



Environmental pollution, the militia, amnesty and gunboat diplomacy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria 2008-2018

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Abstract

This paper examines environmental pollution, the militia, amnesty and the gun boat diplomacy in Niger Delta region of Nigeria. To do this, the paper adopts the theories of alienation by Marx (1932) and anomie by Emile Durkheim (1893) and popularized by Robert Merton (1938 and 1954). The theories assume that alienation gives way to frustration and eventuates anomie behaviour seen in both the gap between needs and satisfaction and in the discrepancy between goals and means in a capitalist economy. The theories explain the feeling by the militia of being alienated from the oil wealth in the region leading to a magnified frustration and anomie actions of violence. Data for the research was generated from secondary sources like textbooks, government gazettes, published articles and other scholarly sources. The paper adopted qualitative descriptive design, and from analysis condemns the resultant militancy and criminalization of the true Niger Delta struggle for resource control, it unequivocally questions the contradictions of the federal government policies and actions so far on the Niger Delta issues. It condemns the continued federal government staggering and slumbering posture on the region's crisis like the vacuity in the proposed Ogoni clean-up of 2018. The paper concludes that the federal government amnesty offer to the militants was a legitimate instrument of the government to guile the legitimate demands of the people of the region and open up the entire region for massive looting. That the amnesty project was therefore, a Trojan horse to the militants and the Niger Delta struggle and recommends a total overhaul of the policies regarding oil exploration even as it encourages a complete cleanup of the polluted environment for a sustainable peace.

Keywords: environmental pollution, gunboat diplomacy, militia, amnesty

Introduction

Environmental pollution is one critical aspect of oil spillage that has always underscored the Niger Delta crisis. The others emanate from the struggle between the federal government operations, and the top security digs on one hand, and the militants and their sponsors on the other hand, over control of oil resource via the lucrative oil bunkering business in the region. Pollution of the environment occasioned by continued oil spillage is directly proportional to the abysmally poor socio-economic and health situations and its attendant high level of insecurity in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. In recent times, the physical, emotional, mental and psychological dimensions of health among indigenous people in the region are distinctly, as well as differentially, influenced by a broad range of social determinants. These include socio-economic circumstances caused by oil spillage, and environments, as well as structures, systems and institutions that influence the development and maintenance of the environment and health along a continuum from excellent to poor. These structures and systems include the multinational companies (MNCs), government policies on oil spillage and institutions like National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA).

The social determinants of the living conditions of the vulnerable people of the region could be likened to "yet to explode time bomb with indefinite range of destruction". The underdeveloped state of the region shows that the development crisis is protracted and has assumed a wide range of unintended consequences with major implications

on unanticipated issues caused by continued pollution of the environment with no solution in sight. For Solomon, Daminabo and Uzor (2016) ^[21], pollution means man-made or man-aided alteration or chemical physical or biological quality of the environment beyond acceptable limits. He added that Environmental pollution is any undesirable change in physical, chemical, or biological characteristics of any component of the environment i.e. air, water, soil which can cause harmful effects on various forms of life or property. This stark reality was affirmed by the late president Umaru Musa Yar' Adua's last statement that

The Niger Delta Crisis is not new. The situation in Niger Delta region has been there remotely for decades and the escalation of violence and criminality that has taken root has been there for between eight and nine years (The Nation, May20, 2009) ^[22].

Implied in the above statement is the recognition of the fact that the federal government was fully aware of the genesis and the level of escalation of the Niger Delta Crisis but lacked the requisite political will, commitment and solution to tackle the development crisis in the region. The Niger Delta region problem is not only economic; it is also structurally determined. The seed for its present condition had been sown long ago by the Nigerian State. Karl Marx once said that every system contains within it the seed to its destruction. Consequently, the Niger Delta region violent eruptions is a product of the Region's development crisis

which in turn, is the product of the seed of structural imbalance, injustice and criminal neglect sown on the region by the politics elite from the majority ethnic groups. Nwankwo (2003) for instance, points out some of the negative expressions in the framework of Nigerian Federal politics and structures According to him:

