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Militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region: A Response to Alienation and Poverty in Nigeria

Summary. It is no exaggeration to say that the conflicts within the Niger Delta strike down to the very heart of Nigeria's political future. The ethnic character of the state, and of formal party politics, has been a staple of Nigerian scholarship. However, the genesis and trajectories of local and community conflicts across the Delta – arguably the geo-strategic center of the Nigerian federation – remain wholly undocumented and not well understood. The US State Department refers to the minority and “anti-oil movements” as “terrorist”, and to the “restive” youth movements as violent and undemocratic. Even those who champion the role of civic associations have seen the mobilization of youth and ethnic minorities in particular, as “negative and “perverse”. Furthermore, at the practical-political level, crises and conflicts within the oil producing communities are dealt with ineffectively by *ad hoc* government commissions in the absence of a cadre of local conflict mediators and local governance institutions. What is lacking are accountable local institutions and forms of governance through which communities can deal directly with companies and government agencies, and resolve local disputes (to produce, in short, forms of governance capable of linking capital and community), and correlatively serious academic studies of the dynamics of conflicts in the oil producing communities themselves. This quasi-empirical paper not only sees militancy as conflict driven, but also as a response to alienation and poverty in Nigeria. However, it intends to analyse the conflict of interests sustaining this militancy using some relevant theoretical frames and Galtung's triangle model of conflict analysis.

Key words: ethnic character, anti-oil movements, terrorist, ethnic minorities, local conflict

Introduction/Background

Peace and conflict research arose as a field devoted to understanding the causes of war and conditions for peace by means of systematic analyses of the historical experiences of war. The concept of conflict, commonly defined as “a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire, at the same moment in time, an available set of scarce resources”¹, offers a broad general research agenda that so far has not been fully explored. As international wars are rare, the focus has shifted in the last decades towards intrastate armed conflicts. Still peace and conflict research remains firmly concerned with situations where violence is carried out by or directed against the government of a state.

The focus of this project is to understand the local conflicts in the Delta in relation to the political economy of oil – that is to say, a particular extractive economy. The Niger Delta is, in a sense, a sort of “company region”, an oil producing zone driven by a particular extractive logic. It is the relation of extraction to violence – economies of violence – that we seek to explore through a comparative community study. The goal is to understand the relations between resources, firms, states and communities, and the circumstances under which the oil-producing communities become sites of extreme conflict and violence. The conflicts emerge in our view out of a crisis of community governance, in the presence of oil and oil companies, that serve as a basis for claims making by ethnic groups, youth, local elites, and civic groups. These conflicts, turning on territory and on access to the company, can be contained within a community but may spill over into inter-community conflicts among proximate or contiguous communities, or may be displaced to diasporas communities elsewhere in the region or the federation.

1. Historical Overview

Even as Ijaw leaders have worked to address pressing problems in their immediate locality – the Niger Delta – their focus has always been national. In 1958, on the eve of formal independence, the British set up the Willink Commission to inquire into the fears of Nigeria’s ethnic minority groups². The Ijaw leaders’ submission to the commission called for a more inclusive federal state in which they would enjoy the fruits and obligations of full citizenship.

¹ T. Pfanner, *Peace and Conflict Research: Interview with Peter Wallensteen*, “The International Review of the Red Cross” 2009, Vol. 91, No. 873.

² A. Jerome, *Infrastructural Reform in Africa*, “Ibadan Journal of Social Sciences” 2006, Vol. 4, No. 1.

Thus, they framed their grievances in terms of the national arena as the audience and site of struggle. Such issues as flaws in the electoral process, resentment of Nigeria's national Army, and inequities in the allocation of oil receipts have engaged the attention of Ijaw leaders since the late 1950s. The politics of the Eastern region were then dominated by a single political party (the NCNC)³. It not only had centralizing ambitions, but also excluded significant ethnic minorities, including the Ijaw, from the regional government, which was the source and distributor of patronage and strategic resources. Indeed, questions concerning Nigeria's fundamentally flawed political process, whether in the guise of military rule or electoral politics, have topped the agenda in the Niger Delta ever since oil became a significant player in the country's political economy.

These grievances now appear to be new because the terrain of struggle has, since May 1999, shifted from a vicious military dictatorship, that sought to stifle all legitimate dissent by clamping down on civil society, to an elected civilian government still dominated by a single political party⁴. The latter does, however, offer some room for mobilized communities and interest groups, including Ijaw leaders and militants, to press their demands on the state.

There is no reliable evidence to support the claim that Ijaw militants have displayed new lethal capacities and a willingness to use them. The events of March 2003 in the Warri area were merely an escalation of a longstanding grievance over the delineation of electoral wards, which Ijaw leaders consider deliberately skewed in favor of the Itsekiri. Clashes between Ijaw and Itsekiri militants have been ongoing since the late 1990s as a result of this perceived injustice⁵. The explosion of violence on the eve of the April 2003 elections was fundamentally the handiwork of rival local politicians desperate for success in the polls and mobilizing all available resources, including festering grievances like the electoral ward issue, to achieve their objectives.

