

Emergence of Ethnic Militia Movements in the Niger Delta Region: From Voice to Armed Struggle in The New Democratic Nigeria (1999-Till Present)

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Submitted to

Central European University
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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Budapest, Hungary
2010

ABSTRACT

With enormous human and natural resources potentials, Nigeria occupies a strategic position in the development of the African continent. The Niger Delta ravaging conflicts remains one of the biggest challenges of the democratic era since 1999, which is the main concern of this research paper.

Through qualitative analysis and evaluation of the theory of grievance and collective action and that of social deprivation model, this research work examines why the continued proliferation of militant groups in the Niger Delta area though, having a democratic government.

The findings however, are that there seem to be no end in the near future to these conflicts and the proliferation of militia movements in the Niger Delta region. If issues such as neglect, deprivation and discrimination and resource control are not adequately taken care of the situation will remain the same. This research project agrees with the basic assumption that these issues of grievances, government's interests and attitude towards these groups and lack of concrete developmental policies will further escalate the crisis in the region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I

I would like to use this opportunity to thank my supervisor Zoltan Miklosi for his comments, advice and encouragement which were very useful to me in the process of writing this thesis. I would also express gratitude to all my class mates who were wonderful people to interact with all through the study period. Further appreciation goes to my wonderful family who stood behind me financially and morally through out my entire study period.

Finally I express my deep sincere appreciation to Almighty God for his mercies, protection and wisdom which are never ending in my life.

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Introduction

With an expanding population of over 120 million, and an estimated oil reserve totaling to about 41.5 billion recoverable barrels, Nigeria arguably remains one of Africa's richest economies¹. Nigeria ranks as the sixth largest producer of oil and petroleum products in the entire globe, which has also seen it as propelling the economic structure of the nation with oil exploration accounting for over 90 per cent of the country's exports while there are other minerals available in the country's rich soil which includes also Barite, Coal, Columbite, Fluorite, Gold, Iron, Kyanite, Uranium, Natural Gas, Phosphate, Tin,².

Despite these enormous deposits of natural and human resources the country is still regarded as a poor nation when evaluated in the GDP rate. This is evident also considering the high level of unemployment, the huge gap that exists between the rich and those living below the poverty level, the high rate of political instability that was witnessed shortly after independence in 1960 culminated to several coups and counter coups that plunged the nation into military dictatorship governments which spanned for over two decades.

This is captured in the analysis of David Bevan, Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning as they wrote that during the first six years of Nigeria's independence between 1960 and 1966 the North and South which was carefully allied with each other towards benefiting from the rich oil that had started coming out from the Niger Delta region, subsequently it brought about two military coups that took place in 1966 while at the same time the threat of secession by the eastern

¹Uwadike, O. Nwafekoku "Oil and Macroeconomic Policies in the Twenty-First Century". In Nigeria in the Twenty- First Century, Strategies for Political Stability and Peaceful Coexistence Africa, edited by Udogu, E. Ike 2005, pp69-87, p69, World Press, Inc,

² Ejibunu, Hassan Tai. Nigeria's Niger Delta Crisis: Root Causes of Peacelessness. EPU Research Papers, Issue 07/07, 2007, pp1-6, p6

region that saw the nation witness a long drawn civil war that lasted between 1967- 1970 with a casualty of about two million lives³.

The outcome of these several military regimes were high level of centralization of government at the federal level, while the other tiers suffered, the high level of corruption by the self proclaimed military leaders who co-opted with civilians in embezzlement of public funds without accountability, press censorship and clamp down on opposition groups and gross neglect of the minority and oil producing communities. This was the situation until finally pressures from within and outside the country led to the new democratic wave in 1999.

Off course it is arguable the nation will have to battle with the long neglect of democratic governance and values which had eluded her for years. And prominent amongst this mirage of developmental problems is the Niger Delta region crisis. The region has witnessed increasing newly formed oil minorities social movements, which have progressed from voice protests to armed struggle to present their demands.

This research project will examine the ethnic militia movements in the Niger Delta region and the origin of the crisis, it also examines the tools and resources for this collective action in the Niger Delta region as used by the militia organizations, current force of action and the current media debate.

The character and role of the state is important to this work which have often been criticized as contributing to the phenomena of the militia movements, their responses to the emergence and activities of several militia groups. Finally the project seeks to proffer recommendations which are designed not only to managing these conflicts but also to finding a lasting solution to these violent protests.

³ David Bevan, Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning. Nigeria Policy Responses to Shocks, 1970- 1990. International Center for Economic Growth Publication Press, 1992, pp 5-15, p7

Statement of Problem

Nigeria in Brief

Prior to the 1999 democratic change Nigeria's route to harnessing its great potentials in human and natural resources stems from her seeming large population and petroleum wealth which ironically have been stalled by political and economic instability. This has seen the country witness various coups, military dictatorships for over two decades, economic mismanagement of huge oil resources, corruption and leadership styles that have remained questionable. This has also resulted in elites initiating politics that have sustained them in power while at the other end excluded vast majority of Nigerians which includes those in the minority areas of the Niger Delta region. This is aptly captured in Robert I. Rotberg words as he laments

Economic performance since the 1960's has been abysmal, especially given the country's abundant human and natural resources and its export earnings from petroleum since 1970 of about \$400 billion"⁴ "It is quite saddening to note that these billions have ironically brought increasing poverty, widening inequality, vast unemployment, a loss of agricultural self-sufficiency, little growth in manufacturing capacity, waste and malfeasance and misfeasance which seem to have aggravated the pains of many Nigerians especially those in minority regions."⁵

⁴Rotberg Robert I. *Crafting the New Nigeria : Confronting the Challenges*, London Lynne, Renner Publishers, 2004, pp1-15, p9

⁵ Ibid

Shortly after independence the nation blossomed in the growth of agricultural production and exports during the era of groundnut pyramids in the northern parts of Nigeria, the rich production of palm oil, export of cocoa, peanuts and the prominent role agriculture played in food production and exportation in the nation's economic development. And within these periods government through public investment attracted foreign investors from the international market.

It is quite disheartening that all these have given way to over concentration on oil exploration and production since oil was first discovered in commercial quantities in Oloibiri in the Rivers State of the Niger Delta region. Till date the exploration and exportation of oil remain the nation's primary source of revenue earnings and this much concentration has also resulted in the neglect of other sectors of the economy more especially as it affects agriculture and industrial sectors. The Nigerian elites and political gladiators have greatly contributed to the problem of weak state institution because they have seemingly played politics of survival and encouraged rent seeking rather than investing in the collective welfare of the entire citizenry. This is as Rotberg recalls "the availability of petrol - riches only exacerbates this tendency, and elevates the scale of corruption"⁶

The federal government have on their own not helped matters as argued above it has allowed over the years the deplorable state of affairs to continue with neglect and the lack of political will to steer the nation to the path of progress and development, this has caused disaffection amongst regions which can notably be seen in the recent activities that have engulfed the Niger Delta region shortly after the 1999 democratic elections. The peoples of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria are often described as the oil producing minorities which has

⁶ Ibid Footnote 4

historically suffered from the pains of discrimination or domination by the other larger ethnic groups⁷.

It has often been argued in favor of these minority areas that the crude oil exploration have caused a lot of environmental hazards and degradation to both land and aquatic life. While the region produces 90 percent of the nation's wealth there is little to show for this in terms of development and basic infrastructural needs of the region's population. At root of the crisis lie the underdevelopment state and the uneven structure of Nigerian federalism regarding important issues of derivation, minority rights and environmental degradation.⁸

In this regard the region has since 1999 witnessed increased militant crisis with the political actors in these confrontations been built around militant youth groups of these ethnic minority groups, the Nigerian state and oil multi nationals who are the main actors of exploration. The frequent struggle and attacks with the federal might have also escalated to blowing up of oil pipelines, kidnapping and taking hostage of both foreign and local oil works of various companies in the creeks. There have also been frequent bombings of targeted areas which has characterized the operations of the militant groups in recent times with some of these groups claiming responsibilities after each attack or bombings.

In view of this Cyril I. Obi recaptures the demands of these newly formed oil minorities' social movements which revolve around struggles for restructure and decentralization of power, self- determination, a favorable revenue sharing formula and adequate compensation for menace of oil exploration.⁹

⁷ Ibid Foote note 4

⁸ Ibid Supra note 2

⁹ Obi I. Cyril." 'The Impact of Oil on Nigeria's Revenue Allocation System: Problems and Prospects for National Reconstruction' In *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria*, edited by Amuwo Kunle, Agbaje Adigun, Suberu Rotimi and Herault Georges, pp268 -273, p 269. Ibadan, Spectrum Books Limited.

Justification of this Research

The topic I am researching on is important considering the impact social movement agitations have on the Nigerian polity. It is justifiable to say that the socio economic environment of the Nigeria state is highly concentrated on the exploration of the rich mineral resources that are abundantly deposited in the creeks of the Niger Delta region. Most often it has been argued that politicians go to elections in order to control these resources in such a way that it becomes most beneficial to them rather than delivering the dividends of democracy. Since the norm has been that elites in the Nigerian state have sustained themselves in power in order to continuously be in the position of managing this wealth to their satisfaction, the state of violence in the region cannot be wished away with a mere wave of hand.

The region as it has often been argued provides over 90% of the country's income through oil exportation and considering the volatile nature of the oil market globally it becomes even more important to embark on this project. When oil pipelines and installations are blown up in the creeks the immediate consequence is the suspension of exploration by oil companies which also have often times reflected in the global rise of oil prices in the international market. The insecurity the crisis has caused to the lives of oil workers in the region both to local and foreign expatriates becomes even more important for this research bearing in mind that these militant groups have resorted to forceful abduction and kidnapping of these workers while demanding heavy ransom as exchange for their release.

Furthermore the division the situation has caused politically in the Nigerian state is worth mentioning. This includes rights agitation, minority exclusion, and environmental degradation, economic and political exclusion and as such it becomes imperative to evaluate these circumstances in the face of the growing violence and constant tension that regularly occurs in the region by the day. The fact of the matter remains that, the conflict is not often seen as a problem been faced by oil workers but one that threatens the corporate existence of the Nigerian state. The need to take these militia movements seriously becomes important considering the fact that their proliferation and activities have led to loss of lives, destruction of oil installations and a threat to national integration and confidence in the Nigerian state.

