

The Politics of Resource Control Agitation and Its Effects on the Socio-Economic Development of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Nwankwo, Sabastine Jnr; Asiegbu, Victor Iheanyichukwu;
Briggs, Alasin Captain; Macs, Omieye; Offor, Onyinye Gift

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examined the politics of resource control agitation and its effects on the socio-economic development of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study was guided by two research objectives with two corresponding research questions. The paper was anchored on the Justice Theory propounded by John Rawls. The research design was based on a qualitative approach. To this end, the paper relied mainly on secondary sources of data collection. The secondary data collected were subjected to content analysis. The paper amongst others found out that the demand for resource control has been necessitated by the neglect and deprivation suffered by the people of the region. It is this neglect and deprivation that have crystallized and metamorphosed into the current resource control conflict that threatens to dismember the Nigerian State. Based on the research findings the paper recommended among other things that the Nigerian federation should be restructured along the ethno-linguistic line to allow each cultural group to exercise some degree of local autonomy within its territory. Finally, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should be amended to enable the states to explore and manage their natural resources without any interference from the central government.

Keywords: *Resource control, Niger Delta, Self-determination and revenue allocation*

I. Introduction

The Niger Delta region with an estimated area of approximately 70,000 km², is one of the world's most extensive deltas. It is situated in the southern region of Nigeria. The Niger Delta is located along the Atlantic coast of Nigeria, which forms the country's southern boundary. It is the point at which the rivers Niger and Benue meet the ocean, and it is a web of rivers and creeks that connects the two rivers. It is the largest wetland in Africa and the third-largest wetland in the world, covering approximately 2,370 square kilometers of riverine habitat. It is stated by Alagoa (2015) that the region, which is located in the southern part of Nigeria and is bordered on the eastern side by the Republic of Cameroon and on its southern side by the Atlantic Ocean within Nigeria, has been defined both geographically and politically, with the latter being important for the purpose of revenue sharing.

The region has a large amount of natural gas resources, which, if properly utilize, could generate income that is significantly greater than that generated by crude oil. According to Badelo (2015), the region is blessed with an abundance of oil wells and other natural resources both within and outside of her immediate vicinity. The vast majority of oil fields are deepwater fields that have been or are currently being developed offshore. Despite the abundance of natural resources, the region continues to suffer from underdevelopment, as well as from inadequate infrastructure and economic development. Over the years, these issues have resulted in a struggle for direct control over the country's natural resources.

As a long-standing issue, the concept of resource control has sparked extensive discussion and debate among academics and representatives from a variety of interest groups. In the Niger Delta, discussions on resource control are ambiguous because the region has long been known for agitation for resource control, which has included but is not limited to both peaceful and violent activities. According to Algoa (2015), the struggle for resource control dates back to the early 1990s, when the Ogoni ethnic group became the leading advocate for the cause of resource control in Nigeria. The peaceful protests and negotiations that took place during this struggle were the front lines of this conflict. According to Umana (2018), resource control refers to the authority to manage the revenues derived from oil and other natural resources in accordance with the principles of true federalism. The ability to control resources and allocate revenues in an efficient and popular manner is critical to maintaining unity and stability between and among the various

parts of a federal system. It has also been a contentious socio-economic and political issue, particularly among developing federal states such as Nigeria, and has been a source of contention.

Various perspectives on the concept of resource control have been developed by scholars such as Ako (2012), who distinguish between three categories: absolute resource control, principal resource control, and increased derivation. The absolute resource control principle states that every region should be able to control its resources, whereas the principal resource control principle refers to the direct and decisive role played in the exploration, exploitation, and disposal of natural resources and resources. Many of those who advocated for increased derivation spoke in terms of the right to control the revenues derived from oil and other natural resources, which they said was in line with the principles of true federalism (Ikeji, 2011).

