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Violent Change- The Experience of Niger Delta Region: Any Lessons for Nigerian State?

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Abstract
This paper seeks to undertake a review of the history of neglect in Niger Delta vis-à-vis-emancipation struggle and vacillation of its approach from being non-violent to violent, in achieving its ambition of bringing succour to the oppressive governance and resultantly engendering better living conditions for the citizens of the region. It is an indisputable fact that the Niger Delta is a region of great and troubling paradox – it is a location of immense wealth as well as inhuman poverty, misery and hardship. This vexed situation has over the years engendered volatile protests and struggles against perceived injustice, disinheritance, marginalization and even exclusion perpetrated against the region by agents of the Nigerian State. While a school of thought opines that a non-violent approach to the quest for social change, is the pristine panacea for arriving at desired summit, some school of thought believes that best is to give back in same manner and texture what the state actors bring to the table. However, a third school is convinced that a violent approach is the most effective in all circumstances. Premised on the above, the struggle which started as a peaceful protest metamorphosed into armed conflict. The paper adopts the Marxian theory that saw human organizations (governments) in terms of the disparity in power and control. The paper concluded that, dialogue or constructive engagement is desirable but is not seen as capable of achieving desired changes rather violent.

Keywords: Niger Delta, Non- Violent, Struggle, Violent, Panacea, Social Change

1.0 Introduction

The return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999 opened up space for expression of suppressed ethnic demands bottled up by years of repressive military rule. Some of these ethno-nationalist sentiments have manifested insurgencies in the Niger Delta region under the auspices of the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the renewed demand for Biafra spearheaded by the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the South East, the incessant ethnic clashes in the Middle Belt region, the frequent religious disturbances in the North as well as the increasing notoriety of the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) in the West cited in Abdu and Okoro (2016:xii). The activities of these organizations and the spontaneous ethno-religious crisis occurred outside of the confines of the law. The response of the state tends to escalate the situation.

The oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria is no doubt a region of protracted and intricate

violent crisis or what some scholars have aptly described as "oil - resource wars" Alapiki (2008); Ibeanu (2008). Extant literature has attributed this complex conflictual situation to several interrelated variables: these ranges from distorted federalism and unjust politics of revenue allocation in Nigeria (Ibaba,2005; Okoko & Nna, 1997). Long years of criminal neglect, mis - governance and corruption culminating in visible poverty and misery of the region (Inokoba & Imbua, 2008; Ikelegbe, 2008): environmental injustice and state orchestrated genocidal human rights violations (Aaron, 2006); Alapiki, 2008): the failure of corporate social governance on the part of the Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs) Ikelegbe (2008); Aaron (2008); Okolo, (2014) : and to issues of socio – political and economic injustice, disinheritance, marginalization and even exclusion perpetrated against the oil rich region by agents of the Nigerian state (Okolo, 2004; Okowa 2007; Enweremadu 2008; Ibeanu 2008).

Apart from the Niger Delta in Nigeria, there are other four (4) deltas of the world, viz; Mississippi River Delta (USA), Mekong Delta (China), Nile Delta (Egypt), Okavango Delta (Angola), and Pearl River Delta (Macau/Hong Kong). Whereas the five Deltas have similar problems and require similar attention for development, the Government of these countries have addressed and promoted their deltas to the point that they are now part of their nations General Ledger for development, leaving that of Nigeria to decay. The Region so grossly neglected and marginalized that the quality and quantity of life of the people are deteriorating, and soon revert to Hobbean days of where it was "nasty, brutish and short". The absence of these socio-economic developments have accounted for the perennial conflicts and violence in the Region. Late Major Isaac Adaka Boro, for instance, after observing several decades of unsuccessful dialogue at the pre-independence Constitutional Conferences for the emancipation of Niger Delta minorities formed his own militia group, known as the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF). The dominant strategy in this phase was that of legal actions by the communities against the oil companies to pay adequate compensation for damages to their property... the second phase was characterized by peaceful demonstrations for adequate compensation or to fulfill their promises to provide communities and the Ogoni Bills of Rights (OBRs) but the oil companies responded by calling in the police and military; affirming that non-violent conflict has the potential to become violent if the regulatory mechanism is ineffective. Accordingly, with some embracement, the various communities are constraint to look for other means of seeking redress, with a view to protecting their interests. This trend of events led to perennial conflicts to which the late Major Isaac Adaka Boro's declaration of the "Niger Delta Republic" on February 23, 1966 is a catalyst.

