

Domestic Terrorism and Security Threats in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT In the last three decades, the Niger Delta region, the centre of Nigeria's oil wealth has been the scene of protest, sometimes violent, against the repressive tendencies of the Nigerian state on the one hand and against the recklessness, exploitative and environmentally unfriendly activities of oil Multinationals on the other hand. The violence has taken terror dimensions. Such violent agitations have claimed thousands of lives, other thousands displaced and inestimable properties have been destroyed rendering the region one of the most dangerous zones to live in Nigeria today. The paper discussed the genesis of the crisis, the threats it poses to human and national security and the policies that have been adopted by the Nigerian state to curtail and control the crisis. The paper submits that repressive tendencies and military solutions are not the best panacea but a policy, devoid of rhetoric, that will promote social justice and equity, reduce poverty and regulate the activities of the multinational oil companies in such a way that their activities will conform with best practices around the world.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a state under perpetual internal security threat. At a more general level the threat has social, economic, political and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions, singly and conjointly, greatly affects the nation's stability and well-being. Threats to human and national security ranges from the menace of separatist demands, illegal militia armies, ethnic and religious conflicts, terrorism, armed robbery, corruption and poverty to sabotage of public properties, economic sabotage and environmental degradation. Among these, ethno-religious fighting and violent attacks in the oil-rich Niger Delta forms the major security dilemma. The predominant threats and security challenges in the area are emanating from un-abating attacks on oil installations, arm proliferation, sea piracy, youth restiveness, bunkering, kidnap and hostage taking

In the last three decades, the Niger Delta region, the centre of Nigeria's oil wealth has been the scene of protest, sometimes violent, against the repressive tendencies of the Nigerian state on the one hand and against the recklessness, exploitative and environmentally unfriendly activities of oil Multinationals on the other hand. Such violent agitations have claimed thousands of lives, other thousands displaced and inestimable properties have been destroyed. In

economic term, millions of dollars have been lost to youth restiveness, disruption of production, pipeline vandalization, hostage-taking, assault and bombing of oil installations to mention a few. The use of terror strategies by the agitated groups to end the real and perceived injustices has attracted global attentions and a rethink on resource distribution policies of the Federal government. However, the persistence of the problem suggests the failure of such policies. This paper examines the menace of domestic terrorism in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and its security implications. For the purpose of analytical simplicity the paper is divided into various sections. Following immediately is the clarification of concepts.

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Conceptualizing Terrorism

One critical analytical problem in the discussion of the Niger Delta crisis is the dilemma of finding an appropriate word or concept to describe the menace and its perpetrators. Numbers of words have featured prominently in the literatures, magazines and newspapers (Osaghae 1995; Suberu 1996, 2001; Adejumbi and Aderemi 2002; Ogundiya and Amzat 2006; Ikporukpo 2007) describing the perpetrators of

the crisis as- terrorists, criminals, ethnic militias, rebels, freedom fighters, insurgents, revolutionaries, and political agitators. In this context, the conceptualization will be based on the tactic and strategy employed in the political struggle. Therefore, Niger Delta crisis is conceived as political acts. Political acts can make sense only when linked to collective grievances. Whether they are acts of terror or of resistance, there is need to recognize a feature common to political acts- they appeal for popular support and are difficult to sustain in the absence of it (Mandani 2004). In essence, the perpetrators are not criminals but terrorists. Then what is terrorism?

A central feature of terrorism is the difficulty of defining its amorphous concept (Heng 2002). The United State Department defines terrorism as 'premeditated, politically motivated violence against non-combatant targets by sub-national or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience'. The problem with this definition is that, due to the level of sophistication of ammunitions in the hand of terrorist, terror acts may be directed at both combatants and noncombatants as we have seen in the September 11 attacks against the United States (Ogundiya and Amzat 2006). For the purpose of this paper, "the threat of terrorism is itself terrorism" (Pillar cited in Heng 2002: 229). Therefore, political terrorism may be conceived "as the threat and or use of extra normal forms of political violence in varying degrees, with the objectives of achieving certain political objectives/goals. Such goals constitute the long range and short term objectives that the group or movements seek to obtain (Shultz 1978). It is more a phenomenon or method of political violence than a clear set of adversaries (Heng 2002: 229). Terrorist violence communicates a political message; usually a message of political change (Crenshaw 1981: 379). It may be an expression of dissatisfaction with the current political arrangement. In Nigeria, the political message, at least from the "Niger Deltans" to the Nigerian state, is simply that the current fiscal federalism or arrangement is not the best for the society. Another conceptual problem is that terrorism is seen as criminality, whereas the two differ.