Those who in their dominant political and economic positions declare faith in the state's unity in diversity, at the same time insist that the central government must monopolies all the resources of the state. The consultants or federating units, lacking in adequate power potential and financial viability, exist, indisputably as mere appendages of the federal monster

According to Umoh, Poroma and Deedam (2019), true federal principle supposed to provide an institutional basis for representing the diverse interests within the federation. What the scenario in Nigeria has shown, is that the principle of ethnic or sectional balancing has heightened conflicts, crisis and division rather than ameliorates them. It is not entirely the intention of this paper to restate the conditions of things in the Nigeria Delta Region. But it is expedient that the paper addresses the recurrent issues of environmental pollution, proliferation of militia groups occasioned by the oppressive and repressive posture of the federal government on them amidst the federal government several amnesty proclamations. It is the assertion of this paper that several hostilities in the region between the militias groupings and the federal government that led to the federal government proclamation of amnesty during former President Yar' Adua's government, have inexorably brought to the fore, again and again, the extant issues in the Nigeria Delta question, "environmental pollution, the militia, amnesty and gunboat diplomacy". The paper catalogues some oil spillages from 2008 to 2018 even as it shows reasons for the rise and sustained actions of the militia. The timeline of 2008 – 2018 is expedient to the research as it heralds the coming of president Yar'Adua, a northerner deputized by a Niger Deltan in the person of ex-president Goodluck Johnathan. It is also important as it was the period when erstwhile president Obasanjo committed genocide in the Odi part of the region which became a major catalyst in the rise of the militias. Peculiar to the timeline is the widespread oil spillage during these periods and the coming of another northerner as president in 2015 who proposed environmental cleanup in 2018 Although Nwankwo (2013), Umoh, *et al* (2019) and Solomon, *et al* (2016) tie the origin of and fecundity to the crisis on resources conflict, public policy lacuna and the structure of governance in Nigeria, and offer structural changes in the mechanism and laws for resource control as a way out of the crises. The current assessment explores the root causes mentioned by them within the Nigerian political experience and in the context of specific determinants of and actors to the conflicts within the purview of environmental factors and institutions that have remained the source and manure to the crises within the periods under review. Upon the above, the paper further argues that the solution to this intractable problem indisputably is not be anchored on the deception or threats of the gunboat diplomacy via military assaults and the wobbling sustenance of amnesty to the militants but lies on

genuine commitment to justice and sustainable development of the Region.

Statement of the problem

A close examination of conflicts over natural resources in Nigeria, will no doubt, indicate a somewhat peculiar post-colonial theme, both in the nature of their manifestation and the politics of their resolution. Of vital importance here, is the Ogoni struggle for self-rule, the secession focus of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Herders-farmers' conflicts, and the Fulani bandits in the Lake Chad Basin and in the Gulf of Guinea with particular emphasis on the Niger Delta militia. Earlier, the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) had in a resolution adopted in 2005, recognized the linkages between the unlawful exploitation (as if exploitation in any case is lawful) of natural resources and the illegal trade in such resource, Conversely, the pollution of habitable natural environment, and the proliferation and trafficking of arms are major factors fueling and escalating conflicts in several regions in Africa in general and the Niger delta region of Nigeria in particular. The extent to which a state succeeds in managing these resource conflicts is one determinant factor of stability in that particular state. This might be one of the reasons why Macartan (2003) argued that the institutional capacity of government alters relationships between natural resource conflict and those subnational groupings agitating for resource control, Macartan did not however foresee the use of gunboat diplomacy by the state or its institution to arm-twist negotiations regarding resource control occasioned by a plethora of environmental challenges. Be that as may, the Nigerian state has been embroiled in one form of resource conflict or the other making it a serious issue impeding nationalism and development. Many reasons have been advanced by the concerned parties to justify their desire to control the resources. In the recurring Niger Delta conflict for resource control, the proliferation of militia groups for various objectives and the subsequent disruption of the economic, political, and socio-cultural activities of the Nigerian nation-state, multinational oil corporations, and indeed the oil bearing communities have become routine occurrence oscillating between public policy lacuna and the failure of implementation, (Umoh, Poroma, and Deedam, 2019). This is in agreement with Collier (2004) when he argued that conflict is development in reverse, and it has intense meaning in the case of the Niger Delta militia. These challenges have made scholars to examined the Niger Delta crisis in other to best understand the phenomenon, an autopsy of the thrust of these researches have shown that even as the scholars adopted many theoretical explanations to the evolution of resource conflict in Nigeria in general and the Niger Delta in particular and how it should be addressed, none had evaluated the link between environmental pollution and the deployment of gunboat diplomacy as the reason for the rise of militia and the subsequent amnesty program. Some of these studies in natural resource conflict adopted different approaches to conceptualized myriads of framework ranging from the *Greed and Grievance, Stake Holders, Frustration – Aggression, theory of alienation, theory of anomic Relative Deprivation, Environmental Scarcity, the Neo-Malthusian theory* down to the *Political Economy* perspectives. These approaches and perspectives adopted are consistent with the thrust of their arguments with degrees of parsimony to the

