

CONTENTIOUS POLITICAL PRESSURE AND DEMOCRATISATION IN NIGERIA – A FOCUS ON MOSOP

E. J. C. DURU AND I. A. UNO

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ABSTRACT

The paper is on contentious political pressures and democratization in Nigeria - A focus on MOSOP. The aim is to show the impact of contentious political pressures on the process of democratization in Nigeria using MOSOP as a case study. Political economy refers to the rapacious exploitation and devastation of Ogoni kingdom by Shell as well as government support of this nefarious activity and the resultant resistance by MOSOP. Content analysis and historical approach as methodological guides were largely applied to explain the relationship between contentious political pressure and democratization in Nigeria. The study discovers that the unfeigned and consistent contentious political pressures mounted by MOSOP in an attempt to protect its environment and people from complete devastation had serious contributing effects on the transition from autocracy to electoral democracy in Nigeria. Arising from this, the paper recommends that more of contentious political pressures should be encouraged among depressed societies to compel unresponsive regimes to address the problems of the society.

INTRODUCTION

The interface between contentious political pressures orchestrated by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) under the intellectual leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa, and military autocracy in Nigeria features prominently in recent Nigeria's democratization discourse. The contradictions in the extraction and movement of fossil fuels with collateral ecological disorders symptomised by the popular dissent of MOSOP registered Ogoni land of Nigeria's Niger Delta on the global conscience. The Ogoni situation exposes the societal dilemma of the relations between fundamental rights of self-determination and state security. The Ogoni kingdom is a small and insignificant minority group within Nigeria's immensely complex ethnic mosaic, flaunting a sensitive habitat and an internationalized ecosystem rich in biodiversity.

The tale of MOSOP in Ogoni land has been a historic campaign against the Nigerian government and Royal/Dutch Shell Development Company for a greater share of oil revenue, environmental hygiene and political autonomy. In this light, this study examines the contributions of the contentious political pressures mounted by MOSOP to democratization and the atrophy of military autocracy in Nigeria. The intermingling of the process dynamics of mass contentious political pressures exerted by MOSOP on one hand and that of military autocracy on the other to produce the implosion of MOSOP also come under scrutiny.

Contentious political pressures are here perceived as organized or spontaneous violent or non-violent dissenting behaviour jointly undertaken on behalf of some group directed at state institutions, officials and processes, intended to directly or indirectly transform existing patterns of political authority. Prior study by Ulfelda (2005:318) on contentious political pressures explores the likelihood of the breakdown of autocracy in the face of organized and disciplined challenge rather than chaotic demonstrations. Ulfelda (2005:326-7) argues that the dynamics of authoritarian breakdown show that contentious collective action (pressures) affects an autocracy in predictable ways. These are indicated by the context in which authority patterns, elite bargains and corporate interests on which an autocracy is based make it vulnerable to the kinds of public challenge.

Drawing from the conclusions of Ulfelda (2005:327) and Beissenger (2002), our analysis of MOSOP revisits insightful assumptions on the roles that contentious political

pressures might play at critical moments in the process of authoritarian transformation. Geddes (1999) while focusing on the strategies of cooperation and conflict among elites in authoritarian regimes argues that military regimes are most fragile, often breaking down in the face of leadership struggles because officers interests in preserving military unity and sustaining their careers often exceed their interest in political power. Illuminating the interface between contentious collective (political) action (pressures) and the breakdown of authoritarian regimes O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) observe that:

Popular upsurge of trade unions, grassroots movements, intellectuals, defenders of human rights and professional associations, etc., all support each other's efforts towards democratization and coalesce into a greater whole which identifies itself as 'the people' exerting strong pressures to expand the limits of mere liberalization (O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986:53-4).

Contentious collective pressures are thus seen as a symptom of democratization, an ephemeral process vulnerable to elite co-optation, manipulation, exhaustion and disillusionment (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986:54-6). Beissinger (2002), Tilly (1978) and Tarrow (1988; 1998) in the analyses of the interplay between collective pressures, political elites and authoritarian structures focus on contentious collective action that is potentially subversive, and challenge normalized practices, modes of causation or systems of authority. Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) note that collective action was fundamental in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Przeworski *et al* (2000), however, reach the conclusion that contentious political action is neither necessary nor sufficient for democratization but is a decisive factor in a significant subset of regime transformation.