2.0 Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Non-Violent Struggle

The practice of non-violence has developed a lot over the last century with the most influential use of recent decades being in political revolutions (Johansen, 2007). The foremost peace scholar, Gandhi added another perspective with the term 'satyagrha' which in English is translated as "truth force" (Bode, 1995),.pointed out that there had been instances in history where great courage, deep conviction and noble cause had prevailed, without violence, against armed might, Gandhi's struggle for freedom of India one such instances; the application of unarmed civilian power using non-violent methods such as protests, strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations, without using or threatening physical harm against the opponent or authority to drive-home their grievances. Civilians challenging the state through non-violent struggle employ irregular political tactics, working outside the defined

and accepted channels for social change and political participation defined by the state.

2.2 Social Activism

Social activism is an intentional action with the goal of bringing about social change. To be successful, social activism, Taib (2006) posits, requires a sense of historical mission and genuine concern for people. The sense of historical mission presupposes that the current state is determined by past and present factors that the future will be determined primarily by the presence hence enables the activist to draw lessons from the past; be conscious of the present doings; and understand the need to envision the kind society desired for the future. On the other hand, a genuine love for people requires the possession of a deep-rooted sense of empathy and understanding of the complexities of human interactions as well as the mechanics of society and the processes of social change

2.3 Change

Change is said to be an act or process whereby something becomes different. It is a deviation, reformation, replacement to what exists. Fullan (1993) opined that change is ubiquitous and restless, forcing itself at us on every turn. He went further to say that it is not possible to 'solve the change problem' but we can live with it practically and productively. Robbins (2011) spoke in volumes when he said 'by changing nothing, nothing changes'. Usually when change is being considered, the opposite of the subject is the change. One could change from bad to good, from war to peace, from violence to non-violence. Change is said to be inevitable, the only thing in life that is 'constant'. As protagonists of Peace and Conflict Studies, change is clearly spelt out in the subject matter, from peace to conflict or from conflict to peace. In the context of governance or every day social life, change means attaining a new socio-political order. In this paper, change is discussed in the prism of non-violent and violent means of moving from one socio-economic-political phase to another. This goes on to say that if a change is expected, there is need for a commensurate action to bring about this change.

2.4 Violence

George Hegel and Karl Marx argue that history of humankind progresses by means of violence. Many times transformation in the society is brought about by violent means. The Arab Spring Movement of 2009 in North Africa was mainly a violent movement that led to the toppling despots and enthronement of democratic regimes in the affected country. The experience in The Gambia and most recently Mali clearly indicates how strategic deployments of violent and nonviolent means can contribute towards resolving a conflict situation. Violence is "an act of aggression; a turbulent state resulting in injuries and destruction. To (Reidel & Welsh, 2002; Waddington, Badger & Bull, 2004; Govier, 2008) sees it as an impermissible application of physical force to another person. The speech titled "The Ballot and Bullet" delivered by Malcolm X in 1964 defined violence to include racial oppression, exploitation and degradation. The World Health Organisation (WHO) gives a more detailed definition by defining violence as "the use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation" (WHO, 1996). Not all conflicts are equal but some much important than others, because in some conflicts the issues at stake are more difficult to resolve in acceptable ways than are those in other conflicts; divergent opinion on how to bring about desired resolution to conflict or change use of force-change. This definition is considered sufficiently comprehensive and is therefore adopted for the purpose of this paper.

2.5 Conflict

Conflict is a phenomenon that is known to

human societies all over the world. It exists when people pursue different interests, opinions or values, i.e. when incompatible or contradictory activities occur and the parties to it are not agreed yet. Letterer (1996) views conflict as a type of behavior which occurs when two or more parties are in opposition or in battle as a result of a perceived relative deprivation from the activities of or interacting with another person or a group. To Rahim (2000) "conflict results from incompatibility or opposition in goals, activities, or interaction among the social entities". However, non-violent conflict has the potential to become violent if the regulatory mechanism is ineffective. Ross (1993 6:xiv) noted that: "If disadvantaged groups and individuals refuse to consider open conflict, they deny themselves what sometimes is their most effective means for bringing about the needed change". He saw conflict as natural and inevitable human experience and as a critical mechanism by which goals and aspirations of individual and groups are articulated, it is a channel for the explanation of creative solutions to human problems and the means to the development of a collective identity. In short, to Ross without conflict we cannot change. Flowing from above, it is seen as struggle over interests or goals which result into aggressive or violent manifestation in behavior.

This occurs when two or more people are competing for inadequate (or perceived to be inadequate) resources over a period of time. The competition may assume negative or destructive dimension when the available resources are not evenly and judiciously distributed. The relatively deprived would always struggle to improve their lot. This view agrees with the Marxian theory of conflict, which posits that more the rate of unequal distribution of scare resources in the society, the greater is the basic conflict of interest between dominant and subordinate segments. He also says that when practices of dominant segments create "alienation dispositions" the more the subordinate segments of a system become aware of their collective interests and question the distribution of scare resources, the more likely they are to join in overt conflict against dominant segment. Resources that can cause conflict include landed property/land (e.g. Niger Delta), money, vehicles, and company ownerships/shares among others. Consequently, there have been violent agitations in the form of militancy and a call for secession by the Niger Delta buttressing the argument of Bannon and Collier (2003:5) that violent secessionist movements are statistically much more likely if a country have valuable natural resources, especially oil.

