

Oil Exploration and Exploitation: Uprising and Insurgence in the Niger Delta, Nigeria

OLUKAYODE BAKARE

Abstract: The conflict in the Niger Delta region is grounded in the deep historical struggles by the local people who have been subjected to several decades of perceived discrimination and marginalization in the distribution of powers and the benefits accrued from the oil in the region. This paper therefore examines the conflict in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, which emanated as a result of right to a resource control. The study adopts the theory of frustration aggression and structural imperialism to address the impending and uprising problems in the region. The conflict in the region had been attributed to corrupt political elites that misused the resources and wealth that were meant for the growth and development of the region. The study concluded that the problems in the region could only be eradicated if the local people are given the right to self-determination and local autonomy, thereby fighting poverty and underdevelopment in the region.

Keywords: Niger-Delta, Self-determination, Marginalisation, Sustainable Development, Local autonomy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The conflict in the Niger Delta region is premised on the continuous agitation for resource control and local autonomy in the region. Since the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta in 1958, the people of the oil-producing region have persistently expressed exasperation over the degradation of the local ecosystems, while socio-economic opportunities and political participations at the national level are undermined by the Nigerian state. Lamentably, oil has become a curse rather than a blessing ever since the discovery of oil in the region (Ako, 2011: 42; Ukeje, 2010: 16). The conflict is grounded in the deep historical struggles and violence faced by the local people who have also been subject to several decades of perceived discrimination and marginalization in the distribution of powers and the benefits accrued from the oil in the region.

The resistance of the Niger Delta inhabitants towards uncanny attitude of multinational oil companies to the environmental degradation has affected oil production and its prices in the world market. The volatility of oil markets in the recent years has also heightened a number of key trends in the world market; the fast growing demand for oil by China, and India, the questionable status of some of the mega-oil fields in the Gulf, the destructive nationalism of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and President Ahmadinejad in Iran, and the spill-over effects of the Iraqi insurrection in the Gulf. There are other key factors contributing to this volatility, namely the deepening and acute conflicts across the increasing ungovernability of the Niger Delta oil fields in Nigeria (Watts, 2007: 637-640).

The major thrust of this paper lie in the fact that local control of resources and self determination could lead to peace and bring about development in the Niger Delta region. The paper is designed to examine the socio-political structure of Nigeria by giving the general overview of the country and series of resource control agitations and insurgencies in the Niger Delta. The paper also attempted to underpin the study on the frustration-aggression theory to discuss the reason why Niger Delta inhabitants engaged in conflict with the multinational oil companies on one hand and the Federal Government of Nigeria on the other hand. The structural theory of imperialism provided the explanations for the insurgence and background to the Niger Delta conflict.

The purpose of this paper therefore, is to critically examine the near anarchy state of the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. To review factors that could contribute to the uprising and insurgency in the region and to demonstrate the relationship between resource control, peace and development.

2. THE NIGER DELTA, NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

There are basically seven states that make up the Niger Delta region. These include: Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers, Rivers, Delta, Imo, Edo and Bayelsa states. The oil conflicts and confrontations with the Nigerian government and multinational corporations are most prominent among the three states- Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers (Tuschi, 2007: 7-8). Further, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Act of 2007 expanded the geographical space of the Niger Delta by adding Ondo and Abia states. By adjustment and oil policies, some regions or communities may be located within and outside the generally accepted six delta states (Ibaba, 2011: 73). The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is one of the largest deltas in the world, and the third largest on earth. The region is known as one of the most difficult and largest deltas in the world and compares with those of the Amazon, Mekong and Ganges. It covers about 70,000 square kilometres, half of which is wet land of 36, 000 square kilometres, with vast flood plains, mangrove swamps (Omotola, 2006: 3), rainforests, and fishing activities (Onduku, 2008: 3).

