



Militancy and Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Inyang, Bassey

Centre for General Studies

Cross River University of Technology

Calabar – Nigeria

basseyinyang62@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper examines militancy and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and the challenges it poses to Nigeria's development. Youths are principal actors in the transition from contentious politics to violence because they are most affected by situations of powerlessness, which state oppression aggravate. Despite the enormous contributions of the region to the wealth of Nigeria, the people of the Niger Delta have remained impoverished and underdeveloped. Paradoxically, the oil producing states have benefited least from the oil wealth. Devastated by the ecological costs of oil spillage and the highest gas flaring rates in the world, Niger Delta is a political tinderbox. Poverty, unemployment, decay infrastructure, corruption at high level, misery, and lack of basic human needs, seem to be lot of the people. For the youths, violence becomes a bargaining weapon for negotiating, legitimizing or violating (oppressive) public order. The poor and unemployed youths therefore formed militia groups to seek redress against the government and the multinational corporations operating in the area. This paper explains the Niger Delta militancy within the Frustration-Aggression Theory and argues that frustration is the bane of the recurrent violence in the region. The paper also argues that most of the circumstances that generate the frustration and anger that degenerate into murderous militancy and youth restiveness in the region is founded on the sense of injustice, unemployment and such other factors as environmental security and infrastructural developmental issues that sparked the conflict in the region. This paper recommends that economic empowerment of the citizenry, both young and old, should be the

corner stone of government's policy, as an idle hand is the devil's workshop.

Keywords: Militancy, Corruption, Frustration-Aggression Theory, Terrorism, Niger-Delta, Security threat, Youth Restiveness.

Introduction

Strategically located along the Gulf of Guinea and atop enormous high quality oil reserves in Nigeria, it has nine constituent states out of thirty-six states. It equally has one hundred and eighty-five local government areas out of a total of seven hundred and seventy- four local government areas in Nigeria. The Niger Delta has been plagued with armed groups and insurgents for decades. Although its tremendous resource wealth should make the Delta one of West Africa's most prosperous regions, decades of neglect by Nigerian government, widespread corruption, and the environmental damage caused by the multinational corporations operating in the region have alienated and marginalised the local population and allowed armed groups to proliferate (Ikelegbe, 2005: 222).

The Niger Delta is like a region with a stupendous paradox. Arguably the poorest region in Nigeria and the level of poverty and deprivation in the region is as staggering as it is perplexing. Within the context of this growing poverty is the massive deposit of petroleum and an ecosystem with immense propensity for national transformation and development. This contradiction has been a product of prolonged neglect by the successive Nigerian governments whose main concern has been the ceaseless flow of petroleum products irrespective of the extent of environmental degradation and the destruction of the ecosystem on which the livelihood of the residents of this region is precariously predicated.

The thesis of historical injustices in the region, expectedly, has produced an antithesis of violence, militancy and restiveness. The current realities in the zone are such that coincide with considerable

protest, killings, kidnapping, hostage taking and other indices that are everything but coterminous with national economic development and the foisting of national integration. Indeed, the drive for development and integration is the heart of Nigeria federalism but this is being daily assaulted by centrifugal forces that could spell danger for the corporate existence of the country (Alabi, 2014: 134).

Nigeria is experiencing the lure of “Petrol-dollar” underdeveloped agriculture, narrowing opportunities for the population, accelerating elite corruption and increasing risk of conflict over oil money. The oil sector in Nigeria operates ‘enclave economy’, based on selective patronage (Le Billion, 2001). The state-centric nature of oil exploration concentrates oil wealth in the hands of the ruling elite, their foreign partners and the multinational oil companies, where they most probably maintained interests. Before the oil exploration in 1958, the mainstay of the local economy was fishing and farming. Environmental pollution arising from the devastating activities of multinational corporations among the host communities of the Niger Delta, created the fault lines for perennial conflict over oil in Niger Delta; communities. Community Based Organisations and Non-governmental organisations are often on one side, with the government and multinational corporations on the other. The conflict has also engendered polarisation within and between communities, dilating the conflict and occasioning cyclical violence. State-backed oil activities in the Niger Delta have impacted negatively on the psychosocial and physical environment, causing stress, violence and insecurity. Escalating violence in a region teeming with angry, frustrated people is creating a militant time bomb.

