for example, many of the people could not express their political opinions, contest for political positions or partake in the choice of their political leaders no thanks to the conquering exploits of the federal Army of Occupation and the militants who parade the area unceasingly.

Moreover, the involvement of children in militia activities spells doom for future national integration. This is very worrisome bearing in mind the experience of child soldier phenomenon in African countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, etc.

Go into the creeks and you will find there are 14-year-old boys. This is the [upcoming] generation we are talking about (Briggs, 2009). They live in the forest. They make a camp, and live there. I finished secondary school. But there was no job, not even a chance of an opportunity. If you ask me to carry arms, I will in order to survive (George, 2009). With youth unemployment soaring in the Niger Delta and even university graduates struggling to find work, recruitment by the militias is one of the only way for young men to make their own way (Briggs and George in IRIN, 2009).

Obviously, it is difficult to convince a child who has been drilled in militia tactics and mentality to intermingle freely with 'the enemy side' no matter the time lag. Child militia in the creeks would definitely make the ill feelings of the situation to not only last longer in the minds of the participants but also blocks the possibility of future sincere development-oriented interactions and integration. Moreover, the fact that these children earn a lot from this exercise goes a long way to compound the problem:

Fourteen-year-old boys are going to the camps as a summer job. "They go there and earn money... you ask, what is the alternative? Say they earn N40, 000 (about US\$340) a month. For those young boys - for anyone else - imagine how much that is. Then they go back to class (Mittee in IRIN, 2009).

The consequence of this is that so long as poverty persists in the area and the nation at large, the attraction to the Nigerian project which is not even ready to take care of these children is minimal. The amnesty payments as packaged by the federal government and some militant groups may not be enough just as it cannot go round in the right sense of it. There are still those who feel unsatisfied by the whole arrangements and would still like to go back to the creeks which they now see as a means to livelihood. Generally, the children also feel aggrieved because they have not seen any encompassing programme to take good care of them.

Conclusion

All efforts at future integration and nation-building in Nigeria will remain a mirage if the current situation in the region continues. The recent amnesty and disarmament programme of the government may not yield the required result nor stop future arms insurgence, after all, no one can guarantee that the arms turned in by the militants are all they had. Hence, the issues of poverty, marginalization, infrastructural decay, pollution, etc, that necessitated the confrontations should be properly addressed. That should not exclude those things that make true federalism thick.

Even in consociational democracy as introduced by Lijphart to mark the polity of several multinational countries, recognition is made of the principle of group rights and collective representation and in proportional distribution of society's resources between officially defined ethnic, language or religious groups. Offices in public institutions are also distributed on the same principle although by definition the state is neutral towards different groups. People in consociational democracy are not only recognized as citizens but also as members of concrete groups and their rights and duties depend on it. A multicultural society can function effectively only if its members have sufficient common ground. Common ground lays a basis for mutually enriching association, recognizing common interests and creating a situation where different nationalities feel themselves secure (Vetik, 2000).

One fears that the situation in the region will be worse when the children who witnessed the present situation became adult Nigerians and stakeholders in the Nigerian project except an urgent step is taken to redress the situation.

The federal government should do well to stop all forms of military attacks in the area. Efforts should be made to re-integrate the spirits of children of the region into the national spirit by providing them with the necessary enabling environment and proper educational programme that will give them a sense of belonging and patriotism. This is also in agreement with AAPW's (2007) recommendation of 'disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of militant youths' as part of peace-building in the area.

The displaced children and their parents should be rehabilitated as a matter of urgency to stop the dismal situation from generating in the children, lasting hatred and anger against the Nigerian nation. Self esteem, which is 'feelings of capability combined with feelings of being loved', would also be developed in them. This is necessary because "a child who is happy with an achievement but does not feel loved may eventually experience low self-esteem. Kids who feel good about themselves seem to have an easier time handling conflicts and resisting negative pressures. They tend to smile more readily and enjoy life. These kids are realistic and generally optimistic" (Sheslow, 2008).

A programme aimed at re-orientating the school children in the region should be embarked upon immediately. This should be integrated into the school curriculum in order to erase the impression already existing in the minds of the Niger Delta children. As one blames the federal government for not giving the crises the attention it deserved right from the time of Willinks Commission of 1958, the militants should also be condemned for converting the agitation of Niger Delta into sheer criminality.

It should be reinstated that while commending the current amnesty programme of the federal government, there seems to be strategic lacuna as it does neither guarantee that all the weapons the militant groups had were turned in nor does it embrace sustainable re-conscientisation programme that would help to redirect and change the feelings of the future leaders of the area in the future Nigeria project. This will help to heal the wounds and save Nigeria from future collapse. With all this in place there is hope that the future of integration in Nigeria involving the current children of the Niger Delta could be bright.

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Chapter 10: The Conflict in the Niger Delta Region and National Interest

By

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Introduction

The Niger Delta region in Nigeria comprises of nine states namely, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Ondo, Abia and Imo. The region is naturally endowed with natural resources like other parts of the country. But because the region has a large deposit of oil and gas resources which most parts of the country do not have and more importantly the world market is in need of those resources and of course, the country itself depends largely on them as well, it has made the region very important not only to Nigeria alone but to the world economy. It has become very glaring that over dependence on those resources by the country at the expense of exploration or exploitation and utilization of other resources like agriculture and other minerals which abound in other parts of the country has made Niger Delta vulnerable to environmental degradation, pollution and gross underdevelopment. As a result of oil exploration, exploitation and gas flaring by oil and gas corporations like Shell BP, Exxon, Mobil, Total, Chevron, Esso among others, the inhabitants of the region and particularly the elite and the leaders over the years felt that they have been unduly exploited and a need for justice to be applied to alleviate their problem which generally has not been adequately addressed by the Nigerian government, hence the conflict.

Therefore, the crisis in the Niger Delta in Nigeria is a conflict of interests which borders on some specifics of human nature, the environment, security and development

which Nigerian government needs to address by embracing a moral and philosophical approach. But in doing so, the nation state must consider the general interest of the citizenry. In this paper, I have discussed issues of vital importance related significantly to the crisis in the Niger Delta region and the nation state and proffer some moral and philosophical solutions. Before we consider the moral and philosophical aspects of this paper, it is important to know in brief the nature of the natural environment and the Niger Delta region.

Natural Environment/ Niger Delta Region

Before the advent of man in the region it can be postulated that the habitats enjoyed the serenity of peace and its aesthetic natural appeal except perhaps occasional natural occurrences like storms, boisterous winds etc, which on their own have added to natural wonder for any intelligent being to appreciate and grapple with because of its metaphysical and empirical splendor. But that was not to continue eternally as the presence of man was going to change all that. It could be likened to the biblical story of the creation of the universe which when its creation was consummated with the making of man, the Creator was pleased with his artistic work and concluded that it was very good but later regretted to have included man in the creation of the universe.

Now let us see how the creation of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria encapsulates the creation of the Hebraic universe. The natural estate of man as far as he was concerned was and still is self preservation and how to cope with the exigencies of life. The natural environment with which he was to co-exist provided a convoluted thought of his role in a polarity of existence plus his natural instinct of aggressiveness, egoism, adventurism, and

pride. The first group of humans that populated what we know as Niger Delta region was basically living a rural agricultural life style with a complete ignorance of most of the things in the environment. Perhaps they were more concerned of how to feed and live, what we can call a minimal existence. They were probably living a philosophical life of eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die. Their knowledge of most of the natural resources at their disposal namely, oil and gas was like the allegory of the cave by Plato, the little ray of light had not shone for the people inside to see, hence its ignorance.