The parochial objectives of self-serving politicians inflame the wider strategic self-determination goals of Ijaw leaders and militias alike when funds are disbursed to the militias. Yet, there is nothing to suggest that these developments represent a fundamental departure from the previous trajectory of political agitation in the area. Machine guns, satellite phones, and speedboats are standard items in the arsenal of military troops deployed by the Nigerian state to pacify the

³ M.O. Maduagwu, *In Search of Political Culture: The Political Class, Corruption and Democratization*, in: *Corruption and Democratization in Nigeria*, ed. A. Gboyega, Agbo Areo Publishers, Ibadan 1996.

⁴ S. Karstedt, *Democracy, Values, and Violence: Paradoxes, Tensions, and Comparative Advantages of Liberal Inclusion*, "Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science" 2006, Vol. 605.

⁵ J.M. Mbaku, *Military Expenditures and Bureaucratic Competition for Rents*, "Public Choice" 1991, Vol. 71, No. 2.

oil-producing communities⁶. Royal Dutch/Shell and the other oil companies also supply weapons, through a variety of sophisticated fronts, to security operatives and mercenaries (including local youth) that they retain in the Niger Delta. The Nigerian state and the oil companies have thus been colluding to contain the legitimate demands of the Ijaw by militarizing the Niger Delta. The glut of arms in the delta warrants urgent concern, but one must first appreciate the problem's origins and dynamic links to state and corporate actors. Recent media reports drawing attention to a "weaponized" Ijaw and to vengeful and bloodthirsty militants are a classic case of giving the dog a bad name in order to hang it. The claim that Ijaw militants are now deliberately targeting and killing oil workers is precarious.

Since the discovery of oil in 1956, the Nigeria's Niger Delta region (NNDR), which hitherto was known for its agricultural export of palm oil, rose in significance in Nigeria's crude oil economy with export earnings increasing from 1% in 1958, to almost 98% and about 90% of the government's total revenue in the 1990s⁷. Paradoxically, while the state and oil companies have continued to profit enormously from oil production, the rural population from where oil is produced has benefited the least from its wealth. Strategically located along the Gulf of Guinea and atop enormous high quality oil reserves, the three Nigerian states of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers – commonly referred to as the Niger Delta – have been plagued with armed groups and insurgents for decades. Environmental pollution, resulting in brackish swamp forests and rivers, depletion of agricultural resources on land, and the death and extinction of aquamarine resources, gas flares, and acid rain, impacting negatively on the health and physical lives of the region's inhabitants, have dislocated local communities, culminating in the impoverishment of the populace and insecurity of the environment from which they gain their livelihoods⁸.

Although its tremendous resource wealth should make the Delta one of Western Africa's most prosperous regions, decades of neglect by the Nigerian government and multinational companies (MNCs), widespread corruption, and the environmental damage caused by the MNCs operating in the region has alienated and marginalized the local population and allowed armed groups to proliferate⁹. Compensation paid out by the MNCs for appropriated and polluted land has led to inter-communal and inter-ethnic violence, most notably between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris in the Warri area of the Delta State.

⁶ D. Bar-Tal, *From Intractable Conflict through Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis*, "Political Psychology" 2000, Vol. 21, No. 2.

⁷ L. Akande, *Nigeria Made \$55 Billion From Oil Exports in 2007*, "The Guardian", 21 February 2008.

⁸ J.M. Hazen, J. Horner, *Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria: The Niger Delta in Perspective*, Small Arms Survey, Geneva 2007.

⁹ A. Ikelegbe, *The Economy of Conflict in the Oil Rich Niger Delta Region of Nigeria*, "Nordic Journal of African Studies" 2005, Vol. 14, No. 2.

The neglect is in the form of an absence of state presence in terms of basic infrastructural provision like schools, hospitals, roads, pipe born water and electrification, as well as, social and environmental security. Neglect of the people on the part of oil companies arises from exclusion of the locals in access, production, and use of oil wealth. Joblessness and poverty among the people have led to a rise in many freedom fighters (militants) for resource control. The militants, to their communities, are popular heroes fighting for a common goal. These problems have resulted in economic pressure on households, frustration, anger, and social tensions due to increasing illiteracy level. In the face of this pervasion, members of oil-producing communities have been forced to fall back on group (ethnic) loyalties in the region. Though many groups, including that of women, have been formed to accentuate struggles in the form of protests, agitations and violence, youth have appeared as the major site of the struggles.

While peaceful efforts such as acceding to continuous dialogue and negotiation were made by oil-producing communities to attract attention to their problems, government hardly honour agreements reached. Instead state repression at any slightest protest is frequent. This has often led to the deaths of people and destruction of property, hence, the creation of a generation of youthful militant groups in NDR. The trend of events has succeeded in transforming the region into the most heavily militarized states in Nigeria.