The Niger Delta is often referred to as "the goose that lays the golden egg," but it is often overlooked while other states make significant strides in developing their economies as a result of the oil resources found in the Niger Delta. In 2005, the Sovereign National Conference was called to address the issues that had arisen since then. It is the governors of the Niger Delta's hope that such a gathering of political and economic leaders will help them achieve their ultimate goal of gaining complete control and management of the oil sector in Nigeria. However, this was not to be, as the Federal Government initiated the rejection of the Reform Conference and the establishment of the National Political Reform Conference instead of the Reform Conference. A paltry 17 percent derivation was forced upon the delegation representing the Niger Delta region, rather than the 25 percent with a progressive increase to 25 percent over five years that they had hoped for (Tucker, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian federalism, according to Orluwene (2008), has been preoccupied with how to distribute revenue among the various levels of government prior to independence and shortly after independence, and this preoccupation continued after independence. Also stated by him was the fact that political elites from the six geo-political zones were fearful of one another's dominance and, as a result, desired to control the government at the national level from the centre. It is unfortunate that the ethnic minorities are concentrated in oil-producing states, whereas the majority of ethnic minorities are concentrated in non-oil-producing states. In Nigeria, the nature of revenue allocation is determined, in an ironic twist, by the major ethnic groups. This condition has, over the years, tended to act as a cog in the wheel of equitable revenue allocation in Nigeria, with the consequences that have resulted from this condition. Following up on the previous point, Ojo (2016) asserts that in almost all federal systems, there are difficulties in attaining an efficient and acceptable pace of growth, resources, control, and allocation, particularly when there are disparities in economic development and resource endowment among the constituent states, as is the case in Nigeria.

Furthermore, according to Ojo (2010), Nigeria's revenue allocation system continues to be one of the most important factors contributing to the destabilization of the country's federal experiment. The implication of this is that over time, the revenue-sharing arrangement in Nigeria has become increasingly lopsided, which may result in challenges both within and outside the country. The Nigerian economist Onoawarie (2001) asserted that revenue allocation has a high potential for conflict, particularly between the rich and poor states in the country. Based on the findings of Emmanuel and Nseabasi (2010), the movement for resource control is born out of a deep-seated sense of marginalization, despite the enormous petroleum wealth that Nigeria has reaped from the oil-producing region. To meet the aspirations of the South-South region, the Nigerian government established OMPADEC (now NDDC) and allocated 13 percent of oil derivation in favour of oil-producing states out of the revenue generated in a month. The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs was also established to coordinate efforts to find a satisfactory revenue sharing formula in order to put an end to the agitation for resource control in the country. Unfortunately, the people of the Niger Delta continue to feel marginalized as a result of the lack of development that they require. In Nigeria, this resulted in a never-ending quest for greater control over natural resources.

The reality revealed that while the Niger Delta region possesses "the goose that lays the golden egg," it does not reap the benefits of the oil-rich region's profits. The region is deprived of development, and the people are reduced to a state of poverty. According to Ikeji (2011), approximately 75% of the population lives below the poverty line, and there is poor environmental sanitation as a result of increased oil spillages as a result of continuous oil and gas exploration and exploitation. The region is plagued by unemployment and a lack of basic amenities, which has resulted in unrest among the youth. This is the context in which this research is being conducted to examine the Niger Delta and the issues of resource control in Nigeria, among other things.

In this context, this paper seeks to examine the issues that the Niger Delta region is grappling with in terms of resource control, with a view to identifying the root causes of the region's struggle with resource control and making

recommendations that will aid in the correction of the unequal nature of the relationship that exists among the federating states.

Research Questions

1. What are the immediate reasons for the struggle for resource control in the Niger Delta?
2. What are the significant impacts of resource control agitation in Niger Delta?