People living in the Hebraic knowledge of the Universe did not even know that the group of people living in the Niger Delta existed neither the people of the region were aware of the existence of other human beings who could have courage to come and invade their region. The question is, were the Edos, Itsekiris, Ijaws, Ibibios, Ogonis, Ilajes, Urhobos, Effiks, Isokos etc the original occupants of the region or they were mere invaders whose descendants today claim its ownership? By virtue of their occupation as agrarians and fishermen and women who by natural accident of adventurism, in the course of farming and fishing, found the region conducive for their existence. Is it not true to say that before humans began the occupation of the region and generally the universe, the other living inhabitants were the original owners? The idea of ownership of land, water and mineral resources emanated from the inability of the other habitats to claim their ownership because of the level of their intelligence. It could also be the case that the biblical idea that Adam the first man created by the Hebraic Being entrusted the universe into his hand thereby making man the owner of all the natural resources which eventually became the basis for all human tribes to become owners of their environments.

It could also be the case that the various ethnic groups of the Niger Delta area believe that the Creator of their universe made them the sole owners of whatever is in their region and they can be used for their well being. In other words, they have a moral claim and justification to use natural resources as they deem fit hence the beginning of their contribution to environmental deforestation, degradation and pollution. The belief that man has the sole authority to use whatever therein on earth as he likes with impunity because everything is under his control is not acceptable to the environmental ecologists who believe in animal rights (Pojman, 1997).¹ As far as the environmental ecologists are concerned, it is nothing but human arrogance and a way to morally justify the injustices of man's treatment of animals and the environment. As far as they are concerned, man only coexists with nature and he has no moral rights to use his rational power and authority to violate the rights of other beings like animals.

While the people of Niger Delta region might not subscribe to the ethics of the environmental ecologists, it does appear that they have their traditional environmental ethics of not taking more than need from nature so that the gods would not be angry with them. By living according to the traditional ethical precepts of relating to nature with care, the environment was able to tolerate the level of their pollution, deforestation and degradation before the advent of modern science and technology with the attendant total disregard to the moral principle of traditional environmental life of the indigenes.

Niger Delta Region and Modern Science and Technology

The exploration of oil in Nigeria by Shell BP yielded some success in 1956 four years before her independence. At that time it was believed that the oil deposit in Nigeria

particularly at Oloibiri now in Bayelsa State was of commercial quantity which was not expected to last long. As a matter of fact by 1957, according to G. Brian Stapleton (1967: 219). Nigeria exported one thousand metric tons of oil. The people in the Niger Delta region before then did not know that they were in the land ‘flowing with milk and honey’ to use the biblical metaphor to describe natural endowment of wealth. If the people had the premonition of the richness of the natural oil and gas deposited in a large quantity in their region and the knowledge of modern science and technology to do the exploration on their own, plus the vision that if they were to be part of Nigeria and would be denied the right to own their God given resources, as they currently experience in Nigeria, perhaps they would have opted not to be part of the country. The question is: why didn’t the people in the Niger Delta area have knowledge of the natural resources of oil and gas before the advent of western science and technology?

Olaniyan (1982: 7), raised a fundamental question relating to the issue of African past and its environment which is germane and relevant to Niger Delta region. “...why did the African culture fail to reach a level of technology comparable to that of Euro-America?” He goes on to say that, “without contact with the new ways and challenges coming from other societies where the new techniques had been evolved, it was impossible to effect any transformation in the traditional methods of solving problems posed by environmental constraints” (Olaniyan, *ibid*). When it became known by some major western oil corporations, namely, Shell, Mobil, Exxon, Chevron, etc, that the oil and gas found in the Niger Delta area is of large quantity and quality, Nigerian government considered it a natural economic boom that would accelerate development throughout the country.

Since a new way of doing things has been introduced through western science and technology in Nigeria specifically the oil and gas industry in the Niger Delta region: what are its impacts on the people, environment and the development of the region? Olaniyan observed that modern science and technology as good as it is, it nevertheless has its devastating effects on man and the environment. He writes:

The traditional balance between man and nature has been complicated by the intrusion of a third factor into the equation, that is, science and technology. Although technology gives man greater control of his environment, its potential is double-edged: technology ill-applied, can as easily upset the delicate balance as it can, when carefully applied, lend itself to solving man's problems (Olaniyan, 1982:9).

The environment of the areas where oil and gas activities take place became worse for it, that is, the traditional farming and fishing of the people in those areas suffer pollution, degradation and neglect. And the people are saying why this? The environment from where the oil and gas are produced would naturally wonder, if they had the capacity to reason, the kind of co-tenants human beings are. The natural aesthetic beauty of the land and water has been degraded and polluted. The peace that had been part of the inhabitants before modern technology was employed to exploit the oil and gas has turned to nightmare.

It is not the case that the Niger Delta area has not benefited from the advancement of the new technology in their area. The natural environment of their ancestors has witnessed new development that has turned some of the rural areas to urban or cosmopolitan cities namely, Port Harcourt, Yenagoa, Calaba, Warri, etc. The introduction of western technology gave rise to new form of life and institutions of higher learning, industries, and businesses with employment opportunities including tourism have made

some of the towns and cities the pride of Nigerians. Is the introduction of modern technology the cause of the insurrection in the region?

The Crisis in the Niger Delta/ Yar'Adua Administration

When it comes to the root cause of conflict between the ruler and the ruled the observation of Kwame Nkrumah is instructive.

The nature and cause of the conflict between the ruling class and the exploited class is influenced by the development of productive forces, that is, changes in technology; the economic relations which these forces condition; and the ideologies that reflect the properties and the psychology of the people living in the society (Nkrumah, 1978:74).

It is against this backdrop that the crisis in the Niger Delta can be adequately viewed. The agitations of the Niger Delta people for a redress of injustice done to them in terms of denial of infrastructure, pollutions of the environment by the industrial oil companies, etc is not a recent phenomenon. It has an historical background that dated to the time Isaac Adaka Boro and his armed group decided, according to Edwin Madunagu, "...to challenge the power and authority of the Nigerian State in the Niger Delta in January and February 1966..." (The Guardian, Thursday, June 25, 2009: 73). That struggle was not to last because of the military coup of January 15, 1966 and the subsequent Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970. The struggle against the oil corporations particularly, Shell BP to clean up the oil spillages in Ogoniland was spearheaded by Ken Saro-Wiwa, a social critic and an environmentalist who was murdered together with eight Ogonis who were accused of killing four Ogonis leaders under the Abacha administration. The killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his group on

November 10, 1995 was seen by most people as a violation of their human rights. The international community was infuriated by the way and manner Abacha ordered their execution most especially when the Commonwealth which Nigeria is a member appealed to Abacha to temper justice with his prerogative of mercy while holding its meeting in Auckland (Ogunbemi, 2007:54-55). Some years after the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his group including Abacha who ordered their execution, Shell corporation however, made a good gesture of compensation to the family of Ken Saro-Wiwa which was seen from the standpoint of moral conscience after the evil deed had been done. The intellectual and a nonviolent approach of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his group was seen by the different interest groups that later emerged as militants in the Niger Delta region as an unproductive method to get justice from the Federal government. The militants felt that a more robust, vibrant and militant approach was a better option. How did it all begin, one may ask? According to Simon Ekpe:

Some said youths who were armed to help rig elections transformed into militants after they were abandoned by their sponsors. Others have also claimed that those who were armed to protect ships involved in oil theft later acquired enough money through the oil trade to arm themselves and ward off security agencies that might try to stop them. They too later became militants. (The Punch, Wednesday, August 12, 2009, 80)

It does appear that the root cause of the militants to choose a violent approach rather than the rule of law or a nonviolent approach to get justice which is moral is basically greed and corruption. There is another group that can be classified as the **elite** which comprises of political and office holders, traditional rulers and elders in the Niger Delta region who appears as unseen hands supporting the militants but their demands for justice are truly genuine and reasonable. Some of their reasonable demands are,

development of the area in terms of basic infrastructure and amenities, i.e., roads, water, housing, electricity, hospitals, employment for the youths, environmental protection of the land, air and water, security, resource control of the oil minerals and gas, creation of more states in the area etc. As far as the **elite** group is concerned, the above demands are sacrosanct which cannot be compromised if there is going to be peace and harmony that will secure and protect the national interest in the region. Suffice to say however, that some other privileges and demands by the **elite** had been met by the Federal government namely, establishment of a Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, upgraded the Institute of Petroleum Technology to a Federal University of Petroleum University located at Effurun and of course, the monthly revenue allocation to their states, which is based on derivation of 13%.