It has an estimated population of 29 million people living in, and the bulk of which resides in rural areas and in, fishing and farming communities. Seventy-three per cent of the population lack access to safe drinking water, about 70% of households lack electricity, 94% of the total population lack access to a telephone (Ibaba, 2011: 73), and there is 40% primary school enrolment rate (Akinwale, 2009: 3). The Ijaws are the largest ethnic group in the region. The Ijaws, the largest ethnic group in the region and have lived in the region for over seven thousand years (Ibaba, 2011: 73), it is the source of 80 per cent of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and represents the economic backbone of Nigeria (Afonitan and Ojatorotu, 2009: 191). Transportation through these ecosystems is usually via rivers and creeks. So, unsurprisingly, there is a high rate of malaria and water borne diseases in the region.

3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

According to Adesopo and Asaju (2004: 278), resources are classified into either human, or natural resources. In this discourse, my discussions shall be focusing on natural resources, which constitute a central plank of the agitation on resource control in the Niger Delta. Stiglitz subscribes to the idea that natural resources are to be understood as the supplies of oil, energy sources of phosphorous, and of other materials required for production of goods and services. Basically, in terms of natural resources endowment, Nigeria is one of the richest countries in Africa with known deposits of tin, limestone, gold, kaolin, clay, marble, radio-active minerals, coal, lignite, natural petroleum, natural gas and hydro-electric power (Stiglitz, 1974: 122). Each of these according to Adesopo and Asaju are classified and assessed state-by-state. The abundance of these natural resources in Nigeria, especially petroleum, has become a double-edge sword and the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. This has been the source of ethnic conflicts, and has been creating social, political and environmental problems. These and many others human security problems in the region have led to the struggle and agitations for resource control rights by the Southerners, which is a process spearheaded by their governors (Aluko, cited in Adesopo and Asaju, 2004: 280).

The agitation on resource control has been between the Northerner and Southern regions. While the Southerners, as represented by the seventeen (17) southerners governors, are agitating for the enforcement of the need to grant local autonomy to the Niger Delta states. The Northerners are represented by their governors have strongly objected the move to grant the southerners' fiscal autonomy on resource control (Ibid.). The southerners' debates and quest for resource control are based on the need to practice true federalism that guarantees fiscal autonomy to the constituent units (Ibid.). The agitation and struggle for resource control dates back to the Boro-led Niger Delta Volunteer Force's (NDVF) failed attempt to secede from Nigeria in 1966. The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and other ethnic minority associations in the Niger Delta, through the Ogoni Bill of Right (OBR), demanded the total control of Ogoni oil by Ogoni (Ibid.). Sagay gave a comprehensive description of resource control. According to him:

'Resource control refers to the power and right of a community or a state to raise funds by ways of taxation on resources within its territory; and the exclusive rights to the ownership and control over resources created within a territory' (Sagay, 2001: 1).

Sagay emphasizes a 'direct and decisive role' to suggest increased participation of the Niger Delta region in the management of their resources. From another perspective, the 17 southern state governors define resource control as the:

'The practice of a true federalism and natural law in which the federating units express their rights to primarily control the natural resources within their borders and make agreed contribution towards the maintenance of common service of the government at the centre' (Sagay, 2001: 19).

According to Dafinone, resource control by the oil producing communities is subject to unfettered control by the federal government. True federalism is a principal expression in the agitation for resource control in the Niger Delta region, as stated by Dafinone. It is believed that the return and operation of fiscal federalism is the only way in which the Nigerian government could release the necessary resources required for the development of the Niger Delta region (Dafinone, 2001: 1). The fundamental question should be asked of a true federalism. Federalism refers to a political system with a constitution that allows some range of autonomy and powers to both centralized and decentralized system of government each of which have their *raison d'être* in the provision of goods and services within their own jurisdictions (Ojefia, 2004: 2). According to Adejumbi, Federalism is described as a political design that creates a balance between local identities and peculiarities and national cohesion (2004: 214). It is an institutional arrangement that derives its existence and recognition from the heterogeneity of a modern nation-state (Oates, 1999: 1120-1121).

4. STRUCTURAL THEORY OF IMPERIALISM: TOWARDS A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

The Structural theory of imperialism, according to Johan Galtung is described as "a tremendous inequality, within and between nations, including the power to decide over those living conditions; and the resistance of this inequality to change" (Galtung, 1971: 81). Galtung concurs that the world is made up of Center and Periphery nations, and every nation in turn, has its centers and periphery (Galtung, 1971: 81). Hence, my focus in this discourse takes its point of departure of two distinct angles- the Nigerian state and the Niger Delta region. Within the politico-economic and social relationships between the Nigerian state and the Niger Delta, the former represents the center while the latter represents the periphery. How do we describe the structural violence in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria? Any theory of liberation from structural violence presupposes theoretically and practically adequate ideas of the dominance system against which the liberation is directed, and this dominant system is imperialism (Ibid.).