2. Corruption and Low Living Standard

The myths of oil wealth have been central to the history of modern industrial capitalism. But in Nigeria, as elsewhere, the discovery of oil, and annual oil revenues of \$40 billion currently, has ushered in a miserable, undisciplined, decrepit, and corrupt form of “petro-capitalism”. After a half century of oil production, almost \$300 billion in oil revenues has flowed directly into the federal exchequer (and perhaps \$50 billion promptly flowed out, only to disappear overseas). Yet Nigerian per capita income stands at \$290 per year¹⁰. For the majority of Nigerians, living standards are no better now than at independence in 1960; a repugnant culture of excessive venality and profiteering among the political class.

Paradoxically, the oil-producing states within federated Nigeria have benefited the least from oil wealth. Devastated by the ecological costs of oil spillage and the highest gas flaring rates in the world, the Niger Delta is a political tinderbox. A generation of militant restive youth, deep political frustrations among oil-producing communities, and pre-electoral “thuggery” all prosper in the rich soil of

¹⁰ National Planning Commission, *National Economic. Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)*, Abuja 2004.

political marginalization. Massive election rigging across the Niger Delta in the April 2003 elections simply confirmed the worst for the millions of Nigerians who have suffered from decades of neglect¹¹.

3. Oil Violence

Mounting communal violence has resulted in at least 5000 deaths and the levelling of eight communities in and around the Warri petroleum complex¹². Several oil company employees have either been killed or kidnapped, prompting all the major oil companies to withdraw staff, to close down operations, and to reduce output by over 750,000 barrels per day (almost half of national output)¹³. The President has dispatched large troop deployments tagged as the Joint Task Force to the oil-producing creeks. Militants, incensed over illegal oil bunkering (in which the security forces were implicated), and indiscriminate military action, have threatened to detonate 11 captured oil installations.

The strikes on the offshore oil platforms – a long-festering sore that is rarely mentioned in the media – were quickly resolved. Nobody seriously expects, however, that the deeper problems within the oil sector will go away. Relatively new to delta politics, however, is a series of assassinations, most notably that of Chief Marshall Harry, a senior member of the main opposition party and a leading campaigner for greater resource allocation to the oil-producing Niger Delta. Fallout from the Harry assassination has already become a source of tension in his native oil-producing state of Rivers. Supporters of the main opposition party, the ANPP, and another opposition grouping of activists and politicians, the Rivers Democratic Movement, have linked the ruling party to the assassination.

The Niger Delta stands at the crossroads of contemporary Nigerian politics. Despite the 13% growth of oil revenues to the delta states, the region remains desperately poor. The resultant deepening material and political grievances place the Niger Delta at the confluence of four pressing national issues in the wake of the 2011 elections: 1) the efforts led by a number of delta states for resource control, which in effect means expanded local access to oil revenues, 2) the struggle for self-determination of minority people and the clamor for a sovereign national conference to rewrite the federal Constitution, 3) a crisis of rule in the region, as a number

¹¹ B. Onuoha, *Policy Reform in Nigeria: Contradictions and Challenges for Implementation*, in: *Nigeria Beyond 2007: Issues, Challenges and Prospects*, ed. R. Anifowose, T. Babawale, Concept Publications, Lagos 2007.

¹² E. Ojo, *The Military and The Phenomenon of Corruption in Nigeria*, "Unilag Journal of Politics" 2005, Vol. 2, No. 1.

¹³ P. Okojie, A. Momoh, *Corruption in Nigeria and the Crisis of Development*, in: *Corruption and Development*, ed. S. Braking, Palgrave Macmillian, Hampshire 2007.

of state and local governments are rendered helpless by militant youth movements, growing insecurity, and intra community, interethnic, and state violence, and 4) the emergence of what is called a South-South Alliance linking Nigeria's hitherto-excluded oil-producing states in a bulwark against the ethnic majorities.

4. A Threshold Crossed?

The article¹⁴ suggests that the current crisis in the Niger Delta represents a threshold increase in violence that threatens Nigeria's national government. This contention must be placed in the larger context of recent history, especially since the end of military rule. Obasanjo's presidential victory in 1999, in the wake of the darkest period of military dictatorship in Nigeria's 40-year, post-independence history, held much promise. An internationally recognized statesman and diplomat imprisoned during the brutal Abacha years, Obasanjo inherited the mantle of a massively corrupt state apparatus, an economy in shambles, and a federation crippled by longstanding ethnic enmity. Entrusted with reforming the corrupt, undisciplined, and largest military in Africa¹⁵ and committed to deepening the process of democratization, Obasanjo was confronted within months of his inauguration by militant ethnic groups speaking the language of self-determination, local autonomy, and resource control (meaning a greater share of federally allocated oil revenues). In an incident widely condemned by the human rights community, some 2,000 persons were slaughtered at Odi in the state of Bayelsa, after federal troops were dispatched in response to clashes between local militants and the police. Obasanjo has consistently refused to apologize for the murders, and there has been no full inquiry. Last year the military was involved in yet another massacre, this time in the Middle Belt in the states of Benue and Taraba intervening in the most serious communal conflict since the clashes that preceded the outbreak of the Biafran civil war in 1967. Thus, under President Obasanjo's watch, over 10,000 people have perished in ethnic violence, and he has failed miserably to address the human rights violations committed by the notoriously corrupt Nigerian security forces¹⁶.