It is a fact that more than 85% of national financial resources come from the region. In spite of what the Federal government has done, the **elite** felt that their demands have not been adequately and properly placed on the front burner of the Federal government policy therefore, the struggle to get justice became imperative hence their clandestine support of the militants. The ethical issue therefore is: should a militant approach be a moral course to be used against the state rather than a noble and just means? Should the state use force to repress the insurgent act of the militants bearing in mind that national interest and national security is the primary duty of the state? Which way ought the administration of President Yar'Adua to take to bring peace to the area and the whole nation at large and to have more economic revenues from the region and retain the confidence of the oil corporations exploiting oil and gas in the region? In other words, what has Yar'Adua administration done to assuage the perceived injustices done to the

Niger Delta region? Was his solution seen as coming too little and too late? What of the oil corporations exploiting oil in the region? Do they have confidence that the solution of government to the problems in the region will enable them to do their business with the assurance of security both life and property? And how is Nigeria's image being portrayed internationally bearing in mind the importance of the country as one of the largest oil producing states particularly in Africa and the world in general? In short whatever happens to the oil region in Nigeria has its impact on the global economy. The world is a global village when it comes to economy, communications and information dissemination etc.

The dimension of violence in the region which characterized the activities of the militants and their sponsors inadvertently affected the economy of the state and painted an ugly picture of Yar'Adua administration as weak and ineffective. It has portrayed the present government as a toothless dog that cannot live up to its constitutional responsibility to the nation in terms of security of life and property. Of course, no government that is worth its salt would fold its arms and allow such militants and their allies to carry on their lawless activities without being repelled. What has government done? There are two concrete approaches at the disposal of the Federal government to employ namely, dialogue and military force. The Yar'Adua administration undoubtedly used both methods. The dialogue approach which is civil in nature involved all the stakeholders in the region with a view to stopping the militants from their destructive devices of oil and gas installations and put an end to kidnappings and killings of innocent citizens and foreigners who work in the oil sector and to allow the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to continue its development of the region. When the

method of dialogue did not dissuade the militants from their violent act against national interest the right thing the state ought to do according to (Arnold Wolfers, 1975:56-57) is to resort to force: “firmness and even resort to force may under certain circumstances require less loss of life, less human suffering, less destruction of faith and principle than the most sincere attempt to eliminate the causes of hostility by concessions.” It became expedient for the Federal government to use a minimum force of action by setting up a Joint Military Task Force (JTF).

The attendant result of government’s Joint Military Task Force (JTF) to dislodge the militants in their various camps was not without casualties of innocent individuals on both sides although the casualties of the indigenes of the south- south region was considered greater particularly the people of the Gbaramatu kingdom. The impact of the use of force or the military might of the Federal government and perhaps with the subtle diplomacy by the stakeholders in the region made the militants to have a rethink of their criminal activities against the state. The Yar’Adua administration came with a solution of amnesty for the militants who are willing to lay down their arms for peace. The duration set for the militants to turn in their ammunition for peace is from August 6- October 1, 2009. There have been expressions of doubt and criticisms of government against this course of action by social critics all over the country that the amnesty would not work.

Besides, the critics have argued why should government set aside 50 billion naira for the rehabilitation of the militants when the money could be used for the development of the area? But this skeptic and pessimist view has not deterred the government that believes in the positive action of the amnesty. Whether the amnesty will work or not, for now, only time will tell. The relatively positive response from the militants so far to the

offer of amnesty, the Yar'Adua administration feels convinced that the amnesty will work.

Be that as it may, the acceptance of inadequate provision of infrastructure and the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta by President Yar'Adua which forms a part of the proclamation of the amnesty raises some moral questions. If the government was aware that the people of Niger Delta have not been given their moral and economic entitlements in terms of the development of the region, why did the Federal government over the years have to wait until the militants raised arms against the state before given them their dues considering the strategic importance of the region to the economy of the nation state? Were the previous governments so oblivious of their constitutional responsibility to the people in the Niger Delta? Normally, one would have considered the adage which says a stitch in time saves nine instructive and the government would have borrowed leaf knowledge to avert the tragedies and economic wastes over the years in the region.

A Good State and Good Governance

A good state according to Plato is one that is governed by a philosopher king or a king who becomes a philosopher and governs by the precepts of reason and justice for the harmonious existence and peace of the citizenry (Plato, 1975).² The purpose of having a good state according to Aristotle is for one to achieve a supreme good of life which is a life of contemplation. It is a life of supreme happiness or satisfaction. To Aristotle it is a life of contemplation that brings happiness. (Bedau ed., 1971).³ One derives supreme goodness from philosophy. In other words, philosophy invigorates the importance of human value. Aristotle is right, but human happiness cannot be divorced from material

and social needs. Furthermore according to (Thomas Hobbes, 1978)⁴ the role of the state is to ensure that there is peace and security. And the state can do so even if it has to curtail some of the freedoms of individuals. However, there are others like John Locke, John Stuart Mill etc who believe that the major reasons why we have a state are to secure human liberty and property because all these contribute to the well-being of both individuals and the state (Locke, 1965 and Mill, 1962).⁵ Within Africa, for example, Nkrumah and Obafemi Awolowo propounded a socialist political system that would provide the basic needs of their people which is a characteristic of a good state.⁶ I am not unmindful of other African political theorists like Julius Nyerere, Daniel arap Moi, Kenneth Kaunda, etc, who have contributed to how African peoples could overcome poverty, diseases, and live a better life under the governance of good leadership.

Having given a brief synopsis of a good state, can we say that Nigeria is a good state? It may be difficult to answer positively or negatively depending on the side one is politically and economically considering the rebranding effort of the nation by the Yar'Adua administration. Or it depends on the experience or orientation one has of what is going on in the country. From our experience, the military have demonstrated at different times their displeasure over the ineptitudes of the leadership of this country by staging coups (Oyediran, 1979)⁷ periodically even though their leadership overall was worse than the civilian administrations they had toppled. From my personal experience, in 1996 I escorted my 16 year old son to the American embassy in Lagos for his immigrant visa. At the interview, since he was young I thought I could assist him answer some of the questions he had to answer but the lady who was interviewing him asked me whether he could speak English language and he answered that he could speak the

language fluently. So I did not need to assist him. He was asked why he wanted to go back to the U.S as a citizen. One of his responses was that he regretted to have been born in Nigeria. I was astounded and I said son, I was born and bred here and I am not ashamed or regretted to have been born in Nigeria. If I your father was not ashamed to have been born here why should you? His answer was that is you Dad. Judging by the number of Nigerians seeking immigrant visas at the embassies and consulates of America, Europe, Russia, etc, in Nigeria for the past 20 years with the hassles they went through with desperation, one would normally suggest that their nation state has failed them. The principle of justice as fairness by (Rawls, 1999: 52-53) or the maximization of the greatest good for the greatest number of people of utilitarianism to reduce poverty and misery of most Nigerians has been jettisoned by the political class. It is not out of place or out of the ordinary that the crisis in the Niger Delta over the years and particularly in recent times is an expression of the inability of the country to respond positively, vibrantly and robustly to the common good which they morally and ethically deserved. In other words, the principle of distributive justice that proposes equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation invariably is seen by many Nigerians to be lopsided. There is need for the government to embrace good governance to assuage the stray nerves of the Niger Delta people and all Nigerians, if the country is to flourish and remain united. The most probable means of achieving it is to evolve a dynamic and authentic democratic culture. It is a democracy that produces leadership by example which takes the welfare of its people on the front burner of its policy. It is leadership of action and not of rhetoric and corruption. It is leadership that believes in education that empowers and makes its people to flourish. It is the leadership that recognizes Nigerian spirit of resilience and pride of

nationhood. It is the leadership that believes that the future begins with good policies that will give right direction to enhance the quality of life of the people and the generation to come. The democracy Nigerians needs is that which respects and sustains the constitutional arrangement of governance which is the hallmark of a good state.