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the immediate reasons for the struggle of resource control in the Niger Delta
2. To identify the significant impacts of resource control agitation in Niger Delta

Significance of the study

This study is significant as it will reveal the historical antecedents of the struggle for resource control in the Niger Delta region and as well bring to the limelight how important the Niger Delta is economical to Nigeria. The study will therefore be of great importance to scholars and as well government agencies in a bid to build upon measures that the federal government has put in place to curb the problem of agitation in the Niger Delta region.

II. Literature review

Politics

Politics comprises all those activities associated with government decision-making that can be implemented with the use of a legal framework or individual force. Max Weber cited in Nnoli (1994) sees politics as the process of striving to share existing power among states or groups within a state. This means that politics is the struggle for power within and amongst state actors. Politics in most societies exist just for the allocation of state powers while in others; it is used as machinery for the development of the society. To Oyovbaire (1979) politics is the management or promotion of public cooperation and conflict within the desirable employment of organized power in the interest, more or less of all members of the political order. Oyovbaire further sees politics as the act of production and distribution of public values, the building of the structures (the capital goods so far say) with which production and allocation process together with the socio-economic relations which derive from the environment of production and distribution.

To Raphael (1990) politics concerns the behaviour of groups and individuals in matters that are likely to affect the course of government e.g. in voting, in forming and running political parties or in exerting influence in other ways on those responsible for the conduct of governmental business. What this means is that politics is machinery through which people run for political offices and as well that which gives individuals the opportunities to vote for candidates of their choice. According to Easton (1965), politics refers to "the authoritative allocation of resources and values for the society". Easton, therefore, limits politics to that stage of the development of human society in which the political system has not only evolved but has also developed to such a level where it is equipped with the capacity to allocate resources authoritatively.

Sustainable development

Development is also seen as an aspect of desirable and planned change influenced by governmental action. Thus, development is a value-based and broad concept. Development is equally a multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social systems (Todaro & Smith, 2009). It transcends beyond the improvement in income and output to the radical transformation in institutional, social and administrative structures. Although development is commonly seen in a national context, its holistic realization may necessitate fundamental modifications of the international economic and social system.

To World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987) sustainable development focuses on improving the quality of life for all of the Earth's citizens without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them indefinitely. It requires an understanding that inaction has consequences and that we must find innovative ways to change institutional structures and influence individual behaviour. It is about taking action, changing policy and practice at all levels, from the individual to the international. Sustainable development is not a new idea. Many cultures over the course of human history have recognized the need for harmony between the environment, society and economy. What is new is an articulation of these ideas in the context of a global industrial and information society.

Resource Control

According to Ojo (2016), a resource is a beneficial material or substance, which in a technical sense refers to the good interaction between humans and the natural environment. So it is a method to achieve specific aims, such as satisfying individual desires or achieving societal objectives. A resource is a social relationship that has two fundamental characteristics: utility and functionality. As a result, rather than the thing itself, the essence of a resource is its ability to perform its purpose. As a result, when a nation or regions within a nation fight for control of a resource, they are not fighting for the resource itself, but rather for the material or financial values associated with the resource.

Currently, there is no widely acknowledged definition for the concept of resource control. Specifically, according to Ladipo (2006), it is the complete and absolute takeover of the resources situated in resource-producing countries by the people of those countries. In the context of resource control, it is defined as the ability of local societies to exercise direct control over the exploitation and management of natural resources within their immediate geographical surroundings. It is the procedure that allows stakeholders in the resource-bearing area to manage the bigger proportions of the resources harnessed in those areas than they would otherwise be able to manage on their own. More specifically, resource control, according to Briggs (2017), is the control and management of resources by state or local governments from whose jurisdiction the resources are derived or extracted. The state or local governments would manage the resources from their territories in accordance with federal criteria (particularly those pertaining to the environment), and then remit a set percentage of the proceeds to the United States government. In accordance with the foregoing, Ifedayo(2010, p.14) believes that resource control entails the access of communities and state governments to natural resources located within their borders, as well as the freedom to develop and utilize these resources without the need for permission from the federal government.