problem and with varying policy recommendations. For example, studies such as Ibekwe, and Ewoh., (2012) ^[9], Walker (2008) ^[29] Umoh, *et al* (2019), Solomon, Daminabo and Uzor (2016) ^[21] Watts, (2010) ^[30], Inokoba., and David (2010) ^[12], Asuni (2009) ^[4], Collier (2009) ^[6] and others have all investigated the Niger Delta crisis. Several of these studies have focused on different aspects of the crisis but failed to capture the interconnectedness between environmental pollution, and gunboat diplomacy as the spine to the formation of militias in the region, this is the focus of this review.

Contextualization of concepts

Pollution

The introduction of substances being it gaseous, liquid or solid into the natural environment with the capacity of contaminating the natural state of that environment. Pollution could occur naturally or humanly induced. Our interest is in the actions of humans that constitutes pollution.

The Environment

This is a habitable, usable and alterable portion of the earth considered as physical space where humans interact with each other and with nature for their sustenance and growth.

Environmental pollution

This is situation where the environment is tampered with or altered in composition or condition directly or indirectly as a result of activities of man so that it becomes less suitable for some or all of the uses for which it will be suitable in its natural contexts.

Gunboat Diplomacy (GBD)

In conflict resolution within a state, diplomacy is the art and practice of conducting negotiations between representatives of that state and an aggrieved subnational group(s). but in interstates conflict resolution, it is usually referring to international diplomacy which sees to the conduct of international relations through the intercession of professional diplomats with regard to issues of peace-making, trade, war, economics, culture, environment, and human rights. International treaties are usually negotiated by diplomats prior to endorsement by national politicians. In an informal or social sense, diplomacy is the employment of tact to gain strategic advantage or to find mutually acceptable solutions to a common challenge, one set of tools being the phrasing of statements in a non-confrontational or polite manner. However, gunboat diplomacy takes a twist in its conduct. GBD is the pursuit of negotiation or agreement between two unequal actors with the display of military power to influence the direction of agreement in favour of the superior actor. This is often subsumed in either foreign policy or domestic policy between states or between a state and subnational groupings

Militia

Are various armed subnational groupings with assertive character driven by ideological differences with the state regarding access to and redistribution of natural resources in a geographical area. Militia in the Niger delta region therefore are concerned with the redistribution of natural wealth accruing from exploration or mining of natural resources in their region. This concern might deploy disruptive behaviors in a bid to make their disagreement

felt. In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, militia objectives explain the groupings as social phenomena that have passionately been supported or discredited by society. Some are known as nationalist struggles in the wake of colonialism while some are called freedom fighters. The danger associated with these groups underpin people's perception of them The term militia was coined out of a Latin word, miles meaning soldiers or fighters, notwithstanding the question of legitimacy and the legal constraints about its acceptance. Example; The Niger Delta Peoples Defense Force, one of the fearsome militia in the region, claims legitimacy based on its claimed mission of defending the people and environment.