In Nigeria several glaring deficits compromise the institutions of democratic rule. A broad consensus believes that the 1999 Constitution is deeply flawed¹⁷. Crafted by the departing soldiers, the Constitution provides no opportunity for

¹⁴ Transparency International, *Transparency International's Corruption Handbook; National Integrity System in Practice*, 2005, www.transparency.org/ach/index.html [30.04.2014].

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ A. Ademoyega, *Why we struck: The Story of the 1st Nigerian Coup*, Evan Brothers, Ibadan 1981.

¹⁷ T. Babawale, *Nigeria in the Crisis of Governance and Development: Vol. 1*, PARC Publication, Lagos 2006.

ordinary Nigerians to debate what they consider to be the central conundrum of the national crisis: the terms of association in a multiethnic polity. Ethnic militias arose and communal vigilante politics flourished during the Abacha years (1993-98), when Nigerians experienced the most severe political repression and economic hardship in the country's history.

The O'odua People's Congress (OPC), for example, was established in the Yoruba speaking Southwest in 1994 largely to protest the annulment of the 1993 elections, in which Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba Muslim, had seemingly won the presidency. Led by disenchanting and impoverished youth, the OPC claimed that a "Northern cabal" in the Army had denied Abiola victory, and the organization aggressively pressed for Yoruba political autonomy. Two vigilante groups, the Bakassi Boys and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), emerged in the Igbo speaking Southeast two years later. MASSOB claimed that the Nigerian state and its functionaries had systematically oppressed the Igbo since the end of the civil war. This movement sought to secure self-determination by resuscitating the Republic of Biafra, whose bid to secede from the federation was crushed by Nigerian troops in 1970. Then the Arewa People's Congress (APC) emerged in the North in 1999 as a reaction to the killing of Northern elements in Lagos and other Yoruba cities and towns by OPC cadres and as a foil to the new Obasanjo government, which many Northerners viewed as a "Yoruba regime". The APC claimed that the harassment of Northerners in the Southwest was part of a Yoruba plan to secede and establish an O'odua Republic. It further alleged that President Obasanjo was sympathetic to the OPC's goals and that the North would go to war if necessary to prevent national dismemberment. These and other ethnic forces have come to play a transformative role in political life largely as party thugs, enforcers, and champions of local interests¹⁸.

The current crisis in Warri, where 3,000 Nigerian troops have been deployed to "restore law and order", cannot be grasped without understanding these powerful ethnic tensions and political deficits. The profile of a militant faction of Ijaw youth has been unjustly amplified to justify the size of the military deployment. Reports from refugees fleeing the creeks indicate that the military is engaged in scorched-earth violence designed, like the Odi massacre, "to teach the Ijaws a lesson". There have been conflicting accounts of the immediate cause of the violence. One account is linked to a disagreement between elements of the Nigerian military and an oil baron over the proceeds of illegal oil bunkering.

Central to the Warri crisis, however, is poverty amidst unimaginable oil wealth. The oil-producing communities do seek to control "their oil". But this legitimate claim is refracted through the lens of ethnic difference, as Urhobo, Ijaw, and It-

¹⁸ L. Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1999.

sekiri people struggle over the delineation of electoral wards (as a precondition to claim state oil revenues) and overlapping claims on oil-rich land. Warring factions and the Army have thus been responsible for many deaths and the destruction of scores of communities.

It would be naïve to deny the growing violence in the Niger Delta and the extent to which democratization has deepened the ethnic spoils politics that have been central to the political landscape of post-colonial Nigeria. But it is far too apocalyptic to read into these troubling trends some sort of historical precipice over which Nigeria is about to tumble.

5. Theoretical Framing

We seek to locate our analysis of “petro-violence” and the “oil-complex” in relation to three bodies of theoretical work, and to provide a critique of each. The first operates under the sign environmental security. Throughout the 1990s there has been a growing interest in the environment as a source of political conflict and as the post-Cold War security issue. Prompted by the work of Robert Kaplan (*The Coming Anarchy*, 2000) Michael Klare (*Resource Wars*, 2001), and Tad Homer-Dixon (*Environment, Scarcity and Violence*, 1999), the field of environmental security speaks to a panoply of sub-national conflicts associated with environmental degradation, rehabilitation, and conservation. In his enormously influential essay, “The Coming Anarchy”, Robert Kaplan conjured up a picture of an African continent in the throes of an apocalyptic crisis: impoverished, undernourished, and driven to barbaric acts of violence, and crushed under the unbearable weight of “eco-demographic” pressures. Much of this scholarship recapitulates two ideas of great antiquity: one is demographically-induced scarcity as a causal agent for sub-national conflict (via Malthus), and the other is environmental determinism (whose genealogy can be traced back to the Greeks). “Greenwar” hypotheses suffer, however, from a crude Malthusianism, a simplistic theory of environmental agency, and an untenable theory of political economy and political action¹⁹.