The principle of resource control, according to Ofeimum (2005, p.10), is the principle that allows each federating unit to be self-governing. It is argued by the authors (on page 33) that resource control has been defined to indicate the authority and rights of a community or state to create income through the taxation of human and non-human substances within a specific environment. Nevertheless, such "powers" and "rights" to commence a taxation procedure are restricted by law, particularly in a federal form of government where the powers of the central government supersede those of the subordinate and constituent states. Taxes that are not legally collected by the constituent states of a federal system such as Nigeria State exist in such systems as the Nigerian federal system. By law, the collection and coordination of such levies is the responsibility of the central government.

III. Theoretical Framework

The study was based on the Theory of Justice developed by Rawls (1971). Rawls developed the theory by revising the social contract tradition of justice associated with philosophers such as John Lock, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant, who were all influential in the development of the theory (Ameson, 2008). John Rawls (1931-2002) was a political liberal philosopher who lived in the United States. His theory of justice envisions a society of free citizens with equal fundamental rights, who work together within an egalitarian economic system to achieve a common goal. His account of political liberalism is concerned with the legitimate use of political power in a democratic society, with the goal of demonstrating how ending unity can be achieved despite the diversity of worldviews that free institutions permit. Society, according to a justice theorist, is a fair system of cooperation that evolves over time and from one generation to the next. They argue that the relationship between citizens is a relationship within the fundamentals of society, a structure into which we are only born and out of which we die (Garrett, 2005). According to Daniel Moellendorf, Rawls's justice theory is primarily concerned with political association, also known as the modern nation, and its consequences (Karrett 2005). According to Piccore (2005), the general conception of the theory of justice is that all social primary goods - liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the foundations of self-respect - are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured.

According to the findings of this study, the ongoing agitation by people in Nigeria's Niger Delta is a result of ongoing economic injustice and marginalization, which they contend is meted out to them because they are a minority group in the country. In order to avoid a sense of marginalization, domination, or deprivation, whether imagined or real, Rawls maintained that unequal distribution of social goods should be to the advantage of the less favoured group. This is in order to avoid the type of crisis in the Niger delta that is threatening the unity and stability of the entire country, Nigeria. The people of the Niger Delta region, according to the paper, must be appointed to national offices or positions open to all under the condition of fair equality of opportunity, and they must be allowed to manage the resources within the region while also being obligated to pay taxes to the central government.

IV. Reasons for the continuous struggle for resource control in the Niger Delta region

For Nigeria, as for a small number of other emerging countries, risk lies in the existence of dangerous contradictions that threaten and block social progress while also jeopardising the life of the state (Umana, 2018, p121). Fédérationalism is the practice of the division of authority between the central government and the relatively independent federating entities. Rather than putting this power-sharing arrangement into practice, the federal government in Nigeria has systematically rendered the federating units powerless and has taken over even the control, management, and sharing of natural resources of the semi-autonomous units in the country, according to the World Bank. With the numerous Nigerian constitutions and decrees promulgated by prior military and civilian administrations, as well as the current civilian governments, the power to regulate natural resources has been variously centralised at the centre of the country. For crude oil, the only alternative available to Niger Delta governments is confrontation with the Federal Government of Nigeria over power and resource sharing, because they lack sufficient cash and are deprived of the ability to generate their own revenue. The system of federalism in Nigeria is often seen as a significant element in the escalation of resource control agitations.