Within the context of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria as it is world-wide, the concept of conflict is mostly seen as an opposition of interests, contradiction of conditions and difference of views between individuals, groups, clans, ethnic nationalities (Yakubu et al. 2005:29-30). This occurs wherever and whenever people come together in the form of family, group, community, city-state or country. The outcome of such mixture normally leads to struggles or contentions of various forms of intensity over diverse interests.

Conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence. According to Francis, "Conflict is the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups". (Best, Shedrack, et al. 2005:6). Some conflict resolution scholars argue that conflict has an ontological basis in human needs of life to enhance human existence that causes violent conflicts, which degenerate into armed violence, or armed conflict. To Kwankwaso, former Nigeria's Minister of Defence (Yakubu, et al.2005:9), the definition or concept of conflict has remained controversial over years due to the divergent perceptions among scholars. According to him, Marxian scholars argue that conflictual situations do emanate from contradictions among social classes while liberal scholars may contend that the failure of

the state to successfully settle the divergent personal and inter-group interest is the source of conflicts in the society. Two contending views of conflict between the Marxists and Liberal Scholars use to further the argument.

According to some other conflict theorists such as John Burton (1979) and Edward Azar (1994) conflict should be seen within the ambit of three related dimensions. The first is the distant past, which may span back to centuries or decades. The second is the immediate past, which shows the deterioration in the relationship among parties. And the third is the current event that remains fresh in the mind of aggrieved party (Best, 2005:47).

Historically, the earlier recorded conflicts within parts of the Niger Delta occurred through internal tensions. These tensions eventually led to the division of existing war canoe houses (waris) in the city-state. With time, both the old and new city states established system of co-operation, alliance and re-integration. In this sense, the internal tension resulted in the transformation of the existing political units into more embracing city-states and was not seen as being destructive. This pattern has changed, giving way to two main features: The First Feature of Conflict is Associated with Negative Consequences that lead to Dysfunctional Structures: This feature, popularized by Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs) perceives conflict as disruptive and unnatural, therefore, sees conflict as a form of deviant behavior that should be controlled and changed. This is because extreme cases of conflicts could be having negative consequences for the people of the Niger Delta and the national economy. We can therefore deduce that conflict in the State and/or Region is only destructive where it is allowed to escalate beyond the control of an established mechanism operating in the cultural system where it occurs. The second feature of conflict is based on incompatibility in the goals of the various ethnic groups, arising from opposing values and attitudes. The incompatibility has been increasingly redefined by post-colonial Governments in Nigeria that are dominated by the majority ethnic groups. This feature has attracted reaction from minorities of the Niger Delta. The reactions have increasingly become widespread since 1990, and the most prominent groups are Meinbutu in Warri, Asari Dokubo's Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and Ateke's Niger Delta Vigilante in Port Harcourt, leading to various theories or approaches of conflict cited in (Etekpe, 2007:22-24). Although the theories or approaches are many, i.e., social contract, structural conflict, economic, physiological, biological, realist and psycho-cultural-aggregated but the paper adopted the Hegel and Karl Marx radical approach.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

3.1 The Prevailing Theories and Approaches to Conflict in the Niger Delta

The Radical Approach

This theory or approach derived its inspiration from Hegel and Karl Marx (1818-1883), which saw human organizations (governments) in terms of the disparity in power and control. The radical school of thought allocates the causes of conflict to the prevailing structure in the society. Adherents to this approach believe that in the Nigerian context, conflict is a feature of the unequal nature of the over 250 ethnic groups in the country and the struggle by the minority ethnic groups to obtain equal access to state power and resources through peaceful means or measures. This approach supports Schlomo's argument (1968) that conflict is a means of bringing about desired change. In this perspective, dialogue or constructive engagement is desirable but is not seen as capable of achieving desired results.