A second body of work focuses on the relations between resources, politics and civil conflict. One thread has focussed on polities dominated by oil revenues²⁰ and the ways in which rent-seeking produces “petroregimes”. In Nigeria, for example, oil rents have historically sustained parasitic ruling elite, and provided the

¹⁹ See M. Watts, *Petro-Violence: Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology of a Mythic Commodity*, in: *Violent Environments*, eds. M. Watts, N. Peluso, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2001.

²⁰ M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1996; B. Manby, *The Niger Delta: No Democratic Dividend*, London 1996; M. Watts, *Petro-Insurgency or Criminal Syndicate? Conflict & Violence in the Niger Delta* “Review of African Political Economy” 2007, Vol. 34, No. 114.

wherewithal for the state to purchase a sort of political consent among the regions and to maintain the delicate northern hegemony within a competitive multi-ethnic polity. Formally, the mechanism of consent is through the “derivation principle” by which oil rents and royalties are distributed to the states, complemented by massive institutional corruption and rent-seeking²¹.

Another thread, following the lead of Jeffrey Sachs and the IMF, has posited a strong association between resource-dependency, corruption, and economic performance. Akinsola²² argue that one standard deviation increase in the ratio of natural resource exports to GNP is associated with a decrease of just over 1% in the growth rate (irrespective of the endogeneity of corruption, commodity price variability and trade liberalization). Alan and Theobald²³ of the IMF believe that for fuels the figure is 0.6% and due “entirely to the indirect effect of corruption”. For Jerome²⁴ oil is a dwindling resource – and a key strategic one – that will necessarily be generative of inter-state conflict. This line of reasoning, developed by Paul Collier of the World Bank using resource-dependency as a way of thinking about rebellion, especially in Africa, sees oil as central to the **economics of civil war**. It permits, indeed encourages, extortion and looting through resource predation (at least up to the point where 26% of GDP is dependent on resource extraction). It is the feasibility of predation (by states or rebel groups) that determines the risk of conflict. Rebels predate through secession. For Collier the risks are greater because of resource dependency than ethnic or religious diversity. For Jerome oil is a “resource curse” due to its **rentier effect** (low taxes and high patronage dampen pressures for democracy), its **repression effect** conferred by the direct state control over sufficient revenues to bankroll excessive military expenditures and expanded internal security apparatuses, and a **modernization effect**, namely the “move into industrial and service sector jobs render them less likely to push for democracy”²⁵. But if oil hinders democracy (as though copper might liberate parliamentary democracy?), one needs to surely appreciate the centralizing effect of oil and the state in relation to the oil-based nation-building enterprises that are unleashed in the context of politics that pre-dates oil.

The third body of theory speaks to ethnicity; ethnic mobilization and ethnic conflict²⁶. Much of this work has been especially helpful in understanding Nige-

²¹ J. Anderson, *Blood and Oil*, “The New Yorker”, 14 August 2001.

²² E.F. Akinsola, *Corruption and Good Governance in Nigeria: Development Perspectives*, in: *Society and Governance*, eds. F.A.D. Oyekanmi, O.Soyombo, Department of Sociology Unilag and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Lagos 2006.

²³ D. Alan, R. Theobald, *Introduction. Why Corruption?*, “Commonwealth and Comparative Politics” 1997, Vol. 37, No. 3.

²⁴ A. Jerome, op. cit.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 35.

²⁶ V. Kemedi, *Oil On Troubled Waters*, Environmental Politics Working Papers, Institute of International Studies, Berkeley 2002; S. Adejumobi, *Citizenship, Rights, and the Problem of Conflicts and Civil Wars in Africa*, “Human Rights Quarterly” 2001, No. 23.

rian federalism and post-colonial politics. Mamdani's²⁷ excellent account of how cultural indignity became the basis for claims making in Nigeria is especially insightful in thinking about the conflicts engendered around ethnicity as a basis for doing politics, and the ways in which ethnicity is invented, and reinvented, in relation to the booms and busts of the oil economy²⁸. Our concern however is to provide studies of local forms of community and ethnic mobilization that stand in relations to extraction – in which land, customary law, territoriality, and the presence of oil companies are all key – and to see how ethnic and other forms of identification (gender, generation (youth), chieftainship, clanship) are reconfigured around forms of traditional authority and locally specific forms of capitalist development²⁹. To our knowledge there are no studies that have attempted to use oil-producing communities as crucibles within which identity politics – and attendant conflicts – are forged.