Democracy grows and develops in a society that believes in its ideals and values namely, freedom or liberty, due process, the rule of law, justice and fairness. How this can be achieved is left for Nigerians to decide. They have to decide the kind of democratic culture of their own which of course will not be a laughing stock to themselves and the rest of the world at large but rather the one that engenders quality of leadership with vision and action.

This democratic culture is part of what I consider to be an embodiment of a sound culture which (Bernard Eugene Meland, 1953: 120) has aptly expressed.

A sound culture, we might then propose, is: (a) democratic in its organization of life; (b) concern for the well-being of its citizens, that is, attentive to the standard of living particularly as this applies to health, comfort, and security; (c) and adequately industrialized to facilitate the production and distribution of goods so that both democracy and human well-being might be assured.

The value of philosophy to national interest is to draw the attention of the leaders to Nigerian basic needs not only by providing logical arguments but also employing moral persuasions. It is the duty of philosophers to train both the present and future leaders so that when it is their turn to lead, philosophy becomes their guide or at least a point of reference when decisions that involve human well-being or the supreme good are to be taken. The current waves of corruption, electoral frauds, human kidnappings, disregard to due process and the rule of law etc are impediments to national development.

Conclusion

I began this paper with an introduction and moved on to look at the original condition of Niger Delta from a metaphysical and empirical perspective comparatively however, with the biblical story of creation. I set in motion the idea that the universe in which man found himself including the inhabitants of the Niger Delta could not have been its owner because other living organisms were the original inhabitants and human beings are simply co-tenants. Be that as it may, I am not unaware of the fact that the authority to dominate the universe which the traditional belief of the people ascribes to the injunction of a Supreme Being is nothing but a means to justify their abuse of the environment in any form they like. The impression I have created is that the claim that the indigenes of the Niger Delta own the land has no moral claim except of course, by virtue of being rational agents or by association having been the dominant individuals and groups on the land. By application I only observe that humans do not own the universe they simply co-exist with nature. We came to this world with nothing and at death each one goes back likewise. So who owns the world? If the universe as we know it is not owned by man then, why killing ourselves over natural resources?

The main thrust of the paper is the identification of the root cause of the problem or crisis in the Niger Delta and who are responsible for it and the solution I proffer is a political system inherent in an authentic democracy which embraces the moral and philosophical ingredients of good governance that produces a good state. The people of the Niger Delta area had to resort to violence because Nigeria is not practising an authentic democracy which is people friendly and results oriented. The view of J. Olubi

Sodipo on Nyerere's Ujamaa and its relevance to human society anywhere and everywhere which shares some moral principles with an authentic democratic culture collaborates what contributes to a good state.

The basic ideals of the philosophy are human dignity and human equality and these ideals involve the elimination of ethnicity, ignorance and poverty, the promotion of mass participation in government and the provision of employment and decent life to all citizens (Fadahunsi and Oladipo, 2004:45).

The problem or the crisis that is man made, as it in the case of the Niger Delta and elsewhere, in my opinion, requires a solution which can be found by man alone using his natural faculty in which morality and philosophy plays a vital role.

Notes

1. See Louis Pojman, (1997), *Environmental Ethics: Reading in Theory and Application*, Boston: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.
2. See Plato, (1975), *The Republic* Translated by Francis Cornford, New York: Oxford University Press.
3. CF, Aristotle, "Justice" in *Justice and Equality*, ed. Bedau, A. Hugo (1971), Englewood Cliffs: Prentice- Hall.
4. CF, Thomas Hobbes, (1978), *Leviathan*, London: Collier Books.
5. CF, John Locke, (1965), *Two Treatises of Government*, New York, A Mentor Book, and John Stuart Mill, (1962), *Utilitarianism*, Glasgow: William Collins.
6. Kwame Nkrumah and Obafemi Awolowo were the most vibrant advocates of socialism in West Africa.
7. See Oyeleye Oyediran, ed. (1979), *Nigerian Government & Politics under Military Rule (1966-1979)*, London: Macmillan Press.

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Chapter 11: Niger Delta Crisis: Implications on Nigeria's Domestic Economic Output

By

TO Akinbobola

Introduction

Niger Delta crisis has become an international issue since the 1990's, when variations in the quantity of oil output invariably impact on the overall production quota of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Nigeria loses almost one million barrels per day, as a result of the crisis in the Niger Delta region. However, Nigeria's government have reacted in the past few months that the shortage in the crude oil output is as a result of restrictions placed by OPEC rather than the insecurity in the Niger Delta area where the activities of the militants have disrupted the operations of the oil producing companies (Business Day, June 08, 2009). The question that readily comes to one's mind is, has Nigeria been able to meet her OPEC quota? What implications do the shortages experienced in the crude oil exploration have on the economy and even globally? A cursory look at the statistics of oil revenue in Nigeria shows that it is dwindling and moving downwards. Nigeria realized through the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), through exportation of crude oil, \$62 billion between 2004 and 2007: \$14.3 billion in 2004; \$16.2 billion in 2005; \$16.3 billion in 2006; and \$16.0 billion in 2007. Within this period, the price of oil in the international market had been on the increase, rising over \$100/b, one would have expected a considerable variation in the records of income as presented above. It therefore becomes obvious that there has been a fall in the level of output of crude oil in Nigeria. The cause of this in recent times had been linked with the crisis in Niger Delta area.

Although considerable empirical research has been conducted on the economic impact of wars, the results of many studies are flawed because they treat domestic and foreign wars as if they were the same (See for example, Braun and Mc Grattan, 1993). Caplan (2001) was able to correct this impression and coming out with stylized facts about the economic impacts of war while separating between domestic and foreign wars. Real GDP growth declines noticeably during domestic wars, although rises somewhat

during foreign wars; inflation is higher during domestic wars than foreign wars; government spending as a percentage of GDP rises in both situation, that is, in both domestic and foreign wars (Caplan, 2001). The situation in the Niger Delta can be likened to that of a domestic war. In the sense that, it impacts on the real GDP growth, inflation and government expenditure on providing security within the region.

This paper takes a cursory look at the impact of a dwindling output on the Nigeria's domestic economy. This will be carried out by using the vector autoregressive modeling technique which exposes the oil shocks on other macroeconomic variables within the economy.

The Niger Delta Historical Experience

The Niger Delta, in pre-colonial times, was a cluster of states with identifiable patterns of government. There was no centralized government as in the West and North of Nigeria. The Niger Delta kingdoms were referred to as city-states. This was the position until colonization, then neo-colonization and now imperialism. Conflict in the Niger Delta is two-fold, while the one is battle for supremacy between the different kingdoms, that is, Ijaws and Itsekiris, the other and the most pronounced, owes its origin to 1956, when, oil was first discovered in commercial quantity in Oloibiri in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. By 1957, oil was again discovered in commercial quantity in Ogoni land, also in the Niger Delta region.

The Niger Delta region has a steadily growing population estimated to be over 30million people as of 2005, accounting for more than 23percent of Nigeria's total population. The population density is also among the highest in the world with 265 people per kilometer squared (NDDC, 2005).