Research Questions

The questions this project seeks to find will be narrowed to very important issues which are primarily related to the militia movements and conflicts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. While addressing key concepts such as marginalization, neglect, discrimination, oppression which have all largely contributed to the escalation and prolongation of the crisis, the research project seeks to know

- Why the increase in proliferation of these youth ethnic militia groups, especially in this era of democratic government?
- How has the character and response of the state affected the situation in the Niger-Delta?

- What is the current debate in the media regarding the conflicts, considering the argument that sustained media coverage of a conflict usually compels government to initiate genuine steps tailored towards a lasting solution?

Hypothesis

Through qualitative analysis of these social movement groups, their demands and operations it will suggest the following hypothesis:

- (a) The proliferation of the militia movements since 1999 democratic elections and their demands has grown from voice to armed struggle protests. The nature of neglect, deprivation and discrimination that has remained unsolved in the Niger- Delta region explains the emergence of militia movements from voice protests to armed struggle.
- (b) The failure of government policies in providing good governance and its response to these groups have continued to escalate and sustain the crisis.

Structure of the Research Work

This research work will be divided into five chapters. Chapter one will primarily focus on theoretical framework which will form the basis of analysis in this project. Basically two theories are identified, the grievances and collective behavior theory and the social deprivation model.

Chapter two will focus on the structure, geographical composition and the peoples of the Niger Delta in the federal structure of the Nigerian state; the discovery of oil in the region and the origin of the crisis.

Chapter three analyzes critically the main arguments of this research project. It focuses on testing the theory induced hypotheses by evaluating the theories which will be raised in the framework. This will be done bearing in my various arguments of the literature in this field while also trying to sustain or disprove the hypotheses.

Chapter four will briefly evaluate the current force of action bearing in mind the composition of the various militia movements, their tactics and resources for collective action with specific reference to the most renowned and sophisticated groups amongst the large numbers scattered all over the region.

Chapter five examines also briefly the development commissions that were set up at various times to look into these grievances and neglect of the people of this region. It also discusses the current media debate while also establishing findings from the various arguments that have been presented. Finally it recommends and concludes

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework and Analysis of Related Theories

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This section will be directed in exploring the theoretical frame on notable works relevant to this area of study. I will look at theses which seek to explain social movements, collective action and militia struggles which have emerged in the Niger Delta since 1999. In doing this the project will also examine key terms and concepts that will flow through the research.

The grievances and collective behavior theory is important in explaining the emergence of militia movements in the Nigerian context. Sidney Tarrow argues that contentious politics rises as a result of actions of people with limited resources who find out that by them acting in disagreement and via network cycles they can oppose stronger opponents¹⁰. In his assessment of the grievances and collective behavior theory, he states that non-Marxist sociologists saw movements outside the frame of organized norms of institutional frame in the society and in his view did not see collective behavior theory sharing resemblance with organized entity, rather can bring about enthusiasm, riots movements and revolutions¹¹ also relying on the presentations of Durkheim's theory of "anomie", individuals continually move from traditional to new collective belongings by engaging in movements (Durkheim 1951; Hoffer 1951). Further to this (Smelser 1962; Turner & Kilian 1972) argues that collective behavior is a function of dysfunctions in the society.

¹⁰Tarrow, Sidney .Power in Movement: Social Movements and Social Contentious Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp10-25 p15, See also Durkheim, Emile. Suicide: A Study in Sociological Interpretation. Glencoe, III, Free Press. 1951. Gurr, Ted. Why Men Rebel, Princeton University Press. 1971. Smelser, Neil. Theory of Collective Behavior. 1962., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. , Turner Ralph T. and L.M Killian. Collective Behavior, 2nd ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall, 1972.

¹¹ Ibid

Given the above analysis I do share in the views stated above. In applying this theory in the context of the argument of this project work it goes with the assertion that the theory does not take a form or more organized nature but rather with the supposed features of enthusiasm, movements and more of like violence.¹² I will say I find some aspects of this theory lacking. If we agree on the argument that limited resources have led people to act contentiously via network cycles to engaged powerful opponents, the Niger Delta case seem to have negated the network cycles. In most cases, networks are used in the proliferation of the militia groups; dissenting individuals find themselves pulling out to form a separate entity. I would say in my view that the study and application of this particular theory does not fully proffer a solution to this contest in question.

The second thesis that explains the emergence and operations of militia movements is the social deprivation model. According to Austine Ikelegbe¹³ in his analysis on social deprivation model he focuses precisely in situating ethnic conflict, quoting erudite presentation of (Horowitz 1985; Siobhian 2001; Wilson 2001) which put conflicts between modernization and development of groups as outcomes of social stratification, inequalities and disparities. But it has been argued that the weakness of this thesis lies with the fact that, there is no striking balance between ethno-nationalist crisis and social inequality, uneven distribution of resources and capacity (Horowitz 1985; Wilson 2001).

Modernization has brought increasing formation of groups not just for agitation or aggregation of interests which promotes integration among members of any society. This easily

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ikelegbe, Austine. Ethnic Militias and Conflict in Nigeria. Canadian Journal of African Studies: Vol. 39, NO 3, pp. 490-516, p492, 1999. See also Horowitz, L. D. Ethnic Groups in Conflict. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1985. Siobhan, H. The Institutional Foundations of Sub-state National Movements, Comparative Politics 33. No. 2, January, 2000. Wilson, R. The Politics of Contemporary Ethno-nationalist Conflicts. Nation and Nationalism 7, no. 3, 2001.

fits into groups' formation when social deprivation is noticed on the part of a state which individuals want to address. Which ever way we see this, protests and demands are part of any evolving society, but again does ethno- nationalist conflict have representation with social inequality, and uneven allocation of resources in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria ? In my own view I would say that ethno nationalism is often associated with domination by majority groupings over the minority. Though deprivation can come in any form, it often results to agitation by groups facing it. It becomes a little bit worrisome here if actually this model or theory forms a basis of resolving the conflicts in the Niger Delta region considering the nature of the crisis which these militia movements have seen also as a propagation of the practice of capitalism and economic domination through agents of developed countries represented by the oil multinational companies in those regions.

But in a more direct application of the theory of social deprivation and the theory of collective action presented above as a foundation of building the main arguments of this research work which has also tried to follow the elements in the hypothesis, it becomes reasonable in evaluating these two models in the context of the Niger Delta Case study.

The counter argument behind these models can be that not all social movements which are formed in reaction to issues of grievances and social deprivation are violent and destructive, how come the case is different in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, and does this really fit into this frame work of analysis?

Though it cannot be fully substantiated that neglect and social deprivation can always bring about restiveness and demands in states, which I do share with, because not all nations are blessed with abundant natural resources as evident in the Nigerian case. Rather one of the main issues in the Niger Delta case is that because of seemingly failure to articulate government

policies rightly, with the presence of natural resources that has brought so much revenue to the state, it has not been properly used for the benefit of the entire citizenry but rather in most cases it has become a pain in the lives of inhabitants who dwell in such oil communities.

I often ask a general rhetoric question when issues like this is discussed. Does the government have any justification not to provide for citizens, who suffer from the effects of pollution because several oil pipelines have passed through their environment destroying means of livelihood both on land and on the sea?. These are strong issues of deprivation.

Collective violence becomes contentious when individuals are involved in seeking ways to achieve their desires while at the same time a government that is weak gives room to breeding of violence¹⁴ as Tilly Charles have shown. However, scholars and experts have over the years attributed this to one of the severe causes of violence and collective action in developing countries of which partly cannot be ruled out in the crisis situation under survey in this research project. Tilly further argues that rulers have used government platforms to often capitalize on violence in order to strength their grip on power for selfish reasons¹⁵.

The position I argue here is that in Nigeria several military regimes that exited shortly after the 1966 crisis can said the be strong governments in terms of its hold on power, but again the question was how strong were they in providing the basic needs of its citizenry? Especially as it relates to the needs of the Niger Delta inhabitants and a quick answer to this is that they were weak and failed to provide for the citizens.

This remains one of the strong arguments' of this research as it relates to the Niger Delta region and that since after independence almost all successive administrations in the Nigerian

¹⁴ Tilly, Charles. *The Politics of Collective Violence*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, pp 26-34, p26, 2003

¹⁵ Ibid Footnote 14

state have virtually played politics of sustenance and consolidation of power to benefit from the mass wealth that accrues from the rich oil region of the delta.

Therefore, the theory of social deprivation has a direct linkage to that of collective action and in my own view has formed the basis of the crisis that has engulfed the region, especially in recent times. This also forms the backbone of which this research project seeks to examine as it applies these models in evaluating the research questions. In view of this, these two models cannot be fully evaluated without putting into consideration counter arguments about it leading to violent actions and increase militant emergence in the Niger Delta. And this will also be evaluated in line with the empirical cases which will be used in testing the theory induced hypothesis in the later stage of this project research.

1.2 Methodology

This research work will employ the use of qualitative analysis of theories and concepts which are useful in the field of social movement and contentious struggle and its application with the current debate of this work. These analysis will follow a structural pattern that evaluates the issues and arguments of this research as it relates the progression from voice protests to what is now been experienced as armed struggle. The research will also concentrate on the rich contents of secondary sources of information as it relates to the conflict situation in the region. Different

scholarly articles, electronic journals, local and international magazines, newspapers will all be quite useful to the structure of this research work.

It is expected thereof that the qualitative evaluations which will be applied in this research project will allow for critical examination of the grey areas that needs to be brought into lime light, which will also contribute to better understanding of the issues on ground. While also hoping it will formulate a reasonable discourse that forms the basis of future explanations of the conflicts and contributing to solutions.

1.3 Testing the Theory- Induced Hypothesis

The two Hypotheses in this research project are mutually linking to each other. Both are inter related and will be applied and tested in line with the theory of grievances and collective behavior and that of social deprivation model.

The basic assumption of the hypothesis remain, first that neglect, deprivation and discrimination which have remained unsolved for decades since the country's independence has contributed largely to the uprising and increase in social movements actions in recent times.

The second assumption is a follow up of the first, that government's response to these activities of the uprising groups and their demands in terms of policies and actions has further deepened the conflicts.

Bearing in mind the effects of these two assumptions, this research project aims at a critical analysis from secondary sources the various issues on ground as a way of testing the theory induced hypothesis in order to prove or disprove these statements.

Causality mechanism becomes an important factor in testing these hypotheses. In doing this I will try to apply explanatory variables such as poverty, unemployment and corruption to see if they have any relationship with the first assumption. What effect has poverty and corruption on the theory of grievances and collective action? Has poverty and unemployment contributed to the grievances and collective action? Does this equally have any connection with the research question of proliferation of these militant groups?