Equally persuasively, McAdam *et. al.* (2001) argue that democracy results from mobilizes and reshapes of population contentions making democratization and contentious collective action inseparable – where the co-optation of previously autonomous leaders serving as intermediates to excluded groups help to produce democracy. The point being made is that contentious political (collective) pressures (action) is seriously linked to the transition from autocracy to electoral democracy. Ulfelder (2005:314-5) typically explores the different implications of types of

collective action on autocracy to conclude that military regimes are less likely to breakdown in the wake of riots. Military regimes are seen to legitimize their rule by way of populist ideology or technical performance and contentious pressures adversely affect these rationale. Contentious pressures involving deliberate violence, however, tend to bolster military rule by emphasizing officers' corporate duty in the maintenance and legitimizing effect of internal order and security.

Military regimes usually rationalize their intervention in politics to be a response to real or purported threat to law and order. In the same vein, justification for military autocracy also arises from technocratic grounds, and the notion that military officers are uniquely imbued with the ideals of national interest and its defense enabling them to toss out corrupt officials, implement economic policy and, serve as agents of political change when civilian politicians fail or become captive to special interests (Stepan, 1971; Linz, 1975). Thus, contentious political pressures may indicate that the regime is failing according to its own rationalization for ascending power or that since law and order have been restored that the military has achieved its aim and should withdraw to its professionalism. Contentious political pressures, therefore, indicate a potential resource in intra-elite power struggle for reform. Military officers in favour of reforms have the advantage of sustaining a military career following a transition to civilian rule and so are likely to capitulate to contentious pressures for political change.

However, as Ulfelder (2005:319) aptly avers, non-violent pressures and protests may exacerbate elite splits and encourage military rulers to step aside while violent contentious pressures tend to harden the resolve of military rulers to remain in power, at least until the maintenance of public order is assured. The interaction between contentious political pressures and the breakdown of military autocracy in the preceding analytic frame is, thus, employed here to account for the contributions of MOSOP in Ogoni land to political transition in Nigeria. The preceding theoretical elaboration seem to adequately capture the convergence of the dynamics of military autocracy and the violent/non-violent dimensions of the goals and strategies of MOSOP based on a diachronic evaluation.

This convergence seems to be a more plausible explanation for the implosion of MOSOP given its strategies and goals as it confronts military autocracy in Nigeria. In a prior study, Ibeanu (1998:17-19; 2000:27-28) has explained the implosion of MOSOP in terms of reactionary internal class bickering and leadership in-fighting for money and power in which mass pressures on the altar of petty-bourgeoisie politics degenerate into authoritarianism. It does seem that this argument pertains more to the analysis of the process dynamics of the character of petty-bourgeoisie politics rather than the convergence of mass movements and military rule.

Following Ibeanu (1998:3-4), mass political movements is x-rayed in state-civil society encounters in which the pluralist analysis and the cooperative complementary thesis (Poulantzas, (1978:265), Gidron *et al*, (1992); Taylor and Lansley, (1992); Taylor and Bassi, (1998) are deconstructed and disaggregated, that is, seen to be not necessarily antagonistic or complementary. However, Ibeanu's (1998) analysis of the contradictions between military dictatorship, communalism and petrobusiness to produce his construct of the 'militariate' as a social category go to illuminate the dynamics of autocracy in Nigeria, without adequately accounting for the linkage between autocracy and mass political pressures as in Ulfelder (2005). The conception of state-civil relations as multiform and in historical perspective nevertheless agrees with Ulfelder's process dynamics of variations in contentious collective action. This study, thus, examines the interplay between the dynamics of Nigeria's political economy, military autocracy and the challenge of the

mass contentious political pressures of MOSOP based on a diachronic approach. The impact of MOSOP pressures for the democratic project in Nigeria, especially after the demise of Ken Saro-Wiwa as well as the implosion of the movement in consequence is also examined. Accordingly, the study brings out in bold relief the interface between oil production and the Nigerian state; MOSOP activism and democratization in Nigeria, and MOSOP misfortune and state and international responses beyond 1995. That is, after the fall of Ken Saro-Wiwa. It is to these arguments that we now turn.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF OIL PRODUCTION AND THE NIGERIAN STATE

Political economy was a term originally used for the study of relations of production in a bourgeois society. As an interdisciplinary study, it refers to the relationship between economic and political power among states and communities. In its original focus, the theory is conserved with the condition under which production was organized in nation states of the new-born capitalist system. The main exponents of the theory include Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Karl Marx.

The context of the MOSOP travails in Ogoni land in Nigeria's Niger Delta is a product of a long drawn out historical process propelled and animated by complex international economic and political forces (Okonta, 2000:6). The history of the Niger Delta outlines the antecedents of exploitation and oppression of the imperial state and later republican state of Nigeria. After the industrial revolution in Europe, palm oil came to serve as the lubricant of industrial machinery needed by the Europeans. In the ensuing legitimate trade following the abolition of slavery, palm oil sourced from the Niger Delta, helped to establish a new commercial relationship between Africa and Europe.