It was not the discovery of oil that ignited crisis in the Niger Delta, but rather, the negative effects of exploration and exploitation of the new wealth, the black gold called hydrocarbons, on the Niger Delta environment and its people.

In 1956, Nigeria had a loose fiscal federation with powerful regions. The regions enjoyed autonomy in the production of their wealth. But this was to change. The oil companies, in association with the government explored and exploited this new resource without regard to the original owners of the land. The first revolt against this perceived

tyranny was not assuaged before the breakdown of the civil war. After the war in 1971, prosperity came to the country in what was then termed “oil boom”.

But resentment of the people of Niger Delta deepened with increasing irresponsibility on the part of the oil companies and government to carry the people of Niger Delta along. They were not adequately compensated.

There is the line of thought that the people of Niger Delta feel marginalized. The marginalization it was contended is traceable to Sir Fredrick Willink’s Commission report on creation of states. The commission actually focused on the creation of the Middle belt state which left the people of the Niger Delta almost stateless. Indeed, the creation of present Delta state with capital at Asaba is described as misnomer. The problem had been compounded also by the Land Use Act which the federal Government used to consolidate its full ownership rights over all land in Nigeria.(Human Rights Watch, 2005)

Another line of thought was the battle for supremacy between different kingdoms, mostly the Ijaws, and Itsekiri’s. While the Ijaws are highly populated within the region, the Itsekiri’s are densely populated where there are a large number of oil wells.(Human Rights Watch, 2005)

Historically, Delta communities prospered as ‘middlemen’ controlling trade with the interior, particularly slaves and palm oil products. But with the development of the colonial state and independence, the region experienced a steady decline and stagnation. For no new sources of wealth developed there to replace these activities. More recently, the failure of the early independent Nigerian government to follow through on a promise to treat the Delta as a special development area, the steady reduction in the share of oil royalties that states in the Delta received, and finally, the habitual disregard of state needs by non-indigenous military state governors, worsened the Delta problems. The Governments neglect of the Delta’s development initiatives (Infrastructures- roads, electricity, schools and health services which all ended inland before reaching coastal communities), Nigeria’s overall economic decline since the mid- 1980s, and the tendency of educated Delta youths to leave the area, have confirmed its status as an economically backward region. The people who remained behind simply lacked prospects elsewhere. The complexities of issues and numbers of stakeholders involved exacerbate South-South

problems. The Delta, in part because of its riverine/swamp topography, has historically been politically extremely fragmented, and subject to frequent and at times violent disputes over land and fishing rights, as well as over traditional leaders political jurisdictions. For instance, there was the agitation that the Olu of Warri should be tagged Olu of Itsekiri's – and also the battle for the heart of Warri. All these led to cycles of “revenge violence”. As more powerful weapons became available in the Delta region in the mid and late 1990s, disputes become more violent. Youth gangs became more powerful, willing and able to protect their villages and elders. (Human Rights Watch, 1999)

As democratic competition returned in 1998-99, some of these youths took up a new line of activity, such as being paid to disrupt political campaigns, or as body guards to political candidates while carrying out orders that are destructive on behalf of their employers. Finally, traditional rulers have lost much credibility and respect as they have been corrupted by bribes from the military governments and oil companies. There had been conflict of interest between Delta communities that bear the environmental damage of oil extraction and the rest of the nation for which oil money is essentially a free good. Had they some authority over environmental issues, many current problems might be more manageably addressed. In the absence of this, and given the federal government's control over all subsurface resources as well as “ownership” of all land, all Delta issues inevitably become national issues.

Oil companies operating within the region did not help matters either, as a result of their tempting targets ; many aggrieved youths in the Delta resorted to direct action to extract compensation for their perceived losses. Oil companies' properties were invaded, their employees were taken hostage and facilities were also shut down. Oil companies typically negotiate release of captured personnel and properties with relative ease by paying the youth's modest ransoms. This strategy creates a ‘moral hazard’ as this stimulates other gangs to this act thereby leading to sustained disruptions, at times to competition among youth gangs, and in general sense, anarchy in the Delta region.(Human Rights Watch, 2002)

Another conflict closely linked to federal control over Delta oil and the economy in general is the intense competition for political office. For politicians, and for their

communities, control of federal office opens the high way to resources that can be diverted from public to private or community control. Federal control of oil and much of the rest of the economy tends to 'centralize' many economic problems, particularly in the Delta region, and stimulates intense efforts to gain and hold office throughout Nigeria. In this circumstance, economic stagnation and hopelessness, historical political fragmentation, and ethnic violent conflicts leads to institutional disintegration – with small groups of youths with weapons unchallenged finding oil companies as targets for hold-up and ransom.

We can therefore summarily, categorize the conflicts in this region. There was the case of the Ogoniland- Southeast of the Niger Delta region crisis. As a result of the government's empty promises of benefits for the Niger Delta people, and the increasing deterioration of their environmental, social and economic apparatus, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was formed in 1992. Ken Saro-Wiwa led this group in their struggle for ethnic and environmental rights. The conflict escalated to a high level of violence that the MOSOP issued an ultimatum to the oil companies demanding damages and compensation. The Military repression of 1994 led to the deaths through hanging, of nine leaders of MOSOP. (Adekunbi Ero, 2008)

There was also the Ijaw-Itsekiri conflict of 1997. The conflict between militants of these two groups has been particularly intense in the major town of Warri. This was basically a crisis of supremacy, that is, which of the ethnic group is truly indigenous to the Warri region, with the underlying presumption that the 'real' indigenes should have control of the levels of power, regardless of the fact that all the ethnic groups enjoy ostensibly equal political rights in their respective places of residence.

In recent times, the ethnic unrest and conflicts of the late 1990s (such as those between the Ijaw and Itsekiri), coupled with increasing availability of small arms and other weapons, led increasingly to the militarization of the Delta region. It has in fact gone bizarre, with financial support from political office holders who want to enforce their own political agenda. Several armed groups have emerged with various agenda of their interest rather than the development of the region.

Oil Exploration and Environment

The Delta environment can be divided into four ecological zones – Coastal barrier islands, mangrove swamp forests, freshwater swamps, and lowland rainforests. The well endowed ecosystem contains one of the highest concentrations of biodiversity on the planet, in addition to supporting abundant flora and fauna, arable terrain that can sustain a wide variety of crops, lumber or agricultural trees, and more species of freshwater fish than any ecosystem in West Africa. Citizens engage themselves mostly in the business of fish cropping. This has however been turned upside down by the menace currently witnessed in the area. This extent of damage was again substantiated in the 1983 report issued by the NNPC, long before the popular unrest surfaced, “...we witnessed the slow poisoning of the waters of this country and the destruction of vegetation and agricultural land by oil spills which occur during petroleum operations. But since the inception of the oil industry in Nigeria, more than thirty five years ago, there has been no concerned and effective effort on the part of the government, let alone the oil operators, to control environmental problems associated with the industry....” (Green Peace, 1983:)

Oil spills occur due to a number of causes, including; corrosion of pipelines and tankers (accounting for 50% of all spills), sabotage (28%), and oil production operations (21%), with 1% of the spills being accounted for by inadequate or non-functional production equipment (The Association of Environmental Health and Sciences (AEHS), 2006). The largest contributor to the oil spill total, corrosion of pipes and tanks, is the rupturing or leaking of production infrastructures that are described as “very old and lack regular inspection and maintenance” (AEHS, 2006). Corrosion accounts for such a high percentage of all spills in the Niger Delta because of an extensive network of pipelines that carry oil from well heads to flow stations – allowing many opportunities for leaks. In onshore areas, most pipelines and flow lines are laid above ground. Pipelines, which have an estimate life span of about fifteen years, are old and susceptible to corrosion. Many of the pipelines are as old as twenty to twenty five years. Even Shell admits that “most of the facilities were constructed between 1960s and early 1980s to the then prevailing standards (Shell International Petroleum Company, 1995:).