The second assumption will present the government as the independent explanatory variable and will be evaluated along variables such as weak institutions, the states interests, and elite's domination in the entire crisis.

These assumptions will be evaluated in the light of various arguments that have been provided in related literature in the field of study connected with this research project. While at the same time connecting these arguments to two empirical case studies of the 'Ogoni Oil Conflicts' and the 'Odi Massacre', that have occurred at different times in these communities of the Niger Delta region. With these two empirical cases, the theory induced hypothesis will be tested further to confirm or disprove them, while also bearing in mind counter arguments.

1.4 Literature Review

The theoretical approaches and analytical concepts that will form the basis of this research project will be those primarily based on social movement and conflict situations and will be directed in evaluating arguments of scholars who have provided works relating to the issues of grievances and collective behavior theory and social deprivation theory and its application to social movements and conflict situations.

Also considering the fact that the Niger Delta phenomena is fast becoming an issue which cannot be ignored any more in the Nigerian polity which also has not witnessed exhaustive literature as it relates to the group operations in the Niger Delta conflicts. It therefore becomes important for this research project to contribute to the exiting literature of the subject matter which to my own opinion theses theoretical approaches have negated concentration on developing countries such as Africa and the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Tarrow argues that collective action is a prevalent issue which often comes with exhibition of social movements, protests and revolutions where individuals having feelings of deprivation apply unacceptable means to act as a challenging force to authorities¹⁶. In the Niger Delta case the collective action becomes a better packaged strategy which groups have applied to agitated and fight for what they believe is denial of rights, economic neglect and environmental degradation by powerful elements such as the state and capitalist multinational oil companies.

The theory of grievance and collective action becomes even more noticeable when argued from the point that it is part of political process in the society as carefully explained by Tarrow making reference to (Hardin 1982; 1995) he claims as not being just mere

¹⁶ Ibid Footnote 10

representative politics but is directed to bringing ordinary people against opponents and those who wield power in the state.¹⁷

Ordinary people in this sense represent those who are poor and lack reasonable access to a meaningful live hood. Not only can it be said that the inhabitants of the Niger Delta region lack the basic resources to ensure good living standards it is arguable that they also do not have the access to power which lies in the more powerful as mentioned above. Invariable collective action violence becomes a way of expressing their grievances.

The most vulnerable in the society when cases as mentioned above are experienced, such as the Niger Delta case leaves the women and youths most affected and as such it becomes no surprise that the current trend of the movement is pioneered by the youths who feel the sense of exclusion from the benefits that should come to them as young citizens of a society that is endowed with abundance in natural resources.

This is captured in the views of Osaghae, Ikelegbe, Olarinmoye and Okhonmina¹⁸ they argue that the youths usually are inclined to becoming part of the struggle through physical maturity and acting as agents of change (Ikelegbe 2006).

Youths therefore, can be both ‘makers and breakers’ of the society. They contribute to the society positively (De Boeck, 1999a), and in another dimension they become breakers by indulging in unhealthy attitudes which include suicide, drug use, alcohol, unsafe sex and law breaking. (De Boeck & Honwana, 2005)¹⁹. In the light of this, it is therefore not surprising

¹⁷ Ibid Footnote 10. See also Hardin, Russell (1982). *Collective Action*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982. One for all: The logic of Group Conflict. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

¹⁸ Osaghae, Eghosa et al. , *Youth Militias Self Determination and Resource Control Struggles in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria*, 2007 pp1-3, p3 . See also Ikelegbe. *Beyond the Thresh hold of Civil Struggle: Youth Militancy and the Militiazation of the Resource Conflicts in the Niger- Delta Region of Nigeria African Studies Monographs*, 27 (3): 87-122, October, 2006.

¹⁹ Ibid Footnote 18. See also De Boeck, F. *Domesticating Diamonds & Dollars: Identity, Expenditure and Sharing in South western Zaire (1984-1997)*, In *Globalization and Identity: Dialectics of Flow and Closure*, Ed B. Meyer and P. Geschire. Oxford: Blackwell, PP. 177-209, 1999a.

that these good and bad attributes do often manifest in the youths in diverse situations in the society. And in such case of perceived ethnic marginalization and exclusion collective action force becomes an option for them to express their grievances.

Three factors that became the concern of early theorist as the eighteenth century started to witness emergence of social movement organizations are quite useful in the analysis of this research study. Tarrow notes these facets as extremism, deprivation and violence²⁰. In applying these theoretical concepts in this study, it becomes necessary going with the fact that militant actions clearly represent cases of deprivation, extremism and constant violence channeled in reaction to challenges that face such groups as individuals who are part of an existing society.

In a similar literature, which I consider related to this research project, Nwokolo has argued through his application of grievance and deprivation theory and tried to show the negative effects of the inability of successive governments in Nigeria to meet social obligation to communities where natural resources are deposited. Drawing inference from (Ovwasa, 1999), he argues that governments failure to perform its role in bringing both human and material developments to the Niger Delta region represents a strategy for extinction of the region²¹.

When arguments relating to unfavorable derivation principle and revenue allocation are raised they point to questions of grievance and deprivation. Like it was a well known fact that the derivation principle was a formula for revenue sharing that benefited the North does

²⁰ Ibid Footnote 10. See also Mc Phail, Clark. *The Myth of the Madding Crowd*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1991.

²¹ Nwokolo, N. Ndubuisi. *From Grievance to Greed: Analysis of Violent Conflicts in Oil Bearing Communities in Nigeria*, Draft Paper Submitted for ERD-ACCRA, pp6-8, p6, and 1991. See also Ovwasa. *Oil Minority Question in Nigeria*, in Saliu H.A (Ed) *Issues in Contemporary Political Economy of Nigeria*, Ilorin, Nigeria, and Haytee Books., 1999.

not apply to the oil producing communities presently. This when viewed from the outcome of the Petroleum Act of 1969, which vested the ownership of all oil and gas in the entire country under the charge of the Nigerian government becomes a problem which has lingered as grievances over years²².

The implication of such arrangement have kept these communities at the mercy of depending on compensation for oil pollution resulting from frequent exploration, and such compensation are subject to opposition by MNC's who have most times questioned the need for paying such compensation when there are claims that oil spillages are as a result of sabotage²³

In some cases these MNC's have further argued that since they pay royalty to the federal government for the exploration of oil in these communities, paying compensation to these communities should not be their responsibility, rather that of the federal government. This invariably has contributed its own share to sustain the presence of the grievance and deprivation theory as it applies to the Niger Delta situation.

The literature on natural "resource curse" equally plays an important part in the analysis of this research work. Some of the arguments which have been raised in support of this phenomenon can actually be applied in the context of the problem at hand. Indra de Soysa argues that there is a linkage between resource endowment and its potential of leading to violence, in a reasonable sense to support the argument on resource curse; criminal agenda remain a principal motivating factor of these civil conflicts²⁴

²² ²² Ibid Footnote 21. See also International Crisis Group. Nigeria's faltering Federal Experience

²³ Ibid Footnote 21.

²⁴ Soysa, de Indra. The Resources Curse: Are Civil Wars Driven by Rapacity or Paucity? In Greed & Grievance : Economic Agendas in Civil Wars, edited by Berdal Mats and Malone, M. David, pp 113- 135, p 114, London : Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000.

The Niger Delta case makes the Nigeria state vulnerable to conflict when accessed from the point of view of the enormous oil deposits in the creeks. Yet again one questions the effectiveness of this argument on the grounds that agricultural production and exportation were flourishing before the discovery of oil.

The resource curse literature has often been applied by scholars in trying to analyze wars and conflicts more especially as reflecting the nature of conflicts that has engulfed states in the African continent. Soysa has further argued by inferring from Paul Collier that there is the existence of strong empirical evidence that natural resources often motivate greed of which the end consequence is civil war²⁵.

As Soysa further argues that high dependence on primary goods exports has a significant relationship with civil war since it provides dissenting groups opportunity to loot and sustain their activities²⁶.

It is no exaggeration that this has been the position in most African countries which have exported primary goods as the sole foreign exchange earner. But I will see it as becoming a little complex when evaluated in the Nigerian context which can still be argued on the basis that before the discovery of oil in 1956, agriculture was a fat primary good earner for Nigeria and yet the various states did very well economically.

Most of the structures and infrastructures that were built in those days from agricultural revenue still have stood the test of time. In alternative to this, some scholars have also argued that there may be noting really wrong with oil discovery in the Nigerian state, but that the change in revenue allocation formula seem to have brought about grievances.

²⁵ Ibid Footnote 24

²⁶ Ibid Footnote 24

In his own analysis Paul Collier has raised an important issue in the fact that recruitment into rebellious groups is a function of income earning opportunities which he described in the terms of the availability of educational opportunities for these young people who are aggrieved; that is, the higher the level of education, the less likely they engaged in risky endeavors²⁷.

How well and effective this particular argument of the literature on resource curse remains applicable in the Niger –Delta issue in Nigeria is rather questionable. This is arguable on the grounds that reasonable number of Nigerian graduates from the region is the ones who are in the forefront of the struggle. One of the foremost and most violent militant groups in the region, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is led by a graduate and not only that large number of graduates belong to this particular group, most of other different groups were equally formed by those who have been educated.

I would share in the argument that experiences have shown that countries are prone to sustain long term economic prosperity if less dependent is placed on natural resources²⁸. This argument has become a common agreement and knowledge in the Nigerian state where citizens have argued the need of having so many resources and yet millions live in squalor and poverty. If critically examined, I do not have much doubt in my mind that Nigeria as a country had done tremendously well until the various central governments started putting much emphasis on the natural resource syndrome in a bid to amass wealth from the rents that were paid by the oil multinationals.

The current situation in the Nigerian democracy is captured in Paul Collier arguments that not only does a resource rent encourage dictatorship rule in a diverse ethnic resource rich

²⁷Ibid Footnote 24. See chapter 5, Collier Paul. pp 91-111, p94

²⁸ Ibid Footnote 24.

state, uneven democratic competition without proper checks and balance also creates room for looting in office²⁹

Several governments have failed to account properly for the proceeds which have accrued to the country as foreign exchange earnings for decades since the discovery and exportation of oil in the country. Ian Bannon and Paul Collier argues that several armed crisis in 2001 can be strongly tied to cases of natural resource exploitation, and that countries with more diverse exports can avoid the negative effects that come with price fluctuations, while also they have suggested that for countries to move away from the dependency level of primary products they should be encouraged to diversify through growth, aid and policy³⁰.

