

The Resurgence of Militancy in the Niger-Delta: A Study of Bayelsa State

Ifeanyichukwu Otodo

Department of Sociology and Anthropology University of Uyo, Nigeria

josprison@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Niger delta region of Nigeria, reputed to be one of the most richly endowed delta's in the world, contributes about 80% of Nigeria's national wealth. Years of political and economic marginalization, environmental degradation, bad governance and policy inconsistency by the government, and the divide and rule policy of the oil companies led to emergence of militancy in the Niger delta in the early 2006. and since then, there have been recurrence attacks from different militant groups. The various activities of militants have created a state of general insecurity in the region. The study sets out to investigate the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta, using Bayelsa state as a case study. The study adopted the aggressive-frustration approach as its theoretical construct, and used it, in the content analysis of the primary data which was collected using a structured questionnaire. The research design was descriptive survey method. The population of the study was made up of residents of Bayelsa state. The study made use of quantitative data analyses. The sample size was 200. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents in the three senatorial zones of the state, while the hypotheses were tested using the Chi-Square test statistics. The two hypotheses were

rejected. The study recommended that the federal government, multinational oil companies and the people of the Niger Delta should cooperate to find a lasting solution to the recurrence of militant activities in the Niger Delta.

KEY WORDS: Militancy, resurgence, Niger-delta, militants, security

INTRODUCTION

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

and structural development of the region that produces the oil.

However, a cursory reading of socio-economic realities in the Niger Delta reveals that revenue generated from oil of the Niger Delta, on which the life of the Nigerian economy depends has not been adequately used to cause adequate structural and socioeconomic development in the Niger Delta region that produces the oil. Indeed, poverty, deprivation and life-insecurity pervade the Niger Delta region. In the midst of poverty and deprivation, the people, of the region always feel insecure and they have sought ways to protest and confront the forces of injustice that tend to threaten the life-security.

Today, the oil multinationals and the people of the host oil-communities are enmeshed in serious crisis arising from the actions and inactions of the oil multinational companies operating in the Niger Delta region on the one hand, and the people of the oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta against the Nigerian state on the other hand. The people of the region had in the past made series of legal and constitutional efforts to convince the Nigerian government to develop the region. Some of the patriotic people of the region made sacrifices with their lives in the cause of the struggle. But in the end, the region only gets palliatives. Since the 1980s through 2005 and climaxing in 2009, the people of the oil-producing communities seem to have resolved collectively to take a rather dangerous approach to protest their collective frustration through exhibition of collective aggressive behaviour; knowing very well

that the Nigerian states and its oil business collaborators (the oil multinationals) are not willing and ready to provide life sustaining opportunities and possibilities for them; even when their land, their waters, their rivers and their environment have been badly destroyed and degraded due to the hazards constituted by the activities of oil industry in the region. The people's means of livelihood are been threatened and so their lives are not secured. In the quest for security, they make moves to confront the multinationals who have come to siphon their God given wealth. In confronting the oil-multinationals, who have the backing of the Nigerian government, a serious security crisis ensued in which the Nigerian state is drawn into the scene. The crisis then exposes the Nigerian state's interest and sincerity in upholding the security of lives of the people of the oil producing communities and their property and the security of the multinational capitalist exploiters.

The ongoing destruction of pipelines and other critical oil facilities by the militant group, Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), is a serious threat to the Nigerian economy that the government must address with utmost speed and seriousness. The unrelenting attacks of this group on oil facilities have led to a downward spiral in Nigeria's oil production, from about two million barrels per day to about 1.2 million barrels currently. The major objectives of the study is to highlight the issue of the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta and also to identify the core factors that seems to have been ignored in the understanding and resolution of the unending crisis in the Niger

Delta region. Again, it is the objective of this study to evolve a theoretical framework and recommend feasible strategies to resolve the recurring militancy in the Niger Delta.