The distinction between political terror and crime is that the former makes an open bid for public support. Unlike "criminal" the "terrorist" is not easily deterred by punishment. Mandani (2004: 229) writes "whatever we may think of their

methods, terrorist have not only a need to be heard but, more often than not, a cause to champion". The cause of the agitator seen as domestic terrorist in this work is the liberation of the Niger Delta region from the morass of economic deprivation and/or marginalization and environmental devastating activities of the Multinational oil companies. The methods employed include: bombing of oil installations, kidnapping, hostage taking, and incendiary attack and so on - approaches known to be common with terrorist organizations across the world. The goal of the militia could be summed up as total control of the resources of the Niger Delta by the people of the Niger Delta and for the development of the Niger Delta. Another feature is that it is domestic in as much as it does not transcend the boundary of Nigeria.

A Framework of Analysis

Terrorism has generated serious and wide theoretical thinking across social sciences and non-social sciences disciplines. The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to the study of terrorism have produced a wide variety of explanations and theoretical statements. Within the context of domestic terrorism three groups of theories are prominent. These are: economic and social integration theory; resource mobilization theory and cultural theories.

The economic and social integration theory holds that "high concentrations of farming, economic depression, and social disorganizations are all related to high levels of domestic terrorist activity, militia movements in particular" (Beiner 2008). The resource mobilization theory suggests that "states which are more prosperous and socially integrated would tend to develop more domestic terrorist activity, on the basis that group competition for power and resources becomes intense" (Beiner 2008). The cultural theories propose that states experiencing greater cultural diversity and female empowerment along with increasing paramilitarism are likely to develop greater levels of domestic terrorist activity (Beiner 2008).

Within the context of this paper resource mobilization theory is more relevant. The theory describes the process by which a group assembles material and nonmaterial resources and places them under collective control for the explicit purpose of pursuing a group's interest through

collective action (Jenkins 1983 as cited in Biener 2008). Collecting resources is always accompanied by the distribution or mobilization of resources. This generates some level of inequity in resource distribution which could become a source of grievance. This paper argue that domestic terrorism in the Niger Delta is a conflict arising from the competition over the allocation and distribution of resources, though there is environmental dimension to it. It is within this context that one can come to grip with the agitation over the problem of neglect, relative deprivation and “internal colonialism” which militants in the Niger Delta seek to redress.

The Niger Delta Region

Long before now, there existed certain level of confusion in the definitive location of the Niger Delta (Ukaogo 2000). This is so because the region is heterogeneous, multicultural, and ethnically diverse. The Niger Delta covers an area of about 70,000km extending eastward of longitude 430 degree east to the Nigeria- Cameroon border and bounded by the Atlantic Ocean. The Delta lies within some 22 major estuaries that are linked locally by a complicated network of mangrove creeks, rich in wetlands, biodiversity, oil and gas as well as human resources (Anyaegbunan 2000: 140). The Niger Delta can be geologically, carthologically, hydrologically or geo-politically defined (Nwachukwu 2000: 105). This paper conceives the Niger Delta from a geo-political point of view. A geo-political definition of the region include those states of Nigeria that border the coastal waters of the Atlantic. They are the oil producing states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Ondo, Rivers, Cross Rivers, Abia and Imo. This richly endowed geo-political zone contributes almost 90 percent of Nigeria’s annual income through sales of crude oil and gas.

DOMESTIC TERRORISM IN THE NIGER DELTA: HISTORICAL SURVEY

Oil has not only promoted international conflicts but also local ones (Nore and Turner 1981; Saro Wiwa 1992; Naanen 1995; Osaghae 1995; Ikporupo 2002; Monica 2004). As Ikporupo (1996: 159) observed, “since the great gold rush, which informed and characterized the voyages of discovery and expedition in the new world (the Americas), no natural resource has attracted so

much attention and generated so much boom and yet so much conflict as petroleum”. In a similar vein, Monica (Cited in SpinWatch 2004) writes;

Since oil was discovered in the wake of the industrial revolution in the 18th century, as a veritable source of energy, man’s appreciation, and value rating and demand for this product have reached a worrisome level. This unbridled appetite for the black gold, competing with human blood for first position in man’s needs have led to wars as many nations are outdoing one another for the control, protection and acquisition of oil generating territories.

Evidences of conflicts in and around the oil producing regions of the world including Nigeria authenticate this remark. In Nigeria, at the centre of most of these conflicts however, is not the competition among the stakeholders but also the environmentally degrading activities and nonchalant attitudes of the multinational oil companies and discontent with what the agitators consider as the obnoxious, archaic laws/Decrees which put the oil producing communities at a disadvantaged position. Such laws prevent the oil communities from total control; of the resource generated from their land. Examples of such laws among others are:

- Petroleum Act (51), 1969: This act vests control and ownership of all petroleum resources in the hands of the Federal Government (enacted in the heat of the civil war by the federal authorities);
- Offshore Oil Revenue Act (9), 1971: This act vests on the Federal Government exclusive rights over the continental shelf of the coastal areas;
- The Land Use Act, 1978; Entrenched in the Constitution of Nigeria transferred the ownership of all lands from individuals and communities to the state governors.