What is imperialism? Imperialism is described as the highest stage in capitalist development (Ibid.). Also, imperialism is described in the words of Galtung as "a sophisticated type of dominance relation which cuts across nations, basing on a bridgehead which the center in the Center nation establishes in the center of the periphery nation" (Pettiford and Steans, 2001: 90). What kind of state is Nigeria? Presumably it is a capitalist state and an organ of international capital, a neo-colonial and 'comprador' state (Galtung, 1971: 81). What are the characteristics and the dominant system of the Nigerian state in relations to the Niger Delta crisis? The questions raised above are dealt with in this section by examining imperialism, class formation, and capitalist development in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region. The meaning and nature of the state are an unsettled discourse in politics, not least, the post-colonial Nigeria (Beckman, 1982: 40).

The colonial heritage of Nigeria, as some scholars would argue, that Nigeria is a 'rentier' state, which largely depends on oil rents, royalties and taxes paid by MNCs. Oil interests and revenues have become part of the major characteristics of the dominant elites in the state, dominated by an unstable alliance of some ethnic majority elites whose geographical homelands have little or no oil reserves. Consequently, the influence and dominance of the major ethnic group is to the disadvantage of the minorities of the Niger Delta, where the bulk of the crude oil is produced (Ayoob, cited in Omeje, 2004: 427-29). Also, the contemporary form of imperialism in the Niger Delta is a transnational alliance of international capital backed at both ends by the power of the state. This transnational alliance of imperialism uses rooted bourgeois class forces, to establish and maintain the necessary instruments for its profits. Jointly, the two parties ally to bring about social and democratic reforms. Consequently, capitalism in the Niger Delta region tends to take oppressive and predatory character. Thus, struggles against imperialism are therefore inevitably linked to domestic class struggle (Omeje, 2004: 428).

The contemporary Nigerian state can therefore be described as a 'comprador' state, where the state officials and state institutions operate as agents of imperialism. The ruling class is the bourgeoisie of the metropolitan states (Beckman, 1982: 40). Turner uses the concept of "commercial triangle" to portray these dominant elites which she describes as a nexus between the MNCs and their local Nigerians, otherwise called 'comprador' (Beckman, 1982: 39). Both the 'comprador' and state officials depend heavily on state's oil revenue to fund and reproduce their societal dominance through inflated contracts and looting that retard both growth and development (Turner, cited in Omeje, 2004: 428). The strategic nature of oil to the economic sustenance of the state and to its dominant elites has heightened the prospects of the state's use of security forces, to quell any oil-related threats in the present historical conjuncture of the Niger Delta region (Omeje, 2004: 429).

According to Ukiwo:

'It is difficult to separate the [Nigerian] government from the state, much less the personalities. Thus the style of the leader robs off on the state. The authoritarian provenance of the present power brokers has led to the personification of the state. Soldiers sent on routine duties are described as an army of occupation and treated as such, because they are seen as agents of oppression or mercenaries of powerful men in government' (Ukiwo, 2003: 129).

The Nigerian state remains oppressive, privatized and unpopular. The state is barely able to stand on neutral ground to mediate conflicts, because it lacks autonomy from the political class and transnational corporations (Ukiwo, 2003: 129). The dominance relation between the Nigerian state and MNCs over oil nexus in the Niger Delta has been the major destabilizing factor that kept the region in a perpetual violence and miseries. The vast amount of income generated by the MNCs and the Nigerian state from the Niger Delta underscores the strategic relationship between them. This asymmetric relationship further underpins why the region continues to exhibit frustrating and aggressive behaviour against their deplorable human conditions in the region.

5. FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION THEORY: TOWARDS A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

The central premise of frustration-aggression theory is that aggression is always the result of frustration. Given the requisite conditions, an individual whose basic desires are thwarted and who consequently experiences profound sense of dissatisfaction and anger is likely to react to his condition by directing aggressive behaviour at what is considered or perceived as being responsible for thwarting the desires, or a substitute. The greater the perceived importance, of the desire and the more comprehensive the checking, the more vigorous the aggressive response (Hann and Feagen, 1973: 133).

A second variant of the frustration-aggression theory is the notion of relative deprivation, interpreted to mean a state of mind where there is a discrepancy between what men seek and what seems attainable. The greater the discrepancy, the greater their anger and their propensity toward violence. Gurr concurs that when we feel thwarted in an attempt to get something we want, we are likely to become angry, and when we become angry, the most satisfying inherent response is to strike out at the source of the frustration (Gurr, 1970: 24).

A more forceful prediction about frustration-aggression theory underscores Muller's reasoning as follows:

'If the mobilization of discontent is correlated with the extensiveness of inequality, such that when inequality is pervasive, some mobilization is almost bound to occur, and then the relationship between inequality and political violence should be positive and curvilinear, i.e., positively accelerated' (Muller, Quoted in Lichbach: 1989: 431).

Also, Kort offers a comprehensive illustration about the behavioural motivation of why actors might revolt against economic inequality:

'When a critically high concentration of inequality of income prevails in a society, a revolution is likely to occur. Whenever income is dispersed beyond a critical minimum of concentration, a civil war is likely to take place' (Kort, 1950: 489).

Burton argues that there are conflicts and unrests in developing nations because people are denied their psychological needs that are needed for growth and development (Burton, cited in Ikejiaku 2009: 9).

The above theoretical submissions explain how the people of the Niger Delta region are being deprived of their basic socio-economic and political rights, and these had justified the insurrection and their quest for self-determination in the region. Consequently, the oil boom in the region, has become, to the local people, a nightmare, and decades of neglect of the region has led to the Niger Delta being the epitome of destitution, hunger and injustices. Accordingly, 10 million people in the region are destitute, with about 14 million people living in abject poverty in the rural areas (Udonwa, 2004: 273).

The impressive growth of the nation's GDP has not impacted positively on the lives of the people nor helped to reduce poverty in the region (Saliu, 2007: 283). The region or communities bore the externalities and hazards of exploitation, but benefited little from it. This has impacted untold anguish and devastation including, unemployment, land degradation, deforestation, pollution of farm lands and fishing streams in the region, and has deprived the people of their source of livelihood. Despite the natural endowments of the region, it remains grossly underdeveloped (Agbonifon, 2011: 254; Aluko, 2003: 78; Ahonsi, 2011: 29). These, however, underpins the state of environmental degradation, poverty, and alienation of the people of the Niger Delta, which in turn serve as the basis of the protracted civil unrest in the region, as the people cannot continue in their frustrating condition. Hence they resort to hostage-taking and other militant activities against the government and multinational oil corporations- actions that have become inevitable as their basic life sustenance (human security) is seriously threatened in the Niger Delta.

6. RESOURCE CONTROL AGITATIONS AND ITS AFTERMATH: THE CASE OF THE NIGER DELTA REGION

The struggle for resource control in the Nigerian body polity has become the bedrock of activities for various militant/militia groups in the Niger Delta. These groups have conceptualized resource control as the fundamental basis of their struggle. Gangs and other criminal elements have opportunistically used the issue of resource control in the Niger Delta region to engage in criminal activities under the cloak of regional insecurity (Ako, 2011: 45). The struggle in the Delta region of Nigeria has taken another dimension in relation to the human rights abuse of state repression, while the youth ethnic associations in the region have been the vanguard and key players in the violent conflicts, using violent means to vent their anger and express their demands (Bejzikova, 2007: 12). Ukeje conceptualizes militarization of the Niger Delta region as arising from the relationship between oil states and oil communities, between oil companies and host communities, between multinational oil corporations and host states, and finally between oil-producing and oil-importing/consuming states (Ukeje, 2011: 84). The militant activities in the Niger Delta region are directed against the military and the MNCs in a struggle for equity, justice and resource control. The resistance of local people to continued marginalization, expropriation of land and outright neglect by the Nigerian state and the oil companies has, absurdly led into more subjugation and power politics by the government. The government continued to pay lip service to their demands, paving way for the militancy. The militant attacks on the government and the oil companies then moved into rebellious stage in which the aim was to halt and interrupt oil exploration, and ultimately force the government to respond to the local people and their problems (Ikelegbe, 2011: 129). The earliest conflict over oil or resource control in the Niger Delta began in 1967 and erupted again in 2004 when oil-related disputes motivated an insurrection by the Ijaw ethnic group. The Niger Delta's Volunteer Force (NDPF), an organisation of Ijaw youths, engaged the Nigerian government in combat. Consequently, the federal government declared that it had discovered 16 ethnic militias in the region, with evidence linking some of the groups in the region to internal and external collaborators who were perpetuating unrest in the region (Oyefusi, 2008: 542)