6. Oil Is Key

The first issue to be addressed is how the pursuit of oil wealth underlies persistent national policy failures in Nigeria. Since 1970, the country's political, economic, and policy elites have established an authoritarian power structure to enable them to centralize control of strategic resources, including the country's substantial oil deposits. Such avarice has not only banished the great majority of ordinary Nigerians from the policymaking process, but it has also led the power elites to pursue social and economic strategies that are short sighted, self-serving, and not driven by the needs of the people. The consequences have been material scarcity, deepening frustration, and social unrest in the Niger Delta and elsewhere.

The government focus should instead be on achieving a just and sustainable political order, giving due weight to the fears, needs, and aspirations of the various social and interest groups in the country. There is a growing consensus that a com-

²⁷ M. Klare, *Resource Wars*, Beacon Press, Boston 2001; T. Abel, *The Element of Decisions in the Pattern of War*, "American Sociological Review" 1941, Vol. 1; J.S. Adams, *Inequality in Social Exchange*, in: *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, ed. L. Berkowitz, Academic Press, New York 1965.

²⁸ C. Ake, *Development for What and by Whom*, paper presented at the Conference on Development Strategies organized by the Dag Hammekjoid in Arusha, Tanzania 1972; K. Amuwo, *General Babangida, Civil Society and the Military in Nigeria: Anatomy of a Personal Rulership Project*, Centre d'Etude d'Afrique Noire Institute d'Etudes Politiques de Bordeaux, Talence CE-DEX 1995; R. Vitalis, *Black Gold, White Crude*, "Diplomatic History" 2002, Vol. 26, No. 2.

²⁹ Y.B. Barongo, *Ethnic Pluralism and Democratic Stability: The Basis for Conflict and Consensus*, in: *Democratic Experiment in Nigeria: Interpretative Essay*, Omega Publishers, Benin 1987; R.E. Baldwin, *Economic Development and Growth*, John Wiley, New York 1972; *As Others See Us*, ed. C. Brooke, Longman, London 1952.

pletely unitary system of government is not suited to a socially diverse country like Nigeria. A federal democracy, turning on a measured dose of fiscal autonomy for the federating units, not unlike the provisions of the country's independence Constitution, is recommended. This would help diversify Nigeria's revenue base by enhancing domestic taxation, as non-oil-producing areas are forced to find alternative ways to boost the exchequer.

7. Conflict Analysis Using Galtung's Triangle Model

7.1. What Structural Challenges Contribute to the Conflict?

Some contradictions or structural challenges characterised and contribute to the conflict in NNDR in divisive ways including: neglect of environmental security and alienation of oil-producing communities in terms of oil production and physical development, state repression and poverty constraining capacity development, and empowerment, in the region. But the connecting structure here is the amnesty programme instituted by the state.

Years of oil exploitation and exploration, and the degradation of the environment and the deprivation of livelihoods, are structural challenges that directly impact this conflict and militancy in NNDR mostly in divisive ways. Because of general environmental insecurity due to the depletion of agricultural resources on land, and the death and extinction of aquamarine resources, as well as, environmental pollution, gas flaring and acid rain, there is a great desire for self-determination and resource control among the people. While peaceful efforts were made by oil-producing communities to attract attention to the problems encountered through oil economy, they were always met with repression by the state in collaboration with the oil companies, leading to the deaths of people and destruction of property. The lack of positive government presence and attention in the region has aggravated frustration, anger, social tensions and activism. The oil-producing communities have been forced to fall back on group (ethnic) loyalties in the region. These accentuated struggles in the form of protests, agitations and violence, youth have appeared as the major site of the struggles through militancy.

7.2. Who Are the Actors? What Are Their Attitudes and Behaviour?

The aforementioned structural challenges are exacerbated by attitudes and behaviors of the primary and secondary actors in this conflict resulting in new or

stronger attitudes and related behaviors. For example, the increasing rate of kidnapping and demand for ransom by kidnappers is driven in part by poverty and frustration (attitude) that leads to individual accounts of aggression and violence (behavior), that contribute to an increase in overall insecurity (structure), which increases everyone's sense of fear (attitude) and leads to a variety of behaviors from isolation (not interacting with neighbors, etc.) to arming oneself, or joining a gang for protection, all of which can strengthen the structural challenges and drive the conflict forward.

The oil – producing communities are the primary actors in this conflict. The militant groups are a large and diverse group of men, women, and children hailing from more than one community bringing various skills, experiences, and perceptions that contribute to this conflict. Categorizing them as one actor is problematic especially given the other aspects of conflict surrounding militancy and the receipt of government attention which manifest themselves in intra-community and intra-family conflict, but for the sake of this analysis, they will be named as one actor. While all oil producing communities have certain common experiences, differences related to the type and severity of poverty, government presence, socio-political empowerment, literacy quality and level, urbanisation, gender dynamics, deprivation of livelihood, and transferable job skills, have significant implications in terms of rehabilitation, resettlement, and empowerment. The common negative attitudes held by the oil producing communities and the militants that act as dividers include anger, frustration, distrust of the Nigerian state capacity, deprivation of livelihood, environmental insecurity, isolation by the state, alienation from oil wealth, fear, injustice, misperception of the members of oil producing companies, and a strong desire for resource control. These result in negative or divisive behaviors such as protests, ethnic loyalty, repression from the state, activism, militancy, kidnapping and demand for ransom, hostage taking, oil bunkering, vandalising and the blowing up of oil pipelines and facilities.