The struggle which started as peaceful protest metamorphosed into armed conflict. The new

wave of protests after this has included the abduction of foreign oil workers, bombing of oil installations and destruction of lives and property. Late Major Isaac Adaka Boro, for instance, after observing several decades of unsuccessful dialogue at the pre-independence Constitutional Conferences for the emancipation of Niger Delta minorities formed his own militia group, known as the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF). He then declared a separate country (state) for the Niger Delta people on February 23, 1966. In reaction to this, the Nigerian State clamped down on him, and he went into twelve days war with the Federal Government of Nigeria. For twelve days, Boro's army held out against the Federal might. This approach was embraced by late Ken Saro-Wiwa, Chief Edward Kobani and Dr. G. Leton through the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in Rivers State in 1990. The argument of MOSOP is that, whereas Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd (SPDC) has been mining in Ogoniland since 1958 and had contributed over 40 billion US Dollars to the Nigerian Federal Government, the people of the oil producing area have not benefited. Other prominent groups that follow this approach include the Meinbutu Group in Warri, Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPF) of Asari Dokubo, the Vigilante of Ateke in Port Port Harcourt, and the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) in Delta State. The main features of these groups are increased spectre of violent attacks on crude oil/gas production facilities in the Region in order to "force" the Nigerian State to make fundamental structural changes in the Region (Etekpe, 2007:25-26). The inherent contradictions have transformed an otherwise peaceful resistance of the people into militant attitude.

This was why the late environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, lamented that the people of the region faced extinction in what he described as an ecological war (Saro-Wiwa, cited in Na'Allah, 1998). Increasing frustration emanating from oil exploration has led to violent resistance which has culminated in conflict in the region between locals represented by militants and oil corporations operating in the region.

Sagay (2001), was apt to say "The cumulative effects of the foregoing are alienation, disempowerment, pauperization and immiscrization of the people against the spirit of the fundamental objectives and Directive Principles of the State Policy". He went further to argue that environment of the Niger Delta has been so degraded that it is already endangering the livelihood and health of the people. Consequently, the 'Hegel and Karl Marx, theories' is imperative and timely in explaining the Niger Delta situation.

4.0 The Diary of the Violent Social Change in the Niger Delta

The history of the Niger Delta provides some insight into its unique position in Nigeria and the ways in which it has come to view itself. Its characteristics include a longstanding outward orientation, initially built on trade; dynamic, fragmented and competitive governance; and a fierce sense of independence in the face of perceived domination by outsiders. ". The struggle which started in 1958 as a peaceful protest metamorphosed into armed conflict (1966).

Conflicts in the Niger Delta have been occurring as far back as the pre-colonial period and the early 1960s when there were protests against the marginalization of the region. As earlier pointed out when the constitutional approach to the problems of the region failed, late Major Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro formed his Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), and challenged the Federal Government on February 23, 1966. After Major Boro's armed conflict, Kenule Saro-Wiwa, Chief Edwin Koboni and Dr. G. Leton from Ogoni continued the struggle and formed the Movement for the

Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). In other words, the grievances of local communities were first articulated in the 1990 Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBRs). The non-violent approach espoused by the Bill's authors has given way to region-wide frustration and conflict characterized by growing complexity, violence, and intractability. With increasing militancy, armed groups have arisen, waging systematic campaigns against the government and oil companies to further their demands (Alagoa, 2004).

During the transition to Independence in the 1950s, the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta began to express their concerns over the form that the Nigerian federation would take. The British Colonial Government set up the Henry Willink Minorities Commission of Enquiry in 1958. According to the Commission's Report, it found the Region "poor, backward and neglected" and compelled the Nigeria State to classify the Region as a Special Area for development after independence in line with how the problems of the other deltas in the world have been handled (Dappa-Biriye, 1995).

Oil exploration has however left in its wake degradation of the environment which has triggered conflict in the region. The Federal Government returning fire for fire, neglect and perceived injustice as well as frustration has led to agitation and struggles for emancipation, youths in the region have become radicalized and formed militant groups to contest their perceived enemies. The region has thus witnessed emergence of militant groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), and Coalition for Militant Action (COMA) and Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Niger Delta Avengers (ADA). It climaxed in the arrest, trial and execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight of his associates in 1995. This execution flared up anger within and outside the country; and won several "converts" at home to the cause of the people of Niger Delta. It also angered the Commonwealth of Nations to the point where it suspended Nigeria as member.
Intense protests and agitations in Niger Delta began in the mid 1980s and had passed through distinct phases. Owugah (1999:5-8) has identified four phases.

> The First phase could be roughly put between the early and mid 1980's. The dominant strategy in this phase was that of legal actions by the communities against the oil companies to pay adequate compensation for damages to their property... the second phase was characterized by peaceful demonstrations adequate compensation or to fulfill their promises to provide communities... the oil companies responded by calling in the police and military .The intervention of these operatives often resulted in destruction of life and property... the resistance thus assumed a desperately militant form in the third phase... mid 1990's to 1998... characterized by the militant strategy of forceful occupation and shutting down of flow station, kidnaping of oil workers, seizure of tug boats and other vessels belonging to the oil companies... the fourth phase is the demand for resource ownership and control. (Owugah, 1999: 5-8; see also Ibaba & Okolo: 5, 2009).

