

# NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT IN AN ENDEMICALLY CORRUPT SOCIETY: IMPORTANCE OF INSURGENCY

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## ABSTRACT

*A society where insurgency becomes relevant to achieve a political objective is on its way to crisis. Crisis abounds in Africa. There is a need for socio-political reordering to assist Nigeria in development and force government to look into matters before it is too late. The origin of militia insurgency was the need to force government to intervene in the degenerated socio-political situation in the different parts of the country. Militia groups situated within the Niger delta region having existed for sometime re-engineered into a more active survivalist and well focused cartel going into a bit of extremity. This forced government to rise to the need of the Niger Delta and the amnesty situation yielded the right result in the establishment of the ministry of the Niger delta, an educational sponsorship of ex –militants and a need for the current constitutional review,. This paper discussed suggested avenues to assist government in early intervention and prevent civil society intervention through militia formation to move the country forward.*

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria at forty-nine battle with problems of corruption and under development, one important aspect of which is the Niger Delta crisis. Solution to the crisis in the Niger Delta lies in leadership and followership re-orientation. Faces of corruption are presented in negligence, decaying infrastructure, backwardness and under development. The Nigerian state is essentially authoritarian, violent and predatory in character. The followership is negligent, irresponsible and unpatriotic. These are essential information to solution finding. The issue of management is of priority to solving the crisis in the Niger delta. Management in this sense, range from political management, resource management, civil society management, management of development and its sustainability, multinational interventional management etc; a re-invention of both the leadership and the citizenship. Akpedeye (2009:47) reiterated the common saying “people get the type of leadership they deserve” “The leadership of a country is not different from or at variance with the people of the country”. In line with this he emphasized,

*The Nation’s bane, to put it bluntly, a corrupt selfish, indolent and irresponsible leadership... Trapped in the morass of a callous, self-demeaning ruling class, Nigeria has become a nightmare for its citizens and an international embarrassment Tell Oct. 12,2009:45)*

It is essential therefore to have a re-orientation. The current rebranding is a good effort if property managed with a mindset for genuine National repentance and re-orientation. Formation of militias is two faced: an attempt to find alternative solutions to socio political problems and a group to force government to intervene in the degenerated socio-political milieu.

At independence, there was openness, accountability, and selfless, purposeful, incorruptible, visionary and result-oriented leadership. Our immortalized founding fathers and nationalists made indelible marks on the Nigerian historical landscape. The above words immortalized their tall dreams and citizenship expectations in the reminiscences of the golden years immediately following independence. The rude awakening into the era of problem started with the crisis of the mid (1960's) sixties, which culminated into the civil war. The post war rebuilding heralded the oil boom and sudden wealth created a new era of leadership and followership that has not enjoyed peace. Peace in the dimensions of the political, economic, social and environmental arena. The Niger delta being particularly affected because it is the goose that lay the golden eggs.

The crisis in Sudan, of over twenty-five years of civil war and despondence is a lesson for Nigeria to pick from, but have we learnt through the experiences of others? In the Niger Delta the need for insurgency cannot be totally dumped on the lap of the Niger Delta youths and civil society: As noted above it is a joint problem of leadership and citizenship both at the National and state levels. Corruption, an engraved and endemic societal disease in the country is the reason for under-development. Under development and object poverty would naturally result into crisis and state collapse (the situation which led to Niger Delta militancy and porosity of weapons of war) It was obvious that Nigeria was at the brink of another civil war and if we are not careful the amnesty might be a gap, albeit a stop gap that would end up in a state of collapse and ultimately war. It is therefore important to find the way forward in socio-political reordering.

There is need for governmental intervention through constitutional renewal, reorganized socio-political structuring, that address the genuine needs of the citizenry, Niger delta infrastructural development and maintenance, citizenship empowerment, orientation and education, development of opportunities and human resources, and offer of valued life to repentant militants amidst others. Militancy is a sign of state failure. This paper evaluated the socio political milieu that degenerated into the crisis, the historical albatross of lack of constitutional development and the Niger Delta peculiar circumstances, governmental interventions in the ensuing years, the breakdown of law and order and the way forward. The paper is thus divided into the crisis of Niger Delta development. The political history of Nigeria; the military factor and militancy; the history of militia intervention in politics in Nigeria, records of protest and human right abuse, records of government intervention, the way forward and conclusion.