Other demands and grievances of Nigeria’s oil bearing areas relates to the disposition of land rents; the application of derivation principle to the allocation of federally collected mineral revenues; the appropriate institutional and fiscal responses to the ecological problems of the oil producing areas; the responsibility of the oil prospecting companies to the oil producing communities and the appropriate arrangements for securing the integrity and autonomy of the oil producing communities within the present federal structure (Suberu 1996: 27)

In the case of the Niger Delta Region of

Nigeria four factors are responsible for the state of affairs between the oil and gas prospecting companies and their host communities. These include environmental factors, government attitude and policies, attitude and policies of the multinationals, and the realities of change fuelled by globalization. Among these, environmental impacts of the oil exploration are perhaps very important. These includes the indiscriminate destruction of marine life by explosives used in seismic surveys; the pollution of water, land and vegetation by seepages and spills from oil wells, tankers and exposed high pressure pipelines; and the devastation of crops and trees by the intense heat resulting from gas flaring. These have not only rendered the region inhospitable but also significantly hamper human development. This is indeed the root of the crisis.

However, the crisis in the Niger Delta can be better understood as a long drawn historical process. This could be divided into five important historical phases – the colonial or pre-independence period which terminated in 1959, the early secession/Isaac Boro phase 1960-1970; the early civil society phase 1970-1985; the consultation, advocacy and mobilization/ Saro Wiwa phase 1986-1995; the confrontation/ post Saro Wiwa Phase 1996 to date.

The colonial and pre-independence period was the pre-oil period, and the Niger Delta at this historical period did not, in a relative term, occupy the center stage in Nigerian politics. During this period Niger Delta area was used to refer to those communities occupying the geographical region where the Niger River emptied its water into the Atlantic Ocean. Presently, it has a wider geo-political connotation embracing all the oil producing communities that were not hitherto part of the original Niger Delta. The pre- independence agitation in the Niger Delta was at first against colonial subjugation and exploitation and later against the perceived domination, peripheralization and marginalization by the dominant ethnic groups. In 1957, a year before the production of oil commenced, the communities of the Niger Delta and several other minority ethnic groups in the country, had complained to the Willink Commission set up to enquire into their fears as negotiations began for a constitutional framework with which the country would be granted independence from Britain, that they were being neglected by the regional and central government in the allocation of resources, social amenities

and political appointments. This complaint could not earn them anything except the creation of the Niger Delta Development Board (NNDB), a special agency established to tackle the developmental needs of the area. The military coups of 1966 and the thirty month civil war rendered the NNDB moribund.

The early secession/Isaac Boro's phase (1960-1970) was very short but historically significant in the study and analysis of the growth of domestic terrorism in the Delta region. It is significant in the sense that it was the first attempt by any Nigerian to lead a separatist group after independence in an attempt to terminate the corporate existence of the Nigerian state.

The demand for equity in the allocation of federal resources took a new dimension on 23rd February 1966 when Isaac Adaka Boro declared the southern part of the present Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states "The Niger Delta Peoples Republic. This occurred at a time, when relatively, oil plays very little or less significant role in the economy of the country. However, the declaration was an "expression of the dissatisfaction of the people of the Niger Delta about the control of the oil resources of the region (Ikporupo 2002). The revolt was brought under control within twelve days. Perhaps, poor interpretation of that historical event and nonchalant attitude on the part of the Nigerian leaders and policy makers (then) was partially responsible for the country's civil war experience that lasted 30 months in which thousand of Nigerians lost their lives and also the current predicaments in which the country is enmeshed.

The third phase is the early civil society phase (1970-1985). This phase was devoid of rancor and destructionist. It was characterized by 'advocacy largely by civil society organizations. It came after a long time of calmness and inactivity that accompanied the civil war when the Nigerian government was busy with its policy of three Rs - policy of Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction. This phase lasted till mid 1980s. The most prominent association during this period is AMOS (Association of Minority Oil States). AMOS asserted that the principle of equity has been neglected in favor of other considerations in the distribution of resources in the country (Ikporupo 1996; Suberu 1996). This, they argued put the oil and mineral producing areas at a gross disadvantaged position. AMOS employed "academic and peaceful approach" (Ikporupo 2002: 209) characterized by negotiation

and consultation with all the stakeholders. Despite its peaceful approach the federal military government used its regulatory power and banned the organization thereby closing the door of opportunities for further discussion with the aggrieved oil producing communities.