The positive attitudes held by many oil producing communities include hope, faith in resource control and self-determination, self defence against threats from state and oil companies, access to oil resources, determination for a better life in the face of state isolation and alienation from oil wealth. An example of a linked behavior is that most communities are into self-empowerment initiatives such as increases in enrolment of school aged children, and awards of bursaries for indigenes in tertiary institutions.

The Nigerian State is another primary actor. This is the state with overriding power and control over all citizens and citizen's right to land and land resources. Common divisive attitudes held by the Nigerian state include: centralised hegemonic federal power, corruption, repression, isolation and alienation of oil producing communities from oil wealth and physical development of the area, weak regulation and control of oil exploration that compromises environmental secu-

rity, as well as, state militarisation of NNDR. Of critical importance, however, is the fact that in the dearth of local capacity, many potential foreign direct investors are scared of investing in Nigeria's expatriate dominated oil sector for fear of militancy. Connecting behaviour of the state is its programme of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) started on 25 June 2009 with the aim of first granting amnesty to militants.

Militant Groups in NNDR are another primary actor in this conflict. These groups' divisive behaviour include: a militant approach to seeking justice, activism, protests, agitation, violence, and group (ethnic) loyalties. Its connecting attitudes include: resource control, feelings of neglect, equity and ethnic autonomy. Therefore, the activities, images, and presence of the militant groups both in the media and in reality have far reaching effects on the conflict. The militancy has the opportunity to serve as either a divider or a connector. Because of their activities, though often limited and often negative (behavior), it currently serves primarily as a divider in this conflict, helping to both create and deepen the community's generally negative perceptions of resource control, equity and self-determination pressure (attitude), resulting in increased negative (behaviours) of the state toward oil producing communities. Likewise, the militancy has a direct impact on the self-perception of oil producing communities (attitude) within the state and, at times, negative (behaviours) like scape-goating and repression based on this self-perception. Militancy also has a direct impact on the increased positive (attitude) of attraction of attention for sympathy (behaviour) interventions, aid, and negotiation from state and non-state actors locally and internationally, thus, aggregating sympathy and aid. Their connecting structure is the amnesty programme fully implemented.

Oil companies (such as oil exploration and extraction companies and their service provider companies) are secondary actors. Limited control over and limited knowledge of the Niger Delta terrain, people and culture (structure) has increased fear and helplessness (attitude) among oil companies and their service providers, leading at times to competition, secrecy, politicking, and a lack of collaboration (behaviors), resulting in trading off local interest for state interest and receiving less local support than they otherwise would. At the same time, in certain instances, division in the ranks of militant groups and their communities (structure) and fear of dealing with the wrong person group or community (attitude) have resulted in an increase in collaboration and communication with the state officials instead of the local people (behavior) between service providers and oil companies, leading to a stronger system of support and trust for state agencies (structure). Oil Company's limited control over the Niger Delta terrain, people, and culture, therefore, could be characterized as both a divider and a connector as it relates to militant strategic operation and state intervention.

8. Key Drivers of Conflict

- Oil exploitation and exploration without physical development incapacitating the communities and its members,
- neglect and alienation of locals from accessing oil wealth leading to poverty, disempowerment and disenfranchisement,
- frustration, anger, group (ethnic) loyalties and its resultant activism and violent destructions,
- state repressive military approach leading to the death of people and destruction of property,
- land degradation, air and water pollution - such as landslide, gas flare and oil spillage - rendering farming communities jobless and impoverished.

9. Key Drivers of Peace

- Provision of basic infrastructure,
- fair share of oil wealth,
- local transfer of oil production skills and their inclusion in oil production decision making,
- state honouring the outcome of dialogue and negotiation,
- cleaning of land, air and water ways of all forms of pollution and degradation, e.g. gas flares and oil spillage for farmers to return to their fishing farms.

10. Scenarios

10.1. Positive Scenario

Relationships improve between oil companies, their host community members, and militant group members which will lead to a decrease in tension and violence. Engage in local capacity building and utilisation to engender sense of belonging instead of isolation and alienation from oil production. Example, develop and utilise local skills in oil production and service providers as such increasing collaborative efforts, can bring about increasing overall support for foreign direct investors in the oil sector, thereby ensuring peace and security. The state strengthens its control and regulation of oil exploration activities in such a way that human and environmental security is not compromised, which will lead to a decreased

in frustration, anger, and activism. Dialogue and negotiation among stakeholders to resolve differences will lead to a decrease in repression that can result in death of people and destruction of property. Also, decentralisation of hegemonic federal power will lead to regional autonomy and healthy competition, as well as, decreased marginalisation and impoverishment.