Restiveness is part of life. It could be seen in someone who has excess expendable energy, zeal, and drive to do things. From childhood through adulthood restiveness is a common feature because man is born to make ends meet and so cannot be docile or inactive. Naturally, youths are full of vitality that makes them restive. The energy if effectively and constructively used in creative and productive ventures like employment, engagement in economic, academic and community development activities, sports and musical

activities among others, could address societal problems. On the other hand, if these energies are not constructively handled, they give rise to negative restiveness or antisocial activities such as hostage taking, kidnapping, armed robbery and the like. Negative youth restiveness is a kind of human behaviour geared towards the realization of human or group needs. It emanates as individuals or groups who are unable to meet their needs through institutional arrangement and hence are interested in attaining such needs through other means which may not be conventional.

The Niger Delta people are feeling deprived, and when a group experiences relative deprivation simultaneously, the potential for spontaneous outbreak of crises, directed at rival groups intensifies (Richardson, 1996). Often, youth restiveness manifests, in inter-generational conflict, pitching militant youths against traditional authorities and community elders. Youth restiveness completes a picture of socio-political anomie. The Niger Delta people are left out of the equation of governance and control in their own country because they are in the minority. The exploiters of their resources do not care about the people whose land had been left bare due to years of oil exploitation. It is even more pathetic seeing the Niger Delta people living in poverty and yet billion dollars' worth of oil are being carted away from beneath their mud houses (Embeke, 2000).

Conceptualising Militancy and Youth Restiveness

The concept of militancy is such that has gained global usage not only in the contemporary epoch but also in the hitherto socio-political relations amongst humans in the centuries past. The coming together of man to live in groups produced complicated socio-economic relations which favoured some individuals and groups at the expense of others. This expectedly brought with it protests against perceived injustices where there are pacific instrumentalities by which contradictions could be resolved, then such protests could be ameliorated without a recourse to violence. On the other hand, where such conflicts are allowed to fester and degenerate into violent conflict, so many options are open to resolving them in a rather

violent form. These could include: militancy, terror attacks, insurgencies, guerrilla warfare, and outright civil war. While a declaration of a civil war would involve the use of powerful and sophisticated weapons, terror attacks, insurgencies, and even guerrilla warfare might not involve the use of such weapons on a consistent basis. When pacific settlement fail, military is usually one of the options often resorted into. What constitutes militancy is nebulous and devoid of consensus. Apart from the aggressiveness which is common to all militant acts, there are variants in terms of components and mode of the concept. It could involve terror attack, kidnapping, killing, maiming, attacks on economic and infrastructural installations and so on.

Kidnapping is viewed as forceful or fraudulent abduction of an individual or a group of individuals for reasons ranging from economic, political religious to self-determination. Usually, individuals so forcefully or fraudulently stolen or carried off are taken hostages mostly for ransom purposes. However, it should be stressed that kidnapping is not a new phenomenon. Rather, it has been in existence for ages. Turner (1998), Schiller (1985) and Warren (1985) have at various fora documented the historical evolution of the concept. As far back as in the ancient Rome, kidnapping had become a serious scourge that Emperor Constantine (AD315) was compelled to order death penalty as a punishment for the crime. Undoubtedly, the worst form of kidnapping and terrorism in human history was the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the fifteenth century. In this obnoxious trade, millions of Africans were exported to the Americans as 'beast of burden' in a most dehumanising form.