Sabotage is performed basically through ‘bunkering’ whereby the saboteur attempts to tap the pipeline. In the process of extraction sometimes the pipeline is

damaged or destroyed. Sabotage and theft through oil siphoning has become a major issue in the Niger River Delta states as well, contributing to further environmental degradation (Anderson, 2005). Damaged lines may go un notified for days, and repair of the damaged pipes takes even longer. Oil siphoning has become a big business, with the stolen oil quickly making its way onto the black market. While the popularity of selling stolen oil increases, the number of casualties from this act has increased. In late December, 2006, more than 200 people were killed in Lagos in an oil line explosion. The NNPC places the quantity of oil jettisoned into the environment yearly at 2,300 cubic meters with an average of 300 individual spills annually. However, because this amount does not take into account 'minor' spills, the World Bank argues that the true quantity of oil spilled into the environment could be as much as ten times the officially claimed amount. Crude oil spills could be as large as 580,000 barrels- 92,000m³ (AEHS,2006).

Oil spillage has a major impact on the ecosystem into which it is released. It destroys the mangrove swamp forests, lowland rainforests and fresh water swamps. Spills in populated area often spread out over a wide area destroying crops and aquacultures through contamination of the ground water and soils. The consumption of dissolved oxygen by bacteria feeding on the spilled hydrocarbons also contributes to the death of fish. In agricultural communities, often a year's supply of food can be destroyed instantaneously. This has well been linked to the careless nature of oil operations in the Delta region. The environment is growing increasingly uninhabitable.

Fishing business is an essential part of Nigeria's sustainability because it provides much needed protein and nutrients for people. Fish populations are declining as they are being depleted faster than they are able to restore their number. Fishing needs to be limited along the Niger River and aquacultures should be created to provide for the growing demand on the fishing industry. Aquaculture allows for fish to be farmed for production and provide more jobs for the local people of Nigeria. Over fishing is not the only impact on marine communities. Climate change, habitat loss, and pollution are all added pressures to these important ecosystems.

In the Niger Delta region, fishing business which used to be the major source of income for local people have been destroyed as a resultant effect of oil spillage. The local people no longer can engage themselves effectively in fishing, thus apart from the

reduced trading and consumption of fish, it has also impacted negatively on the level of employment. Many of the youths are left with virtually nothing to keep them engaged.

Nigeria flares more natural gas associated with oil extraction than any other country on the planet, with estimates suggesting that of the 3.5 billion cubic feet (100,000,000m³) of associated gas (AS) produced annually, 2.5 billion cubic feet (70,000,000m³), or about 70% is wasted via flaring (Shamsudeen Usman, 2008 All statistical data associated with gas flaring is notoriously unreliable, but associated gas wasted during flaring is estimated to cost Nigeria US\$2.5 billion per year (Media Briefing: Gas flaring in Nigeria)

This practice, which is universally agreed to be wasteful both economically and environmentally, is carried out in order to maximize the production of crude oil, while the associated gas accompanying it is often burned off. This occurs because it is costly to separate commercially viable associated gas from the oil. Therefore, the associated gas found with oil is often burned off, in order to increase crude production. Even though companies operating in Nigeria also harvest natural gas for commercial purposes, they prefer to extract natural gas from deposits where it is found in isolation. This isolated gas is known as non-associated gas. Gas flaring is generally discouraged and condemned by the international community, as it contributes greatly to climate change, which ironically can display its most devastating effects in developing countries like Nigeria, and particularly in the semi-arid Sahel regions of sub Saharan Africa. The Niger Delta's low-lying plains are also quite vulnerable as they lie only a few meters above sea level.

The devastating effect of gas flaring also includes the release of large amounts of methane, which has very high global warming potential. The methane is accompanied by the other major greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide of which Nigeria was estimated to have emitted more than 3,438 metric tons in 2002, accounting for about 50% of all industrial emissions in the country and 30% of the total CO₂ emissions. As flaring in the West has been minimized, in Nigeria it has grown proportionally with oil production (Climate Justice Programme and Environmental Rights, 2007). OPEC and SHELL, the biggest flarer of natural gas in Nigeria, alike claim that only 50% of all associated gas is burnt off via flaring at present. This statistics remains unacceptable to Nigerians' as the World Bank reported in 2004 that, "Nigeria currently flares 75% of the gas it produces".

Between 70% and 75% is the generally accepted percentage of gas flared (CJPER, 2007). Gas flares can be harmful to health and livelihood of the communities in their vicinity, as they release a variety of poisonous chemicals. Humans exposed to chemicals released can suffer from a variety of respiratory problems, which have been reported amongst many children in the Delta region but have apparently gone uninvestigated. These chemicals can aggravate asthma, cause breathing difficulties and pain, as well as chronic bronchitis. Apart from its negative effects on man, it has been investigated to cause damage to surrounding vegetation.

Studies from U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) have also shown that gas flaring is a major contributor to acidic rain and pollution (Nwilo and Badejo, 2007). Flares which are often older and inefficient are rarely relocated away from villages, and are known to coat the land and communities in the area with *soot* and to damage adjacent vegetation.

The Economy and Oil Output

Nigeria relies solely on revenue generated from crude oil sales, as more than 90% of its revenue comes from oil exports. In this sense, Nigeria's domestic expenditure is determined by what happens to the price of oil in the international market as well as its supply quota as dictated by OPEC, a cartel, which Nigeria is a member country.

Unlike other countries that are equally blessed with oil, oil wealth in Nigeria rather than be a blessing has turned out to be a curse due to rent seeking activities, corruption, macroeconomic instability, poor management of oil revenues and unstable and costly business environment. Countries like Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Iran, Norway, Egypt, Venezuela and Oman have used petrodollars to transform their economies to economic powerhouses and better the lot of their citizenry. As at 2006, Iran's GDP was estimated at \$193.5b, with \$2, 440 per capita income, Kuwait boasts of 10% of the total world oil reserves, infrastructures have been improved to meet international standards in many of these countries, for instance, Venezuela Infrastructure Report as at 2007 forecast that the industry will record an average annual growth rate of 9.6% from 2006 to 2010 and is likely to develop from an estimated \$5.4billion to more than \$12billion by 2010. While road construction could see spending

of about \$5billion by 2010, deepwater port construction has an estimated budget of \$1billion. Qatar is rated as one of the countries with the highest levels of per capita GDP in the world (World Bank Report, 2008). Qatar is planning to spend over \$130billion in transforming Doha into a global, modern city by 2010. The driving force is the realization that oil revenues will not last forever and a boom in oil –related revenues has provided the money to provide the change. Qatar’s Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani earmarked \$40billion for projects to reduce the emirate’s dependence on oil and gas. The experience of Qatar is replicated in oil-rich North African countries.(Atojoko, 2008)

The table below summarizes Nigeria’s position in spite of all resources that has been generated over the past 10 years. Indices highlighted below have been found to have contributed immensely to the low level of growth and development of the country.