The third phase is the Ogoni/Saro- Wiwa phase (1986-1995). This phase has been discussed extensively in the literatures (Saro-Wiwa 1991, 1996; Naane 1995; Osaghae 1995; Suberu 1996; Cayford 1996). This phase witnessed the intensification and internationalization of ethnic minority agitation and non-compromising stance of the oil producing communities, prominent among which is the Ogoni ethnic group. The Ogoni campaign was spearheaded by MOSOP (Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People) under the leadership of late Ken Saro Wiwa. The approach of the Ogoni was largely based on advocacy and protest march. Two cases are worth mentioning here. To contest the perceived injustice and unfair treatment of the Ogoni people in the distribution of the state resources and abject neglect of their region in spite of the long years of petroleum exploitation, MOSOP mobilized all the communities and gathered at Bori, the major town on 26 August, 1990 and adopted the Ogoni Bill of Rights. According to Suberu (1996:33) "the bill represented the classic example of the use of written memoranda to articulate the cause of the oil producing minority communities". The bill demanded among other things the "right to control and use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development (Ogoni Bill of Rights 1990:4). Another spectacular protest march by the Ogoni ethnic was that on 4 January, 1993, involving about 100 thousand people from all parts of Ogoni land.

These two protests generated international sympathy in support of the minority oil communities. Another significant step taking by the Ogoni ethnic group was the decision to boycott the June 12 presidential election in 1993. Subsequent disagreements among some Ogoni groups resulted in the murder of four Ogonis and the subsequent hanging of the Ogoni nine including Ken Saro Wiwa, the renowned playwright and environmentalist, by the military regime of the late dictator, General Sani Abacha. This marked the end of another phase and the beginning of a new phase witnessing the employment of non-compromising stance and terror strategies. In the words of the Human Right Watch, "the hanging of Saro-Wiwa in November

1995 could be said to be the turning point in the politics of the Niger Delta"

The post Saro Wiwa phase (1996 to date) has been characterized by violent attack and bombing of oil installations, kidnap, hostage taking and assault. This phase, aptly described by Ikorupo (2002: 209) as "the wilderness phase" poses greater security challenges for the Nigerian state than in any period of Nigeria's political history, except the civil war. In this phase, thousands of people mostly from the ethnic minority groups have lost their lives, thousands are being displaced and another thousand rendered homeless thereby aggravating the social, economic and environmental menace inflicted on the people of the Niger Delta by the recklessness of the multinational oil companies. The "judicial murder" of Ken Saro Wiwa not only created a leadership vacuum but also a consciousness in the people that support for any group or leaders of any group claiming to be their representative, liberator or freedom fighter is sacrosanct and unflinching. This has been responsible for the further proliferation of militant ethnic groupings. As at now, there are over 150 of such groups claiming to be the voice of the people of the oil communities. Few of these are: the Supreme Egbesu Assembly (SEA), Niger Delta Volunteer Force, (NDVF) led by Asari Dokubo; Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB); The Chicoco Movement formed in August 1997, on a joined rally at Aleibiri; Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA) formed in 1998, Consists of Ijaw/warri ethnic groups; Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) formed on January 1, 1999; Isoko National Youth Movement (INYM); Itsekiri Nationality Patriots; Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) formerly headed by Late Ken Saro-wiwa ; Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN); Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND); Movement for Reparation to Ogbia (Oloibiri) (MORETO); Egi Women's Movement; Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), led by Ateke Tom; and Federated Niger Delta Ijaw communities, led by Oboko Bello. The proliferation of ethnic groupings has further created security management problem.

The brief historical analysis indicates that the Niger Delta crisis is a product of the struggle for the control and allocation of the petroleum resources of the Niger Delta and a fight against the environmentally degrading activities of the oil companies. It has never been against the interest of the United States of America as it is

wrongfully perceived among observers in the western world (<http://www.factmonster.com/spot/terrorism7.html>). It is terrorism to the extent that the militia uses terror strategies to pursue their local goals. It is an outcome of the feeling of the people that in spite of their oil resources and contribution to the growth of Nigeria economy and development of other regions, the regions remained impoverished, underdeveloped and neglected. It is indeed a fight against inequity and both real and perceived marginalization of the Niger Delta by the majority ethnic groups.

DOMESTIC TERRORISM AND SECURITY THREATS IN THE NIGER DELTA

Violent political agitation by the people of the Niger Delta for improved and equitable resources allocation and involvement in the petroleum industry has constituted the most serious threat to the economy, human and national security in Nigeria. Not only that, because of the nature, dimension and strategies employed by the militants the country has been named among the terrorist trouble spots around the world (<http://www.factmonster.com/spot/terrorism7.html>).

Since 1998, the Niger Delta has seen a rise in the incidence of hostage taking of oil and oil related multinational company staff (both foreign and local) sabotage of company property; pipeline vandalisation; bombing of oil installations; kidnapping for ransom, sea piracy and robbery on the waterways. It was reported in the Financial Standard of January, 2006 that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation recorded 1,306 cases of line-breaks (majority of which took place in the Niger Delta) of petroleum products pipeline across the country in 2005 (Ibiyemi 2006: 3). This figure is considered too high when compared with 88 cases recorded in 2003. It also represents an increase of 40.5 percent over the 929 cases recorded by the corporation in 2004. The situation is worse now. There is no passing day without a reported case of kidnap, hostage taking or pipeline destruction in the Niger Delta. Balogun (2006) observed that:

Kidnap and hostage taking particularly of foreign oil workers, by militants in the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria is assuming an alarming rate. Before youths militants became daring in 2006, they had limited their exuberance to just disrupting operations of oil producing companies, blowing up oil pipelines and invading oil fields with the aim of collecting ransom.