In reaction to this, I think the issue of aid has been better expressed on paper than in practice. The argument behind this is that most of the conditionality's that comes with aid seem to leave a lot of these natural resource countries worse than they were before they went into aid agreements.

In the Nigerian context, experts have argued that most of the foreign aids the country acquired in the past failed because the conditionality's and terms of repayment did not put into consideration the level of the country's economic growth. And as such the country still remains highly indebted to World Bank and IMF till date.

Still on economic growth, another argument of the resource curse remains that several studies seem to come to an agreement that nations that are resource dependent often find economic growth moving in slow pace than countries without resource deposits³¹.

²⁹ Collier, Paul. *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are failing and what can be done about It*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp 33-52, p51.

³⁰ Bannon, Ian & Collier Paul. *Natural Resources and Conflict: What Can We Do*. In *Natural Resources and Violent Conflict: Options and Actions*, edited by Bannon Ian and Collier Paul, pp1-15, p7, Washington, D.C, World Bank, 2003..

³¹ Ibid Footnote 30

Should Nigeria have been better as a resource- poor economy? , for me the odds remain against having so many rich natural resources and yet not been able to give citizens quality life. This again goes to what this paper had argued in its early stage, that the rich production of palm oil, exportation of cocoa, peanuts and the rich agricultural growth of the various regions helped government to attract direct foreign investment through public investment and transparency.

The next chapter that precedes this will discuss and show an overview of the geographical composition of the Niger Delta areas in the Nigerian federal structure. These areas are also referred to as the oil rivers. It discusses the land mass, composition and the peoples that make up the region, while also attempts to situate the history of the discovery oil in Nigeria and equally evaluates in content the origin of this crisis at hand.

Chapter 2: Geographical Setting of the Niger Delta and Origin of Crisis

2.1 The Niger- Delta Area

2.1.1 The Geographical Composition and People of the Oil Producing Communities

The geographical composition of the Niger- Delta region remains an important element in understanding the nature of the present state of affairs and issues in the region. Belonging to the South-South geographical area which makes up the six-geographical zones in the Nigerian federal structure the area is endowed with rich deposits of natural resources.

The Niger-Delta has a composition of nine states which are Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross-River, Akwa- Ibom, Abia, Imo, Edo and Ondo States with a total land mass of about 29, 000 square kilo meters or about 3.2 percent of the total land area of the country and location of the nation's oil installations mostly in the creeks³².

Out of these nine states mentioned above, Edo Imo and Ondo states were only recently added to the composition of the Niger Delta states due to the fact that they also can boast of substantial oil wells. And this addition has subsequently expanded the land mass and composition of the region. Therefore, as officially defined by the federal government the whole of Niger Delta extends to over 70,000Km contributing a share of 7.5% of the total land mass of Nigeria, and the area is home to about 31 million inhabitants out of the over 120

³² Ibid Footnote 21

million population of the Nigerian state, including as much as 40 different ethnic nationalities and also having a livelihoods of predominantly farming and fishing³³.

The Niger-Delta is home to the third- largest drainage area of Africa's rivers, and serves as a large low-lying land in the south east of Nigeria and having considerable deposits which flows from the River Niger and River Benue respectively. Accordingly the peoples of the region fits into groups of diverse nations and ethnic nationalities which include: the Ijo, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Isoko, Efik, Etche, Ibibio, Igbo, Andoni, Ikwere, Ogoni, Edo and Kwale-Igbo which also have some of these groups split into sub-clans³⁴

The expansion of the Niger Delta region as recalled by Okonta Ike and Oronto Douglas was aided by the advent of the slave trade that brought about expanded social and economic activities involving huge migration and interaction between various ethnic groupings in the region.³⁵ It is also important to note as this research work had argued in its introductory chapter that oil communities have continued to languish in neglect and deplorable conditions ever since exploration started in large quantities. To drive this point further, the composition of these areas is clearly represented in the words of Okonta and Douglas,

Despite having enormous natural resources the area remains one of the poorest and most underdeveloped parts in the federal structure with seventy percent of the inhabitants still living a rural, subsistent existence characterized by total absence of basic amenities as electricity, pipe borne water, hospitals, proper housing and motor able roads³⁶

³³ http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Niger_Delta (accessed 11/05/2010)

³⁴ Okonta, Ike & Douglas Oronto. *Where Vultures Feast: Shell Human Rights, and Oil*, New York, Verso Publishers New York, pp5-20, p5, 2003. See also Kenneth O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885*. An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria (Oxford University Press, 1956), 21.

³⁵ Ibid Footnote 34

³⁶ Ibid Footnote 34.

Also it's quite incredible that the area has one of the highest population densities in the world with an annual population growth put at 3 percent³⁷. The implication of this is that population growth is on the increase and notable in large cities like Port-Harcourt and Warri which have in recent times witnessed constant growth and not much improvement in the infrastructural development to match such population explosion.

It's also on record that the Niger-Delta region boasts of having the largest wetland in the entire globe and an environment with enormous oil reserve which can be said to have attracted the interest of the United States which accounts for one thirds of Nigeria's oil shipment and the Europe also having a fair share of the supplies.³⁸

The irony behind this is that it has often been argued generally in the Nigerian public why the country still finds itself importing petrol from external sources if most of the oil production in the creeks is often exported to America and most of European countries.

But again this is an issue that occurs frequently in the country. Having so much in terms of natural resources base and yet very little is committed to its enhancement and development of the areas which are the Oil Rivers (Niger Delta) but rather ending in the hands of a few rich and corrupt office holders that have continuously looted the state treasury since after independence. The point here is not looking at corruption as in general sense, but bringing it down to the level of development in the various communities in oil producing areas which does not really show for the kind of wealth that is generated from oil exploration and also if these communities are compared in terms of infrastructural development with what is available to inhabitants and also the areas which houses both foreign and local oil expatriates

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ http://www.essentialaction.org/shell/Final_Report.pdf (accessed 11/05/2010)

Map of Nigeria, also showing areas of the Niger Delta below



The river Niger delta, where the country's hydrocarbon deposits are concentrated, the region which is located in the South- South geo graphical zone in Nigeria is indicated below left in the map description. This shows the several states that make up the wetland region which is also close to the gulf of Guinea.

http://www.waado.org/nigerdelta/Nigeria_Facts/NigerianMaps/LeMonde.html (accessed 10/05/2010)

2.2 The Discovery of Oil in the Region

The discovery of oil in the Nigerian state was first noticed in large quantities in a remote village of Oloibiri (of which is part of now Rivers state) by Shell and British Petroleum (BP) in 1956, just few years before the country's independence. Subsequently the discovery stimulated an increase in the number of oil companies in the region.

The main multinationals that operate on a joint venture agreement with the federal government includes the Anglo Dutch Shell Petroleum Development Company, which produces 42.2% of the country's daily output, Mobil (US) 21.2%, Agip (Italy) 7.5%, Elf 6.1%, Texaco Overseas Petroleum (US) 2.6% and others accounting for 1.7%³⁹

The emergence is not complete without the mention of the first few steps to set up a concrete arrangement for exploration in Nigeria. This was to follow after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by the British colonial masters in 1914.

The first ever Mineral resources Act of 1914 was the one which enabled the Governor General of the new colony Lord Frederick Lugard to grant licenses to British companies and subjects operating in Nigeria. This ultimately brought about the issuance of license for oil exploration to Shell and D'Arcy (later to be called Shell-British Petroleum Development Company) in 1938 covering a land mass of 15,000 square miles of which Oloibiri was later found to produce the first commercial oil well the country ever had⁴⁰

³⁹ Ejibowah, John. Boye, "Who Owns the Oil? The Politics of Ethnicity in the Niger Delta of Nigeria". *Africa Today*, Vol.47, No. 1(winter, 2000), pp.29-47, Indiana University Press,<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4187306>.

⁴⁰ Ibid Footnote 39

Upon this land mark discovery, what was later to follow in several years to come were different steps which were taken before and after independence to create a functional oil industry, this discovery of oil was followed by the first shipment in 1958.

With the enablement of the 1914 Act, Shell Petroleum began operations from its Oloibiri oil wells and with the enactment of the 1959 Petroleum and Profits Tax Ordinance; the sole concessionaire right of the Shell-BP was subsequently extended to other foreign companies putting in place a fifty percent each profit sharing that was between the Nigerian government and foreign oil companies⁴¹

The establishment of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in 1977 which replaced the Nigerian National Oil Corporation (NNOC) further opened the doors of the down stream sector in the industry. Not long after this, the corporation became a major player as the government acquired 57% stake in the upstream sector which it maintained as a joint venture partnership with foreign multinational corporations.

2.3 Emerging of the Niger Delta Conflict

The argument behind the theoretical frame work of this research project is that there is a considerable linkage between the theory of social deprivation and that of grievances and collective action as it relates to the crisis of the Niger Delta region. Furthermore, these oil communities have in the past showed also considerable forms of grievances right from the discovery of oil in the region. As it is widely known, these grievances are often directed in

⁴¹ Ibid Footnote 39.

reaction to the neglect, political and socio- economic exclusion of the people and the areas where exploration is carried out.

Franz Fanon argues that what is today the current crisis in the region can actually be traced with the discovery of oil by the Royal Dutch Shell in 1956; which is a follow up of the plunder of the Delta region back in 1444 when the Portuguese adventurer and former tax collector, Lancarote de Freitas who on sailing to West African Coast, stole and sold as slaves 235 men and women.⁴²

In reality one of the greatest challenges which the people of the Niger Delta region have faced is the fact that the federal government is invested with the control and ownership of property rights in the entire country and can choose to covert any area which contains crude for exploration.

This section recaptures several steps that seem to have brought about what is seen today as the different protests and armed struggle which are frequent occurrences in the region. The history of protests is not complete without the mention of the Willink Minorities Commission of 1957.

The fears of the minorities in reaction to the regional arrangements in the Nigeria federal structure showed in the report to the commission with two instances pre-empting these fears, first the division of the country into three powerful regions and in each giving a particular group numerical strength; while the second was the fact that independence was around the corner⁴³

⁴² Ibid Footnote. 34. See also Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade. The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440-1870* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 21-22.