The first major episode of violent militancy in the Niger Delta occurred in February 1966. The Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro's episode in 1966 was followed by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSP) in 1990. In spite of the level of contributions, the Region still so grossly neglected and marginalized that the quality and quantity of life of the people are deteriorating, and soon revert to Hobbean days of where it was "nasty, brutish and short. The absence of these socio-economic developments

have accounted for the perennial conflicts and violence in the Region. This has become so pronounced that between1996 to 1999 about so conflicts have recorded followed the major conflicts in the Region.

The militancy and insurrection in the region is a classic case of the primacy of grievances in conflict causality. A prominent leader of the region put this succinctly in an interview recently;

> The boys are fighting for their survival. They are fighting unemployment, criminal negligence of their area, the dehumanization of our own people (Newswatch, 2008:08:04; 16- 26, see also Ikelegbe, 2010; & Okolo, 2014, pp. 91 - 99).

Ibaba & Okolo for example drew an inference from the above reference, thus, for them:

> Firstly, militia conflicts in Niger Delta emerged over a decade, but perhaps were unnoticed, or did not attract serious attention because it did not significantly affect oil production. Secondly, militia conflicts emerged because of the failure of the state to address the objective conditions that set in the agitations in the first place, and the state's violent responses to protests in the Niger Delta.(Ibaba & Okolo: 5, 2009)

In the 1990s, Ken Saro-Wiwa's Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) launched an era in the Niger Delta that was characterized by protests and subsequent repression. After these series of uprisings and new waves of protests characterized by militancy began, violence during this period grew out of proportion with the emergence of the Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV), led by Ateke Tom and, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), led by Alhaji Asari Dokubo. This eventually witnessed the emergence of other militant groups, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and the Niger Delta Liberation Front (NDLF). This introduced militancy into the region which was characterized by armed attacks, bombing of oil installations and hostage taking, particularly of foreign oil workers-thereby ushering in a Hobbesian Niger Delta (Ibeanu 2006:9)

The emergence of new militants such as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), the Red Egbesu Water Lions (REWL), Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF), Niger Delta Red Squad (NDRS), the Adaka Boro Avengers (ABA) in 2016, and the Greenland Justice Mandate (NDGJM). These new groups have continued from where the former militant groups left off with renewed bombing of oil installations and abduction of oil workers. The government has responded to the attacks by matching force with force, a step which analysts have criticized as not helping to achieve the goal of enduring peace in the region.

The Youths Conference that convened in December 1998 at Kaiama (the former home of the hero Isaac Boro) crystallized the struggle for resource control in the Kaiama Declaration. Subsequently became an article of faith for the Niger Deltans (UNDP 2007, p. 3), particularly with the emergence in December 2005 of the umbrella militant group calling itself the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

Thus, the content of their demands became volatile and resulting in the shift from mere development to issues of self-determination, resource control, federal restructuring to guarantee regional autonomy and self-development, environmental remediation and corporate responsibility. A critical analysis of the demands, reveal a shift from accommodation to direct challenge of the

Nigerian state project and confrontations with the state (Ikelegbe, 2010; See also Ibaba & Okolo 2009; 2011). All of these avenues of conflict became increasingly polarized and militarized, as stakes were raised and weapons became more accessible. The Niger Delta region is oppressed people and can never be free unless resolved to. Zimbabwe and Kenya got free after a few resolved that bondage was unacceptable. The developments in South Africa were triggered by same resolve. Injustice breeds insecurity.

From the discussion so far, it is glaring that the anger and bloody conflict associated with the Niger Delta region is largely neither the federal, state nor the local government have made any genuine attempt to engage the people of the region in the process of policy formulation nor as such can we boldly assert that for there to be any hope of permanently addressing the fostering conflict of the Niger Delta Region. It is clear from the foregoing historical analyses of conflict that the people of the state and region have come a long way in the struggle against deliberate state policies and programmes that are designed and implemented to promote or induce conflicts.

5.0 The Changing Faces of the Violent Approach in Niger Delta

Against all odds, non-violent approach has proved to have been a single most virile tool that transition may come about through a violent revolutionary cataclysm (Hudson-Allison, 2016). In fact, oftentimes it is said the only language Nigeria government understands is the language of violence. Many times this saying is proven true. Most recently, we experienced the End-SARS protest which started as peaceful protest by Nigerian youth who were dissatisfied with the spate of police brutality across the country. What started as peaceful strategy was high-jacked by violent opposition and was met and installed by the institutional violence that the youth initially came out to protest against. Notwithstanding the vacillation of the struggle from non-violent approach to violent approach which eventually drew attention of the state. Presented below is list of some of the actions taken by government to militancy vacillation thereafter:

In 1957, the government established the Willink's Commission to look into the problems of the minorities. The Willink's Commission found the region as “poor, backward and neglected”, and recommended the establishment of an economic development agency. This Commission acknowledged the utter neglect of the region and, among other proposals, recommended and the eventual creation of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB).