## **THE CRISIS OF NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT**

Nigeria has experienced decades of underdevelopment and the Niger Delta has particularly experienced a chronic phase because of the side effect of drilling and oil exploration. From the late 1980's, the region occupying an area of 75,000 sq km; has been bedeviled by communal unrest, crime and violent conflicts, so much so that international interventions through NGOs, international organizations and civil society (amongst others) has yielded nothing or unappreciable result. The crisis of development in the Delta involves political, economic, social, environmental and security.

The existing situation in Middle East countries such as, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE (Dubai) etc is enviable in the green revolution of desert land, physical and infrastructural development. Such problems as neglect, environmental degradation from oil pollution, absence of physical development and destruction of the eco-system with atmospheric pollutions from emitted gases (resulting from poor management of the oil industry) is the take of woe in the Niger Delta. Ekpebu (2008:5-6) emphasized that

the history of neglect and other acts of oppression and suppression which have led to the current undesirable state of affairs in the sub region is as a result, first and foremost, of neglect and suppression by the former Eastern region of its minority nationalities, cross river, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa and the Southern Cameroon.

The problem of western states and neglect of the western part of the Niger Delta and Bendel which informed the agitation for the creation of state in response to the exigencies of the crisis of the civil war. The Edo and Delta states were lumped together into the Mid-west state, which was later renamed Bendel. The Rivers and South East states were created in 1967 to undermine the capacity of the secession survival. But this did not wake up the federal government to the need for development.

Development refers to the efforts and results of transformation of the physical and social environment within which man operates for the purpose of enhancing their standard of living (Anikpo 1996:6).

Okaba (2009:2a) recorded that the Niger Delta is Africa's and the world's third largest mangrove forest. One of the world's most expansive fresh water swamps in western and central Africa and Nigeria's major concentration of high biodiversity. The Niger Delta is home to about 30 million people, diversified into ethnic tribes of Ijaw, Isoko, Ishan, Ilaje, Ibibio, Anag, Efik Ekpeye, Ikwere, Edo, Ogoin, Ogba Engeni Ukwani etc (Ibid: 29).

Crude oil was first discovered in Oloibiri in the now Bayelsa State of Nigeria. Nigeria's exports amount to eighty percent of foreign exchange earnings. At peak recently, Nigeria's production hovered around 2.15 million barrels per day. Poor corporate relations with indigenous communities, vandalism of oil infrastructure, terrible ecological damage and security problems are the regions experience. The country's economic survival is currently anchored upon oil exploitation. Okaba laid emphasis on the fact that oil dependence facilitates the terrible linkage between skewed economic performance, poverty, injustice and conflict (Okaba, Petrodollar 2008:29) the World Bank and IMF report that:

*countries that are resource poor, grew four times more rapidly than resource rich countries between 1970 and 2004 despite the fact that they had half their savings. The greater the dependence on oil and mineral resources, the worst the growth performance (Gary et al 2003:18).*

It is no surprise therefore that, poverty, injustice and conflict abound in the region. Faces of underdevelopment are evident in infrastructural decay, poverty, illiteracy and the destruction of the eco-systems.

## **THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF NIGERIA, THE MILITARY FACTOR AND MILITARISATION**

The nature and character of the Nigerian state promote militia formation. The character of the Nigerian state is a by-product of colonial and military rule. The 1984-85 Berlin conference started the process of annexing discrete and diverse nationalities without the people's consent. The forced contraption, necessitated a continued recourse to their individual ethnic groups which they believe protected and guaranteed individual rights, privileges and advancement.

Lord Lugard amalgamated the two sections of the North and South in an uneven marriage in 1914. This created a major obstacle to constitutional development. This also resulted into incessant ethnicism and separatedness, which intensified military interventions and years of military domination of governance. The program that resulted from the second coup in 1966 led to the secession of the east and the civil war. The period following also witnessed 1975, 1984 and 1993 coups. Abdusallam returned the nation to civil rule in

1999. Military intervention in the politics of the state opened the Pandora box of ethnic rivalry, political instability, and abuse of human rights.

The military retarded democracy, elevated corruption and created antagonism with the civil society. The military also, in the attempt to perpetuate power deterred the normal and legal processes of constitutional development and implementation through draconian laws, called decrees. Military decrees supersede the constitution and are an aberration to practical democracy (Omotoso: 2006).