First, the struggle in the region was based on discontent with the multinational corporations (MNCs) and the Nigerian state. Second, it involved agitation based purely developmental issues and political demands; for example, the demand for a restructuring of the federal system (Bajzikova, 2007: 32), increase of revenue allocation among the component units of the federation in favour of the Niger Delta region from 13% to 100%, and other issues of resource control (Osaghae et al, 2007: 16). According to Cyril Obi (2010: 220), in 1997, the Ijaw Youth Council, civil society group, in 1997 took up the struggle of resource control and insisted that 'we cease to recognise all undemocratic decrees that rob our

peoples/communities of the rights to ownership control of our lives and resources, which were enacted without our participation and consent’.

The emergence of these civil societies in the region, and the subsequent challenge of the state and the multinational oil corporations’ practices, began to impact on the perceptions of the Niger Delta people. Their grievances and demands began to escalate beyond the community to the ethnic group, state and region, which in turn led to the formation of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1990 as a way for people to relate to the state and MNCs (Ikelegbe, 2001: 349). According to Osaghae, et al., the most profound and committed struggle on resource control by the people of the Niger Delta can be found in the ‘Kaiama Declaration’ of the Ijaw people formed on the 11th of December, 1998. The document asserts that ‘all land and natural resources within the Niger Delta communities belong to the Niger Delta’ (Osaghae, et al 2007: 9). This declaration was based on the Ijaws’ claims arising from the federal government, and international oil companies’ brutal and unrepentant drive to exploit the resources of the Niger Delta as well as the killing of the poet, Ken Saro-Wiwa, leader of the MOSOP (Kemedi, 2003: 132).

At the national level, when Nigeria returned to civilian government in May, 1999, there were high expectations in the country that the democratic government would bring about succour, demilitarization of the region, a reduction in poverty and, tension and bring ‘democracy dividend’ to the people (Obi, 2008: 431). Contrary to expectation, this past 10 years have witnessed a radical shift in the struggle and agitation for resource control, moving from an elitist movement to one fuelled by militant youth, which contributed to the aggravation of oil conflicts in the region (Obi, cited in Ako, 2011: 47). Ako argues that not all conflicts in the Niger Delta region can be genuinely linked to agitation for resource control. He asserts that the motivation for violence determines whether a group is classified as militant or otherwise (Ako, 2011: 46). According to Osaghae, et al (2007: 16, 21):

‘In the Niger Delta, the term ‘militants’ refer to gunmen who make political demands, including the release of imprisoned leaders, cash reparations for communities, charge of electoral candidates and a greater share of oil revenues, among other issues. The political demands distinguish them, albeit tenuously, from criminals who simply kidnap people for money. Militants are also distinct from disaffected communities, whose people may perform kidnappings or attacks in the hope of getting a clinic, school, or cash, but have no overall political aims [...] cults and gangs are criminals who sell drugs, rig elections and fight each other, among other activities’ (Osaghae, et al, 2007: 16, 21).