In this commercial relationship, influential African merchant chiefs came to serve as middlemen between the producers in the interior and the European traders. Bonny, New Calabar, Okrika and Brass, Akassu, Asaba, etc. former slave ports became export markets. In view of the unscrupulous undercutting among British traders and fierce competition from the wealthy and influential African middlemen and from the French and the Germans, George Taubman Goldie amalgamated the British company. Goldie secured treaties of protection with local chiefs with, which Britain secured a sphere of influence over Niger Delta from the Berlin Conference and the area declared the Oil Rivers Protectorate. The treaties with the African chiefs were dubious concoctions in which signatories were either forcefully obtained or forged. On occasion King Jaja of Opobo had required of the British Consul to define the word '*Protectorate*', and the answer he got was that the British crown intends to protect his kingdom from the French and the Germans (Ashton-Jones, 1998:203).

The United African Company later named Royal Niger Company obtained its charter in 1886 which specifically mandated it to maintain free trade, secure the abolition of slavery and collect taxes and maintain law and order. These contradictory tall orders could not be maintained by the monopoly enterprise of the Royal Niger Company. The African middlemen were sabotaged and exorbitant levies and duties imposed and prices fixed for the palm oil trade to the disadvantage of the Africans. Resentments of British monopoly were brutally suppressed by '*gunboat diplomacy*'. Dissenting Kings were murdered their town razed to the ground or were dethroned and exiled. The harsh treatment meted out to William Dappa Pepple, King of Bonny, Jaja of Opobo and Nara Olomu, prince of the Itsekiri Kingdom of Warri – who were either dethroned or exiled in the 19th century all indicate the beginning of an enterprise of expropriation of the economic resources of the Niger Delta and institutionalization of a culture of violence and coercion by the imperial state. The forces of imperialism replaced and destabilized functioning political

institutions with the imposition of warrant chiefs and native authorities that were unchecked and unaccountable to the natives. Native Ijaws also had the lot of political coercion and economic exploitation.

In 1895, King William Koko protesting the imposition of tariffs, took the offensive with one thousand Nembe clan warriors, fortified by the belief in *Egbesu*, the Ijaw god of war, raided Akassa the headquarters of the Royal Niger Company, and massacred some of the staff. The resultant economic stagnation from the palm oil trade experience led to a popular prayer of the time *"may this evil of palm oil not get to our children"* (Saro-Wiwa, 1991:47; 1995:73).

In 1893, the Oil Rivers Protectorate became the Niger Coast Protectorate to be later joined to the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1906 and Lagos Colony. The forceful annexation of the Niger Delta communities into the British colony and protectorate of Nigeria by Lord Lugard in 1914 had never been at ease with the communities as Nigerian history unfolds. The demographic logic of colonial democracy inevitably relegated the minorities of the Niger Delta who by the 1990s revived their agitation against imperialism that their 19th century treaties with the British do not amount to their inclusion in the new Nigerian nation on the road to independence. The Niger Delta chiefs argued that:

The British crown undertook to provide protection and to deal with foreign powers, but the treaties did not provide that the chiefs should surrender to the British government. Sovereignty, which could be transferred to any other authority. If Her Majesty's Government saw fit to end the treaties, then the chiefs of this area were morally entitled to revert to their original status (Nigeria, 1958:50).

In 1957, while rejecting independence for the Niger Delta communities and granting them a separate state within Nigeria, the Sir Henry Willink's Commission recognized that among the peoples of the area lay a deep-rooted conviction that the difficulties of this difficult stretch of country were not understood at headquarters of the government. The Willink's Commission, however, declared the Ijaw country as a special Area, which would draw public attention to a neglected area putting forward plans of their own improvement (Nigeria, 1958:42 and 95). In the late 1950s, the discovery of significant petroleum deposits at the Boru field in Dere, Gokana Kingdom brought oil companies, pipelines, flow stations, gas flaring and oil spills with attendant ecological crisis. Conflict arose between the host communities and the oil companies and the state over land, water and air pollution.

The atrocities of oil exploration, inadequate compensation for damaged cash crops, land acquisitions and lack of welfare improvement packages by government and oil companies led Isaac Boro of the Ijaw community to threaten a declaration of an independent republic in the Niger Delta in February 1966 after the January coup of the army in 1966. The secession later collapsed by March 7, 1966 when Isaac Boro surrendered after a twelve-day revolution (Boro, 1982).