However, kidnapping has gained the attention of some scholars and institutions. The divergence of opinions notwithstanding, the concept has evolved with defined characteristics and features. Pharaoh (2005:23) has categorised the concept thus: criminal kidnapping (to settle political scores or further some political objectives) and pathological kidnapping and kidnapping for sexual purposes. In specific relation to the Niger Delta, kidnapping in the zone has been a relatively new development. Apart from it manifesting during the

Trans-Atlantic Slave trade which cut across the whole continent of Africa, the practice is a recent development in the Niger Delta. While there might have been pockets of kidnapping here and there, it however became a serious problem during the Fourth Republic which was accomplished by a relative freedom of expression and ideas. Under the erstwhile military rule, the fundamental freedoms of the people were easily trampled upon with little or no consequences.

In the early days of the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), any act of kidnapping was intended to draw the attention to environmental degradation and the injustices in the zone. In fact, kidnapping and other militant activities of MEND during this period focused on three main issues: (a) that all laws relating to oil exploration be abrogated to give the local people more empowerment to have control of their resources (b) that the issue of natural resource control and self-determination be recognised and operationalised as cardinal principles for the protection of their minority status; and (c) that appropriate institutional and financial arrangement be put in place for the development as well as the numerous environmental problems associated with oil exploration and exploitation in oil producing communities in the Niger Delta. The refusal or the lack of political will on the part of the government to implement the above resulted in kidnapping and other militant activities (Onduka, 2001).

The Niger Delta is replete with so many cases of kidnapping. In April 2003, militants seized four Niger Delta oil rigs and took 270 people hostage, and out of this number, 97 were foreigners. In January 10, 2006, militants kidnapped 4 foreign oil workers from Shells off shore at E.A. Oil field. In February 18, 2016 militants attacked Nigeria's largest off shore oil platform at the Bonga oil field which almost grounded oil business in Nigeria which caused a serious setback to the country, which depends on oil for more than 90% of its revenue. However, the government having failed to provide the necessary political solution, the struggle has snowballed into full-blown armed conflict, sometimes coloured with criminality, where even

septuagenarians and toddlers are not spared in the mad rush for ransom (Editorial, 2009:14).

For quite sometimes, the Nigeria environment had been marked by negative youth restiveness. Often, youth restiveness manifests, in intergenerational conflict pitching militant youths against traditional authorities and community elders. Youth restiveness completes a picture of socio-political anomic. The main reason is economic and political injustices by corrupt and avaricious political group on the weak, helpless, downtrodden and hopeless majority of the Nigerian project particularly those of the Niger Delta. Rotimi (2005) in Wokocho (2007:39) lists the factors among which are state sponsored violence, political assassination, communal clashes secret cult activities and unemployment. The Niger Delta people are left out of the equation of governance and control in their own country because they are in the minority. One of the many-sided effects of the seemingly unending Niger Delta crisis relates to matters of agitation by youths over issues of deprivation, neglect marginalisation and feeling of dissatisfaction. The root cause of youth restiveness in the region is the broad spectrum of laws that have both colonial inspiration and feudal inclination and accompanying actions of the Nigerian state on the country's oil industry and the age-long regime of environmental degradation due to the mindless operational threats arising from oil exploration and production activities of the oil conglomerates.

According to Irikana (2007) the incessant and riotous dimension of youth restiveness in the region is clearly the consequence of the long period of neglect by the government, oil production, massive and indiscriminate exploitation and depletion of resources (that serve as the people's source of livelihood) which degrade their environment and the denial of the youths of sustainable employment and livelihood opportunities. This is the scene in the Niger Delta where the energy and activism characteristic of youths are being channelled towards social vices as a result of unemployment. Attah (2004) in Wokocho (2007), says that unemployment which is a situation in which people who are willing and capable of working are unable to

find jobs at the prevailing wages has become a big problem for the Nigeria youths. Unemployment is very high among the people of the Niger Delta as the oil companies do not hire most of their employees from the region that produce oil, but from the non-oil producing areas.