The taste of power continued to prevent the country from testing and perfecting democratic practices. Military rule also introduced the idea of force in the attainment of political objectives. Access to power, maintenance of power and achievement of political objectives were believed to be possible through the use of force.

The Nigerian civil society thus got imbibed into the idea that political objectives needed the intervention of force for attainment. The civil war of 1967 to 1970 also involved the civil society, some of which never got enrolled in the Nigerian army after the civil war. These groups still possess the experiences and necessary wherewithal to reorder, coordinate and organize groupings of civil society into militants and para-military groups. The colonial rule, which terminated in 1960 was authoritarian in practice. Nigeria has been under military rule for twenty-nine years. The preponderance of militaristic legacies implicated on authoritarian tendency of the twenty years of elected civilian administration (1960-1966) (1979-1983, 1999-2009). The result is authoritarian leadership and followership, militarization of political life (witnessed in nation wide rigging and election violence). Disdain for democratic rules, accountability, constitutionalism, and the rule of law (each of the democratic leadership retrogressed into irreversible authoritarianism).

Agbaje (2003:6) recorded that, civilians are on record as having played very active roles in the planning and execution of crises that bred brinkmanship. Chris Anyanwu aptly describes the political climate that resulted into the formation of ethnic militias.

*One of the many legacies of June 12, is the height of discomfort over the disequilibrium in our body politic. At no time in our history has this awareness been more acute than now. The Ogonis are crying over "neglect". The northern minorities feel left out. The west feel "robbed". The core North feels it has only held the title but real power has been elsewhere. The East says it has always been oppressed and "marginalized". These echoing words in our national language are supportive of a deeply seated problem that must be addressed before any form of democracy or in fact any form of social peace can be achieved. More and more these days, Nigerians are showing signs of unease with the land... and of the geo-political arrangement they have... At the roof of all these is the growing feeling of injustice. (in Agbaje 2003)*

The increasing legitimization of ethnic demands, the scale of inter ethnic conflicts, explosion of civil conflicts and wars with ethnic undertones deepens the need to understudy the relevant conditions for the peace of Nigeria. Peace in the Niger delta is an important aspect of the Nigerian peace. This is implicative of the strategic and economic importance of the Niger delta to the Nigerian state

## **THE HISTORY OF MILITIA INTERVENTION IN POLITICS IN NIGERIA**

Militant ethnic nationalism in post independent Nigeria featured in the late 1980's through the early 1990's. The politics of intense and violent acrimony in ethnic politics expressed through ethnic militia formation did not start with independence. Ethnicism (however) started since the colonial uneven amalgamation of 1914. Agbaje (2003:1) noted that "the phenomenon of ethnic militia has become such a

defining characteristic of the Nigerian state since the mid 1990". National crises always-necessitated fusion, such instances as political crisis, religious riots, cultural affinities in foreign or distant environments, trade unionisms, resource sharing and control, provided the background to the emergence of ethnic militias from the 1990's

Agbaje further emphasized that authoritarianism breeds disdain for the security and rights of the dominated, be they groups or individuals (Ibid 2003). A vision into the history of Nigeria from the previous stretch back era of colonial authoritarian rule, through the post colonial experience of the coups, military rule and civil war reveal the uneasy growth of the civil society in disdain of autocracy and desire for survival and freedom. Scholarly ideas support the view that national crises and ethnic resource survival provide the background to the emergence of the contemporary forms of ethnic militias in Nigeria. Agbaje in line with others emphasized that (Adigun 2003:1) (Abegunde, 2006:175-6) (Omotoso 2006:89-100).

*...the struggle for national resources had been prominent in the fourth republic... the struggle over public office and resource sharing has always involved the call upon ethnic sentiments and the instigation of ethnic (that is ethnic peoples) by the elites for militant action(s). This has led to the formation of many ethnic militias as standing armies for respective groups (Agbaje:Ibid)*

Omotoso also emphasized that, "the emergence of ethnic militias was a result of the manipulation of ethnic by the governing elite all over the country (Omotoso:91). Further in his argument he reintegrated,