The militias in the Niger Delta region have been described as being useful in direct actions against the MNCs. Further, they also press home community demands and grievances in the negotiation with the MNCs (Ikelegbe, 2011: 100). A militia is an ‘armed, informal civilian group that are involved in para-military, security, crime, and crime-control activities in the protection of communal, ethnic, religious and political causes’. The main different between these gangs and militants/militias as stated above is that the gangs are encouraged by and spurred on the financial benefits derived from their activities (kidnappings, drugs trafficking, etc.) (Ikelegbe, 2011: 100). The struggle for resource control in the Niger Delta of Nigeria can also be viewed from a political angle. Since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999, the federal government has cornered and used oil proceeds in a corrupt manner to enrich other parts of Nigeria. Since 1999, the Niger Delta elite have adopted the rhetoric of self-determination in order to argue for an increase in oil proceeds based on a return of 50% derivation to the region (Obi, 2008: 224).

After the democratic transition in 1999, politicians started aligning themselves with and arming the militant youth organisations in order to influence the result of polls, as well as to intimidate opponents in the polls in ways that have been described as a ‘commodification of violence’ (Human Rights Watch, cited in Ako, 2011: 46). Obi characteristically notes the local resistance in the Niger delta as an opportunity for the people of Niger Delta to take recourse to violence as a modality of survival between the competing local elite interests, local opposition, communal civic organisations, the MNCs and the Nigerian state (Obi, 2008: 420). Local resistance may also involve actions classed as right-seeking ranging and which range from protests involving the obstruction of access routes, petition writing, sending delegations to state governments, and standing up against the repressive response of the federal government and oil companies to the needs of local communities (Osaghae, at el, 2007: 16). Local resistance in the Niger Delta region was further corroborated by Asari-Dokubo, the leader of the MOSOP, as follows:

'we asked them to leave our land, but they refused and sided with the Nigerian military, believing that the Army would protect them [...] the foreign oil workers should leave our land peacefully and come back when we might have resolved our differences with the governments' (Daily Independent Newspaper, quoted in Osaghae, et al, 2007: 17).

Accordingly, the above quotation depicts the prevalent and persistence of struggle of the people of the Niger Delta who believe that their rights have been jeopardised as a result of the continuous exploitation of their local ecosystems in the region. This belief has caused the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) to engage in armed attacks on MNCs and governments between 2006 and 2009 in which they concentrated on by 'crippling' oil exports after 50 years of 'beating around the bush' by the Nigerian government (Baldauf, cited in Ako, 2011: 47). MEND's accusation of 'beating around the bush' underscores the government's various neglected commitments and failed efforts to get the National Political Reform (NPR) to devise and recommend an improved derivation for the region (Ako, 2011: 47).

Another dimension to the nexus formed by the Niger Delta political elites, violence, and resource control is the issue of corruption on the part of the political leaders (Ako, 2011: 47). In this regard, two former Niger Delta state governors, Lucky Igbinedon and Diepriye Alamesigha, were prosecuted for corruption in Nigeria. Additionally, third governor, James Ibori, was declared wanted and ultimately arrested and faced trial in Britain on the 16th of April, 2011 for money laundering. This, however, explains why despite the federal government increase in the oil derivation to the Niger Delta region from 1.5% in the 1990s to 13% in 2000, the region has not witnessed any increase in quality of life (Human Rights Watch and ANEED, cited in Obi, 2008: 224). On this note, recently (January, 2011), youth supporters in the Delta state of Nigeria stopped security agencies from apprehending Ibori to face trial on corruption (Ako, 2011: 47). Between 1999 and 2005, oil derivation to the Niger Delta was increased to 13%. This period accounted for \$1, 767,500.00 as federal allocation to the entire Niger Delta states, which did not have any impact on the excruciating human conditions in the region. This suggests that responsibility for the crisis ravaging the region may lay with the MNCs and the state, and the political elite of the Niger Delta states (Omotola, 2006: 24). It is however very difficult to conclude that the youths that opposed Ibori's arrest are either from militant camps, or are gangs and criminals hired by Ibori to defend and protect himself from facing the court's action.