The conflict dynamics in Nigeria's Niger Delta manifesting in the demands for reparation for ecological

damage from the state and oil companies, demand for more equitable distribution of oil revenues and the provision of infrastructure and welfare needs, is a deep seated phenomenon arising from the character of the state in Nigeria. The Nigerian state relies on foreign exchange earnings from oil production as the mainstay of its economy making it vulnerable to interruptions and vicissitudes in oil flows. The Nigerian state is authoritarian and capitalist as its imperial predecessor manifesting absolutism, arbitrariness, mass political alienation, low state legitimacy and prebendal politics. The conflict dynamics in Nigeria reflects the contradictions of deprivation, exploitation and exclusion of the masses and sections of the elite from the political process. The consequences have been endemic military and authoritarian rule, poverty, unemployment, hardship, opportunism, hopelessness and malaise in society not just for the Niger Delta. The prevalence of prebendal politics, however, exacerbates the situation inter-ethnic struggles for resource allocation and ethnic majority – ethnic minority squabbles in the same vein.

Currently, crude oil is generated in the Nigeria's states of Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Imo Abia, Akwa Ibom, Cross River and Ondo. Crude oil production in the service of self-serving politics and rapine economics buttress inefficient exploitation of nature and coercive state power to sustain uninterrupted oil flows at competitive costs to boost state revenues and company profits in Nigeria. This unfolds a political economy of government improvidence, devoid of long-term economic rationality and ecological consequences. Crude oil production makes up over 80% of government annual revenue in Nigeria. Its production dates back to the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in Oloibiri in Niger Delta by the Anglo-Dutch Shell conglomerate in 1956 (Dura, E. J. C. 1999:23). The Nigerian government commenced the exportation of 6,000 bpd in 1958. Mobil, ELF Aquifaine, Chevron and Agip have since joined Shell in oil exploration in Nigeria. In 1970, Nigeria was producing 2 million bpd of Bonny light crude oil as 5th largest producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

The Nigerian Federal government controls the distribution of oil revenues according to a set formula. Two distinct phases of fiscal federalism can be observed in Nigeria – before military rule in 1966 and after. In the first republic (1960-1966), only 20% of revenue accrued to the federal government, 30% to a distributable pool and 50% to the regions of extraction based on derivation principle.

The successful prosecution of the civil war, which followed military rule in 1966 ending in 1970 led to the promulgation of the Petroleum Decree (No. 31) of 1969 that vested all the lands and the resources on the federal government. Military autocracy thus appropriated the oil of the Niger Delta, which was inside desiccated secessionist Eastern Nigeria (Biafra) despite the support given to it by the minorities of the Delta. The major shift in revenue derivation in Nigeria is presented graphically in the Table I below:

Table I: Federal-State Percentage Share in Petroleum Proceeds

Years	Producing State (%)	Federal Government (%)	Distributable Pool (%)
1960-67	50	20	30
1967-69	50	50	-
1969-71	45	55	-
1971-75	45 minus off-shore proceeds	55 plus off-shore proceeds	-
1975-79	20 minus off-shore proceeds	80 plus off-shore proceeds	-
1979-81	-	100	-
1982-92	1½	98½	-
1992-99	3	97	-
1999-present	13	87	-

Source: Sagay (2001)

The Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) control 50% of oil production with 96 wells hooked up to 5 flow stations, which brings it close to the ruling government's in Nigeria (SPDC, 1995:1). Shell has been able to provide the police, army and navy with logistics to quell disturbances and protests against its facilities by communities and with the support of the government it has been able to provide its own private security outfit and could call out the security agencies in Nigeria to support its course at will.

The extraction and movement of fossil fuels in the upstream and downstream activities of oil refineries, oil services, liquefied petroleum gas and liquefied natural gas; result in inefficient processes and environmental hazards. Table 2 shows gas flaring of over 13 billion cubic metres in 145

communities by Shell, Gulf, Mobil, Agip, Texaco, Pan Ocean, Ashland, Phillips, Tenneco and Elf in Nigeria. Table 3 shows that in 1991, Nigeria exceeded the world average for natural gas flaring by 72%, flaring 76% with world average at 4% of total production (Sagay, 2001:25). The attendant air pollution is related to the destruction of wildlife, farmlands, forests and human lives by oil spills and fire outbursts from leaking oil pipelines. In Ngwa land in Abia State and Jesse Town of Delta State, fire from leaking oil pipeline claimed several lives in 1998. Though many of the pipelines and valves are due for replacement, oil companies and the government usually attribute spillage to sabotage to avoid compensation arising from spills.