⁴³ <http://sanibalashehu.wordpress.com/2008/07/24/the-minorities-question-and-the-willink-intervention/> (accessed date 13/05/2010)

The problem here was basically that of fear of domination which culminated in testimonies been brought before the Willink Minorities Commission of inquiry. Though the commission acknowledged the presence of these fears amongst each ethnic minority groups, there were no genuine implementation of the commissions recommendations to these effects.

The 1969 Petroleum Act of which General Yakubu Gowon the then military leader allowed the transfer of all oil revenue to the federal military government also made provision to allow for disbursement of revenue to states on need basis. But again there was no special provision for the needs of the minority people of the Niger Delta region⁴⁴.

Several other degrees by subsequent military regimes further raised the hopelessness nature of these minority groups and the need for them to ask questions. Rather than improve upon the revenue that goes to these regions, the various degrees such as the 1971 Decree of which allowed the federal government access to lay claims to offshore rents and royalties, succeeded in reducing the 50 % which went to the oil producing communities as rents.

Of particular importance to the issue of history of protests was the promulgation by the military government the 1978 land Use Act which vested the ownership and control of the entire land mass in Nigeria in the military governors who were representatives of the Federal Military Government; at a time when Niger Delta oil fields were accounting for about 82 percent of the entire revenue of the nation.⁴⁵

The point I have tried to make here is that the crisis at hand today had gone through various stages as the military legislations succeeded in the exclusion of oil communities in all dialogues and negotiations with multi national oil corporations. They were also denied from

⁴⁴ Ibid Footnote 34.

⁴⁵ Ibid Footnote 34. See also Dike, Trade and Politics, 198.

benefiting from the royalties and rents paid by these companies for oil exploration and production.

Not only were they excluded as stated above, the 1978 Land Use Act was a continuation of the damage to the derivation principle, and the second republic government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari slashed it to 5%. Before Ibrahim Banbangida handed over to an interim government in 1993, the derivation principle had gross fallen to a mere 3% to as benefits to oil producing communities⁴⁶.

The effect has been complete failure of the federal and state governments to deliver on the political, social and economic welfare that should give these oil producing states meaningful livelihood and compensation for environmental hazards. One wonders with all these developments how much in the past governments especially the military could have offered with most of the decrees and edicts tailored to keep their hold on power

Also with the behavior of oil multinationals who on their part seemed not committed enough to do anything meaningful with the community representatives, the complains have gradually moved from feelings of fear, dejection and voice protests to the present level of struggle that is been championed by militant youths who have devised several other combat moves to press for their demands.

⁴⁶ Ibid Footnote 39.

Oil Revenue Derivation:

Oil revenue allocation has been the subject of much contention well before Nigeria gained its independence. Allocations have varied from as much as 50%, owing to the First Republic's high degree of regional autonomy, and as low as 10% during the military dictatorships. In practice, 85% of the oil wealth is retained by Nigerian elites who comprise 1% of the population.

Oil revenue sharing formula					
Year	Federal	State*	Local	Special Projects	Derivation Formula**
1958	40%	60%	0%	0%	50%
1968	80%	20%	0%	0%	10%
1977	75%	22%	3%	0%	10%
1982	55%	32.5%	10%	2.5%	10%
1989	50%	24%	15%	11%	10%
1995	48.5%	24%	20%	7.5%	13%
2001	48.5%	24%	20%	7.5%	13%

. *State allocations are based on 5 criteria: equality (equal share per state), population, social development, and land mass and revenue generation.

** The derivation formula refers to the percentage of the revenue oil producing states retain from taxes on oil and other natural resources produced in the state. World Bank report.

Source: http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Niger_Delta (accessed date 14/05/2010). The figures does not include some of the years mentioned in the analysis, but what it intends to show is that the revenue sharing formula was changed upon the discovery of oil in the Niger-Delta from the 50% that goes with derivation and has since been manipulated to suit the elites preferences in power.

Chapter 3: Resource Dependency, Analysis of Variables and Testing the Theory- Induced Hypothesis

This chapter will largely focus on testing the hypothetical statements that have been raised in the introductory chapter of this work. It critically analyzes the basic assumptions which have been raised in this research project. The main aim here will be to evaluate the two theories which have been established, (a) theory of grievance and collective action, and (b) theory of social deprivation. This will be achieved by to applying the various concepts which have been raised to form the basis of testing the theory induced Hypothesis.

In doing this, it will concentrate on the state's involvement in the crisis situation as independent explanatory variable, bearing in mind issues like poverty, corruption, unemployment and the reaction of the state towards the militant groups as dependent explanatory variables . It will further test the hypothesis by analyzing some cases which are very important in the crisis of the Niger Delta. The research will be applying two empirical cases as supportive examples and arguments to sustain or disprove the hypothesis which has been established earlier on.

Government's involvement and interest can be presented as a counter argument that a corrupt state which applies force to quell down protests or agitations can be acknowledged from empirical experiences also as it does not inevitably lead to violent and militant actions from an aggrieved population. But I do not seem to completely share in this line of argument regarding the nature of the crisis in the Niger-Delta.

It can also be argued that grievances and social deprivation which are often as results of corruption and the state's inability to manage effectively crisis situation cannot be enough reasons to also generate militant actions. Bearing in mind these counter arguments, I will take a

positive stand in supporting the theory induced hypothesis which has been raised in this research project.

In trying to show this, the research project will first concentrate on evaluating the various scholarly arguments of resource dependency and apply these variables that have been identified to the two theories of grievances and collective and the theory of social deprivation. Secondly, two empirical cases of the “Ogoni oil Conflicts and the “Odi Massacre will be evaluated to support the theory based assumptions.

3.1 Resource Dependency

3.1.1 Poverty: And the Theory of Grievance and Collective Action

Grievances and collective action theory are strongly related to effects of poverty. In this regard, Michael Ross argues that governments of rich natural resources are very backward in the provision of social amenities for the benefit of its population⁴⁷

As argues by Ross (2001b) there is a strong correlation between dependence on oil and mineral exports and child mortality rate; who shows that as dependence in mineral exports increases high mortality rises proportionally⁴⁸

If we narrow this argument to the Niger Delta scenario it makes sense to view the theoretical frame of grievance and collective action along this assertion. The basic claim here and which I argue in support is that poverty is on a high rate in the region because of the government’s failure to invest in education. Youths find it difficult to integrate properly in the

⁴⁷ Ibid Footnote 30. See chapter two, Michael Ross. The Natural Resource Curse: How Wealth Can Make You Poor, p20

⁴⁸ Ibid

society. Those who have also graduated from the University tend to be unemployed several years after education.

The results of this have been that poor youths who find it difficult to get education are the most vulnerable and express their grievances by joining the militant groups. They become easily cajoled when they see the need that by joining in dissident actions they can also make money through kidnap and looting of oil which can also come in form of bunkering.

The picture of this argument is better captured in the words of Mukagbo, Cable Network News (CNN) anchorman for inside Africa “Niger Delta remains a region where time seems to have stood still and where people live the most meager of existences, leaving them bitter and angry from not having benefited from the black gold that makes Nigeria Africa’s largest producer”⁴⁹

Closely related to the issue of poverty is unemployment which implies that both can go interchangeable in terms of its ability to generate grievances and subsequently lead to collective action. It is common knowledge that unemployment is on the high side among the people of the Niger Delta.

Brisibe (2000) aptly supports this in his assertion “less than five percent of people from the Niger Delta work in the oil multinationals in those areas, women from the region in these oil companies are less than one percent”⁵⁰. This has on its own part greatly contributed to cases of grievances in the region and also which sustains the claim of what the theory of grievance and collective action projects.

The reality of this assertion is clearly in breach of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 which states in 17 (2) (d) “exploitation of human or natural resources

⁴⁹ Ibid Footnote 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid

in any form whatsoever for reasons, other than the good of the community, shall be prevented”⁵¹. How well this is respected becomes a controversial issue when applied to the conflict at hand and has also added to the grievances of these ethnic groups.

3.1.2 Corruption: And the Theory of Grievance and Collective Action

The strong argument in this case remains that governments that receives more money from resource dependence are found to engage in more corrupt practices than when there is less dependence on these natural resources. Experiences have also shown that, this revenue which comes from resource dependence are so enormous that not only have such governments failed to manage them, the wealth often out weigh the normal budgeting procedures and thus affects the state’s progress⁵².

Even though this is so, the Nigerian case becomes rather a good example to substantiate this claim. In recent times more revenue has gone to the oil producing states as monthly allocations, but the argument has always been that the state governors have done pretty little to aid in the development of oil producing communities in their various states.

The attitudes of these state governors were one of the worries of Nigeria’s former finance minister Esther Nenadi Usman. Acknowledging this problem, she asked for greater scrutiny of the activities of governors, on his own part the former Head of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nuhu Ribadu, in 2003 argues that 70 percent of oil revenue which amounts to over \$14 billion was unaccounted for or wasted frivolously⁵³.

⁵¹ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999)

⁵² Ibid Footnote 30. See chapter two, Michael Ross. The Natural Resource Curse: How Wealth Can Make You Poor, p24.

⁵³ Ibid Footnote 2.

This can pass for the height of grievance and frustration which is often seen in the eyes of these youths in their quest to address what they perceive as injustice. In the words of one of the foremost leaders of Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), an active militant group in the Niger Delta area, he affirms “we are in the middle of a struggle for the liberation of Niger Delta, the most devastated and most threatened region in the world”⁵⁴

With reference to the provisions of the Nigerian constitution, in chapter two, 15 (5) “the State shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power”⁵⁵. I question in my own view the need to allow so much power to state governors while in office. They also enjoy immunity while in office which means that it is usually difficult for these governors to be persecuted while in office except for a few cases that has occurred.

It becomes evident that the application of the theory of grievances and collective action with the arguments which have been derived from experiences stated above sustains the assumption of the theory induced hypothesis. That the nature of neglect, deprivation and discrimination which remain unsolved explains why the emergence and activities of these groups are on the increase.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid Footnote 53.

3.1.3 Weak Institutions: And the Theory of Social Deprivation

Dependence on the proceeds of natural resources often has weakened the operations of the institutions of primary products states making it difficult find lasting solutions to conflict situations⁵⁶. In support of this argument is the claim that natural resources sometimes can be vulnerable giving criminals the opportunity to indulge in extraction activities and also some military officers all who may actually grow strong enough to challenge the government⁵⁷.

In the Nigerian context, the state's inability to adequately provide good governance is often linked to this factor and since the discovery of oil it has been argued that government has found it difficult to articulate correctly its policies in line with development. On paper, policies are excellent but failure to deliver can be attributed to political instability leading to the weakness of state's institution, often as a result of military officers in going into politics who saw the oil money as wind falls which are never accounted.