Poverty and unemployment in the region, according to Umana (2018, p.102), are among the factors that have contributed to the struggle for resource control. This is due to the fact that the Niger Delta region has remained grossly backward and underdeveloped, and has been plagued by poverty despite its enormous oil wealth, as a result of a systematic imbalance in the production exchange relationship between the Nigerian government, multinational oil companies, and local communities. Although the region has reaped enormous benefits from oil export, it continues to suffer from significant land degradation and poverty, which has resulted in the militarization of the region and the outbreak of frequent violent warfare (Umana 2018, p.102). As a result of oil extraction activities, the physical environment of oil-producing villages in the Niger Delta region has deteriorated to a catastrophic degree over time. This has put the fragile subsistence peasant economy's bio-diversity, as well as the entire social structure's livelihood and existence, in jeopardy. Despite more than 60 years of oil production in Nigeria and hundreds of billions of dollars in oil revenue, the inhabitants of the Niger delta region, particularly the rural villages, communities, and fishing settlements along the riverside (creeks), continue to live in abject poverty despite the wealth of the country. The poverty rate is approximately 80 percent, and the unemployment rate is approximately 70 percent. Many towns lack even the most basic of utilities, such as piped water and electricity, which are essential for survival.

Moreover, the perceptions of relative prosperity in other parts of Nigeria contribute to the profound sense of marginalisation felt by the people of the region. Across the South-South zone (which includes six of the oil-producing states), more than three-quarters of the population (77 percent) believes they are living in poverty, compared to the official statistical measure of one-third who believes they are living in poverty (35percent). Furthermore, three out of every ten people in the South-South consider themselves to be "very poor," according to the World Bank. A great deal varies across states, with Bayelsa, the core Ijaw state, having a disproportionately high concentration of people who consider themselves to be "extremely poor" (Umana, 2018). High oil prices in the Niger Delta are also considered to have a negative impact on the purchasing power of residents, especially when compared to the standard of living enjoyed by those employed by the oil industry, many of whom are from other countries (UNDP, 2006). The high proportion of people living in poverty, combined with subjective assessments of personal deprivation, results in a widespread sense of inequality, which is a significant driver of regional volatility.

Apart from that, environmental degradation as a result of oil extraction in the Niger Delta has emerged as one of the most visible factors that has a negative impact on the Niger Delta's ecosystem (Chucks, 2008). Communities have frequently come into conflict with the federal government and oil companies as a result of environmental degradation (Amnesty, 2009) The most significant environmental challenges that Niger Deltans face are oil spillage, gas flaring, and shoreline flooding and erosion, to name a few. As part of its campaign to raise awareness about oil operations in its region, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) chose the environment as the focal point of its campaign in the early 1990s. The environmental movement has been inextricably linked to the broader struggle for social and political transformation ever since that point. In response to the heavy-handed and occasionally violent response of federal security forces to these demands, some groups have resorted to more radical tactics in order to achieve their objectives. The preservation of the Niger Delta's natural environment is inextricably linked to the preservation of the region's economic well-being of its citizens (Alagoa, 2005).

According to a World Bank study conducted in 2003 on the relationship between poverty and the environment in Nigeria, the poorest half of households surveyed in the Niger Delta derive 60 percent of their income from environmental resources (Ijaija, 2019). The primary consequence of this reliance is environmental degradation, which has a disproportionately negative impact on the poor compared to the wealthy. Because a large proportion of the population relies on agriculture as a source of income, the Niger Delta region is particularly vulnerable to poverty and

its consequences. Despite the fact that the oil industry has created new jobs, the negative impact of environmental damage due to oil extraction in the Niger Delta has not been balanced out by the creation of new jobs in the oil industry. Despite the fact that Nigerians account for as much as 95 percent of the workforce in some large oil companies, overall employment opportunities in the industry are limited, particularly for those living in the country's oil-producing regions. It is widely believed by the local population that it is difficult to break into the oil industry's limited job market, and as a result, the local population is systematically excluded from available opportunities in favour of those from outside the region. According to Ojo (2010), the unemployment rate among the people of the Niger Delta is extremely high. It is not in the interests of the youth from the Niger Delta that transnational corporations, particularly oil companies, are present in their communities and operate in their neighborhoods. People from the Niger Delta make up less than 5 percent of the workforce in the private sector. The majority of those employed by the oil companies are from areas of Nigeria that are not oil producing areas (Nsirimou, 2014).