The prominence of the Niger Delta area in Nigeria is premised on its strategic relevance and resource endowment. With the discovering of oil in the region prior to independence, the Niger Delta remains the preferred destination for investors especially oil explorers and oil investors. By 1950, the Shell had already begun production at the rate of 5,100 barrels per day in the Niger Delta (Oromareghake, Arisi & Igho, 2013). The Mobil, Chevron Texaco and other indigenous oil companies later in the 1960s and 70s joined oil exploration which led to the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in the Niger Delta. This has led to the increased output of oil production in the area and subsequently Nigerian reliance on the proceeds accruable from oil market. In fact, as at 2004, the region accounts for over 80% of government revenue, 95% of export receipts and 90% of foreign exchange earnings (Imobighe, 2004). The high level of production notwithstanding, incidences of poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment remained despicable.

Thus, the increased production and earnings seem not to have been translated into effective utilization of funds. Incidences of poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment still remain high in the region that apparently provides over 80 percent of government revenue. In fact, scholars (Eweremadu, 2008; Ibeanu, 2005; Ibeanu & Ike, 2006; Imobighe, 2004; Kelegbe, 2006; Osaghae, 1995; Okonta, 2005) explained

that Niger Delta is a contradiction in terms of level of poverty, underdevelopment and difficulties amidst plenty. Undoubtedly, the Niger Delta represents a sordid tale of squalor and underdevelopment in the centre of its tremendous wealth.

Ibeanu (2008) captured the Niger Delta contradictions within the context of “affluence and affliction” explaining how the wealth of a region has paradoxically become the instrument of oppression and poverty. In fact, oil has wrought only poverty, state violence and a dying ecosystem (Okonta, 2005). For instance, by 2004 the poverty incidences in the Niger Delta states were estimated as 45.35% in Delta state, 33.09% in Edo, 27.39% in Imo, 22.27% in Abia, 42.15% in Ondo, 29.09% in Rivers and 19.98 in the state of Bayelsa (National Bureau of Statistics 2004).

The consequence is youth’s restiveness, militancy, kidnapping, pipe line vandalism, oil theft and other forms of criminality and violent confrontation. Thus, the inability of the Nigerian state to address genuine demands of the people in the area stimulated long years of clashes and confrontations between several youth groups and security agencies as well as oil multi-nationals. With the return to democracy in 1999, the military approach to containing the unrest exacerbated the already hostile security condition in the area leading to loss of human lives, oil and increased environmental devastation. For instance, the Nigerian government claims that between 1999 and 2005, oil losses amounted to 6.8 billion USD and a report leased in late 2008 prepared by a 43 person government

commission entitled The Report of the Technical Committee of the Niger Delta – in the first nine months of 2008 the Nigerian government lost a staggering \$23.7 billion in oil revenues due to militant attacks and sabotage (Joab- Peterside, Porter, & Watts, 2012). They further explained that: this is added to the oil bunkering trade (on average 12% of production) which is a multi-billion business and the overall losses are astounding. Between January 2006 and the summer 2009 over 400 expatriate oil-worker hostages were taken; maritime piracy has shown a marked increase (even after the amnesty). Between 2005 and 2009 there were over 12,000 pipeline vandalization, and over 3000 oil spills. Over 1 million barrels of output were shut-in as a result of the deepening insurgency by the summer of 2009 (by some estimations output fell to around 1 million barrels b/d in the summer of 2009), 124 of 174 oilfields were shut, Shell’s western operation were closed and Nigeria as a consequence fell from its perch as the largest African producer (Joab-Peterside, Porter, & Watts, 2012).

As can be seen, the Niger Delta after over half a century of crude oil exploration has remained grossly under-developed and indeed suffers from both human and ecological devastation. Perhaps, putting into cognizance the fact that previous government establishment of specialized agencies (Niger Delta Development Board, Niger Delta Basin Development Authority, Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission, Niger Delta Development Commission), that appear to have failed to satisfactorily tackle the Niger Delta

challenges, the late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua led administration initiated amnesty programme.