Today, people in the Niger Delta live in perpetual fear. More worrisome is the fact that the legitimacy and the survival of the Nigerian state is under considerable threat. Table 1 gives a graphic picture of the situation in the Niger Delta.

It is important to note that this table only shows a few incidents of acts of terror in the Niger Delta region. Indeed, kidnappings in Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta have become an almost daily occurrence. For instance, nearly 100 foreign oil workers have been kidnapped in the first quarter of 2007. MEND the most active and violent militant group have been responsible for most of the destruction of oil facilities and the kidnap of oil workers. In short, the Niger Delta region could be said to be in a state of war- a war of low intensity between the militants and multinational oil companies on the one hand and the militants and the Nigerian state on the other hand. More worrisome is the fact that the terrorists are now confidently inching closer into the metropolis with the threat to make the attacks national. With a more sophisticated weapon, the terrorist not only intimidate foreign citizens but also the Nigerian security agencies. Irrefutably in the Niger Delta Region today, the fear of the militants is the beginning of wisdom.

MEND in its non-compromising stance vowed to cripple the nation's economy. Truly, the damage youth restiveness has done to the Nigerian economy is huge. Shell, for example produced only 700,000 barrels per day from August to December 1998 falling short of its production quota of 830,000 barrels per day in July 1998 (SPDC Report, May 1999:2). The confrontation has also had its toll on human lives. In 1999 for instance, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that the Ogoni rebellion resulted in deaths and destruction of the community, producing refugees estimated to be 5,400 (Ejobowah 2000). In another instance, in a military operation in December 30 and 31 1998, about 26 civilians were killed and about 200 wounded (Ejobowah 2000). On the other hand 80 soldiers were reported missing. The effects of the confrontation on the economy have been enormous. The oil industry is estimated to have lost 117 working days in 1997. In the first eight months of 1998 Shell, the largest oil company lost about 11 billion barrels of crude oil estimated at \$3.2 billion (Ejobowah 2000). Appreciating the damaging effect on the economy, General Abdusalam Abubakar in 1999 budget speech to

Table 1: Some terror incidents in recent years

March 1997	Youths captured a barge delivering goods to a Chevron installation, The crew of seventy Nigerians and twenty expatriates were held hostage for three days
December 13-17, 1997	13 employees of Western Geophysical were held hostage by youths in a barge off the coast of Ondo State
On October 14, 1998	Militant seized control of two Chevron flow stations, at Abiteye and Olero Creek, near Escravos on the Atlantic coast, taking some thirty workers hostage for two days
Nov, 1999	Odi-South-East, 12 Policemen were held hostages and murdered by the youth
October 10, 2001	19 soldiers on a peace mission in the conflict area were abducted and killed by the Tiv militia in Zaki-Biam
On March 12, 2003	Government forces Vs Ijaw militia (Some soldiers and militants were killed)
On June 5, 2004	the Nigerian military killed 17 bandits in the oil-rich Delta state as part of an effort to combat oil theft, piracy, and kidnappings of oil workers
January 11, 2006	Four hostages seized (a Briton, an American and two Hungarians). About 22 persons were reported to have died in the attack.
February, 2006	Nine hostages seized
April, 2006	Militant claimed responsibility of Bomb explosion 2 people died, six others injured.
May, 2006	Five military personnel killed in surprise raid by the militants
May 2006	Seven hostages: 4 Briton, 2 Canadian, 1 American
31 st May, 2006	Five Koreans were held hostage by joint militant action
July 13, 2006	4 military personnel including a naval chief killed
July, 2006	2 explosions rocked pipelines conveying crude oil to Nigeria Agip oil, Twon Brass, Bayelsa State.
October 1, 2006	Militants killed 13 soldiers while escorting two oil vessels along the Cowthorn Channel and sank their vessel
October 3, 2006	Seven expatriate oil workers held hostage from their residence at Essan Akpan estate in Eket
October 10, 2006	Sixty oil worker taken hostage by militant youth in Balyesa
January 2007	24 Filipino held hostage and was not released until after a month in February. Also 9 Chinese were kidnapped in Sagbama, Bayelsa state
January 10 2007	Ten oil workers comprising 9 Koreans and one Nigerian working for Daewoo were kidnapped
May 8,2007	Attack on oil facilities at Brass and Asaka
May 16 2007	Attack and destruction of the country house of Goodluck Jonathan, Governor of Bayelsa State and Vice President elect of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
Friday July, 24	Bayelsa State Speaker's mother abducted