Additionally, factors such as bunkering, intra-ethnic rivalry, religion, and politics are contributing to the struggle for resource control. Individuals who engage in bunkering cannot be champions of resource control for the benefit of others, but must instead act in their own self-interest or for their own personal enrichment. It is possible for those who are not getting their desires fulfilled to use the clamour for resource control to further their goals. Everything from oil spills to gas flares to effluents from industrial wastes is putting the Niger Delta's fragile ecosystem under constant attack. Indescribable and irreversible ecological devastation has resulted as a result of the unrestrained extraction of crude oil and natural gas from beneath the surface of the Niger Delta's land. It is true that the environmental consequences of the oil industry in the Niger Delta include land degradation, soil quality degradation, the destruction of aquatic ecosystems, and air pollution (Badmus, 2017).

The destruction of aquatic ecosystems in the Niger Delta is a significant environmental damage caused by oil spills in the region. This has a significant impact on the locals because it represents a significant threat to a previously important economic hub for their lives and fishing. This is one of the reasons why the people of the Niger Delta have persisted in their demands for direct control over her natural resources. As a result of the oil exploration process, materials such as drilling cuttings and drilling mud, which are used to stimulate production, are discharged into the environment, with the vast majority of them ending up in streams and rivers. These chemicals can cause fish to die or become unfit for human consumption in certain situations. Another issue associated with environmental degradation in the Niger Delta is the degradation of soil quality. This is yet another environmental problem that the people of the Niger Delta have to deal with. Inorganic chemicals found in large quantities in petroleum waste, such as phenyl cyanide, sulfuric-suspended solids, chromium, and biological oxygen, have been shown to have negative effects on the environment, including soil and water contamination. Flaring of natural gas is the most significant source of air pollution in the Niger Delta. The oil companies are constantly releasing gas, at all hours of the day and night. In fact, it is believed that some flares have been burning for more than thirty years, resulting in the release of hydrogen sulphide and other toxic gases into the atmosphere, all of which have potentially lethal consequences for the surrounding environment and wildlife.

V. Significant impacts of resource control agitation in the Niger Delta

The struggle for equitable revenue allocation in Nigeria has the potential to erupt into conflict, particularly between the southern and northern regions of the country. It is also a subject that has continued to generate controversy in the federal and state governments' relationship in their fight to maintain a formula for revenue allocation (Amuwo, 2018, p.247). In addition, these issues have cumulatively slowed the progress and prosperity of the Nigerian federal system, prompting calls and agitations for alternative systems such as fiscal federalism, which was in place from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. They have also trickled down to the lower levels of society and manifested themselves in a more compounding manner. More specifically, the solid minerals and agriculturally endowed states are blinded by the discovery and availability of oil, resulting in the state and economy of Nigeria becoming a resource curse (Ross, 2012).

Gas flaring and oil spillage in the Niger Delta, where oil exploration is taking place, are causing agricultural and fishing livelihoods to be disrupted, causing a famine among the local population. Additionally, noise from continuous oil drilling and spillage has destroyed the biological and eco-system of the Delta region, while the installation of oil pipelines has deforested the majority of the region's lands and degraded the environment (Adejumobi, 2012). Furthermore, oil exploration generates poisonous gases such as carbon monoxide, chlorine, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides, acid aerosols, and beryllium, among others, which are not only harmful to the environment, but also to the people who live in the surrounding area as a result of their activities. Among the many diseases that have been linked to oil exploration in the Delta region are heart problems, irritations, edoema, dizziness, and a slew of others that have been linked to the aforementioned harmful substances (Kabir, 2008). This problem is exacerbated by a scarcity of effective medical facilities in the surrounding area. The military government of General Babangida attempted a preliminary attempt to introduce development and welfare-driven scheme among resource-producing communities in the country in

1989, which resulted in the establishment of the National Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (NRMAFC) committee in 1989, followed by the establishment of an intervention agency in the Niger Delta region known as the oil and minerals producing areas development commission (OMPAD) in 1990.