Essentially, this programme is geared towards demobilizing the youths to ensure conducive atmosphere for development. As a result, a development plan which also necessitated the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry at the Federal level as part of frantic efforts to transform dilapidated infrastructures and ensure general development.

There are preponderant number of studies on underdevelopment, poverty, violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta (Ibeanu, 2000; Ikelegbe, 2001; Ibeanu, 2005; Ikelegbe, 2005; Omotola, 2006; Joab-Peterside, 2007; Saliu, Luqman & Abdullahi, 2007; Ibeanu, 2008; Enu & Ugwu, 2011; Faleti, 2012; Obadan & Chokor, 2013; Oromareghake, Arisi & Igho, 2013). Some of these studies seek to establish the relationship and the interconnectedness of poverty and conflicts specifically as regards to the Niger Delta violence since the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta (Faleti, 2012; Okpo & Eze 2012; Ibeanu, 2005). Hence, other related positions that the end product of underdevelopment, neglect, marginalization and oppression of the people in the region is the manifest struggle to compel state authorities to address environmental difficulties confronting the people and indeed, ensure a corresponding improvement on development of the people in the Niger Delta.

Thus, poverty is generally seen as a global phenomenon. According to Aboyade (1976), poverty is a state of inadequate command

over, or inadequate access to, resources to satisfy wants which are considered normal by the value system of a given society. In the same view, World Bank Development Report (2000) explained that poverty is an unaccepted deprivation in human well-being which comprises both physiological deprivations in human that also includes; inadequate nutrition, health, education, shelter and social deprivation which includes risk, lack of autonomy, lack of self-respect and powerlessness. In fact, Burton (1997), asserted that poverty is as a result of inability to meet basic human needs can generate reactions that lead to conflict.

Following from the above, it could be stated that the impact of poverty is negatively monumental especially where the political system lacks the political will, socio-economic, political and structural wherewithal to address poverty incidences. Poverty could be explained as lack, inadequacy, deficiency and inability of one to optimally surmount basic daily needs (Nwanegbo & Odigbo 2013). Earlier, Obadan (1997) enumerated the main factors that cause poverty which goes beyond low income to include among others: “inadequate access to employment opportunities; inadequate physical assets such as land and capital and minimal access by the poor to credit facilities even on a small scale; inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development in poor regions; inadequate access to market where the poor can sell goods and services; low endowment of human capital; destruction of natural resources leading to environmental degradation and reduced productivity;

inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin and those victimized by transitory poverty and lack of participation”(cited in Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013).

Evidently, it is the failure to draw the poor into the design and subsequent implementation of development programmes that affect their lives. These are mainly issues bothering on the capacity of the state to evolve credible processes to deal with the basic and fundamental needs of the people. Thus, the outcome of this haphazard and poor implementation process of development programmes in the Niger Delta is obvious complication of the existing poverty crisis to a more complex degree. Thereby augmenting the possibility of people unleashing grievances on the polity and sometimes resorting to arms struggle. This has made security conditions in the Niger Delta to become more precarious and terrifying. In fact, David (2000), argued that the roots of insecurity in the Niger-Delta lies in the history of struggles for self determination, local autonomy and democracy of the ethnic minorities in the region which goes as far back as the second decade of the 20th century (Oromareghake, Arisi & Igho, 2013).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper derives from the frustration – aggression theory. It is informed directly by the works of Gurr (1967), and Feierabend and Nesvold (1971). The frustration – aggression hypothesis was formulated

originally by John Dallard et al. The fundamental thrust of this theory is that—the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise that the existence of frustration leads to some form of aggression. In Gurr's (1967) own analysis, he proposes that: The potential for collective violence is a function of the extent and intensity of shared discontents among members of society, and; the potential for violence is a function of the degree to which such shared discontents are blamed on the political system and its agents.