In 1976, when Olusegun Obasanjo became the Military Head of State and Government, further to the NDDB the establishment of the Niger Delta River Basin Authority (NDRBA).

In an attempt to pacify the youths who have become apprehensive and restive, President Shehu Shagari's Government in the second republic instate the derivation principle, with the implementation of 1.5% (percent) derivation to the oil producing communities (OPCs).

In order to show its commitment to ending the crisis and ensuring the development of the area., the Federal Government under then Military President, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida led Government, in raising the derivation principle from 1.5% (percent) to 3% (percent), and went ahead to establish the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) which was in operation from 1992 in 1993. The OMPADEC was set up under the Chairmanship of Chief Albert Horsefall.

After this, the Niger Delta Environmental Survey was set up in 1995, followed by the

Niger Delta Development Commission, established in 2000 by President Olusegun Obasanjo with a vision 'to offer a lasting solution to socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta Region' and a mission 'to facilitate the rapid, even and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful' (Niger Delta Development Commission, 2000 p.103).

The Special Security Committee on Oil Producing Areas was also set up by the Federal Government in November 2001 to address the prevailing situation in the oil producing areas. Other efforts include the convening of the first Niger Delta peace conference in Abuja in 2007, a Joint Task Force (JTF) in 2008, and a Technical Committee made up of stakeholders and the Niger Delta ministry in 2008.

The Federal Government under late President Musa Yar'Adua in 2009 introduced an amnesty programme which witnessed a large number of militants surrendering their arms in return for training by the government. Under the programme, many repentant militants were trained within and outside the country and during the period, relative peace returned to the region. Amnesty represented an opportunity to stabilise the region for constructive conflict resolution negotiations backed with solid proposals for the necessary disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the region's militants. The first stage of the programme led to 26, 808 ex-combatants accepting the offer. Of them, 20, 192 accepted the offer on or before 4th October 2009 and 6, 616 during November 2009. The second stage involved government setting up demobilisation camps for the demilitarisation and rehabilitation of the ex-militants; while the third stage involved government's engagement with the leadership of the combatants and ex-combatants, as well as non-combatant youths, for employment and socio-economic empowerment.

To accelerate and ensure the socio-political and economic development of the area Federal Government established the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (MNDAs)

Additionally, the Federal Government in November 2016 convened a peace dialogue in which President Buhari met with leaders from the region in Abuja to discuss the way forward. At the meeting, leaders of the region led by Elder Chief Edwin Clark presented a 16-point agenda to the Federal Government and the president welcomed the requests reiterated that the reports of amnesty would be implemented.
The then administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, in continuation to ending the crisis and ensuring the development of the region embarked on the clean-up of Ogonland.
Nevertheless, the signed into law of the long awaited Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) (President Buhari) are all pointers or fallout from the Violent approach by the Niger Delta people to addressing the frustration aggression, injustices, deprivation and state of hopelessness bedeviling the region.

6.0 The Role of the Niger Delta Elite in the Scenario

After Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro's episode in 1966, the struggle for resource control and self-determination in the Region almost died down until 1990 when it resurrected through the activities of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP).

Since then, over 20 militant groups have emerged to sustain the agitation and the dimensions, and the tempo of conflicts has also increased to attract national and international attention.

LIST OF ALL THE 20 MILITANT GROUPS OPERATING IN THE NIGER-DELTA

S/NO	MILITANT GROUPS	DATE FORMED	CURRENT STATUS/ ACTIVITES OF THE GROUPS	SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT	POLITICAL IMPACT	REMARKS
1	Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF)	1966	Engaged in violent protests and attacks on oil installations to demand resource control.	Contributed to disruptions in oil production, affecting local economies.	Increased local and national awareness of Niger Delta issues.	.We will no back dow until our right are recognized.
2	Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)	1990	Primarily engaged in peaceful advocacy: have influence in local governance.	Promoted environmental justice: led to increased investment in sustainable practices.	Enhanced political representations for the Ogoni people in governance.	Environmenta justices ar non-negotiate able: we wil fight for ou land.
3	Egbesu Boys of Africa	1990s	Active: Known for local protests and resistance against perceived threats.	Limited economic disruptions: focus on local rights.	Increased local political activism and community mobilization.	We stan united for th rights of ou people and ou land.
4	Ijaw Youth Council (IYC)	1998	Active in advocacy: involved in political negotiations and	Advocated for youth empowerment programmes, leading to jobs creation initiatives.	Increased political participation of Youths in local governance.	Youths empowerment is crucial fo the future o the Nige Delta.