*The failure of the Nigerian state to be fair and just to all groups has given rise to ethnicity as a potent weapon of agitation ethnic groups or sub State identities are gradually assuming the fulcrum of groups rights and citizenship claims..... to success fully protect their collective and particularistic interests, these groups are now adopting various measures and techniques which include violence to achieve their aims and to draw attention to their areas and the problems confronting them (Omotoso:90)*

Ajumobi (2003:10) also emphasized that,

*In Nigeria, primordial identities of ethnic, communal and religious formations have taken the centre stage in social and political interaction. Ethnic socio-political organizations... are perhaps the most palpable on the political turf... these groups have penetrating networks and profound influence... The corollary to these groups, especially at the youth level, is the ethnic militias (ibid).*

Briggs (2004:278) agree with this and posit that the sudden growth of ethnic militias in Nigeria is borne out of cumulative frustrations which metamorphosed into anger and then aggression (Briggs: 278). In the particular case of the Yoruba ethnic group, the formation of ethnic militia was resultant of the determination of the marginalized and oppressed ethnic group to protect and defend themselves against the domination of the northern elements, particularly those in the military. Subsequent to the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential elections that was adjudged by international observers as free and fair; other factors are long years of military dictatorship which ensured the exclusion of other tribes (ethnic groups) from power, deprivation of certain ethnic minority groups of commensurate benefits from the resources extracted from their environments, the belief of the Igbos that they are singled out for retribution over the secession and civil wars of 1967-70, establishment of local government and political power sharing.

Omotoso insisted; (ibid) “the enthronement of democratic rule (on may 1999) provided a fertile ground to vent pent up anger” This period witnessed various ethnic conflicts and the proliferation of ethnic militia groups, with the aim of fighting for and defending ethnic rights. The practice of the politics of exclusion by the ruling elite Agbaje (ibid) believes, emphasized the divisive rule of the elite, which in turn encouraged the formation of ethnic militias. To buttress this he noted.

*the rise and resilience of the traditions of political brinkmanship, involving treats and counter threats of breakdown of rule induced and system supportive behaviour in contexts etched by the tendency of the political elite to prefer fission to fusion, coming apart rather than sticking together at moments of great national crisis... provided the background to the emergence of contemporary forms of ethnic militias in several emerging national crises in Nigeria.*

Several emerging groups included, Oodua “Peoples” Congress (OPC) in the west, Arewa Peoples’ Congress (APC) in the North, Bakassi Boys (in the East) Egbesu Boys (Ijaw) a militant wing of the Ijaw Youth Movement (IYC) and the Movement for Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). The Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) was founded in 1994, (while Abiola was incarcerated) Faseun, the founder believed” the essence was to defend the rights of Yoruba people worldwide (Newswatch 2000:6) (Tell November 21). Chief Gani Adams (factional leader) also insisted “the major objectives of OPC are to ensure self determination and total restructuring of the Nigerian state into a true federal state, among others (2000:100). This has implications for the Faseun statement. Other factors according to the leaders were structural in balances, the military and repressive decrees, destructive constitutional structure, conscious debasement of ethnic nationalities, ethnic cleansing, insecurity of life and property and the degenerated educational system (ibid 97-100) Omotoso noted that the Gani Adams faction of the OPC was more militant, confrontational and violent. The Yoruba ethnic group saw it as a messiah because of its vigilante services, in assisting the people against robbery and providing an alternative to the ineffectiveness of the state security service.

In the Eastern part of Nigeria, the alleged Marginalization and oppression in access to political participation and power, rooted in the Biafra secession and civil wars of 1967, alleged conspiracy between the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba ethnic groups; criminal neglect of the area in infrastructural development amongst others led to the creation of MASSOB The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, by Chief Ralf Nwazurike, to secure a sovereign state for the Igbos. It is a local ethnic militia group, which has variedly engaged in clashes with law enforcement agencies. It designed a separate flag, currency and other national symbols, Chief Nwazurike was arrested and charged for treason and felony to prevent national distintegration and protect the security and stability of the state. (Adeyemo 2005:22)

The Bakassi boys was created by the Aba traders to protect them from the menace of the underworld. A self help organization with a private army to emphasise the failure of the state and law enforcement agents. It was later recognized by the Anambra state government, which incorporated it into the state security network. It gradually became an instrument for settlement of political scores and went underground for public outcry.

The Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA) a militant wing of the Ijaw youth movement to oppose the exploitation of mineral resources in Niger delta without corresponding benefit called for total resource control. Pocket of riots and demonstrations with oil companies and house arrests have also taken place at village and community levels to address this issue. The Arewa peoples’ congress (APC) was formed in the north, in response to the allegation and activities of the OPC in the South-west. Its activities are to counter

perceived violence, and threat to the Hausa/Fulani's within Yoruba land and elsewhere. Omotoso lent credence to the failure of state and leadership.

*The sporadic rise in militia activities across the country could be traced to the criminal neglect of Nigerians by the leadership, the marginalization and oppression of one group by another and outright exploitation of so many people by a few privileged individuals.*

Babawale (in Adigun 2003:1) further noted "the Nigerian people generally relate to the Nigerian state as an uncaring and illegitimate institution" loyalties are therefore unnationalistic. Political strength, and economic viability intensify the desire for models and avenues for actualization. An aggregated minority ethnic member of the Nigerian state are neglected, oppressed marginalized and denied access to political power. Inequality however breed frustration and suspicion and the result is crisis. The fear of the military maintained the gunpowder silence until the need for solution forced them to resort to violence especially in the democratic era. Omotoso (ibid) argued that the need for force led to the formation of ethnic militias; unemployed youths and frustrated civil society members, provided with the financial where withal and protected by disgruntled politicians and the wealthy seeking for power from the militias others seek access to power through this militias with the faith that it will provide what the state could not provide. Their credibility and total commitment lend credence to their usefulness. Militant ethnic nationalism thus saw the light of day in the Niger Delta Crisis. The Niger Delta people articulated their demands in documents such as the "Ogoni Bill of Right", the "Kaiama Declaration", the "Ogbia Declaration" and the "Ikwerre Rescue Charter". The Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force is an agglomeration of various youth groups committed to self-actualization and economic emancipation of the Niger delta region. The demand for total resources control, hostage taking, and Company distortions were regularly recorded and the joint police military patrol failed to stop their activities. Another group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) merged with NDPUF intensifying the security situation in the Niger Delta and the peace of the country.

#### **RECORDS OF PROTEST AND HUMAN RIGHT ABUSE IN THE NIGER DELTA**

The NDPUF commenting on the arrest of their leader Asari Dokubo noted that, the adoption of peace and dialogue had failed. According to the group,

*the elders told us that peace and dialogue are the best options to get results. We listened to them and handed over our guns, and look at what they have done to us. We now know that only violence can get result... (NDPUF militant cited in Agbo :27)*

The MEND leader Cynthia Whyte commenting on state refusal to release Dokubo also threatened,

*by now, they would have realized that the time for talk is over. Now it is time for bang, bang! We will hit them and smoke them out from every part of our fatherland. We will not spare them. Our rivers will be reddened with their blood... (Cited in Agbo:29)*

The sleepless nights resultant of the activities of riots, demonstrations, hostage taking and militia violence has resorted to Amnesty and the creation of a ministry of the Niger delta. Hopefully, there will be a positive record of development in the oil-producing delta. Before this achievements could be recorded however a lot of protests and human right violations were recorded. It is necessary to capture some of this as

imperative of the necessity for militancy. The relevance of militancy can only be evaluated when we chronicle the years of protest and human right violations resulting from the activities of the oil companies in the Niger delta.

The composition of the delta region was the first bases for agitation. The conceal of identity of Niger delta minorities led to the demand for a separate state out of the Eastern region. (see Ikiddah 2002 :277, Agbese 2002 :128). The Rivers chiefs and people's conference (RCPC) in 1950 visited the colonial office in London but the result was unsatisfactory. The formation of political party was the second effort, the Niger delta congress (NDC) was found in the 1959 general election congress. In 1966 Isaac Boro launched the fight for the Niger delta republic (Akinwumi 2004, Ikporukpo 2002). The born revolt failed but succeeded in awakening the ethnic consciousness of the minorities of the Niger delta and resulted in the establishment of civil society groups eg. Ijaw Youth Council. It marked the beginning of the Niger delta struggle for autonomy, resource control and development.