Ocheche (2006) opines that the increasing presence of unemployed youths (educated and uneducated, skilled and unskilled) possess severe challenges to existing peace. As political elites use youths as instrument of violence to acquire political power, the only form of political education these youths are being taught is the culture of violence, and this is one the greatest challenges that African states must brace up to tackle (i.e how to transform our youths from being instruments of violence to instruments of peace and conflict resolution).

Militant Insurgency and Security Threats in Nigeria

Insurgency in whatever form is considered serious security threat to a nation. However, it is important that issues leading to insurgency are often associated with the peoples grief against the state or state institutions. There is the need therefore to always handle such cases with care and diplomacy, so that it does not result in complete breakdown of law and order.

For many years, the Nigeria state pursued economic interests at the expense of secure and stable environment in the Niger Delta region. At the objective level, the Nigerian State has proved incapable of alleviating the critical development gaps in the creeks. At the subjective level, the militants are young, educated and have modern technology to their advantage. In 2009, the Federal Government offered amnesty to the militants, which included an unconditional pardon, rehabilitation programme, education, training and cash payments to those who lay down their arms. However, the amnesty programme was not properly handled by government. Lack of political will to holistically to address the Niger Delta question despite the amnesty, remain further flash points of frustration and may explain

the bomb incidents traceable to the militants of the region after the amnesty.

As the Niger Delta conflict escalated, it led to a very disturbing national (even sub regional) security concerns. The regional waterways in the Gulf of Guinea became increasingly risky for any form of business, including fishing. It reduced the frequency of mercantile ship movement and threatened to heighten regional tensions. Niger Delta militants were reportedly enlisted in a failed attempt to overthrow President Teodoro Obiang Nguema led government of Equatorial Guinea on the 17th of February, 2009 (BBC, 18 Feb. 2009).

The corruption of Nigerian political process that has left the oil mineral-producing communities of the region poor and undeveloped has produced an unintended consequence. It has created a large class of young men who have no hope of legitimate work that would fulfil their ambitions, and are easily recruited into violence (Human Rights Watch, 2003:2). Again, people have raised questions about the role of politicians as financiers of armed groups and reaffirmed the militarised nature of Nigerian Politics where the political process is subjected to the force of corruption and violence (Human Rights Watch 2003:2).

According to Igietseme (2011), the present situation in Nigeria especially as it relates to the rising level of insurgency, can only be understood when viewed in the light of the fact that over the years, the leadership lacked three major and ancillary leadership elements which ought to represent what Nigerians should admire in any future candidate for the highest office of the land., in his analysis these include, vision for society and people, commitment to vision, purposefulness and will to achieve major aspects of vision and the humanistic tendency of the leader.

According to Omololu (2007), "The Nigerian State is a victim of high-level corruption, bad governance, political instability and cyclical legitimacy crisis. Consequently, national development is retarded, and

the political environment uncertain. The country's authoritarian leadership faced a legitimate crisis, political intrigues, in an ethnically differentiated polity, where ethnic competition for resources drove much of the pervasive corruption and profligacy. While the political gladiators constantly manipulated the people and the political processes to advance their own selfish agenda, the society remained pauperised, and the people wallowed in abject poverty. This invariably led to weak legitimacy, as the citizens lacked faith in their political leaders and by extension, the political system. Participation in government was low because citizens perceived it as irrelevant to their lives. In the absence of support from the civil society, the effective power of government was eroded. Patron-client relationships took a prime role over the formal aspects of politics, such as the rule of law, well-functioning political parties, and a credible electoral system".

In the same manner, Kew (2006), observed thus: The Nigerian government remained distant from serving the interest of its people. Politics at the federal, state and local levels of the Nigerian federation are dominated by the powerful mandarin who built vast patronage networks during the military days and who now use political office to expand these networks and their personal fortunes. Moreover, many of these so called "godfathers" have been cultivating personal militias to secure their positions, prompting a local arm race in some regions.