This also suggests that the struggle of local politicians in the region is not for the common good of the poor Niger Delta people. This can be seen clearly, as oil derivation from the federal government is siphoned off by local politicians and ultimately diverted into private purses. Thus, the agitation for improved derivation has political and selfish motivations in addition to the local which underscores the prevalent 'oil war' in the region (Omotola, 2006: 24). The struggle for resource control and economic emancipation by the minority states of the Niger Delta of Nigeria is undoubtedly strange to the MOSOP, MEND, NDPVF, AMOS and other associated movements in the region. The struggle and awareness to just and equitable oil revenue allocation formula, acceptable fiscal system and democratic peace in the region have now spread to all the minority states of the Niger Delta. The importance that people place on gaining the power to control their resources is critical in understanding the oil-violence in the Niger Delta region. Further, one can see from the findings that, the present oil derivation given to the Niger Delta region has been fixed at 13% since 1999, after the return of Nigeria to civil rule. Yet, this revenue allocation to the region has not brought any meaningful development to the people living there. This paper has also shown that political elites in the region monopolize, and misappropriate, and divert the meagre revenue allocation in order to increase their own personal ill-gotten wealth.

7. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated and recognized the protracted oil conflict in the Niger Delta, Nigeria within the purview of youth militancy and subsequently, kidnapping of and attacks on oil workers. It circumscribes actors such as the Nigerian state, MEND, and the MNCs' roles in the conflicts. The paper addresses the problem as paramount to the process of facilitating development in the region. The people of the Niger Delta region demanded for resource control and local autonomy, which lie at the heart of their struggle. The people of the Niger Delta region are fighting for justice and self-determination, because they are aware that the resources generated from their land constitutes over 90% of the Nigerian earnings, yet they remain poor. The Niger Delta political elites are also found to have contributed to the continuous underdevelopment and marginalization of these people by diverting and misappropriating the 13% oil derivation given to the each of the nine States in the region from the federation account by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The paper

therefore concluded that local autonomy and resource control demanded by the local population in the Niger Delta could bring an end to the protracted conflicts in the region. Also, if the 13% derivation to the region is properly utilised by the political elites, the poverty level and civil unrests in the region would be minimized, coupled with the MNCs' social responsibilities towards the development of the Niger Delta region.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adejumobi, S. (2004) 'Civil Society and Federalism in Nigeria', *Regional & Federal Studies*, 14:2, 211-231.
- [2] Adesopo, A. and Asaju, A. (2004) 'Natural Resource Distribution, Agitation for Resource Control Right and Practice in Nigeria,' *Journal of Human Ecology*, 15:4, 277-289.
- [3] Afonitan, A. and Ojajorotu, V. (2009) 'The Niger Delta Crisis: Issues, Challenges and Prospects', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3:3, 191-198.
- [4] Agbonifon, J. (2011) 'Territorialising Niger Delta Conflicts: Place and Contentious Mobilisation', *A Journal for and about Social Movement*, 3:1, 240-265.
- [5] Ahonsi, B. (2011) 'Capacity and Governance Deficits in Response to the Crisis', in Obi, C. and Rustad, A. (eds.), *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing Complex Politics of Petro-Violence*. Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 28-42.
- [6] Akinwale, A. (2009) 'Curtailling Conflicts in the Resource-Endowed Niger Delta Communities of Nigeria', *Journal of the Social Sciences*, 7:1, 1-16.
- [7] Ako, R. (2011) 'The Struggle for Resource Control and Violence in the Niger Delta.' In Obi, C. and Rustad A. (eds.), *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing Complex Politics of Petro-Violence*. Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 42-54.
- [8] Aluko, M. (2001) 'Social Dimensions and Consequences of Environmental Degradation in the Niger Delta of Nigeria', *Journal of Human Ecology*, 14:4, 74-86.
- [9] Bajzikova, K. (2007) *African Oil - The Way to Reduction of Poverty? (Nigerian Case)*.
- [10] Beckman, B. (1982) 'Whose State? State and Capitalist Development in Nigeria, *Review of African Political Economy*, 9:23, 37-51.
- [11] Dafinone, D. (2001) *Resource Control: The Economic and Political Dimensions*.
- [12] Galtung, J. (1971) 'A Structural Theory of Imperialism', *The Journal of Peace Research*, 8:1, 81-117.
- [13] Gurr, T. (1970) *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 24.
- [14] Hann, H. and Feagin, J. (1973) 'Perspectives on Collective Violence', in Hirsch, H. and Perry, D. (eds.), *Violence in Politics*, New York: Harper and Row, p. 133.
- [15] Ibaba, S. (2011) 'The Ijaw National Congress and Conflict Resolution in the Niger', in C. Obi and Rustad, A. (eds.), *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing Complex Politics of Petro-Violence*. Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 71-82.
- [16] Ikejiaku, B. (2009) 'The Relationship between Poverty, Conflict and Development', *Journal of Sustainable Development [online]* 2:1, 1-14.
- [17] Inokoba, K. and Imbua, K. (2010) 'Vexation and Militancy in the Niger Delta: The Way Forward', *Human Ecology*, 29:2, 101-120.
- [18] Kemedi, D. (2003) 'Changing Predatory Styles of International Oil Companies in Nigeria', *Review of African Journal*, 30:95, 134-139.
- [19] Kort, F. (1952) 'The Quantification of Aristotle's Theory of Revolution', *American Political Science Review*, 46:2, 486-493.