Today, the militants on their own have formed cabals in their various regions, not only breaking pipelines but also getting involved in the lucrative business of bunkering,⁵⁸ to amass illegal wealth. The effect of these activities has been constant challenges on governments from the military which would always want to topple an existing government in order to get involved

⁵⁶ Ibid Footnote 30. See chapter two.

⁵⁷ Ibid. see also Reno, William. 1995. *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, world Politics and African States. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Reinner., Ross, Michael L. 1999. "The Political Economy of the Resource Curse". *World Politics* 51(2, January): 297-54

⁵⁸ Bunkering – Definition, this is a term for illegal exploration of natural resources by saboteurs in order to make huge sums of financial resources which is not readily accounted for. The term is a common phenomenon which is in practice in the Niger Delta areas of Nigeria. It involves illegal breaking of laid pipelines to extract petroleum products. This process is usually applied by militant youths you have seen it as a good source of income to perpetuate their struggle against the state. However, also some government officials are largely involved in this through the middle men; this is so because it involves a lot of wealth which are made without accounting for it by any means.

with the oil resources, and from militants groups who are involved in bunkering usually through the use of sophisticated weaponry to continue their trade and also fight the state.

Weak institutions as an outcome of resource dependence have often resulted in lack of accountability in government. Ross also argues in light of this, that governments which enjoy heavily from proceeds of natural resources are often coercive in character and are often in the habit of investing huge sums from the natural resources revenue into elite's patronage and putting up large military forces⁵⁹

This is perhaps what scholars have argued severally as a major set back in the Niger Delta conflicts. The years of military dictatorships were supported with huge budgetary allocations to defense sector and one wonders if these huge allocations are being used to improve the military intelligence of the country globally to match with the technological advancements of western powers, rather most often these allocations were to beef up security and acquire sophisticated weaponry to match protests in the Niger Delta region.

The effects of these huge sums and its unaccountability on governance is what Ross further argues, that governments that enjoy proceeds from natural resources do not usually uphold the principles of democracy are hardly in good positions to resolve grievances of their citizens but rather contributes to igniting these conflicts further⁶⁰. In the next discussion which will proceed, an attempt will be made to evaluate the Nigerian state's interests in these conflicts to show how its impact has affected the crisis situation.

⁵⁹ Ibid Footnote 30. See chapter two.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

3.1.4 State's Interests: and the Theory of Social Deprivation

It is no secret that the Nigerian state is a rentier one basically relying heavily on the rents and royalties which oil multinationals pay for exploration of the crude oil business in the creeks of the Niger Delta. This is nucleus of the entire game politics which is played in terms of defining the structure and composition of how and why those who go in political positions do so in the Nigerian state.

This research work in its early stage have tried to put up an argument in the line that those who go to politics in the Nigerian state and find them selves in power have greatly perceived their involvement in this wealth sharing as the primary and motivating factor in contesting for political positions rather than what they should offer to their various constituencies.

This invariably shows where the heart of the elites lie, with a primary concern in management of the oil conflicts been directed not only to maximize oil revenues, but has been dominated by an unstable coalition of some ethnic majority elites whose geographical areas are never part of the oil producing communities⁶¹

In the view of Terisa Turner (1978:167) the concept of 'commercial triangle' gives a wider insight of a coalition of the dominant elite forces which are the oil multinational corporations, local Nigerian middle men (often known as compradors) and the state government officials who heavily rely on the proceeds of these revenue through every possible means⁶²

⁶¹ Omeje, Kenneth. Conflict & Evolving Politics in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. "Review of African Political Economy, vol 31, No. 101. (September, 2004) pp 425-440. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4006965>. Accessed 08/05/2010.

⁶² Ibid Footnote 61. See also Turner, T & P Badru (1984), 'Oil and Instability: Class Contradictions and the 1983 Coup in Nigeria', Journal of Modern African Studies, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 111-138.

3.1.5 The Ogoni Oil Conflicts: Empirical Case I

Several events were prominent in the Ogoni Oil Conflicts which made it well known not just in the Nigerian context, but also attracted international awareness. Widely believed to be among the largest concentration of oil wells in Nigeria but like every other oil producing community it has suffered neglect and marginalization which has grown into grievances over the years.

Initially most of these protests of social neglect, issues of grievances and environmental degradation of the activities of the oil companies operating in Ogoni land were organized not as violent attacks but to express strong displeasure of the neglect and marginalization. I argue here that not only has these grievances led to more militant groups springing up, government has further ignited these conflicts by its application of repressive attacks.

The Ogoni confrontations which lasted between 1990 and 1993 not only opened a new phase in the oil minority struggle, it showed the courage which the leaders of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in presenting the Ogoni Bill of Rights demanded autonomy to control their political affairs, use of fair share of the economic resources derived from Ogoni land and a restoration of the derivation principle which benefited the major ethnic groups in the past⁶³.

These demands were in reaction to various environmental degradation which has been going on for years as a result of oil exploration and has often caused oil spillage due to the fact that pipelines were not properly laid and as a result farm land and aquatic lives become destroyed

⁶³ Osaghae, E. Eghosa. "The Ogoni Uprising: Oil Politics, Minority Agitation and Future of the Nigerian State". *African Affairs*, Vol. 94, No 376 (July, 1995), pp 352-344, 326. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/723402>. Accessed: 12/05/2010.

once there is a spillage, and this caused more agitation which the Ogoni people resolved to fight for what they believed was their right⁶⁴.

The feeling of grievance was vividly presented by the leader of the MOSOP, Ken Saro Wiwa who argued that taking away their lands amounts to air and sea pollution, it denies them the opportunity of making a live hood while at the other end their children find it difficult to get educated, exposing such tribe to the effects of extinction⁶⁵.

But again while the Ogoni's were preparing for mass action, they were reminded by the state through the then state military governor which is a good basis for a counter argument behind the stated assumption. That is the Ogoni's do not have justification to carry arms since they have no special or worst condition than any other oil producing community in Nigeria.

Two straight reasons have been adduced why the Ogoni's took the laws into their hands, (a) the failure of the state to respond positively regarding the complaints that were brought against the oil companies in the past, this was said to have led to the declaration of self-determination, (b) the radical orientation of the MOSOP and other main organizations that were part of the struggle⁶⁶.

Inferring from these two reasons I argue in support of the assumption behind the theory induced hypothesis of this research that grievances and the state's reaction have often sustained the crisis in the Niger Delta and as such escalated the conflict situation in the region. Rather than negotiating with the MOSOP leadership, the state went ahead in 1992 to place a ban on public demonstrations and sought to confine the right to self – determination and disruption of oil

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

exploration as offences under law of treason subject to prosecution⁶⁷. Yet again, this argument supports the assumption that the state's attitude and handling of the crisis has often created more violence than peaceful resolution.

Between the period of 1990 and 1993, several protests and struggles soared in Ogoni land and it was as if there was a sudden rekindling of hope in the agitations with cases such as 300,000 Ogoni indigenes protesting Shell's oil activities and environmental degradation in Bori. Several other protests and agitations were held at different occasions not without incidences of the state's brutality, coercion and several arrests of MOSOP leaders and at some point shootings and killing of protesters at oil installation sites⁶⁸.

Joseph Richard have added to the arguments of the state's failure to handling the crisis and its brutality in the Ogoni conflicts, as he argues that the government had to come down heavily on these protests actions against the Ogoni's dissidents in forceful repression of these protests activities; while also stating that these protests actions of the Ogoni people were as a result of support and encouragement it received internationally by organizations such as Working Group of Indigenous People in Geneva, United Nations and its specialized agencies and a host of other International Organizations⁶⁹. This was to show the condemnation of the state's action against the citizens of the Ogoni clan

Arguing against any neutrality of the state in such matters that have risen between host oil communities and oil companies of which the state has often claimed to be, the Ogoni conflicts

⁶⁷ Cayford, Steven. "The Ogoni Uprising, Human Rights, and a Democratic Alternative in Nigeria". *African Today*, Vol. 43, No. 2, (April –June 19996), pp.183-197, p189, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4187095>. (Accessed: 20/05/2010.)

⁶⁸ <http://www1.american.edu/ted/ogoni.htm>. (Accessed 21/05/2010).The list of these protests as put forward are intended to show the various dates when major protests, shootings and killings occurred in the Ogoni land. These were activities and conflicts that lasted between 1990- 1993, including meetings and negotiations which were held in the period of the crisis. What it intends to show is that the federal government resisted these protests with every might and violent means available to them.

⁶⁹ Joseph Richard." Autocracy, Violence, and Ethno military Rule in Nigeria." In *State Conflict, and Democracy in Africa*, edited by Joseph Richard, pp359-373, p366. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999.

seem to have raised very interesting points which again go to support not only the arguments behind the theory induced hypotheses of this research paper, but also shows the interests of the state in matters such as this.

Osaghae argues that the Ogoni uprising has demonstrated that the state merely exists to strengthen the interests of the majority groups against minorities, and have also taken sides in favor of the oil multi national against these minority communities rather than been neutral; further to this is that the state has resorted to violence and militant actions in order to quell these protests even when there are no eminent violence and these frequently up rising are in response to the state's failure in handling the crisis objectively⁷⁰

3.1.6 Ogoni Oil Conflicts and Confirmation of Hypothesis:

- Environmental neglect and its degradation which is evident in the Ogoni oil crisis has been going on for several years and also the inability of Shell to adequately address the issue of oil spillage. There was also fear of extinction as result of pollution and damage to aquatic life, this is a confirmation that sustains my first hypothesis that neglect , deprivation and discrimination which has remained unsolved explains the emergence of protests and militia movements
- Government's action towards these protests supports the second hypothesis of this research. First I argue that government was not neutral in the crisis and seem to have taken sides already against the people of Ogoni in their issues with Shell. While various protests went on, which I argue to be legitimate, the state returned its reaction with

⁷⁰ Ibid. Footnote 63.

violence, first by banning all protests demonstrations, instituting a punishable decree and also went ahead with repressive attacks

- The causality here is that, the more government used force, there was intensification of the crisis which resulted in the government creating an unwanted inter ethnic war between the people of Ogoni and their neighboring Andoni community in order to divert the attention of the struggle of self- determination.(See Osaghae Ibid Footnote 63, page 337)
- The attitude of the state in the crisis was seen to have agitated other youth groups which sprang up in order to support the prominent group in the region (MOPSOP), and this action supports the argument of the hypothesis behind proliferation of the militant groups.