Table 2: Gas Flaring in Nigeria by Companies, 1982-83

Company	1982		1983	
	Gas Flared (billion m ³)	%	Gas Flared (billion m ³)	%
Shell	6,932,385,329	94.09	5,413,250,218	66.43
Gulf	2,096,585,478	98.88	1,800,971,000	98.69
Mobil	673,759,700	68.49	900,286,000	70.77
Agip	2,382,145,001	88.25	2,102,150,861	95.89
Texaco	368,279,000	97.96	430,988,000	98.81
Pan Ocean	79,787,789	92.98	122,307,350	95.75
Ashland	223,232,456	99.47	430,560,153	98.86
Phillips	28,434,153	98.44	25,779,720	98.33
Tenneco	26,175,613	99.66	31,145,189	100.00
Elf	550,999,332	98.50	690,734,090	99.16
Total	13,361,783,851	92.33	10,618,229,855	69.89

Source: Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Annual Reports

Table 3: Natural Gas Flared as Percentage of GDP (1991)

Country	Percentage (%) of Gas Flared
USA	0.6
Holland	0.0
Britain	4.3
Ex-USSR	1.5
Mexico	5.0
OPEC Countries	
Nigeria	76.0
Libya	21.0
Saudi Arabia	20.0
Iran	19.0
Algeria	
OPEC Total	18.0
World Total	4.0

Source: Friends of the Earth, Nigeria, 2000

The point then is that years of neglect and ecological devastation of the Niger Delta, which produces much of the government revenue has exacerbated the contradiction between the impoverishment and hopelessness of the area and its expectations of the government. The Nigerian state has failed to appear popular as the representative of the general interests of the nation. The Nigerian state is parceled out as a means of production to regional, ethnic, religious, class and corporate interests in the fundamental interests of the dominance of foreign capital. The Nigerian state and its autocratic credentials render her incapable of mediating social conflicts arising from the generation and distribution of oil revenues. Groups in control of state apparatus use state sponsored violence in pursuit of ethno-regional dominance and abuse of natural resources. Hence, the aggression of a privatized state appears as group conflict (Ake, nd:9)

Thus, the threatened livelihood of the Ogonis arising from the unsustainable exploitation of crude oil, with its devastation of farmlands, water supply, fishing and general

environmental hygiene as well as poverty, illiteracy and diseases culminated in popular mass mobilization in the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1990. The neglect of the welfare of the people and violent repression by the government and the menace perpetrated by oil production activities of oil companies in the Niger Delta bred mass contentious political pressures among the Ogonis for redress. It is to the formation of MOSOP, its goals, strategies, resources, leadership and execution of its agenda that we now turn.

MOSOP ACTIVISM AND DEMOCRATISATION IN NIGERIA

Here, we examine the confrontation between the Nigerian state and its repine political economy and the mass contentious political pressure of MOSOP. Among other contributions of MOSOP to transition politics in Nigeria in the 1990s, we specifically look at the contradictions between the dynamics of military autocracy and the goals and strategies of MOSOP.

Ogoni land is a poverty and environmental devastation stricken community of about 404 square miles in South-Southern Nigeria with a population of about half a million people. Its parlous condition subsists in spite of its claims that 634 million barrels of oil worth approximately \$30 billion had been generated from its land by Shell, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Agip and Elf over the years (Maier, 2000:80). In 1990, the Ogonis formed a vociferous movement across clans, classes, ages and traditional and western beliefs, to carry the work of their oppression to the Nigerian government, oil companies and the international community with its philosophical bedrock provided by Ken Saro-Wiwa.

In 1968, Ken Saro-Wiwa had expressed the growing hostility of the Ogonis to the oil companies in his pamphlet entitled, *"The Ogoni Nationality Today and Tomorrow"*, in which he called on the Ogonis to organize and assert themselves (Saro-Wiwa, 1995:52-4). In 1970, complaints about oil pollution came from conservative and influential Ogoni chiefs who sent a protest letter to the military governor of Rivers State, demanding a greater share of oil revenues extracted from Ogoni land and a programme to reverse environmental destruction (www.prairienet.org/acas/genochs.html, 1992). At the time Ken Saro-Wiwa was the Rivers State Education Commissioner. Saro-Wiwa used this position to create a political followership by awarding scholarships to young Ogonis and other minorities. Saro-Wiwa remained in politics until 1977 when he lost an election into the Nigerian Constituent Assembly due to a protégé sponsored by Edward Kobani, a conservative Ogoni elder (Maier, 2000:87).