Source: Ogundiya I.S 2005.The Threats of Terrorism in Nigeria: Myths or Reality. Paper Presented at the Workshop on Disaster and Emergency Management, Organized by the Office of the Secretary to the Kebbi State Government, Kebbi, Nigeria, 20-22 Sept 2005 and author's compilation from Financial Standard February 13, 2006; Financial Standard February 6, 2006, Vanguard January 23, 2006; The Pointer January 20, 2006, The Punch January 20, 2006, Tell magazine, June 4, 2007.

the nation as cited in the Guardian newspapers of January 2, 1999, confessed; "... the temporary closure of wells in the Niger Delta led to a sharp reduction in government foreign exchange earnings", resulting in the non-realization of "the budgeted 1998 revenue of N216.336 billion from oil. The situation has gone worse since then. In a period of seven months in 2006 (between February and September) the Business Day of September 4, 2006 reported that the country lost about 12 billion US dollars to the Niger Delta militants. By May 2007, it is estimated that militant activities and protest have reduced oil production from a total capacity of 3million barrels per day to about 2million barrels. At an average of 65 dollars a barrel, this loss translates to \$65 million per day. Expectedly, this is damaging to the economy of

the nation- an economy that is significantly driven by oil.

Therefore, if security derives from the commonsensical fact that a person's first interest is survival, the Niger Delta region's environment (socially, economically, politically and in strict environmental sense) is far from been secured. More worrisome is the threats it constitute to Nigeria's global image, as most nations including United States, Britain, Australia among others, instructs their citizens against doing business in Nigeria (British High Commission, Nigeria 2005; Australian High Commission 2005). For example Australian High Commission warned;

Australians in Nigeria should exercise a high degree of caution. The risk of terrorist attacks against Western interests remains...Australians

are advised to defer non-essential travel to the riverine area in Bayelsa, Delta and River States in south-eastern Nigeria... Unrest and violence can occur without warning throughout Nigeria. Cult or street youth gang violence occurs regularly and can result in fatalities.

The image of Nigeria abroad is that of a state that is engrossed in war. What is the reaction of the Nigerian state to the spate of violence in the region? The next section will examine the effort of the state to short-circuit the crisis.

MEASURES TO END DOMESTIC TERRORISM IN THE NIGER DELTA

It is grossly disingenuous to say that the approach of the Nigerian state to resolve the recurrent problem in the Niger Delta is completely repressive. Occasionally, soft measures are applied while at times hard measures are inevitable in order to maintain peace or protect the corporate existence of the country. Following Theodore Lowi (1964) and Keller (1983), three forms of state responses to the claims and activities of ethnic minority oil producing communities can be identified (cited in Suberu, 1996). These are redistributive, reorganization and regulatory/repressive state policies and responses. According to Suberu (1996: 35) redistributive policies are state decisions that consciously dispense value resources to one group at the expense of other claimants to state resources. Re-organizational policies refer to state effort to restructure or reconfigure political or administrative institutions and relationship in order to accommodate group demands or strengthen the efficacy of centralized state power. Regulatory policies on the other hand entail the mandatory imposition of sanctions or restrictions of individuals or groups that are perceived to pose a threat to state cohesion and order. A brief discussion of these policies is necessary.

Redistributive Policies: Revenue sharing or resource distribution has been at the centre of ethnic agitation in Nigeria. The exceptional political sensitivity of resource allocation is worsened by the lack of consensus on the criteria of distribution, the absence of reliable socio-economic data, and political change, and the extent to which revenue distribution is tied to perceptions of regional ethnic dominance (Suberu 2001). Revision in Federal revenue sharing arrangements have been the most important redistributive

policies designed to contain ethnic minority agitation in Nigeria. The irony however is that, the various review exercises have been done at the disadvantage of the oil producing communities. Before oil assumes a prime position in the Nigerian economy derivation principle occupied the centre stage of revenue sharing practices. The percentage allocated to derivation stood at 50% before the promulgation of the Distributable Pool Account (DPA Decree 13 of 1970) which slashed it down to 45%. The 1979 Constitution revised the petroleum act of 1969 by declaring Federal Government's ownership of all mineral resources both onshore and offshore and the derivation share of oil revenue slashed to 5% by the Second Republic government of Shehu Shagari. By 1985 the derivation principle as an index of revenue allocation has been partially eliminated. For example, the Babangida administration (1985-93), at its inception inherited a revenue sharing arrangement which assigned 2 per cent and 1.5 percent of oil mineral revenues to the oil producing states and oil producing areas respectively (For detail see Suberu 1996). This was later slashed down to 1 per cent in order to provide fund for the development of Abuja, the Nigerian new capital city. Following intensive agitation, the statutory allocation for the mineral producing areas was increased from 1 to 3 per cent of federally collected revenue. This remained so till the end of 1993.