5	Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN)	2000s	Active in advocacy: Engages in community mobilization and protests.	Advocated for local economic initiatives.	Enhanced political representations and a wareness of Ijaw rights.	Our identity and rights must be recognize and protected
6	Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF)	2004	Active: involved in local protests and occasional violent incidence.	Contributed to instability, affecting local businesses and investments.	Increased government focus on security and political negotiations	We will protect our communities from exploitation and vi olence.
7	Niger Delta Revolutionary Movement (NDRM)	2004	Active: Involved in militant activities, although less predominant than the past	Contributed to insecurity, impacting local economies and investments.	Increased political awareness of Niger Delta issues and the national levels.	We will not rest until our demand for justice is met.
8	Delta Force	2005	Active: Engages in protests and has a reputation of violent actions.	Contributed to insecurity, discouraging foreign investment in the region.	Raised political awareness about the need for security reforms.	The government must listen to our grievances or face the consequences.
9	Sons of the Niger Delta (SNA)	2005	Currently involved in local protests: influence	Contributed to local protests, affecting regional	Increased local political engagement and activism.	We are committed to fighting for our people's

10	Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC)	2005	Active: Involved in armed resistance and community mobilization efforts.	Increased instability, affecting local businesses and livelihoods.	Height ened political tensions: prompted security responses from the government.	We will continue our until the government addresses our concerns.
11	Niger Delta Freedom Fighters (NDFF)	2005	Active: Involved in attacks on oil facilities and local protests for autonomy	Disruption in oil productions, led to economic losses for the government and local businesses.	Influenced political discourse on autonomy and resource control.	We demand from oppressors and control over our resources.
12	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)	2006	Conducted attacks on oil pipelines and facilities: known for high -profile kidnappings and sabotage	Significant decline in oil production: led to economic losses for the government.	Pressure government negotiation s with the local communities for resource control.	Our struggle is for the liberation of our people from oppression.
13	Bakassi Freedom Fighters (BFF)	2006	Currently less active: some members involved in local politics	Limited impact: focus on local grievances without significant economic disruptions.	Raised awareness of the rights of the Bakassi people: influenced local governance.	We demand autonomy for our people and protections of our rights .

14	Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF)	2006	Active: continues to engage in sabotage and kidnapping.	Disrupted oil productions, affecting local and national economies.	Pressured government to address resource control issues politically.	We demand control over our resources and compensations for damages.
15	Niger Delta People's Movement (NDPM)_	2007	Active: Continue to advocate for local rights through protests and community engagement	Advocated for economic rights, leading to some community developments initiatives .	Increased political representatives for lo cal communities in governance.	Our voices will be heard: we will not be silence.
16	Martyrs Brigade	2008	Active in armed resistance: known for confrontation with security forces.	Led to the increased in military in the region, impacting local communities.	Heightened political tensions and security concerns.	Our sacrifices would not be vain; we seek justices for our people.
17	Niger Delta Oil Pipeline Protection Agency (NDOPPA)	2008	Active: Engages in negotiations with oil companies and local extortions..	Engaged in negotiations, which led to some economic benefits for the community.	Influenced government policies regarding oil companies operations and local rights.	We will ensure that oil companies respect our environment and communities.

18	Indigenous People of Biafra (IBOB)	2012	Primarily focus on political activism: faced cracked down but remain influential.	Economic impacts through protests affecting local businesses: some disruption to trade.	Increased political polarizations in Nigeria: highlighted ethic grievances.	We will continue to agitate for our rights and independence.
19	Niger Delta Avengers (NDA)	2016	Responsible for multiple attacks on oil infrastructure to demand environmental justice and autonomy.	Attacks on oil infrastructure resulted in major financial loss es.	Influenced government policies towards increased autonomy of Niger Delta	We will continue to attack oil installations until our demands are been met.
20	Reformed Niger Delta Avengers (RNDA)	2017	Active: involved in attacks on oil facilities and community mobilization.	Continued attacks have disrupted oil flow, affecting national revenue.	Increased pressure on government to address local demands for autonomy.	We are committed to the struggle - for self - determination in the Niger Delta.

Source: www.wilsoncenter.org). AFR_110929_Niger Delta_0113.pdf . Retrieved 01/06/2024

Paradoxically the different concepts, theories and approaches has negated against the principle of collectivism hence clash of interests hindered the development of the region. For instance, some of the leaders deviate from self-sustainable programmes and projects to reduce the high level of poverty and decay in the region by demanding huge amounts of money from the Federal Government on their behalf, which never got to them. Thus, their noble objectives are frustrated by some of the leaders which generated internal tensions among themselves.