3.1.6 The Odi Massacre: Empirical Case II

The Odi experience as an empirical example which from all indications sustains the arguments behind the theory induced hypothesis of this research work going by the conditions surrounding its occurrence.

Odi is one of the oil producing communities in Bayelsa state, having an estimated population of about 60,000 inhabitants and substantial oil wells of which Shell Petroleum Development Company controls three of these oil wells and with a large presence in the land due to its oil exploration activities⁷¹. The conflict provides one of the justifications of the growing examples oil conflicts which can be escalated out of grievances and further shows the state's

⁷¹ http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Urgent_Action/apic_122399.html. Odi Massacre Statements, 12/23/1999,(Accessed 21/05/2010)

nature of intervention and handling of not only oil related conflicts but those which are extra oil conflicts in Niger Delta region⁷².

The Odi Massacre was the aftermath of the killing of 7 police men led by Mr. Thomas Jokotola; CSP whom the militant youths had believed also to mastermind the assault that led to their dislodgement shortly after the election process of 1999. The police men were on a mission to investigate plans of a reprisal attack by youths of the Odi community against an ethnic rival group in South Western part of Nigeria. It has been argued that these same youths were used as agents of violence and intimidation to win elections in the just concluded 1999 civilian elections by the Bayelsa state government, and having come into power the government reneged from the terms of the agreement with these youths as has been agreed during election electoral campaigns⁷³.

However it must be put into consideration the fact that no individual in whatsoever capacity is entitled to take the laws into his hands by committing atrocities such as murder and in this case taking the lives of uniformed men who are on state duty becomes a basis for a counter argument which might question the need why lawless youths should not be punished by the state. But again was due process followed? Were proper investigation conducted before repressive actions were carried out? And it was believed that most likely none of the youths involved in the act were among those hit by the bullets of the armed soldiers because they were nowhere to be found.

⁷² Ibid Footnote 61.

⁷³ Ibid Footnote 72 <http://www1.american.edu/ted/ogoni.htm>. (Accessed 21/05/2010). The list of these protests as put forward are mainly intended to show the various dates when major protests, shootings and killings occurred in the Ogoni land. This does not form the entire list of these activities that lasted between 1990- 1993, and does not also include some other meetings and negotiations which were held in the period of the crisis. What it intends to show is that the federal government resisted these protests with every might and violent means available to them.

Several factors in this case suggest the wrong handling of the crisis situation and it becomes even more worrisome when viewed from the arguments behind the theory induced hypotheses of this research work. This argument is evidently shown in former President Obasanjo's letter dated 4th November to the Bayelsa state's government to produce the culprits in two weeks or face an invocation of a state of emergence in the state.

However, few days before the expiration of this ultimatum, federal troops numbering over 2,000 invaded Odi community and at the end of the two days operation some 2, 483 unarmed civilians were left dead⁷⁴. This was in response to the then Nigerian Defense Minister, General Theophilous Danjuma who authorized the Odi invasion that was labeled 'Operation Hakuri II' and it was ridiculous to know that such a military force was initiated with the mandate from the state to protect lives and property especially where oil installations are situated, in rigs, terminals, oil pipelines refineries and installations in the Delta region⁷⁵

It becomes an irony when this statement is critically evaluated with the level of the damage that was done during the invasion and one wonders what relationship has the protection of the above mentioned facilities have to do with the crushing of over 2, 483 civilians and destruction of the houses, properties and farm lands when it was believed that most likely none of the youths involved in the act were among those hit by the bullets of the armed soldiers because they had absconded.

The scene was better captured in the words of Senator Suleiman Ajadi who was in the entourage of the then Senate President, Chuba Okadigbo when he visited the scene of the

⁷⁴ Ibid Footnote 61. See also Vanguard (2002), 2,483 Lives Lost in Odi Armed Invasion, Vanguard, 20 November 2002, [http://www.allafrica.com/Nigeria/newswire/ \(2003a\), Between Service and Patronage: The Nigerian Refineries, 1983-2003, Vanguard, 3 August 2003, http://www.vanguardngr.com/article/2002/business/bb303082003.html](http://www.allafrica.com/Nigeria/newswire/(2003a),%20Between%20Service%20and%20Patronage%3A%20The%20Nigerian%20Refineries,%201983-2003,%20Vanguard,%203%20August%202003,%20http://www.vanguardngr.com/article/2002/business/bb303082003.html).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

massacre. “I don’t see the reason of hitting an ant with a sledge hammer, “he bemoaned, adding, “Even a foreign invasion would not have been more devastating”⁷⁶

Beyond this lies a consequence of aftermath that goes with the state, every repressive action against protests have been met with intensification, and it is no secret that the Ogoni conflicts and the Ijaw resistance which Odi crisis represents have been worrisome to the Nigerian state because these two ethnic groups have frequently been in the forefront of regional autonomy, resource control and self –determination which are cases that undermine the revenue base of the state⁷⁷. This is so because the elites which these communities accuse of belonging to the major ethnic groups have consistently held on the power and strategic positions which is the only way to sustain control of resources in a primary product dependence nation like the Nigeria.

The largely acclaimed consequence of the Nigerian state’s interest in the handling of the Odi crisis which is part of Ijaw community is a justification of the theory induced hypothesis that the state’s response to these groups have continued to escalate and sustain the crisis. In support of this Omeje makes a strong claim to this effect,

Ijaw youths have in turn responded to the state’s military actions by intensifying attacks against Chevron and Shell Oil operations along the Escravos River and Jones creek. In fact, the proliferation of clandestine militant groups and activities of several parts of the Niger Delta against the state oil companies is partly related in the people’s anger over the Odi massacre and Warri South local government conflicts⁷⁸

⁷⁶ http://www.waado.org/environment/fedgovt_nigerdelta/bayelsainvasion/FederalGovernInvadesBayelsa/MilitaryInOdi/MilitaryMassacres.html. A Tale of Military massacres: from Ogoniland to Odi town; Obasanjo’s condemned for the situation in Nigeria; Osita Nwajah; The News (Lagos) December 6, 1999. (Accessed 21/05/2010).

⁷⁷ Ibid. Footnote 62.

⁷⁸ Ibid Footnote 62. See also Ikelegbe, A (2001), ‘Civil Society, Oil and Conflict in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: Ramifications of Civil Society for a Regional Resource Struggle’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 39, no 3, pp.437-469., Eke, P (2003), ‘Itsekiri Relations’, July, http://www.nigerdeltacongress.com/iarticles/itse_sagays_faulty_analysis_of_u.htm.

Odi Massacre and Confirmation of Hypothesis

There is a linkage between these two cases and both are mutually related in terms of evaluating the two hypotheses of this research project. I also argue in the direction that the sequence of occurrences in this case further confirms and sustains my hypotheses.

- The youths who have been used as agents of violence and manipulation by the incumbent to win elections in the polls are abandoned without proper integration into the society after promises before electoral victory. Though a counter argument here might be that these youths are law breakers, but again I argue from my illustrations that neglect and deprivation are all forces which make these youths vulnerable and easily manipulated by elites seeking electoral positions. And neglect and deprivation can bring about violent protests and destruction as in the case here and this sustains my first hypothesis.
- Government's action in the crisis also justifies the second hypothesis of this research project. Few days before an ultimatum was given military forces invades Odi community and civilians massacred, this implies that government has no genuine intentions of handling the crisis rather that the troops were sent to protect the oil installations, pipelines and companies and can this be achieved through destruction of lives?.
- The outcome of the invasion was that it generated more resistance from the militants who have resorted to clandestine activities as attacks have been intensified against oil companies operating in the Niger Delta. I argue here that by its invasion of Odi, the action of the government has resulted in more groups springing up to show dissatisfaction over the Odi massacre and the crisis in Warri South local government and as such this development sustains the second hypothesis.

Chapter 4: Current Force of Action and the Composition of Militancy

This chapter briefly evaluates the current force of action, which is the new dimension of the movement from voice protests to a more forceful armed struggle. It includes also the composition of these militia movements in the form of unitary to fragmented, while also it talks about some of the tactics and resources for collective action which have been applied by some of the notable militants groups such are the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF).

4.1 The Current Force of Action

Although as noted earlier that the problem of the Niger Delta has been a long drawn issue which started with various complaints and fears of minority issues shortly after oil was discovered and subsequent independence of Nigeria in 1960, the emergence of organized and forceful militant youths since the early 1990's have changed dramatically the face of the crisis and pushed it to another level entirely.

The protests of these groups and the threat of rebellion which they unleash on the oil companies and the state are now common and seen every where especially in the regions where oil is located⁷⁹. And the most visible actions of this new dimension are been spearheaded by the youths.

This is captured by Osaghae and others while inferring from (Momoh 1996), they assert that in movements from any contentious politics to violence, the actions of the youths remain

⁷⁹ http://www.ensec.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=211:militancy-and-oil-violence-in-the-niger-delta&catid=98:issuecontent0809&Itemid=349 Journal of Energy Security, Ojaborotu Victor, Militancy and Oil Violence in the Niger-Delta, 27th August 2009, (Accessed 22/05/2010.)

important due to the fact that they are most vulnerable when repression is applied by the state. Youths also find in violence a strong option for negotiation, and extension of demands on perceived forms of oppression by the state which is seen as a way of bringing attention to the Niger Delta to forms of state's injustice⁸⁰.

In a more direct and empirical illustration, the current force of action in what we have today in the Niger Delta region is represented by the "Kaiama Declaration" of 11th December, 1998 which took place in the town Hall of Kaiama one of the Ijaw communities in the Niger Delta., and witnessed the gathering of over five hundred youths of different groups. Several articles and demands were issued in the Kaiama Declaration and at the end of the gathering all oil companies were issue two weeks to pay compensation for the effects of environmental degradation which the exploration of oil has caused to various communities in the Niger Delta land.

The demands of these youths was also in outright rejection of the peaceful way the elders used voice to dialogue which they saw as been weak, ineffective and a fearful approach as such they have decided to take their destines into their own hands through mobilization and direct engagement with oil multinationals and the state⁸¹

This action of the youths and subsequent ones that followed marked the process of generational change in the struggle from the elders to the younger generation and till date the process has been fortified even in the face of constant violent repression from the state.

⁸⁰ Ibid Footnote 18. See also Momoh, Abubakar (1996) "Popular Struggles in Nigeria", African Journal of Political Science, 1:2, pp 154-175.