Amnesty

Citizens' forgiveness by the state for a past crime so long as there is a change of heart within a prescribed time of rehabilitation. Sometimes amnesty is induced by the state as a means to emasculate crisis or conflict

Theoretical Anchorage

For a detailed theoretical explanation of environmental pollution of the Niger Delta Crisis and the resultant issues of militia, amnesty and gunboat diplomacy, the paper adopts two theoretical perspectives in analyzing the above issues, namely, the theories of alienation by Marx (1932/1964) and Anomic by Emile Durkheim (1893) and popularized by Robert Merton (1938 and 1954).. In Marxian Sense as captured by Onouha (2008) ^[18], alienation can be seen as the opposite of what people can be potentially. As a result of alienation, work in capitalist society is reduced to mere labour in which the individual does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, close s not to freely develop his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The implication of this is that labour in capitalism is very different from genuine human activity. The issue of alienation stems from Marx's view that for man to survive or live, he must eat, and for him to eat, he must produce (work). In working, he establishes a relationship which in most times, alienates him from his productive activity, object of his activity, the product, from his fellow workers and finally from his own human potential (specie being). Work is therefore, man's most important activity as human being. Through work, we create our world and ourselves the products of our labours reflect our nature and forms the basis for our self-evaluations. Individuals in capitalist societies lose control of their labour and become commodities, objects used by the capitalist to make profit because of their interactions or relationship with the capitalist. Thus, in Nigeria, the people of the Niger Delta Region and their land and resources are used by the multinational oil companies in collaboration with Nigerian state, as object of profiteering and expansionism, with their resources products and lives controlled by MNCS and federal government. Alienation is a structural condition in Marx's view, regardless of how they feel about it, workers are alienated, having no control over the conditions of their work; they can control neither their wellbeing nor their survival. Thus, the Niger Deltans have no control over their natural resources, over their wellbeing and their survival as their environment has been polluted and their means of livelihood (fishing waters and farm lands negatively affected without any meaningful sustainable solution to the destroyed business but to the

destroyed self to be used by the government and the MNCS. Alienation in Marx’s estimation therefore, is a pervasive sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness; isolation and self-estrangement. Thus, the accumulated tension arising from persistent alienation is expressed in violent crime and conflict and the upsurge of military onslaught on the people of the region. The Theory of anomie on the other hand, emphasizes the importance and the impertinence of two elements in any society. According to Emil Durkheim, the chief proponent of the theory, includes (1) cultural aspirations or goals people believe are worth striving for, and (2) institutionalized means or accepted ways to attain the desired ends. R.K Merton argued that in a class oriented society, opportunities to get to the top are not equally distributed. If a society is to be stable, the two elements mentioned must be the means by which individuals their reach goals that are important to them. Disparity between goals and means fosters frustration which leads to strain. This structural strain theory explains why the crisis in the Niger Delta persist inspite of all the palliative measures such as the creation of state, establishment of development agencies development agencies and upward review of derivations to 13%, the violent crisis persists because all the measures do not meet the aspirations of the ordinary people of the region. The reason as captured by Obi (1997) [14] when he noted that while the oil was taken out of Niger Delta and it proceeds used in developing cities in other parts of Nigeria, and also enriching the hegemonic elites, the region was impoverished, underdeveloped and polluted. Hence, when there seem to be no legitimate means to achieve their aspirations of decent living in the area, the people had to resort to violent activities.