In the 1980s Saro-Wiwa concentrated on writing to portray ethnicity, corruption, military autocracy and the plight of the minorities as a columnist in *Sunday Times*, a weekly newspaper in Nigeria (Saro-Wiwa, 1995:65). On 26 August, 1990, the Ogoni Bill of Rights written by Saro-Wiwa in consultation with key elders and Ogoni intelligentsia, and signed by five of the chiefs in the six kingdoms of Ogoni, was adopted at Bori village, the traditional capital of Ogoni. The statement declared that ethnic politics and the federal and state governments in Nigeria were pushing the Ogonis to slavery and extinction; it demanded political autonomy for the Ogonis, the right to control resources, the right of direct representation in all Nigerian institutions, promotion of Ogoni culture, and protection from environmental degradation (MOSOP, 1992). MOSOP was formed at Edward Kobani's house to champion the Ogoni Bill of Rights with Dr. Garrick Leton as president and Saro-Wiwa as publicity Secretary (Saro-Wiwa, 1995:76).

The reckless violence and brutality with which states security operatives treated the demonstration of Umuechem oil producing community near to Ogoni protesting against Shell, in which 80 people were shot dead and 495 houses destroyed or damaged according to Amnesty International, reminded the Ogonis of tribulations to come (Human Rights Watch/Africa, Nigeria, 1995). Nevertheless Saro-Wiwa's contact with an environmental group based in Denver Colorado, USA working to preserve the wilderness, galvanized him to use the environment as a base for action (Saro-Wiwa, 1995:80). MOSOP received further international boost with Saro-Wiwa's contact with Amnesty International and Green Peace, International pen, the Sierra Club, the UN Working Group for Indigenous People – the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) by 1992 (Maier, 2000:92). MOSOP was given further fillip by Saro-Wiwa's reflective mobilization of a frustrated army of youths into a militant wing – the National Youth Council of the Ogoni People (NYCOP) in late 1992 (Saro-Wiwa, 1995:102). In early 1993, MOSOP mobilized some 300,000 for the Ogoni day rallies in which Shell was declared *persona non grata* in Ogoni land and a clarion call on other minorities in Niger Delta to rise up and fight for their

rights. The demand of \$10 billion in damages for destruction of the environment and in payment of taxes and royalties was also made to Shell (Kretzmann, 1997).

The outpouring of enthusiastic support for MOSOP frightened the ranks of six conservative chiefs, signatories to the Ogoni Bill of Rights to make a volte-face towards the military government (Maier, 2000:94). In April 30, 1993, security forces opened fire on protesters in the Ogoni village of Biara leaving one dead and eleven wounded in the protest against Wilbros of Tulsa, Oklahoma, a US contracting firm hired by Shell, for bull-dozing of crops to prepare ground for the laying of a new pipeline. A week later, eight chiefs led by Ignatius Kogbara issued a statement apologizing for the protest and condemned what it called the lawless activities of certain elements of MOSOP and supporting government crackdown on MOSOP. The NYCOP following this, attacked the homes of several chiefs who fled their homes (Saro-Wiwa, 1995:158-9). The Nigerian government was getting increasingly pressured by MOSOP's campaign and saw its writing of national anthem and design of an Ogoni flag as evidence of secessionist intent (Maier, 1993).

In 1993, MOSOPs call for boycott of the Presidential elections, which was effectively prosecuted by the NYCOP led to the arrest of Saro-Wiwa leading to further unrest and demonstrations against the chiefs. In the wake of an anonymous vile propaganda that Dr Garrick Leton and Edward Kobani were 'vultures' and traitors that had accepted \$4.5 million bribe to destroy MOSOP, both resigned making way for Saro-Wiwa to emerge as MOSOP president. By 1994, the spill over of violent demonstrations by the NYCOP taking its toll equally on neighbouring communities of Andoni, Okrika and Ndoki had brought reprisal raids by these aggrieved communities and security forces with attendant deaths and displacements. In a secret memorandum dated May 12, 1994 from Lt. Col. Okuntimo to Lt. Col. Dauda Komo, military administrator of Rivers State, were plans to neutralize MOSOP and to restore Shell activities. The memo states in part – "Shell operations still impossible unless ruthless military operations are undertaken for smooth economic activities to commence", "wasting operations during MOSOP and other gatherings making constant military presence justifiable" (World Council of Churches, 1996:96-97).

On May 21, 1994, the intimidation and assault tactics of the NYCOP achieved heavy exploits when they attacked and killed Edward Kobani, Chief Samuel Orage, Chief Theophilus Orage and Albert Badey in a meeting they perceived to be plotting to sabotage MOSOP. Saro-Wiwa and his deputy, Ledun Mitee were stopped from attending a series of rallies holding in Ogoni land by soldiers and angry supporters standing by, resorted to mayhem, stormed the place of Chief Gbenemene of Gokana where the meeting of these elders, they considered traitors, we being held, and beat them to death. Saro-Wiwa and Mitee were arrested and troops led by Okuntimo's Rivers State Internal Security Task Force ran amok in Ogoni land looting and maiming (Human Rights Watch/Africa, Nigeria, 1995:15).