⁸¹ Ibid Footnote 18. See also Ikelegbe, A .O (2005B) "Encounters of Insurgent Youth Associations with the State in the Oil Rich Niger Delta Region in Nigeria", Journal of Third World Studies, Vol, XXII. No 1 spring. 151-181.

4.2 Composition, Tools and Resource for Collective Action

The success of most composition in contentious politics involving groups in terms of its coordination and sustainability largely depends on the availability of what Tarrow had argued on, from his assertion it is deducible that composition of these groups is made possible through

The support of closely built social networks and galvanized by culturally resonant, action-oriented symbols, contentious politics results in social movement when it brings about sustained interaction with opponents. From this, the composition has to be present within “social networks and resonant collective action frames which are in line with sustainable capacity building to face challenges against strong opponents⁸²

This is the case with the Niger Delta youth militia organization, these are organizations that have also brought about sub organizations in the form of moving from unitary to fragmentation as a result of wider spread and growth in membership. Fragmentation can be an outcome of feud within the ranks of these groups. The position presently is that there are several numerous groups broken in pieces and scattered all over the various communities in the Niger Delta region and most especially communities where oil wells are located.

For Osaghae, Eghosa et al these groups work through local, national and sometimes international linkages interacting mutually to give various organizations support in the pursuit and sustaining their claims⁸³.

The composition of these groups are mainly young people who feel aggrieved with the state of their living status and as has been stated earlier in this paper, most of the young graduates who for lack of finding a job after education tend to have spearheaded the operations of some of these groups. Notable among these groups are the Movement for the Survival of

⁸² Ibid Footnote 10

⁸³ Ibid Footnote 18.

Ogoni People (MOSOP) which was then headed by late Ken Saro Wiwa (who was executed by the autocratic regime of General Abacha for the same struggle), The Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) founded in 2004 and is composed mainly of the Ijaw youths and is headed by Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo Asari and The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta which was formed in 2006. (MEND). The group is quite similar to the NDPVF in terms of having close aims and objectives.

MEND for instance have several hundreds of these young men in its composition and has enjoyed enormous support from the people of the region. In the words of Nnamdi K Obasi, west Africa's Senior Analyst at the International Crisis Group "MEND seems to be led by more enlightened and Sophisticated men than most of the groups in the past." Its leaders are educated, some at the University level and they have learned from militant movements in other parts of the world"⁸⁴

Also various military tactics and resources have been implored by these militia groups. These are also effectively represented by MEND's tools and tactics. As it has been observed, these groups use among notable tactics swarm based maneuvers with speed boats which enable for quick movements before and after attacks; improved fire power and combat training and also effective use of disruption system on well selected target to shut down oil production and installations⁸⁵

The structure of these groups has most times remained under secret ways partly because of the nature of their attacks and also because of the counter and repressive attacks by the state. However, it has also been observed too that the primary tactics which these groups use is the kidnapping of foreign oil workers which forms one of the huge sources of income available to

⁸⁴ <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12920/#p1> MEND: The Niger Delta's Umbrella Militant Group, Author: Stephanie Hanson, March 22, 2007, (Accessed 24/05/2010)

⁸⁵ Ibid Footnote 33

them, other resources of income that has been attributed to these groups are providing security to oil installations which the oil multinationals pay heavily for and also engaging in bunkering, which involves tapping from oil pipelines and filling plastic cans with crude oil⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Ibid Footnote 84

Chapter 5: Development Commissions and Media Coverage

This chapter will be devoted to brief examination of the development commissions which were set up at different occasions to look into the needs of these communities, while also looking at the effects of these commissions in terms of bringing infrastructures and better lives to the people of this region. It also discusses the current debate in the media bearing in mind that frequent media reporting of the events in the Niger Delta is an effective tool to solving these conflicts. It further seeks to make some recommendations in the light of the findings and finally it concludes bearing in mind the important issues of the research discourse.

5.1 Development Commissions

5.1.1 Establishment of OMPADEC AND NDDC

In response to various demands that revenue allocation that accrues to the oil producing communities were not properly managed by the various state governments, the General Ibrahim Babandiga's military government established the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). However, this commission had a primary function of identifying the various problems of these oil producing communities and carry out development projects based on the principles of demand, balance and priority of each of these communities⁸⁷.

From the nature of its establishment, OMPADEC was seen as a right step but on the other hand, it was argued shortly after it took of operations that the commission was established as a

⁸⁷ Ibid. Footnote 63

lame public agency which through the provision of funds will keep these communities on a quiet end⁸⁸. The events that were later to follow proved the inefficiency of the commission going by the fact that the only supervisory authority OMPADEC had came from the presidency which had other pressing state matters

However, this inefficiency and financial misappropriation (that later set in) were among the findings of the World Bank team that studied the progress of the activities of the commission in 1995. Among other irregularities found were, the absence of environmentally sustainable development, lack of requisite personnel to carry out long term ecological planning and the absence of complete project assessment which involved integrated approach to development planning bearing in mind the local communities of these areas⁸⁹

Another negative effect which stalled the progress of OMPADEC was its composition as a federal establishment with the presence of diverse ethnic nationalities where struggles for jobs and contracts became the order of the day and this eventually brought about corruption, incompetence and bureaucratic maneuvering with funds meant for the development of oil producing areas⁹⁰. The effect of this was further diversion of funds that were to be used for developmental projects to private uses which were not accounted for by various administrators of the commission.

The later failure of OMPADEC was replaced with the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000, to work towards the development of the region through policy formulation and project implementation. The commission currently coordinates and executes developmental projects. Also the revenue allocation has grown from 3% in 1992 to about 25%.

⁸⁸ Ibid. Footnote 34.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Footnote 34.

⁹⁰ <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/cepmlp/journal/html/vol4/article4-10.html> , Nigeria's Oil Revenue and Oil Producing Areas, Ike Oguine, (Accessed 25/05/2010)

Though it has been argued also that NDDC have done better than its predecessor OMPADEC, funding the commission remains one of its pressing problems. One of the primary functions of the commission is to collect money granted or deposited by the federal government, state government or institutions which also include loans, grants or gifts; however it has been impossible for the organization to earn funds from some of the expected source⁹¹ and as such this has hindered the progress of development in the region. Though the commission has engaged in extensive project execution, there is still more to be done when compared to the level of development of the region which is still evident going by the sustained violence in these communities.

5.1.2 Current Media Debate

This research paper is of the view that that one of the ways of bringing attention to the current issues in the Niger Delta region is the through effective media reporting of the events. It has been argued that sustained media coverage of a conflict usually pushes a government to develop policies in resolving conflict; in the Niger Delta situation important questions arise such as, has media coverage brought about effective federal policy? Or has insufficient media presence resulted to absence of government policy in the Niger Delta region⁹²

When critically examined these are very important media issues which can impact positively or negatively to what ever resolution process or package been offered by the government. My view regarding the impact and commitment of the media in this crisis situation

⁹¹ http://www.nigerdeltacongress.com/narticles/nddc_and_the_verdict_of_history.htm , NDDC and Verdict of History, Ekpo, Udeme. (Accessed 25/05/2010).

⁹² <http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/articles/levi-obijiofor/niger-delta-media-coverage-and-conflicting-si-2.html> ,Niger Delta Media Coverage and Conflicting Signals, Obijiofor Levi, (Accessed 25/05/2010)

is that it falls short of the necessary commitment and consistency that can push the government to show more resounding action.

In line with this, it has been argued that media reports have been sporadic as it lacks consistency following the fact that there seems to be almost no reporting when there are no shootings, explosions, abductions or killings in the Niger Delta cites and suddenly media coverage emerges when there is a case of kidnap in the region.⁹³ Though it has also been argued that continued coverage of constant blood letting and kidnapping in the region can get audience quite exhausted with watching human suffering and agonies coupled with the fact that most of these conflicts and attacks by the militants except for few cases occur in remote areas have all contributed to the inconsistency of the media coverage of the events⁹⁴. In this regard I seem not to share in this view considering the nature of the crisis itself, I think the media coverage has been largely localized and needs more international sustained coverage and not only when the oil companies are involved in any of these attacks.

The success of the media coverage should begin from speaking out more of the neglect and bias position of the state in handling these crisis and bringing in more international media attention is also a very effective tool of not only attacking government's negative attitudes but also persuading them into initiating policies that are effective and sustainable.

⁹³ Ibid. Footnote 92.

⁹⁴ Ibid

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The main idea behind this research project has been largely to examine the questions behind the proliferation of militia movements in Nigeria since democratic transition from military rule in 1999. Despite having a democratic government, one would have thought that the process of rebuilding the menace of military dictatorships in the past would have been a lot accommodating for civilian leaders, but the various crisis that have engulfed the nation especially the Niger-Delta crisis following the emergence of militant groups since late 1990 shows the level of damage already done to the corporate existence of the nation.

The state's attitude and policies towards the militia groups is equally a concern of this research paper bearing in mind that the state is an important factor if there is going to be a genuine solution to the conflicts.

In its evaluation bearing in mind two theories, grievances and collective action theory and social deprivation model, this research project had applied these theories with the two hypotheses that was develop along side. In view of this several explanatory variables were used along side independent variable of government's attitude towards the militia groups in the Niger Delta region in testing the theory induced hypothesis of this research project with two specific different events that occurred in the Niger Delta region. The Ogoni Oil Conflicts and the Odi Massacre has also being very important in testing the hypothesis.

In view of this, my findings are largely in support of the theory induced hypothesis of this research project, that is the proliferation of militia movements in the Niger Delta region is as a result of long neglect, deprivation and discrimination that have existed in this region over years. I strongly sustain also the second hypothesis of this research project, that government has

contributed largely towards the escalation of these crisis by constant repression against these groups and its failure to initiate genuine developmental projects especially in these regions.

Also the media debate has not being receiving adequate coverage and seems to be lacking in most aspects and journalists merely follow the news as they occur and as such not widely covered.

In view of these findings and in relation to the scholarly application of various works in this research project, I am of the opinion that true development in Nigeria will begin once the country begin to move away from resource dependency. This will bring an end to elites holding the entire nation to ransom through the propagation of its desires rather than the wishes of the masses.

By moving away from the syndrome of oil dependency, diversification must be encouraged and a return to the days of rich agricultural exports, furthermore, I strongly share in the idea that primary products such as rich natural resources have greatly stalled developments in countries where they are found in large quantities and this is one of the negative characteristics of oil which Nigeria must begin to avoid.

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