Table 1: COMPARISON OF FIVE BASIC DEVELOPMENT INDICES AMONG 10 SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES

<i>COMPARISON OF FIVE BASIC DEVELOPMENT INDICES AMONG 10 SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES</i>						
NO	COUNTRY	GDP Per person, Purchasing power-parity	Government Effectiveness	Political Stability	Anti-Corruption	Rule of Law
1	Mauritius	\$13,700	71.6%	79.3%	66.5%	75.7%
2	South Africa	\$13,300	76.8%	44.2%	70.9%	58.6%
3	Botswana	\$10,900	73.9%	93.3%	78.2%	67.1%
4	Angola	\$4,500	10.9%	28.8%	8.7%	7.1%
5	Senegal	\$1,800	47.4%	37.5%	41.7%	45.7%
6	Rwanda	\$1,600	39.8%	27.4%	55.8%	34.3%
7	Nigeria	\$1,500	16.6%	3.8%	5.8%	8.1%
8	Kenya	\$1,200	28%	15.4%	16%	15.7%
9	Liberia	\$900	6.6%	12.5%	20.4%	11%

10	DR Congo	\$700	1.9%	1%	2.9%	1.9%
		World Average: \$10,200	Sub-Saharan Africa Average: 27.2%	Sub- Saharan Africa Average: 35.6%	Sub- Saharan Africa Average: 30.3%	Sub- Saharan Africa Average: 28.8%

Source: World Fact Book and World Bank, 2007

The above indices clearly show that Nigeria is far below the Sub-Saharan Africa average. This is an indication that, the revenue generated from the boom in oil, considering the astronomical rise in the international price of oil, has not been effectively utilized.

The Niger Delta conflict has worsened with increased pipeline vandalism, kidnappings and militant takeovers of oil facilities since 2005. The consequential instability has caused a significant amount of short fall in production. The Nigeria's effective oil production capacity was estimated to be around 2.7million barrels per day (bbl/d) but ranged between 1.8million to 2.1million bbl/d as a result of the crisis (EIA, 2009).

In 2008, Nigeria exported most of its 2.17million bbl/d of oil production. As the 5th largest foreign oil supplier to the United States, of the exported quantity, 44% was exported to the U.S. and others to Europe (25%), Brazil (7%), India (11%) and South Africa (4%). Over the past years, volatility in Nigeria's oil supplies has led some U.S. refiners to stop purchasing Nigerian crude (ibid).

A scan through the domestic macroeconomic indicators also exposes the consequences of a volatile and rather obscure nature of oil supplies in Nigeria. A fall in international oil price is usually accompanied by a rise in the supply of crude. While the cartel – OPEC restricts output to bid up price. In a situation where output cannot be increased to full capacity production rate because of several hindering factors mentioned above, then we would expect a deteriorating domestic macroeconomic indicators, considering the fact that Nigeria solely depends on earnings from crude oil sales.

Table 2: SELECTED MACROECONOMIC INDICATORS IN NIGERIA (1980-2006)

YEAR	INFLATION RATE (%)	MONEY GROWTH (%)	REAL INTEREST RATE	DEFICIT/GDP RATIO (Nm)	GDP GROWTH (%)
1980	10	50.1	-0.4	-3.9	4.2
1985	5.5	8.4	6.25	-2.1	9.7
1990	7.4	29.5	13.2	-4.4	-8.2
1995	72.8	16.3	52.01	0	-2.5
1998	10.8	17.2	11	-3.3	-1.9
2000	6.9	13.3	23.1	-1.5	3.8
2002	20.2	21.6	3.8	-3.8	1.5
2003	14.0	24.1	7.6	-2.0	10.7
2004	10.0	26.6	5.4	-1.5	6.58
2005	11.6	30.8	1.6	-1.1	6.51
2006	8.6	27.82	10.1	-0.6	5.63

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria; Statistical Bulletin & Annual Report and Statement of Accounts (Various issues).

From the above table, GDP had been on the decline since 2005, since the destruction and vandalism worsened. It declined from a high of 10.7 in 2003 to 5.63 in 2006. Real interest rate had increased to 10.1 in 2006.

Model Estimation and Results

As earlier mentioned, the aim of this paper is to examine the impact of the volatile supply of crude oil as a result of the crisis in the Niger Delta region on the domestic output of the

country. This study adopted annual data series. In exposing the impact, one main equation is estimated for the period of 1980 to 2008. The data for the variables, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Government expenditure and Oil output/supply, were obtained from Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Statistical bulletin and the International Financial Statistics. Time series econometric study is not adequate when there is lack of stationary test on the macroeconomic variables. This is because regression run on non-stationary time series variables produces spurious result, which are meaningless. It indicates that time series variables have to be stationary for better result to be obtained. The implication is that stationary time series should possess three characteristics namely, finite means, variance and auto-variance (Gujati, 1997).

In this study, the stationary test adopted unit root test because it is widely used as formal statistical test. The widely adopted unit root test is the augmented Dicky-Fuller test (ADF). The contrast between stationary and non-stationary time series can be illustrated as follows:

$$Y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_{t-1} + U_t \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

A stationary series is one whose absolute value of β_1 is less than or equal one. A non-stationary series is one whose absolute value of its coefficient (β_1) is greater or equal to one. For the analysis of stationary test, the study also tests for co-integration. Individual time series data might not be stationary but their linear combination might be stationary (Gujati, 1997). Co-integration analysis provides a powerful discriminating test for spurious correlation. Failure to find co-integration is an indication of likely spurious correlation and the invalidity of inference drawn from such correlation. A linear combination of time series variable of a model is explained to be co-integrating of order 1(0) of the regression residuals, indicating stationarity or that the ADF test can be applied to the residuals from regression. If it is significant, the residual from static regression is adopted as an error correction term in the dynamic first difference regression estimation. It can be illustrated as follows:

$$U_t = Y_t - X_t \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where U_t is the residual term, Y_t is the dependent variable, X_t is explanatory variable.

$$\Delta Y_t = a + b\delta U_{t-1} \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

Where Δ is difference factor, U_t is residual, U_{t-1} is previous residuals, δ is the coefficient of previous residuals, a is constant.

Empirical Result

The unit root test was carried out and the vector autoregressive modeling technique was adopted, the impulse response functions and variance decomposition results are thus reported. The result of unit root test on the variables adopting ADF test as specified in equation (3) are reported in the table below:

Variables	Level	1 st difference
Real GDP	-1.7516	-4.4716
Oil Supply	-5.7562	-
Govt Exp	-4.5216	-

Notes: ADF critical values: 1%, 5%, and 10% are -3.52, -2.90, and -2.59 respectively.

The report revealed that all variables are stationary except the real GDP at log level. Since the study intends to establish their order of integration, all the variables are ensured to be stationary at all the critical values.

The variance decompositions with a ten-year horizon are listed in the table below. They show the fraction of the forecast error variance for each variable that is attributable to its own innovations and to innovations in the other variables in the system.

Table 3: Variance Decomposition from the reduced model

Variables	Period	Σ RGDP	Σ GOVEXP	Σ OILSUPPLY
RGDP	1	100.00	0.000	0.000
	3	76.064	10.320	13.616
	6	71.904	14.248	13.848
	9	71.104	14.358	14.538
GOVEXP	1	0.466	99.534	0.000
	3	1.663	92.581	5.756
	6	2.228	89.608	8.164

	9	2.256	89.336	8.408
OILSUPPLY	1	0.286	0.281	99.433
	3	9.982	3.144	86.874
	6	10.006	4.146	85.848
	9	10.275	4.139	85.586

Source: Author's computation

The table above shows that in Nigeria, the real GDP accounts for 100% in the first year of the 10-year forecast error variance of RGDP, but decline gradually in the third year to 76%, 72% in the sixth year and 71% in the ninth year. Government expenditure accounted for 0% in the first year, but gradually rises to 10% in third year, 14% in the sixth and ninth year. Oil supply contributes 0% in the first year and rose constantly to 14% in the third and sixth year and 15% in the ninth year.