On October 31, 1995, the Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal consisting of two judges and one military officer convicted Saro-Wiwa and eight others. The 'Ogoni nine' were executed by hanging on 8 November, 1995 at the gallows of the Port Harcourt Prison in Nigeria following the confirmation of the sentence by General Sani Abacha's Provisional Ruling Council. The execution sparked off international reactions. The Commonwealth meeting in Auckland, New Zealand suspended Nigeria the same day. Limited sanctions on sale of military equipment and travel of government officials were imposed by Western nations. Out of the 20 Ogonis detained with Saro-Wiwa, one died in prison and the military government of General Abdulsalami Abubakar in 1998 later released others. The military clamp down dealt a blow on MOSOP and NYCOP as many of the members went underground or fled to exile.

MOSOP's goal as stated in its Bill of Rights hinged on the demand for political autonomy driven home by media campaigns, locally and internationally, violent demonstrations against Shell activities, sensitizing of other Niger Delta communities suffering the same experience as the Ogoni. MOSOP's peaceful protests earned them local and international recognition, support and condemnation for military autocracy in Nigeria. The media campaigns and alliance with other minorities gave filip to pro-democracy agitations against military rule in Nigeria. The dwindling support of the military regime became completely eroded by economic conditions in the country and the peaceful protests of civil society, pro-democracy movements and contentious political pressures of MOSOP and their minority allies in the Niger Delta. Their violent protests, however, led the military regime to clamp down on the movement leading to its intimidation and implosion of its leaders. The Nigerian government established an Internal Security Task Force under Major (later Lt. Col.) Okuntimo, for the systematic use of violence for the decimation of MOSOP. The Second Amphibious Brigade of the Nigerian Army based in Bori was used to quell the demonstration of MOSOP during the "Wilbros Affair" (Human Rights Watch, 1995:17).

On May 4, 1993, Nigeria's military President, General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated a decree against treason stipulating the death penalty for anybody who organizes war against Nigeria, intimidates the President or Governors, utters or publishes words suggesting the break up of Nigeria, flies a flag, or suggests creation of a new state or local government for the country. These measures suggest the determination of the Nigerian government to eliminate the violent pressures of MOSOP.

The ideological bent of military autocracy is to defend and protect the national interest and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a state, as well as the maintenance of law and order. It is this rationalization that motivates the military to intervene in governance and propel their action in government. The clarion call for resource sovereignty, political autonomy, the boycott of the 1993 presidential elections, flying a flag, writing an anthem and violent demonstrations by MOSOP was easily seen by Nigerian military authorities as pushing mass pressures and protests to the limits of subversion. For the military, these excesses are approached from military strategic calculations. Society must be purged of subversion and lawlessness in order to legitimize military rule. MOSOP was, thus, destined to be crushed to bolster up the legitimacy of military autocracy in Nigeria. Earlier revolts of Isaac Boro in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria were similarly crushed because the military broke no internal rival in their monopoly over the use of violence in society. The MOSOP boycott of the presidential elections was considered as an attempt to derail the military transition programme.

The violence of MOSOP leading to the death of four conservative MOSOP leaders who were pro-military autocracy led to the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa on grounds of vicarious liability. Leaders of MOSOP also resigned from the movement because of the harassment, torture, intimidation and arrests by the military government due to especially MOSOP violent activism and stoppage of oil production in Ogoni land. If not for violent demonstrations and the recklessness of MOSOP militant youths, leading to the death of its prominent leaders, the movement would boast of charismatic leadership and local and international appeal. Power struggle and pecuniary considerations no doubt operate in social movements as MOSOP but its resilience depends on its goals, strategies and the strength of the military autocracy that it opposes or confronts. Although the implosion of MOSOP has not consigned it to the dust bin of history, but it has suffered a tactical blunder and blow which it has not fully recovered.

MOSOP campaigns, activism and its mobilization of oil communities in the Niger Delta not only gave filip to

democratic transition in Nigeria, but has stimulated mass action across the Niger Delta to attract government and international attention.