The creation of the 12 state structure in 1962 resulted in minority support of the federal government against the Biafra. The death of Boro however alienated the Deltans from the federal government and movement for the minority rights began at the level of the civil society. Some were community based, youth associations, pan ethnic and issue oriented, ken Saro wiwa's MOSOP and the Ogoni Uprising. The leaders of MOSOP and the Ogoni traditional rulers presented the Ogoni Bill of rights to the federal government of Babangidda (1990). It demanded political participation and resource control amongst others and self-determination. Within the MOSOP was the National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP) and the Ethnic Minority rights organization of Africa (FMIROAF).

The aggressive media propaganda and onslaught of MOSOP against the oil company and federal government alliance led to repression through the promulgation of a decree that later resulted in the killing of the Ogoni Nine. The Ijaw Youth Movement and Kaiama Declaration in 1998 to fight against marginalisation, neglect, underdevelopment, militarisation and repression of minorities.

It demanded compensation, development, resource control, national conference and federal restructuring (Ikelegbe 2001 a, 122 2001 b:46). Its famous kaiama declaration of 11<sup>th</sup> December 1998 was decisive. They demanded the stoppage of oil exploration. It called for the convocation of a sovereign national conference (SNC) democratically constituted to address issues. The IYC militant youth wing known as Egbesu Boys of Africa became violent in the attempt to close down oil facilities. It started to kidnap and killed twelve policemen at Odi in 1999, this resulted into the Odi massacre.

The rise of militia groups with violent orientation was the trend in the 1990's. The Egbesu Boys, Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPUF) the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), NDPUF was established in 1998 by Asari Dokubo to assist development of the delta and remove environmental insecurity and marginalisation. It engages in seizure of oil facilities, kidnapping and violent confrontations. MEND's demand is emancipation from colonialism by state oil company conspiracy. Engaged in hostage taking and ransom, their media coverage arouse National and international attention to solution finding.

Proliferation of militia movement enacted violent responses from the state. State attacks elicited harassment, death, physical assault, extortion, rape and brutalization of the citizens, the epic of which was the Odi massacre. Over two thousand people were killed, many injured, and several others displaced. There has been loss of property and psychological embarrassment. State disposition to ethnic militias in the delta is to force to submission instead of amicable resolution but when force failed there was resort to "bargain" and the result was the just concluded amnesty. Success of the amnesty however is dependent on management.

There was the creation of the ministry of the Niger delta to oversee the areas development. The current scenario is the handing over of the repentant militants to the defence ministry. There is the fear of tough handling and a breakdown of negotiated peace. The defence minister Godwin Abbe, is to head the amnesty implementation committee. Abbe has suggested constructive engagement of the militants. Except the Para militia group be integrated into the Nigerian army (this too is dangerous considering the Sudan experienced) there is public opinion Abbe's decision might not be the best to find a way to demilitarize and reintegrate the ex militia men into the civil society. The R.R. as Abbe referred to the rehabilitation and reintegration need to be handed over to a joint ministry of defence and civil society groups for proper handling. National reconciliation must take cognizance of the post Biafran settlements and take note of the negative aspects of peace building (for reconstruction).

A disgruntled ex militia might be the necessary seed to germinate into a civil war or another militancy. MEND raised an Aaron team (Tell 2009:29) to negotiate with government but the defence minister had a negative disposition to this. Our recommended opinion however seek the intervention of such groups in attending to issues because a revisit of militia intervention is a dangerous precipice.

### **RECORDS OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN THE NIGER DELTA**

Nigeria's 2.3 million barrel per day, ranks her as the sub Sahara's largest exporter of oil, accounting for Eighty five percent of the government revenue (Okaba 2008:26). More than 95% of export earning and approximately 40% of GDP. Okaba noted that underdevelopment in the delta overwhelmingly proclaims the paradox of plenty and the high level of poverty (ibid:26). He further stressed that, "as petrodollar fail to keep pace with demands and expectations, oil based governments, increasingly rely on repression to keep themselves in power and sustain the supply of oil. Thus a greater percentage of state revenue go into militarisation and conflict (mis)management".

Nigerian institutional responses include OMPADEC and the Niger Delta development commission (NDDC). The implementation of the 13 percent constitutional provision for derivation for developmental projects. The oil companies also improved on social responsibility, investing in community development projects such as schools, road construction, and rehabilitation. Federal government priority to Niger Delta development has generated a lot of frustrations. As recorded earlier, government efforts since independence have not led to significant improvements. There was the establishment of the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). The 1999 constitution also provides that at least thirteen percent of the revenue derived from natural resources should be paid to the states where it is produced. This was delayed till January 2000 before the federal government began making payments. Though some arrears were paid, the implementation was not satisfactory and the states demanded resource control.