Upon Nigeria's eventual transition from military rule to democracy in 1999, the transition had a wide range of consequences for the country's politics, including the politics of resource control. After becoming disillusioned with the failures of successful military operations, President Obasanjo's administration took the step of creating the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000, in response to agitations for resources controlled by Ken Saro-Wiwa's Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), AsariDoKubo's Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and Ateke Tom's Niger Delta Revolutionary (Ugwu, 2019, p. 24). When Asawa was interviewed for Egwu (2014), she explained that the commission was established with a mandate to develop the oil-rich Niger Delta region as an effective means of eliminating protests and agitations while also ensuring the socio-economic development and political welfare of the oil-mining areas and region of the Niger Delta. According to Amakeivi in Ugwu (2019), in an effort to strengthen the NDDC as a commission, the government of Late President Musa Yar' Adua in 2008 announced the creation of the Niger Delta Ministry, thereby granting the commission the status of a parastatal under the Niger Delta Ministry, thereby strengthening the commission as a commission (Ekwri&Etim, 2017).

The conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta was the most protracted in the country's history. It was exacerbated in part by the lackadaisical attitude of the federal government and its interventionist agencies such as the Oil and Minerals Development Corporation (OMPDEC), the National Development and Industrialization Corporation (NDDC), and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) toward the social and economic problems affecting the Niger Delta people following several years of oil exploration in the region. Indeed, the discovery of oil, which should have been a source of joy for the people of the Delta region, turned out to be a means of not only impoverishing them but also jeopardising the future of their children and even the unborn. But the struggle resulted in an explosion of different kinds of community leadership, with some claiming to represent their communities while actually working to further their own personal interests. It is important to note that these individuals do not actually live in the communities in which they profess to be leaders. The vast majority of them live in urban areas, far away from the negative consequences of oil company operations and operations. Until relatively recently, it was common practise for these self-styled leaders to misappropriate compensations or donations that oil companies, in their ignorance, disbursed to the communities through their channels of distribution. Ultimately, this development harmed the relationship between oil companies and their impoverished host communities, resulting in the kidnapping and killing of oil workers and the vandalization of oil pipelines in the region (Ehamidem, 2003).

In addition to causing economic and social instability, the demand for resource control in the Delta region has serious implications for the peace and stability of the Nigerian state. For example, the 1995 killing of Isaac Jasper Boro and Ken Saro-Wiwa, a renowned and internationally celebrated environmental campaigner, is a significant example of the federal government's repressive acts against civil activism in the Delta region. Many prominent indigenes and non-indigenes have also lost their lives in the struggle for resource control throughout Nigeria (Adangor, 2015). More specifically, the vicious attacks on the Delta communities of Umuchem and Odi that occurred during the civilian administration of Olusegun Obasanjo as a result of protests against the poor state of infrastructure in the communities resulted in the deaths or maiming of a large number of people. Along with firing entire communities, security agents were alleged to have committed acts of rape and torture against women and men from the Odi community in particular (Ahmed, 2016. p. 26). The Nigerian economy, perhaps more than any other, suffered as a result of the clamour for resource control.

The Nigerian economy suffered tremendous hiccups in the 1990s, when ethnic militancy reached its zenith in the Delta region, owing largely to the operative methods of a tie region, such as pipeline vandalism, rig blockages, hostage-taking, and illegal oil bunkering, among other things. A total of 75 oil spillages that occurred in the Delta region during the 1990s were attributed to militant activity, according to official figures. On the other hand, the impact of militant activities on the Nigerian economy was clearly visible. Following a series of coordinated attacks on oil facilities in the region in February 1996, an estimated one billion dollars was lost (Ogbogbo, 2015, p. 176). Additionally, several billions of dollars were lost on an early basis as a result of halted exploration operations, as the militants' targets included expatriates and "bourgeoisie" oil companies in the region. When pipeline vandalism struck the Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC) in 1992, the company reported a loss of approximately \$1.4 million and a subsequent drop in oil revenue of approximately \$900,000 the following year (The Punch, 2008, p39). It was only in the corporation's western division that all of this occurred.