The fundamental departure here is collective violence or any violent behaviour exhibited by a group or collectivity for political, social or economic objectives or a combination of objectives against a political system or circumstance; which is thought to represent the source of the collective shared discontent. Gurr (1967) explains further that—discontent arising from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic instigating condition for participants in collective violence; with relative deprivation defined as the—perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and value capabilities. These value expectations, as Gurr (1967) explains represent the —goods and conditions of life to which people believed they are rightly entitled, while value capabilities are the —goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining and maintaining, given the social means available to them. These value capabilities have both an immediate and futuristic dimensions. What all these boil down to is that the exhibition of

aggression or aggressive behaviour by a collectivity or group is a precipitate of an underlying frustration and discontent.

The Feierabends and Nesvold (1971) utilizing this same theory in a separate work propose that —systematic frustration leads to aggression. That is, frustration collectivity experienced by the members of a polity and which is caused by the political system under which they live induces the tendency to resort to political aggression. In their view, collective frustration arises principally from the inability of the political system to satisfy or guarantee the attainment and maintenance of the social goals, aspirations and values of the people.

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

The aggressive behaviour exhibited by the people in the oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta region against the Nigerian state and its petro-business allies (the oil multinationals) fits perfectly into the frustration-aggression theoretical framework. The people in the oil-bearing communities have for a very long time been deprived of their means of livelihood; even

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

Methodology

Studying the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta needs effective research methods for studying and addressing it elaborately. According to Gilbert (1996), the method selected to study a phenomenon should be guided by the research topic, time,

as well as availability of financial resources. The researcher had faced limited time and financial constraints conducting this study. This study adopted the quantitative method of enquiry in studying the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta. Hence, the survey research design method, which is a type of quantitative method, was adopted. It deals with the relationship between variables, the testing of hypotheses and the development of generalization, principles or theories that have universal validity. The population of the study comprised of all the people in Bayelsa state. According to the 2006 National census, the population size of Bayelsa state was 1,798,519. The state host several oil companies, and has been one of the state where militancy is prominent. The sample size of two hundred (200) was used. The samples are residents of Bayelsa state. They were drawn from the three senatorial zones of the state. The first sampling method employed was the stratified sampling method to select the local governments that participants were drawn from. Thereafter, the snowball sampling technique was employed in all the selected local government to select the 200 respondents that participated in the study.

The research instrument used was structured questionnaire which was developed by the researcher to elicit information that was used to test the hypothesis and answer the research questions. The questionnaire contained 18 items, with a 5-point response set. The validity of the instrument was obtained from 3 experts, two criminologists and one political scientist. The instrument

was also subjected to split-half reliability, and it yielded a coefficient of 0.88. Hence, the instrument is considered valid and reliable. Also, secondary data from the library were collected and carefully analyzed. In addition, further information for analysis came from newspaper, blogs, periodicals, journals, internet, magazines, and textbooks; simple percentages and chi-square of non-parametric techniques were used as analytical tool for this study.

Results

Two hypotheses were tested in this study and the results are presented as follows:

1. There is no significant association between resurgence of militancy and structural development of the Niger delta.

In testing this hypothesis using the Chi-Square test statistics.

The calculated chi-square value is 7.501. This is greater than the critical chi-square value of 5.9915 i.e. $X^2_{\text{calculated}} (7.501) > X^2_{\text{critical}} (5.9915)$. This result is significant as $p\text{-value of } 0.00 < 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted accordingly. There is no significant association between resurgence of militancy and structural development of the Niger Delta.

2. There is no significant association between socioeconomic lives of the people of Niger Delta and resurgence of militancy.

The Chi-square test is used in testing this hypothesis.

The calculated chi square value is 2.17. This is less than the critical value of 1.96 (at 95% level of significance) i.e. $\text{calculated } (2.17) > \text{critical } (1.96)$. This result is significant as $p\text{-value of } 0.00 < 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted accordingly. Hence, there is no significant association between socioeconomic lives of the people of Niger delta and resurgence of militancy.

Research Questions

Why has militancy persisted in the Niger Delta?