By August 1999, as constitutionally demanded the government established the thirty -eight member revenue mobilization, allocation and fiscal commission, to negotiate a new formula for revenue sharing. The committee's recommendation was suspended and a new committee was set up in April 2002. This was the federal account allocation committee, to find a political solution to the resource control issue. In July 2002, the President signed an executive order providing for the federal government to take fifty six percent, state and local government to take twenty percent respectively. In an attempt to defuse the demand for full control the government established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The NDDC was charged with the task to

*...Conceive, plan and implement, in accordance, with set rules and regulations, projects and programmes for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta area, in the field of transportation, including roads, jetties and water ways, health, education, employment, industrialization, agriculture, fisheries, housing,*

*and urban development, water supply, electricity and telecommunications (NDDC Act, Section 7(1)(b))*

Despite beginning operations by 2001, the commission became moribund due to unceasing complaints of lack of funds by government and oil companies. Recently, the government, through the National Petroleum Investment and Management Service (NAPIMS), set up an oil industry development committee to monitor and rationalize oil company development projects. Mobile police army and navy were widely deployed throughout the area.

The Nigerian Police Force in collaboration with NNPC, established a “task force” on pipeline vandalization. In August 2001, Delta State government banned militant groups blamed for disruption of oil activities in the state. Most vandalization decrees violate international human right laws e.g. the petroleum production and distribution (anti sabotage) act of 1975. The criminal justice (miscellaneous provisions) Act of 1975 is also another. In November 2001, a special security committee on oil producing areas was set up to look into vandalization, disruption and kidnapping, extortion and a general state of insecurity. The committee was to:

- (1) Identify lapses in the protection of oil installations including causes and sources of facility vandalisation and sabotage.
- (2) Recommend appropriate measures to enhance oil installations”
- (3) Appraise the negative impact of youth and community agitations
- (4) Recommend measures to reduce youth restiveness, communal agitations, and other incidents of sabotage of pipelines in oil communities (source Nigeria vol. 1, No 7 (A))

The committee noted the disruptions had reduced production and that disruptions originated from armed youths in host communities. They insisted that another major threat was from the activities of a “cartel or mafia” composed of highly placed and powerful individuals within the society (who run a network of agents to steal crude oil and finished product from pipelines). It was noted that the root causes of insecurity in the areas had to do with neglect, frustration, and the sense of abandonment. Thus they believe militarization and security approach could not bring enduring peace. It recommended development of infrastructures such as roads, housing, electricity, water, employment generation and economic empowerment of the people of the area (Ibid). It noted, these would ensure the effective enforcement of law and order.

The committee proposed an upward review of derivation component of payment to states to minimum of 50%. Repel of land laws prohibiting the oil companies from hiring “ghost worker”. It recommended the creation of a centrally controlled integrated oil producing area security and safety system”, noting this would ensure the effective enforcement of law and order. All recommendations did not pass the paper stage. It is no surprise that the situation in the Niger Delta gradually degenerated into militancy.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

There is a need for socio-political reordering to assist Nigeria in development and force government to look into matters before it is too late. Crises abound in Africa, the twenty years Sudanese war was resultant of deprivations in resources sharing. Gabon ranks high in world poverty rating spending a high ratio of national income on importation of food and consumer goods. Angola the second largest oil exporter in the continent was engaged in war with UNITA for years and still engaged in conflict with rebel forces in the oil rich enclave of Cabinda. Nigeria has for the up tenth time resolved the Niger Delta crisis with promises embedded in the amnesty and creation of the ministry of the Niger Delta to oversee development. The

Nigeria peculiar problem is in the execution stage of government intervention. The origin of militia insurgency was the need to force government to intervene in the degenerate socio political situation in the different parts of the country. Militia groups situated within the Niger Delta region having existed for some time reengineered into a more active, result oriented and well focused group going into a bit of extremity to force government to rise to the need of the Niger Delta (White in Agbo:29) the leader of MEND reiterated, *by now, they would have realized that. The time for talk is over we will hit them and smoke them out ... our rivers will be redeemed with their blood.*

This extreme situation is a sign of failure of the state. The essence of government is to protect and provide security and other paraphernalia of development for its citizens. Nigeria is one of the internationally acclaimed poor state-Okaba (2005) described it as a classical example of the paradox of plenty with seventy percent living on less than one dollar per day, forty percent lack of sanitation and safe water, eighty two percent lack of access to regular power supply and forty six percent infant mortality rate (Ibid 2005b 62-63). Infrastructural decay is experienced in decades of neglect of roads, transport, housing, education energy and water. Governmental negligence is also epitomized in the general societal moral decadence. The deterioration in the standard of living can only be measured in the abject poverty recorded in Oloibiri, the first oil well in Nigeria and beyond.