The emergence and rise in influence of the militia

The emergence of armed militia is consequent upon two major factors; environmental pollution via oil spillage and affiliate oil activities of Multinational companies (MNC), and the demand for resource control occasioned by poverty, unemployment and lack of access to the wealth accruing from the region. The armed militia though currently seems to be a sleeping dog also emerged as a resistance against economic hardship, state authoritarianism and environmental degradation. One of the contemporary precursors to it rise in influence is noted in the action of MOSOP. The group through organized mass actions blocked state/oil companies’ access to oil wells in Ogoniland leading to great losses of revenue to Shell and the FG (Obi, 2001). The MOSOP’s example spurred up the rise of other militia in the region despite organized state actions to crush the rebellion. For Omeje (2004) [16], militia groups emerge because of what he calls *oilification* of conflicts in Nigeria. To him, the assumption of oilification explains the tendency of the Nigerian government to use more than a proportionate force to address anything that seems to threaten oil activities in the country. Oil being a national security issue is often protected with state’s apparatus of violence, the armed forces. The brutality that often shapes military interventions against noncombatant is known to characterized issues of internally displaced persons(IDPs). The IDPs in the region were never provided with humanitarian assistance leading to more recruits to the militia and deaths. The Vanguard Newspaper (2002, 3) [25] reports on the Odi Massacre reveal that the rule of engagement of the over 2000 troops that invaded Odi was

with a shoot-on-sight order that led to some 2,483 civilians’ death and many more displaced. This action spurred the rise of many more militant leaders and militia groupings such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND); the All Ijaw Youth Conference; the Egbesu Boys of Africa; the Pan-Niger Delta Youth Movement, the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF); Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities. This massive resurgence of ethnic militia has heightened arms proliferation and worsened the spate of violence, most of which targeted the oil companies operating in the region through seizure of oil wells, kidnapping and hostage taking of oil workers. In May 2009 however the FG ordered an organized military offensive known as the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) against the ‘militants.’ The JTF (also known as ‘Operation Restore Hope’) was met with wide criticism for the degree of atrocities against the people of the region especially women and children.

Environmental pollution, the militia, amnesty and gumboat diplomacy in niger delta region

The Niger delta region of Nigeria constitutes of southern Nigeria oil rich states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. These states became prominent even before they were created following the discovery and subsequent exploration and exportation of crude oil. History has it that oil was first discovered and explored in Oloibiri in the present day Bayelsa State in 1956. Since then, women, children and men in the communities that make up these states have known deprivation, pollution, poverty, and unemployment tailored in pains and sorrows from the oil activities. As Wafaa (2017) [27] pointed out, that Oil wealth in theory, brings positive impacts to host communities with minimal costs to the environment; however, the exploitation of oil wealth by political elites and oil companies with disregard for environmental degradation has ensured that the Delta stands as a monument to the failure of the modern African nation-state to care for its people. The emergence and rise in influence of the militia groupings is consequent upon factors such as oil spillage The major oil spill that culminated to widespread environmental pollution that attracted brought international attention to the region was the 1970 oil spill in Ogoniland which lead to the contamination of thousands of hectares of farmland and rivers. Shell BP the company behind the spill was fined \$26m by a court 30 years after. Since then till date, the region has witnessed over 7,000 spills. (Vaughan, 2011) [26]. The table below gives a run-down of oil spills in the region from 2008 to 2018.

Table 1

Year	Total Number of Oil Spills	Number of Litres Spilled	Number of Barrels
2018	571	4,054,180.64	25,689.37
2017	489	5,261,786.74	33,302.45
2016	562	6,775,629.53	42,883.73
2015	739	6,833,956.48	43,252.89
2014	1,236	12,121,558.74	76,718.73
2013	1,621	5,076,396.88	32,129.09
2012	1,059	6,021,743.45	38,112.3
2011	984	11,347,199.01	71,817.72
2010	817	6,621,081.69	41,905.58
2009	704	4,993,620.73	41,905.58
2008	800	10,196,707.15	31,605.12

Source: author’s adaptation from NOSDRA (2019)

As a consequent the violent crisis and gum boat diplomacy between the Niger Delta militias and the Nigeria federal troupe became an inescapable consequence of environmental pollution, injustice and inequity in the country to height that, late Attorney General of the federation Chief Bola Ige, Solomon, Daminabo., and Uzor (2016) ^[21] observed rather inductively that.:

All Nigerians are thieves stealing the property of the Niger Delta. Nigerians have stolen the treasure of the Niger Delta people and if care is not taken, we will face the wrath of God because it is a sin to plunder the resources of the people