As was observed from the empirical evidence presented by the respondents, a number of pertinent features such as minority status, political oppression, the labelling and meanings behind 'militia' action can be perceived as main reasons for resurgence and continued violent conflict and militancy in Niger Delta region. These observations add to various narratives of conflict and labelling extending further whether so called 'militia' actions are motivated by greed or grievances, and how the claim for 'rightful share' are intricately dovetailed in this process. They also offer further insights about shifting ideologies among some 'militia' members/leaders. Identifying different mechanisms of co-option, political patronage and material benefits offered by various informal actors also contribute to the political economy of resource governance. From a critical perspective, the Niger Delta region can be described as an arena of contested entitlements, a theatre of struggles where the

politics of recognition are being played out. This particular case reveals how the protests of the Ogonis and Ijaws shaped a particular form of resistance and collective action. It partly demonstrates the political opportunities or constraints for the success or failure of movements, and state capacity for repression. Also, the legislative laws of resource extraction have been central to the conflict surrounding the Ogonis and Ijaws, as well as other ethnic minorities of the delta. The narratives and meanings behind 'militia' action are socially constructed. Protesting groups were labelled or framed by the state/media in various ways, as oil thieves, criminals, kidnappers, cult gangs or restive youths. While 'militants', on the other hand, see themselves as freedom fighters, liberators or resource agitators. These labelling manifest a particular kind of reality with varied meanings and interpretations both at the individual and collective levels. The meaning of 'militancy', therefore, is not straightforward. They cannot be conceptualised within a binary framework of true or false, bandits/common criminals or freedom fighters. They are socially constructed within the narratives of the state, powerful elites and various other groups. This must be also noted that, for some 'militia', such activities can be an opportunity to make a living. As some members being recruited in 'militia' groups in the context of their desperation to survive (often indirectly paid by the state or other political sources), while others drift into 'militant' activities having become involved in oil theft, in order for their subsistence.

What are the unresolved issues that made militancy persist in the Niger Delta?

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

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

What are the options available to resolve and put an end to militancy in the Niger Delta?

The resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta crisis is a function of related fundamental issues that generated the crisis in the first place. Therefore, it follows that any attempt aimed at addressing this dangerous trend is a call for finding solutions to the fundamental issues that form the bedrock of the crisis in the oil-bearing region. In other words, the problem of indiscriminate use of arms by ethnic militia in the Niger Delta will continue to defy solutions for a long time to come if the causes of the crisis are left unaddressed. Guns in the hands of militant youth will continue to exacerbate the problem until more basic solutions are found. In view of this development, some solutions can be suggested as policy options for policy makers and other stakeholders.

The recent national conference is a giant stride towards addressing the incessant violence in the region because all stakeholders in the polity came together and discussed the future of the Nigerian state. But it was limited in scope as it was masterminded by the state executive. Although both the majority and the minority put heads together to fashion out a workable machinery for restructuring the country in such a way that each section of the country would have its own fair share of available opportunities, it fell short of addressing the

fundamental problems of Nigerian federalism. The fundamental questions of Nigerian federalism still stand unresolved, and can only be addressed in a sovereign national conference. At present, Nigerian federalism is skewed, and it does not adequately cater for the interests of the minority. This question of federalism must be an integral part of the project to create a true democracy, good governance, an enhanced position of ethnic minorities and transparent fiscal control.

What efforts have been made by government, oil companies and the people of the area to resolve the recurrence of militancy in the Niger Delta?

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

(created by Bayelsa State to protect oil installations) and Operation Flush (established by Rivers State).

The Nigerian state and oil companies have at different times emphasized their commitment to the forceful protection of oil company activities and installations. This underscored the states leader pronouncements of warning against the disruption of oil production since oil is the lifeblood of the country. It was against this backdrop that several militant/resistant groups emerged to protest the militarization and injustices being perpetrated by the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies (MNOCs) against the Niger Deltans.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study draw attention to the fact that in reality government has not recognized the Niger Delta problems and has not taken adequate measures towards solving them. Findings show that, for the militants to surrender their arms, the government and oil companies must recognize some of the militant's challenges and work hard towards addressing them.