Furthermore, the factionalisation of MOSOP into two: MOSOP championed Ken Saro-

Wiwa and other labeled Vulture or pro-Government led by Chief Edward Kobani. At the climax of the feud in 1994, Ogoni People lost its second generation of leaders- Chiefs Edward Kobani, Samuel Ntete Orage, Albert Tombari Badey and Theophilus Nna Orage, known as Ogoni 4; and later in 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others namely; Felix Nuante, Dr. Barinem Kiobel (former commissioner), Nordu Eawo, John Kpuiem (Vice President, NYCOP), Paul Levura, Baribo Bern, Saturday Dobe and David Kpokoo through hanging by the Federal Government. The death of first, Ogoni 4, and later, Ogoni 9, brought "darkness" and sharp factions in Ogoniland. The factions were between pro-government, tagged "vultures" and pro-Ken Saro-Wiwa, known as MOSOP.

It could be recall, in 2003; some politicians allegedly armed Alhaji Mujahad Asari-Dokubo, leader of the NDVF and Ateke Tom, leader of Niger Delta Vigilante, to ensure that they were re-elected. Dokubo and Tom worked together for the re-election bids but later fell apart. According to Chigbo (2007:24-25), during their struggle for supremacy about 2000 youths died. Ikelegbe applied the economy of war theory emphasising greed and grievance to explain the emergence and sustenance of militant activities in the zone proves that the decision to use violence indicates certainty of success In support of this view, Collier and Hoeffler (2000) maintain that grievance is a convenient tool for political mobilisation to access and control resources. Conversely, the combination of grievance and greed argued by Seiyefa (2020), Godinho, and Hermanus (2018) underscores the implication of elite political culture and the government's attitude towards governance. It is pertinent to note that the outcome of the political elite form of governance – state capture does not serve as the cause for greed, however, the disparity between the rich and the poor necessitated by the absence of infrastructure makes the case for grievance or social injustice.

Corruption in high haven, the presidential panel, which investigated alleged corruption in the amnesty programme for Niger Delta report, indicted three former coordinators of the federal government initiative for looting and misappropriating a whopping N712 billion allocated to rehabilitate and reintegrate members of the armed group into the society.

Thus, the paper believe that some of the issues raised by militants, particularly in the area of improving the quality of lives of the people were critical to the resolution of the conflict and the situation change for better has unraveled several proven and tested methods, strategies and skills to manage and resolve the perennial conflicts in Niger Delta.

7.0 Lessons for Nigerian State

a) The key lesson is that proper management of conflict will lead to better stimulation of ideas, search for new strategies by the Government and also lead to the clarification of the position held by the aggrieved parties and a chance for people or interest groups to redress issues of long-term neglect and under-development.

b) Bridge the gap by unraveling the unexpected the frightening financial, material and human costs and losses; skills and social structures on conflict transformation.

c) Drawing the attention of government and international communities to the nature and dimensions of the politics involved in disposing the people of the Niger Delta of their resources which is the major source and cause of conflict in the Region.

d) The government should be civil, democratic and responsible enough to listen to nonviolent protesters at all times and oblige their demands.

e) Leaders have to be honest and committed to their Cause. Individual Kick backs and self aggrandizement should not be allowed to cause dissension or jeopardize their common goal by

emphasized reclaiming dignity for people who were marginalized, setting aside normal lives and making exceptional sacrifices to achieve the stated goals.

8.0 Conclusion and recommendations

The Niger Delta since the commencement of oil mining had been an area of conflict. Devastated by oil and gas exploration and exploitation, and neglected by the Nigerian State and MNOCs, a very high level of unemployed youths have taken over the agitation for resource control and management. They have frontally challenged the Federal Government and MNOCs. Applying the theoretical framework of "Marxian", the paper appraised the radical approach that brought a sort of succor to the region. Thus, what Henry Willink's Commission observed and described in 1958 that Niger Delta is poor, backward and neglected, is still true today. Ake (1966:23) was apt to react thus "to this end, every other thing is subordinated, including the lives and livelihood of the people of the Niger Delta Region as well as, the environment". Flowing from the above, dialogue or constructive engagement is desirable but is not as capable of achieving desired results.

To Hetzel (1992:17), "since we haven't gotten closer to the solution (proposed at Earth Summit), we need to take a closer look at how we define the problem and our choice of solutions". In this 21st Century, we must choose a different attitudes and belief systems about the earth, oil and gas exploitation in the Niger Delta, tin mining, Middle Belt, gold mining in the North West areas, and human interaction and relationship with the host communities. For the desired attitudinal change, the paper identified the need for proactive policy formulation and implementation at all tiers of government and those of MNOCs.

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