According to Saro-Wiwa (1995) in Solomon, Daminabo., and Uzor (2016) ^[21];

under a true federal constitution, each group, however small, is entitled to the same treatment as any other group, however large. Opportunity must be afforded to each to evolve its peculiar political institution. The present structure reinforces indigenous colonialism — a crude, harsh unscientific and illogical system

In addition to the above, Ikelegbe (2001) ^[11], argued that the failure of the state to provide security and stability has weakened confidence in the state to prevent crime, settle conflicts and contain violent clashes. Ethnic and religious communities have had to establish communal and ethnic militias for self-defense and defence. This, politics of counter-violence as exemplified by the militias and the military are bred by government persecution, arbitrariness, excessive force, repression and human rights abused. It is on the above premise that an interpretation of Ikelegbe (2001) ^[11] would mean that if government uses force against people who think that they have a just cause is likely to inspire fear, but in the longer run, repression provokes resentment and enduring incentives to resist and retaliate.

The cumulative effect of all the above is the continued gunboat diplomacy between the militants and the Nigerian soldier in the troubled Niger Delta. What could be termed a full blown fighting erupted in May 1999 after the movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, (MEND), attacked military position and hijacked two vessels carrier by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in retaliation of government groups' earlier raid of its camps identified the creeks. The joint military task force (JTE) had earlier identified the various armed groups in the region, evaluated their strengths and concluded that massive military attack remained the best option to shut the raging agitation of the people in the region. Subsequently, the federal government deployed four helicopter gunships, twenty-four gunboats and about 7000 soldiers to the region. During this period some analysts described as a peace time and on the heels of amnesty proclamations for the militants by president Umaru Yar' Adua (The week June 1, 2009) ^[23].

Over a thousand lives were lost, thousands hospitalized, and not less than three hundred homes razed down in Warri, Delta state. This attacks attracted several reactions from traditional rulers, South-South governments, some governors, non-governmental organization and militant

groups. The Niger Delta civil society coalition (NDCSC) for instance, noted that from Adaka Boro to Ken-Saro-Wiwa, the Nigerian government has responded to the demands of the indigenous and minority people of the Niger Delta in a genocide manner, as was evidenced in Odi, Umechem, Choba, Odioma, Agge and recently Gbararnetu Kingdom communities. Since the extra-judicial killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni nine, destruction of Odi and others failed to stop the just demand for just treatment from very repressive regimes, it is unclear that the last military expedition and the amnesty programme that followed the demand for justice from the over impoverished and dehumanized people of the region.

In a bid to address the menace of environmental pollution, Nigerian government as well as international communities have risen with couple of policies aimed at arresting where possible or reducing the impact of environmental pollution. Some of these policies and legal framework as provided by both local and international authorities include:

1. Mineral Oil Safety Regulation (1963)
2. African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (1969)
3. Petroleum Regulations (1967)
4. Petroleum Decree (1969)
5. International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for the Compensation for oil Pollution Damage (1971)
6. Petroleum Refining Regulation (1974)
7. Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act (1988)
8. Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999)

UNEP (2011) ^[24] noted that the nature and concentration of pollutants released into the environment determines the severity and the detrimental effects of the pollutants on man and his environment.

The amnesty project: A critique

Two schools of thought have emerged in response to federal government amnesty position of the Niger Delta crisis. The weak state/dependency school believed that the federal government was bereft of political will to deal with the Niger Delta situation by providing adequate funding and development strategy capable of integrating all earlier framework to achieve the needful. This is evidenced in what could be termed the poverty of decision of the president to abdicate his responsibility to military men to invade the communities of the Niger Delta and glory in slaughtering of Nigerian citizens in the pursuit of militants' gun criminals.