The two hypotheses which were tested in this study were rejected. Based on the study, the root cause of militancy in the Niger Delta is the collective failure of the Nigerian state, the multinational oil corporations and the people of the Niger delta to bring out rapid socio-economic development to the region. Therefore, there is need to address these problems and challenges that triggered violence, insecurity and economic loss in the Niger Delta.

While positions and interests may be sacrificed during negotiations, needs cannot be compromised. The recurrence of militancy in the Niger Delta was because the position of the people was not met or even discussed. A renege on the amnesty programme has jeopardized the fragile peace which was hitherto enjoyed in the region.

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

Conclusion

The Niger Delta conflict and crises and the battle to abate them have dragged on for decades and the end does not seem to be in sight. They are rooted in a deliberate tenacity of the government, the oil companies, and the communities not to yield on their respective stands. The federal government has become notorious for its enshrined strategy of systematic intimidation and flexing of muscle against the resource custodians, the Niger Delta people. This obnoxious attitude has been demonstrated in the take it or leave it snobbish behaviour and gross inconsistency in distribution of oil revenue. The effrontery of the Federal

Government in diverting revenue from oil in the Niger Delta to developing other states in the country while ignoring their own development needs has attracted the vexation of the Niger Delta people especially the youths. The damage of their environment and destruction of their agricultural and fisheries sectors, and remorseless attitude of the oil companies is another bitter pill that the people have refused to swallow without question. State interventions have been intimidating, repressive, excessive, and bear the semblance of mandatory annihilation. Government reactions to the crises in many cases are tantamount to killing an ant with a sledge hammer. The militancy demonstrated by the communities is a natural phenomenon that transmits into practicality the disenchantment and disillusionment of the people. The conflict in the Niger Delta is a storm that is fast developing into a hurricane. If it is not brought under control now it would have very devastating and deleterious consequences on the oil industry, foreign investments, the tourism industry, and the credibility of the federal government of Nigeria.

Recommendations

To resolve the recurrence of militancy in the Niger Delta, this study recommends as follows:

1. The Nigerian government should at all time assume and maintain a paternalistic posture. That way the government must be genuinely committed to the protection and security of Nigerians living in the

oil-producing region. Resorting to killing Nigerians in the oil producing communities whenever there was over-stretched agitation should not be considered as a good option at all; no matter the level of the local people's agitation. Already, the people and their land have been impoverished, they are poverty stricken and frustrated. To react, the way they are doing now should be expected. Government must not ignore the sanctity and security of lives of Nigerians that it swore to protect.

2. There is need for the Nigerian government to engage all stake holders in the oil bearing communities and the oil multinationals in a round table talk for all parties to work out a workable joint security programme for the region. The people must be involved in negotiating, designing and executing security programmes for the region. The people of the oil communities, especially the irate youths must not be sidelined. They are important in the scheme. They have their ideas of what can guarantee security in the region. Most of them are intellectuals in their own right. A situation where the government alone comes with its own security programme for the Nigerian Delta region without inputs from the people of the region cannot resolve the issue of contradiction of the security in the region in all

fairness. There will always be clash and contradictions.

3. There is need to review the Nigerian constitution to make provision for the inclusion of oil-bearing communities as stakeholders in terms of decision-making and control of the economic resources derived from the region. This might be a long-term solution, but there is need for it. Again, obnoxious acts such as the land use act of 1978 should be revoked. That is one of the basic legislations used to deny the people their rights to make claims to their land and which tend to deny the people not only the right of control over the resources that pertain to the land but even to engage in direct negotiations with the oil prospecting companies operating in the region.
4. Youth empowerment schemes, well packaged to commit the youths in the region and keep them busy from roaming about idle-minded should be accorded priority in government's programmes for the region. Government could do this in conjunction with assistance from the oil multi-national companies operating in the region through employment of the youths in security jobs in the area.
5. Government and oil companies need to devise regulatory mechanisms to ensure that allocation and compensation to the oil-bearing communities actually get to the people of the communities. This

again should involve inputs from the people of the oil producing communities.

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