- [21] Lichbach, M. (1989) An Evaluation of 'Does Economic Inequality Breed Political Conflict?' Studies, World Politics, 41:4, 431-470.
- [22] Oates, W. (1999) 'An Essay on Fiscal Federalism', Journal of Economic Literature [online] 37, 1120-1149.
- [23] Obi, C. (2008) 'Enter the Dragon? Chinese Oil Companies & Resistance in the Niger Delta', Review of African Political Economy, 117, 417-434.
- [24] Obi, C. (2010) 'Oil Extraction, Dispossession, Resistance, and Conflict in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Niger Delta', Canadian Journal of Development Studies, 30:1-2, 219-236.
- [25] Ojefia, I. (2004) The Nigerian State and the Niger Delta Question, A Paper Presented for the 22nd Annual Conference of the Association of Third World Georgia, USA.
- [26] Omeje, K. (2004) 'The State, Conflict & Evolving Politics in the Niger Delta, Nigeria', Review of African Political Economy, 31:101, 425-440.
- [27] Omotola, S. (2006) 'The Next Gulf? Oil Politics, Environmental Apocalypse and Rising Tension in the Niger Delta', Occasional Paper Series, 1:3, 1-32.
- [28] Onduku, A. (2008) Environmental Conflicts- The Case of the Niger Delta
- [29] Osaghae, E., et al. (2007) Youth Militias, Self-Determination and Resource Control Struggles in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, Research Report.
- [30] Oviasuyi, P. and Uwadiae, J. (2010) 'The Dilemma of Niger Delta Region as Oil Producing States of Nigeria', Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development, 16, 110-126.
- [31] Oyefusi, A. (2008) 'Oil and the Probability of Rebel Participation among Youths in the Niger Delta of Nigeria', Journal of Peace Research, 45:4, 539-555.
- [32] Saliu, H., et al. (2007) 'Environmental Degradation, Rising Poverty and Conflict: Towards an Explanation of the Niger Delta Crisis', Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa 8:4, 275-296
- [33] Sagay, I. (2001) Nigeria: Federalism, the Constitution and Resource Control
- [34] Steans, J. and Pettiford, L. (2001) International Relations: Perspectives and Themes. Malaysia, LSP: Person Education Limited, pp. 90.
- [35] Stiglitz, J. (1974) 'Growth with Exhaustible natural Resources: Efficient and Optimal Growth Paths', the Review of Economic Studies, 41, 123-137.
- [36] Tusch, R. (2007) 'Nigeria's Niger Delta Crisis: Root Causes of Peacelessness', EPU Research Papers, issue 7.
- [37] Udonwa, N., et al. (2004) 'Oil doom and AIDS boom in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria', Rural and Remote Health, 4:273.
- [38] Ukeje, C. (2001) 'Oil Communities and Political Violence: The Case of Ethnic Ijaws in Nigeria's Delta Region', Journals of Terrorism and Political Violence, 13:4, 15-36.
- [39] Ukiwo, U. (2003) 'Politics, Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria', Modern African Studies [online] 41:1, 115-138.
- [40] Watts, M. (2007) 'Petro-Insurgency of Criminal Syndicate? Conflict and Violence in the Niger Delta', Review of African Political Economy 34:144, 637-660.