However, the marginalization school of thought see the crisis as a result of the plundering of the region's wealth since president who first offered the amnesty at the time preferred to turn a blind eye to the real criminals within his party, government, criminals within the ruling party, government, in the military and those in the private and multinational oil sectors that are leading the oil bunkering industrial complex, small and light arms proliferation that contributed to the continued crises infested and disastrous state of Nigeria. The armed conflict by militia and, amnesty deal was obviously aimed at opening the creeks of the region for unfettered illicit oil deal, nothing more. In addition, a peaceful Niger Delta prevents, the looting enjoyed by some top brass within the military high command.

The announcement or pronouncement of amnesty for the militants did not solve the development crisis in the Niger Delta region one approach to this argument was the insincerity of purpose of the government in granting the amnesty. This was attributed to the failure of the past peace effort such as the creation of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), increasing the derivation from oil from 1.5% to 13% over the years and the recent creation of the ministry of Niger Delta, etc. where intention of peace has been shown, only for the federal government to renege on its promises and bombard the region. Secondly there was the issue of criminality in the region. Some of the militants had compromised themselves in criminal activities like kidnapping, armed robbery, assassination and murder. For instance, the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, Professor Nirni Briggs, and the mother of the former governor of Rivers State, Sir Celestine Omehia were kidnapped in 2007 in Rivers State by suspected militants. Thirdly, there was the problem of unhealed wounds, inflicted by the militants on the region. The activities of the militants resulted to the death of many people and destruction of properties worth billions of naira as well as the resultant communal crisis such as was experienced in Okrika, Umuechem, Ogbakiri, etc all in Rivers State. The common question had been that if militants that have committed heinous crime were granted amnesty, what would government grant the people that have had their fathers, mothers, sons and daughters kidnapped or killed in the so-called struggle? Beside this, there was the problem of identifying the genuine people involved in the Niger Delta struggle was it the Ijaws, Ogonis, Ikwerres, Ibibios or the political class as represented by the governors in the region and opinion leaders or the street Urchins that have metamorphosed into militant groups? But while the government was talking about amnesty on one hand, the joint military task force on the other hand, was still carrying out punitive raids on communities around oil facilities as a way of permanently relocating the people from their ancestral homes and turning the area into oil mining fields.

Conclusion

It is clear from the analysis that the root cause(s) of the insecurity in the Niger Delta Region occasioned by the activities of militia has always been link with neglect, frustration and the sense of abandonment of the people. Sustainable peace in the oil rich Niger Delta, therefore, cannot be achieved by military intervention or the security approach.

In the same vein, Saro-Wiwa (1990) in Solomon, Daminabo, and Uzor (2016) ^[21]; puts it more pointedly when he argued that:

The basic point about the development of oil producing areas is political one. Revenue allocation lies very much at the heart of federal system of government, Oil is at the centre of Nigerian federation. At this time consequently, most of the laws, which govern the exploitation of oil in Nigeria, offend public morality and are decidedly opposed to the interest of those who own bearing land.

Implied in the above view is the fact that the solution to the crisis in the Niger Delta is not in demonstration of the

military might on already powerless people of the region but on addressing the inherent and internalized injustice meted out against the region by the operators of the Nigeria state. Consistent resort to the deployment and use of force in responding to the crisis in the Niger Delta region does not in anywhere depict demonstration of political will. It only shows the level of federal government insincerity and commitment to 'the plight of the people of the region and also the declining and deteriorating nature of Nigerian failed state in which anarchy and instability are the means to ends. It is our candid opinion that the federal government has always reduced the situation in the Niger Delta to criminality and national insecurity.

Recommendations

Gunboat diplomacy is never a win-win situation and has always been an incubator for future conflicts, therefore the paper recommends the following:

1. The mini refineries built by indigenous people of the region should be accessed and assessed by government for the purpose of support, monitoring to meet standard and taxation expectations
2. Oil bearing communities should be allowed to be stakeholders in the oil production and sales
3. Government should in addition to refurbishing the refineries in region build new ones to reduce unemployment and by extension, recruitment of young people into militia.
4. Misappropriation of funds at the Niger delta development commission should be reviewed and corrupt personnel brought to book.
5. The region should be allowed to control its resources at least 50%.

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