MOSOP AFTER SARO-WIWA

After the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the leadership of MOSOP passed on to Ledum Mitee while its militancy passed on to other minority groups in the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta has exploded in an orgy of violent demonstrations, communal clashes, pipeline vandalizations, incessant demands for compensation, and the revolt of Alhaji Asari Dokubo claiming autonomy of the region and general confusion. The Niger Delta has since exploded with the Kaiama Declaration in the Convention of Ijaw Youths called the Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN) in 1998 requesting more local control of oil revenues and better environmental practices. Shell operations in many parts of the Niger Delta were shut down. Oil companies in a new born-again approach entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with host communities to protect oil installations and to solve developmental problems through dialogue. To resolve the problem of the reign of extortionists, charlatans and opportunism in oil company and host community relations and incessant demands for compensation for oil spills and sabotage, the civilian government of Obasanjo set up the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to replace the moribund Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). Violence has continued, however, in the Niger Delta between government and communities in Bonny, Eleme, Okrika, Oleh, Choba and Odi, Liama, Finima and Gbarantoru and among communities, Ijaw-Yoruba, Ijaw-Itekiri, Bille and Kalabari, etc.

Acting MOSOP president, Ledum Mitee returned from two years exile in 1998. Events held to commemorate the killing of the 'Ogoni 9' progressed without military interference in November 1998 (MOSOP, 1998). Protests and arrest were still evident in K-Dere village, Gokana Local Government of Ogoni land in March and April, 2000 over conflict with Shell on shell's resumption of operations in the area. The Ogoni case was also presented to the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission of Justice Chukwudifu Oputa popularly called the 'Oputa Panel' in 2001 (HRW, 2001). Also in November, 1998, Ledum Mitee represented MOSOP in the meeting with Rights Groups in the Niger Delta and the UN Special Rapporteur to Nigeria to assess human rights abuses in Nigeria (ND-HERO, 1998). On July 24, 1999, MOSOP held a workshop on the Niger Delta Development Commission Bill, attended by 500 delegates representing all sections of the Ogoni community and issued a communiqué requesting proper consultation of and representation of all Niger Delta communities in the Board and its activities (MOSOP, 1999). In October, 2001, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights found the Nigerian government liable for violations of life, property, health, family, environment and for the destruction of Ogoni land and appealed to the Nigerian government for restitution (www.cesr.org/ESCR/Africancommission.html, 2002).

In July 2002, the body of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Eight others hanged in 1995 were exhumed from the prison cemetery for dignified reburial by his people (HRW, 2003). In December 2000, the US and British governments adopted voluntary principles of security and human rights for companies in the extractive and energy sectors, and non-governmental organizations. In 2002, US and British officials visited Nigeria to discuss the principles with oil companies (www.statte.gov/). Shell reviewed its policy in line with the principles in 2001. Other international responses to the Niger Delta situation after Saro-Wiwa include the African action Plan Initiative adopted by the G8 industrialized countries, in June 2002, which is supportive among other things, of promoting particularly decision-making and reforming the security sector

and improving the situation in the Niger Delta (G8, 2002).

What the proceeding discourse unfolds is the fortunes and travails of MOSOP's contentious political pressures and the democratization process in Nigeria as well as international support. Credit invariably accrues to MOSOP for constituting a potent opposition for military rule in Nigeria and for mobilizing and supporting pro-democracy efforts in the process of democratic transition in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The contentious political pressures of the MOSOP have been examined to explain the interactions of MOSOP with military autocracy in Nigeria. The process dynamics of military autocracy was seen to account for the decimation of MOSOP in view of its violent strategies and subversive goals. Thus, violent strategies of contentious political action tend to breed violent clamp down by military autocracy while non-violent strategies tends to erode popular support and legitimacy of military autocracy. Africa's and Nigeria's surge for democratization arises largely from the failure of development strategies and the authoritarian politics associated with them. Development was launched as an ideological blind by a leadership that was alienated and discredited. In their alienation the leaders became so repressive that the people begin to see the state and its development agents as enemies to be evaded, cheated or defeated as circumstances permitted (Ake, 1996:137). There is, therefore, the compelling argument to advance devolution of power and democratization of the process of development (Ake, 1996; Ihonvbere, 2000).

The mass contentious political pressures of MOSOP draw attention to the fact that poverty cannot be resolved nor human economic conditions improved without the full and effective contribution, creativity and popular enthusiasm of the vast majority of the people as contained in the UNECA, African Charter for Popular Participation of 1990. What is envisaged, following Ake (1996:143) is an all embracing nationwide mobilization, consultation and dialogue of groups of households, communities, villages, cooperatives, farmers, associations, rural improvement associations, labour unions, traders associations, professional associations, to make them more skilful, more confident and giving them more access to things they need to be more efficient. Equally important is ensuring real opportunity to make decisions instead of participating only to legitimize the pre-conceptions of government officials. The neglect of Ogoni land and the Niger Delta is a reflection of a diachronic rapine political economy in which the imperial and republican state in Nigeria deny the material empowerment, environmental hygiene and democratic participation of citizens in the development process.

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