Further deterioration of living conditions are recorded in state oppression, repression and militarization within and around the oil industry with high environmental abuses, intensifying mass poverty and general insecurity. The revolutionary struggles in the Niger Delta region against state led economic exploitation and socio political marginalization could however have been avoided. State capacity or performance, which Coleman (1971 in Abraham 2000:276) argued should be integrative, adaptive and innovative in response, is reserved in the governing elite. The wisdom of the elite however is resided in the structure of the state itself. A corrupt society can only produce a corrupt government and a collapsed governing structure. A collapsed governing structure cannot hold the system together nor respond to the needs and desires of the people. Government response to participatory and distributive demands can only be effective when there is an accountable, unselfish and sacrificial attitude. The kleptocratic nature of the state is a major stop- watch of accountability. (The record of Abacha governments looting of the country's oil wealth is relevant here) the excess income accrued from oil over the years by successive governments are not also hundred percent accounted for. Governmental interventions are usually more suppressive than responsive to solution finding. Kleptocratmania is also a good feature of the local governing structure in different parts of Nigeria. Accountability is irrelevant in our moral code of conduct and the watch- dog of government and society, the Nigerian constitution, is an illegal child of colonialism and military autocracy. Scholarly arguments buttress the point that power cliques have appropriated the state machinery (Abraham 2008, Omotoso, Abegunde, 2006).

Bureaucratic rationality also impedes the success of landable developmental and interventionist programmes. Bureaucracy can be described as the giant devil and stopwatch of governmental achievement. The failures of the river basins and the Niger Delta River basin in particular can be attributed to bureaucratic interventions. Government monitoring and interventions can prevent bureaucratic bottlenecks. Governmental attitude in intervention without monitoring is method to silence the voice of opposition without resolving the real crisis.

The first phase of the federal government sixty-day amnesty programme for interested Niger Delta militants ended on October 4, 2009, but is this truly an embrace of peace? The large quantity of sophisticated arms and ammunitions surrendered by Niger Delta militants in the amnesty programme shows the alarming level and the grave implications for the country (Agbo 2009:20). If the rehabilitation and

reintegration is properly handled, then Nigeria would have brokered peace on the road to Niger Delta development. Failure of post amnesty integration could lead to future problems. There is the likelihood of ex militants becoming political thugs and armies for inter tribal conflicts. Niger Delta militants were fingered as part of mercenaries in the failed Equatorial Guinea Coup. The handing over of rehabilitation to the defence ministry may not address the humane, social and civilian concerns. Issues of equity and justice do not require military solution but political solution following the increased confidence, consequent upon the success of the amnesty. The militants would expect the authorities to implement the report of the Ledum mittee committee-vocational training for repentant militants and massive infrastructural development in the Niger Delta.

## CONCLUSION

The topic posits alternative options and choices available for resolution to the Niger Delta developmental crisis beyond militia formation. Leadership and followership reorientation, an address of the country's management, socio economic, political, institutional and civil society managements is of priority. There is need for socio political re-ordering and governmental interventions through constitutional renewal, re-organised structures that address the genuine needs of the citizenry, Niger Delta infrastructural development and maintenance, development of opportunities and human resources and an offer of valued life to repentant militants.

It is pertinent to address the inherent contractions of relations between state, oil company, and civil society. The prospect for peace, stability and development in the country is embedded in the asymmetrical power relations between the oil and the environment. To Omotola, revenue allocation predicated upon fairness, equity and social justice (2008) is the first option in solution finding. In spite of the worst scenario, there is hope in pockets of existing Nigerians within and in the Diaspora who are sacrificially ready to take the bull by the horns and we need to search them out and put them in the right positions of leadership.

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