Now according to the 1999 (Section 162 subsection 2 and 3) Nigerian Constitution the derivation formula for sharing revenue stands at 13 per cent. Nonetheless, the increase has not doused the flame of the struggle for equity and justice in the Niger Delta region as communities demand for total control of what they feel is their God-given resources or at least a return to the pre-1970 period when other formulae like population, equity, and need were peripheral. Though the revision in Federal revenue sharing arrangements have been the most important redistributive policies, this has been used to the advantage of the major/dominant ethnic groups. Thus, the major ethnic groups (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo) have been accused of internal colonialism. Indeed, this forms a major crisis that the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC), inaugurated by President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2005, had to contend with (NPRC Minority Report of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources).

Other measures include the establishment of special commission and federal agencies to address the peculiar developmental needs of the region. For example Shagari administration (1979-83) set up a presidential task force in 1980 known as the 1.5 Per Cent Committee to see to the developmental peculiarities of the region. 1.5 per cent was allocated to the Committee to carry out its mandate. The task force recorded nothing of note on the sands of time (Tell Magazine June 2007: 29). Later, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was established by General Ibrahim Babangida, the then military head of state. He gave OMPADEC the mandate of turning around the situation in the region. It was a glaring fact that the Commission like the previous ones failed to achieve its founder's vision. It was widely believed that inefficiency, lack of focus, inadequate and irregular funding, official profligacy, corruption, and excessive political interference, lack of transparency and accountability and high overhead expenditure in the organization ensured that people largely got disappointed. The failure of OMPADEC accounted for its dissolution by Obasanjo's civilian administration upon inception in 1999 and its replacement by Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The NDDC was set up with the mission of facilitating 'the rapid, even and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, and environmentally regenerative and politically stable (Obasanjo 2007). President Obasanjo in his speech also charged the commission to make the people of the Niger Delta feel a sense of belonging by uplifting their standard of living through the implementation of life-touching projects. The persisting crisis of development in the region is a testimony to the fact that little has been achieved by the Commission due to pandemic political and bureaucratic corruption.

Reorganization Policies: A common feature of ethnic politics in Nigeria is the unrelenting agitation for administrative autonomy. This has resulted in incessant state and local government creation exercises. The philosophical basis for such agitation is the underlying assumption that such administrative unit enhances access to national wealth; facilitate equitable inter-ethnic power sharing and as well local community development. Suberu (1996) writes;

A key feature of Nigerian federalism is the

decisive role that state and local government play in facilitating the access of territorial communities to federal developmental patronage. This role has arisen from the virtually complete dependence of the states and localities on federal oil revenues, but also from the continuing emphasis on the standard of inter-unit equality in distributing federal financial resources and infrastructural opportunities to the nation's constituent communities and segments.

Therefore, the Nigerian state has responded to intense clamor for additional constituent units in the Delta region. Presently, Niger Delta Region is composed of nine states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. In order to pacify the people of the region, the ruling Peoples Democratic Party has conceded the post of the Vice Presidency of the country to the region. However, it is significant to note that the creation of states and constituent units have also failed to serve as a panacea to the crisis. A number of factors explain this- the poor relationship between the host communities and the multinational oil companies; the devastating impact of the activities of the oil companies on the environment; competition among the various communities for recognition and access to resources; crass poverty and poor management of the available resources by the states and local government within the region. More important is the fact that most policies designed to short-circuit the crisis are formulated at a level far removed from the communities.

Regulatory/Repressive Policies: Successive governments in Nigeria have used regulatory and repressive instruments to contain the crisis in the Niger Delta. These include promulgation of Decrees during the military era and Acts of Parliament during the Civilian administration. For example, Babangida military regime promulgated Decree No 21 of May, 1992 among other Decrees as a sanction against ethnic minority agitation. Decree N0 21 (Cited in Suberu 1996: 41) for instance, empowered the President of the Federal Republic to:

dissolve and proscribed any association of individuals of three or more persons ... which in his opinion is formed for purposes of furthering the political, religious, ethnic, tribal, cultural or social interest of a group of persons or individuals contrary to the peace, order and good governance of the Federation...

Other measure that is being proposed to

address the terror dimension is constitutional engineering. Recently, the legislative arm of the government has received two bills entitled (1) "An Act to Prohibit Terrorism" and (2) "Prevention of Terrorism Act". The first bill sponsored by one of the Senators prescribes life imprisonment for those involved in hostage-taking, kidnapping and related activities while the second bill sponsored by the president prescribes a maximum of 20 years jail term for offenders of such terror actions. The bills also recommend the establishment of anti-terrorism agency in the country.