10.2. Neutral Scenario

Attitudes between oil companies, militant groups, and host communities remain the same, tension, militancy, and fear continue at the same level, and oil companies' staff and facilities remain targets for crime and violence. Capacity development, empowerment, and utilisation continue to fluctuate in oil-producing communities.

10.3. Negative Scenario

Further decreases in productive government attention to oil-producing communities in terms of socio-political and economic empowerment, and the continued lack of inclusiveness in oil production and service delivery between host communities and foreign oil companies, lead to increased fall back to group (ethnic) loyalties and militancy. Increased military presence and repression militarises the NNDR and aids the culture of impunity. Failure by the state to engage the aggrieved parties into meaningful dialogue and negotiation increase resentment suspicion, insurgence, and armed proliferation for self-defence. Increased centralisation of hegemonic federal power over oil wealth increases agitation, protest, and activism for self-determination, ethnic autonomy, and resource control.

11. Recommendation to Move Toward the Positive Scenario

1. Bring the key leaders or stakeholders (the Nigerian state, the oil and gas industry, and oil-rich communities) together to persistently dialogue and negotiate the way forward,
2. Militarization of the region will further violent attacks and reprisals in the region that will end up threatening the basis of Nigeria's unity,
3. A long-term process of collaborative capacity building designed to work together and implement strategies that will resolve the underpinning issue of poverty reduction,

4. Ensure that host communities are, in practice, at the mainstream of policies affecting the management of oil and gas resources through constant cross-community stakeholder interaction,
5. Strengthen legal framework to protect host communities from oil company's extractive processes and ensure strict adherence to check on, including gas flaring and pollution,
6. Adequate compensation should be made to individuals and communities for land use and pollution, in a transparent manner devoid of the divide and rule tactics,
7. Develop human and institutional capacity to engage and empower indigenous youths, both in the oil and non-oil sectors to create positive alternatives to militancy,
8. The government needs to take practical and holistic measures to diversify the economy in order to reduce over-dependence on non-renewable oil and gas resources,
9. Efforts must be geared towards having the will power to implement policies. The will must be devoid of inept and corrupt leadership, but must entrench justice, equity, transparency, and good governance,
10. The amnesty programme must holistically include the communities which have suffered total neglect, alienation, and injustice over the years and not just concentrate on militants,
11. Physical development of standards that showcase the presence and activities of expatriate, in terms of high quality basic infrastructures. Example: the placement of all oil and gas related institutions, companies, and organisations headquarters in NNDR.

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Wrogość w rejonie Deltę Nigru jako reakcja na alienację i ubóstwo w Nigerii

Streszczenie. Nie ma wątpliwości co do tego, że konflikty w Delcie Nigru są poważnym zagrożeniem dla politycznej przyszłości Nigerii. Autorzy nigeryjscy zajmowali się do tej pory charakterem etnicznym państwa czy też polityką. Konflikty w Delcie Nigru (geostrategicznym centrum Federacji Nigeryjskiej), ich geneza oraz oddziaływanie na lokalną społeczność wciąż pozostają słabo udokumentowane i są niewłaściwie rozumiane. Departament Stanu USA określa mniejszości i „ruchy anty-naftowe” mianem „terrorystów”. Ugrupowania ludzi młodych wyrażających swój niepokój nazywa agresywnymi i niedemokratycznymi. Niejednokrotnie nawet ci, którzy są orędownikami tworzenia grup obywatelskich, negatywnie postrzegają oddolne ruchy młodych ludzi i mniejszości etniczne. Z powodu braku odpowiednich instytucji i kadr zajmujących się mediacjami na szczeblu lokalnym rząd nie radzi sobie z kryzysami i konfliktami dotyczącymi sektora wydobywczego ropy naftowej. Wyraźnie widać potrzebę powołania takich instytucji, które mogłyby bezpośrednio współpracować z firmami i agencjami rządowymi w rozwiązywaniu lokalnych problemów. Rolą takich instytucji byłoby również rozwijanie samorządności i budowanie relacji między kapitałem i społecznością lokalną. Ponadto tego typu instytucje zaangażowane byłyby w badania sytuacji konfliktowych związanych z wydobywaniem ropy naftowej. Autor artykułu dowodzi, w oparciu o pewne dane empiryczne, że zjawisko wrogości w Nigerii jest reakcją na alienację i ubóstwo oraz prowadzi do konfliktów. Tezy stawiane przez autora mają też podbudowę teoretyczną w postaci trójkątnego modelu analizy konfliktów opracowanego przez Galtunga.

Słowa kluczowe: charakter etniczny, ruchu anty-naftowe, terroryzm, mniejszości etniczne, konflikt lokalny