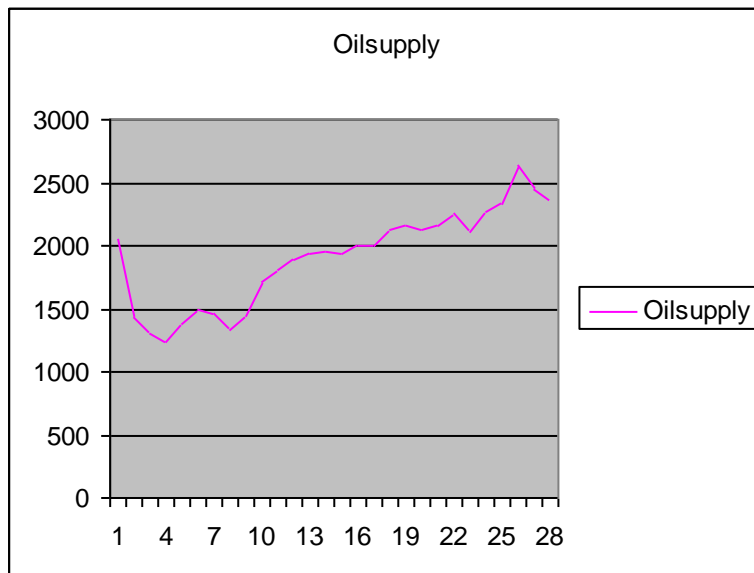
Also, the real GDP contribute 0.5% in the first year, 1.7% in the third year, 2.2% in the sixth and 2.3% in the ninth year to government expenditure. Against itself, the government expenditure contributes 99.5% in first year but gradually decline to 92.6%, 89.6% and 89.3% in the third, sixth and ninth years respectively. Whereas, oil supply contribute 0% in the first year and gradually increase to 6% in the third year, 8% in the sixth and ninth year to government expenditure.

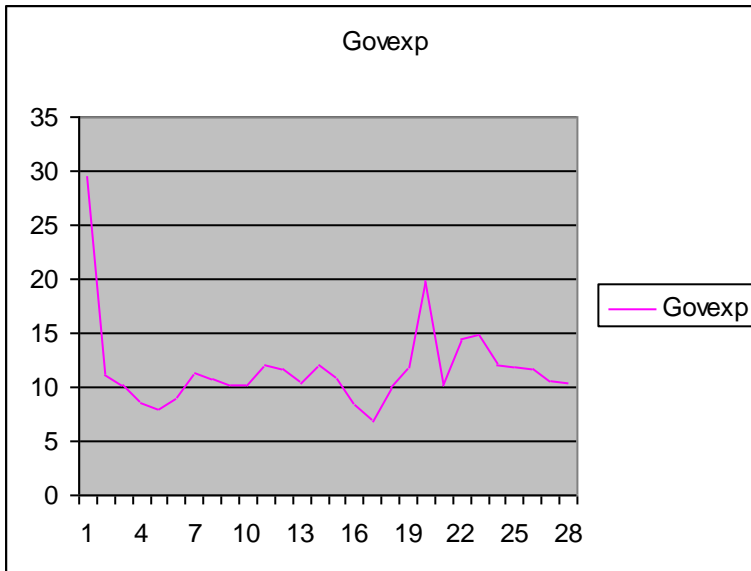
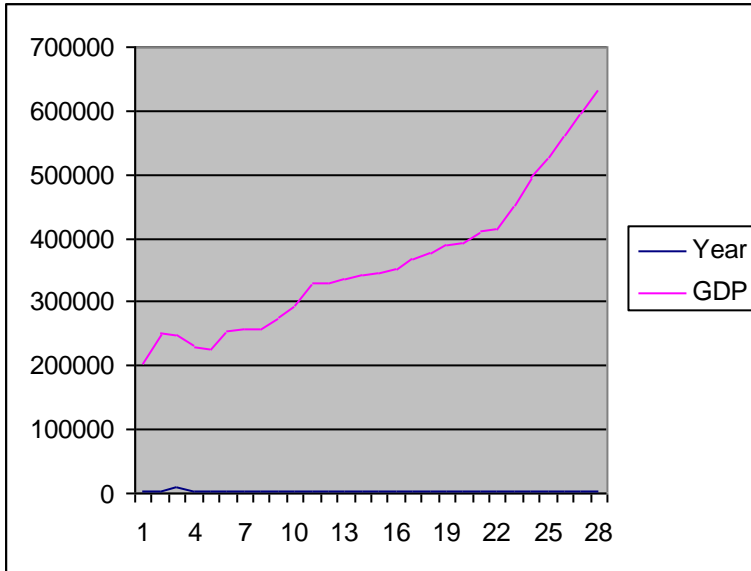
In addition, the innovation in the real GDP accounts for 0.3% in the first year and gradually increases to 10% in the third, sixth and ninth years. Government expenditure contributes 0.3% in the first year and gradually increases to 3% in the third year, 4% in sixth and ninth year. While oil supply contributes 99% in the first year but gradually decline to 87% in the third year, 86% in the sixth and ninth year of the 10-year forecast error variance of oil supply. The phenomenal contributions of past innovations in government expenditure and oil supply to real GDP is worth examining. In the first horizon, both government expenditure and oil supply contributes 0% to real GDP. However, the impact is much stronger by the third year when it rose to about 10% in government expenditure and 14% in oil supply. Nevertheless, in both sectors, the impact increases in government expenditure to 14% in the sixth and ninth year while oil also contributes 14% in the sixth and ninth years.

In government expenditure, the impact of oil supply is the strongest in the sixth and ninth year with 8% of forecast error variance of government expenditure over the 10-year period. While the impact of real GDP on oil supply is the strongest in the sixth and ninth year with 10% respectively of the forecast error variance of oil supply over the 10-year period.

Thus, we conclude that the variance decomposition confirmed a strong short run effect of government expenditure and oil supply on real GDP in Nigeria. The effect is felt strongest in the third, sixth and ninth year. This findings support the fact that changes in oil supply will affect revenue from oil export, which in turn, determine government expenditure and real gross domestic product in Nigeria.

This relationship is made clearer with the use of simple graphical analysis below. The graphs are based on the data as shown in the appendix.





Conclusion

It is clear from the above submission that oil supply shocks affects the level of economic growth as well as government expenditure in Nigeria. A short fall in the output will lead to fall in the level of growth and a boost in supply will improve the level of economic growth. It would therefore be wise adopting a holistic approach to solving the Niger Delta crisis so as to ensure a peaceful environment and to effectively harness the resources tapped from there.

Several attempts had been made by the government to ensuring peace in the region; this however has been marred by some unscrupulous leaders of the region, while seeking personal benefits the crisis creates for them.

The recent amnesty granted by the government is in fact a step in the right direction. All hands must however be on deck to ensure its success. The creation of the Niger Delta ministry has also been applauded. The government should however ensure that the functions of the ministry does not in anyway override or dualised by the Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC).

An agency within the ministry should be set up, and charged particularly with the responsibility of ensuring a clean environment. Environmental issues should be taken with utmost importance, as a clean environment ensures good health and reduces mortality rate as well as medical cost. The agency should see to the problems of deforestation, gas flaring, and ensuring clean waters for fishing activities within the region. Creation of jobs for the disarmed militants is equally an important and vital issue for the government to handle. This can be done by acquisition of skills through training centres provided by the government and thereafter making loans available for them to set up the venture in which skills were acquired. The government should also ensure that operating companies within the region are not only responsible by paying taxes to the coffers of the government, but also that they are socially responsible to the plight of those leaving within their community. For instance, a power plant project could be constructed to serve a large part of the community other than their employees or vicinity. A complete reorientation of the youth should be carried out. This can also be done by creating an agency to carry out orientation programmes to improve the level of awareness and development projects being embarked upon within the community, and also enlightening them on ways in which they can key into it for their own benefit and welfare.

All the above recommended policies are not directly related to boosting the oil output, but indirectly, the execution of the above recommendations will ensure a peaceful Niger Delta which will in turn lead to increase in the output of oil, as operators can increase their production capacity as well as reduce the cost of operation (maintenance).

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