Another regulatory approach is the deployment of the law enforcement agents and the military to the troubled zone to suppress the agitators and enforce order. This approach often further aggravates the crisis. In certain circumstances, the police and the soldiers have overreacted, killing innocent citizens and renders thousands homeless. This is inevitable because the police and the soldiers deployed to such scene are often poorly equipped and as well poorly trained in weapon handling and crowd control. Few cases are worth mentioning here. For instance, when the IYC leading other groups in the historic Kaima declaration asked all multinational oil companies to leave the Ijaw land in December 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar dispatched several warships to the Delta Region to quench the riot and enforces order. When Ijaw Youths went out in the street of Yenagoa, the Bayelsa state capital in peaceful protest about three hundred of them were shot down by soldiers in cold blood. The soldiers also invaded the city of Kaima and murdered several people including the son of the king. The story is not different when the civilian government of Olusegun Obasanjo sacked the Odi community in 1999. Hundreds of people lost their lives in an operation that reduced the whole community to rubble (for detail see Human Right Watch 1999).

Other palliative measures include negotiation and dialogue with the oil producing communities. Before the exit of Obasanjo's administration, the president organized meetings at regular interval with all the stakeholders. This forum provided the oil communities to table their grievances in a legitimate manner. It also provided the opportunity for the government and the multinational corporations to assess their activities on the one hand and ensure corporate social responsibilities on the other hand. Furthermore, the Federal Government charged the NDDC to produce an all-inclusive Niger Delta Development Master Plan.

The Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan was launched by President Obasanjo on Tuesday, March 27; 2007. The broad goals of the master plan with mutually reinforcing components include poverty reduction, industrialization and socio-economic transformation to prosperity. Therefore the plan focuses on five major themes: Economic Development, Community needs the natural environment, Physical Infrastructure, and Human and Institutional Resources (Agbo 2007: 30). The 15-year Plan clearly enunciates the role of all the stake holders- local Government, State Government, Federal Government, Multinational Oil Companies etc. - in tackling the problem of development in the Niger Delta. Though, it is too early to evaluate the plan, it demonstrates the commitment of the Federal Government to end the crisis because the 'security of the Niger Delta is the security of Nigeria' (Yar' Adua cited in Tell June 4, 2007: 31). The problem however, remains whether the new Plan will not suffer the same faith that befell the previous policies. As noted earlier, the persistence of the problem indicates the failure of some of these measures. What is the way out of the woods?

CONCLUSION: WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

It has been argued in this paper that domestic terrorism in the Niger Delta region is a consequence of the long years of negligence, real and perceived marginalization of the oil producing communities and the nonchalant attitude of the oil companies to environmental safety. It is directed at the Nigerian state and the multinational oil companies rather than against the national interest of any nation. Therefore, the Niger Delta question in Nigeria is peculiar and domestic though it may have international implications. From all sides of the divide, it calls for a careful understanding of the issues involved, and the strategies being applied. The problem is for the Federal government to solve. Repressive state policies or military solution cannot be the right panacea but a determined effort, devoid of rhetoric, to promote social justice and equity; to stem the tide of environmental devastation and ecological destruction going on in the Niger Delta. Though the establishment of special commission like the defunct OMPADEC and the current NDDC is a welcome development, it is necessary for the government to monitor and constantly evaluate the activities of such agency in order to determine

whether its stated achievement is commensurate with the fund released. This will further check financial recklessness, mismanagement and corruption that have bedeviled all government agencies in the country. Most of the redistributive policies failed because they were conceived and adopted at a level far too removed from the people. Hence, there is need for community involvement in policies designed to affect their lives.

Furthermore, the activities of the multinational oil companies must be closely monitored and under strict scrutiny in order to ensure that it conforms to the best practices around the world. Social and infrastructural development must be the priority of both the government and the oil companies. The multinational oil companies must be alive to their corporate responsibilities. The current levels of infrastructural decay in the region are sources of dissent and rebellion in the state. Fundamentally, Nigeria needs to redefine its national security goal. The national security aspiration of Nigeria has for a long time centered on expelling external aggression and containing internal upheavals. Therefore, economic deprivation or imbalances, poverty, health concerns, international migration, terrorism environmental issues like desertification, gully erosion and other ecological problems should form part of the security agenda. This is critical to the resolution of the Niger Delta crisis because the grievances of the people are rooted in the deplorable state of the environment; abject poverty and economic and social deprivation. David Palmer (Quoted in Crenshaw 1995) maintained that isolation and poverty breed terrorism. The fact that the hostages are being taken for ransom suggest that poverty is a major precipitating factor in the explanation of domestic terrorism in the Niger Delta and the attendant threat to human and national security. Therefore, concerted effort must be directed at implementing policies that engender social and economic development of the various communities.

There is need for a clear and coherent national policy on terrorism. Akin to this, a well trained anti-terrorism squad must be created from the Nigerian Army, Air Force, Navy, Police and State Security Service. The role of these security organizations must be clearly stated in order to prevent duplicity and conflict of functions. This is necessary and critical to Nigeria's preparedness to contain the development and spread of terror acts to other zones (more especially the Northern states where

cases of terrorism have been reported in the recent time) that are prone to terrorism.

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