The struggle for control of natural resources posed a significant threat to the country's security as well. The possession of sophisticated weapons by the militants, such as Russian-made AK-47s, grenades, and dynamite, posed a threat to not

only Nigeria's peace and security, but also the security of neighboring West African countries. People and goods from other parts of Nigeria were unable to freely move into the Delta region because of the high number of armed robbery incidents that accompanied the militancy in the region, including neighboring states such as Edo. Additionally, the proliferation of weapons and various militant activities in the Niger Delta have cast a significant shadow on Nigeria's international reputation (Omojuna, 2011). As a result of the insecurity caused by the conflict in the Delta region, the United States of America, for example, has issued several travel warnings to its citizens not to travel to Nigeria. Despite the fact that such calls had little impact on bilateral socio-political and economic relations between Nigeria and the United States, there is no doubt that they contributed significantly to Nigeria's unenviable status as a "pariah" nation in the international community. As a result of this agitation, violence breaks out, resulting in the proliferation of various armed groups. Some are sponsored by high-ranking political figures in order to pursue their own personal interests (Adeoti et al., 2015).

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

Our conclusion was that the conflict that has become endemic in the system arose out of perceived neglect, marginalisation, and deprivation of the region, particularly in terms of the control and appropriation of resources within the Niger Delta region, and that this conflict has now become endemic in the system. As previously stated, the unstable nature of the Nigerian federation is due to the fact that there is a disparity in size and resource endowment between the constituent units of the federation, but more so because there is an asymmetrical relationship between the regions in terms of access to the instruments of state power, and consequently the allocation and utilisation of federal resources. The pattern of violence in the Niger Delta indicated that agitations and protests were intended to convey to the appropriate authorities widespread popular dissatisfaction and disenchantment with federal policy and practises. In this region's oil-producing areas, the plight of the majority ethnic groups is a reflection of political dominance and economic marginalisation by the minority ethnic groups, as reflected in revenue sharing and subsequent state-creation exercises. When it comes to revenue allocation, the Niger Delta oil producing minority is a pivot for transferring revenue from that minority to the majority ethnic group, which occupies a central position and decides how the natural resources will be distributed and allocated.

Finally, the findings of the study revealed that the government's policy responses to the plight and agitations of the Niger Delta people did not produce the desired results, as evidenced by the establishment of the various development agencies in the region. And that the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) will not be able to provide a panacea for the problems of the Niger Delta as originally envisaged by its members. It is instead up to the federating units to exercise their autonomy, self-determination, and the right to control resources within their respective areas, and then pay a prescribed tax to the central government, as is the case in some other federations, such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, and Germany, to achieve a solution.

Bases on the study's findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 1) The Nigeria federation should be restructured along ethno-linguistic lines in order to allow each cultural group to exercise a certain amount of local autonomy within its own territorial jurisdiction.
- 2) Nigerian federation should be restructured along the ethno-linguistic line to allow each cultural group to exercise some degree of local autonomy within its territory.
- 3) The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should be amended to enable the state to explore and manage its natural resources without any interference by the central government.
- 4) Adequate attention should be paid to the diversification of the Nigerian economic base. Oil and gas revenues should be reinvested in other productive and dynamic sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and manufacturing. This would result in healthy competition among various states and rapid development throughout the country.
- 5) Finally, granting full autonomy to the Niger Delta region will help to resolve the agitation and militancy surrounding resource control issues. Maintaining long-term stability in the country and ensuring the smooth operation of multinational oil companies in the region are both dependent on effective control of oil and gas resources and self-determination for the region.

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