The rising level of corruption in Nigeria, nonchalant attitude on the part of the government and massive embezzlement of public funds especially from the 1980's led to the myriad of unemployed youths who became willing tools in the hands of corrupt politicians to unleash terror on their perceived enemies as well as other related states (which include the police and other related security agencies). It was, indeed, this situation that bred what analyst later came to describe as the Talibans of Nigeria (which later became Boko Haram Sect). this group consisted of Nigerian university undergraduates, former military personnel and professionals, who felt dissatisfied with the level of irresponsibility exhibited by the Nigerian government and those around the corridor of power (Akubor, 2011).

Bayart (1993:17) talked about the idea of accumulation, opening up of opportunities of social mobility and enabling the holder of power to set himself up. During the 2003 elections, state governments in the region recruited armed militias to carry out widespread electoral fraud (Walker, 2008). The former leader of Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Asari Dokubo, liked the former governor of River State, Peter Odili, Abiye Sekibo, former Federal Transport Minister, Austin Opara, former Deputy Speaker of House of Representatives and some of Odili's aides as sponsors and financiers of terror gangs. The armed groups were formed and empowered before the April 2003 general election, to ensure the victory of the ruling party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state "by any means necessary" (Niger Delta Project for environment, Human Rights and Development, NDPEHRD, 2004:5). The above points to the fact that rather than a consensus of the electorates being responsible for electing state officials, it is the support of the instrument of force that determines who win elections in Nigeria. Again and of more relevance for our purpose here is that, it has raised questions about the role of politicians of financiers of armed groups and reaffirmed the militarised nature of Nigerian politics where the political process is subjected to the force of corruption and violence.

The militants have a combination of factors working to their advantages that continue to have profound reference in the contemporary Niger Delta debate. Firstly, the terrain of the region constitutes one of the most obvious explanations. As "the is characterised by dense mangrove swamps and waterways, making it a fertile ground where shadowy elements carry out guerrilla type operations without detection. The geography of the region and its marginalisation from state transportation and communication infrastructure makes the region extremely difficult to police. MEND employs a variety of techniques that require good knowledge of the mangroves, and tactics designed to cause significant damage such as swamp-based tricks where militant would use light plastic speed boats to launch swift attacks on targets.

Secondly, security in the region is lax. A climate of socio-economic uncertainty helped by easy access to firearms among vast stretches of populace, has made the region a fertile ground for multiple conflagrations. The firearms used by militants are readily available in the region since small-arms filter into Nigeria using speed boats through Cameroon and Gabon from conflict zones like, Angola and Sierra Leone. Thirdly, the success of oil bunkering in Nigeria is an indication that influential state officials offer cover and protection to criminal elements to enable them operate and also provide security to well-established cartels without the interference of the state security forces (Coventry, 2009;14). Corrupt state and security officials work in partnership with criminal elements to undermine effective law enforcement in dealing with militancy in the oil producing areas (Coventry, 2009; 12). This debate leads to the question of how the militants and their activities are sustained.

Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis and the Niger Delta Crisis

The frustration-aggression theory is associated with the works of John Dollard et al(1931:1), the core assumption being that “aggression is always a consequence of frustration”. This theory has been expanded and modified by scholars like Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962) which appears to be the most common explanation for violent behaviour stemming from inability to fulfil needs. The authors argued that individuals are motivated to achieve life ambition and fulfil destiny, but when these expectations are thwarted, frustration sets in. In an attempt to explain aggression, scholars point to the difference of what people feel they want or deserve to what they actually get-the “want-get-ratio” (Feierabends, 1969:256-7) and difference between “expected need satisfaction and “actual need satisfaction” (Davies: 1962:6). Where expectation does not meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions. This is the central argument that Ted Robert Gurr’s relative deprivation thesis addressed in saying that “the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is sought and what seem attainable, the

greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result” (Gurr, 1970:24).

A good example of the way in which frustration leads to aggression can be seen in the ongoing crises in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. After waiting and peacefully agitating for what the people of the region considered a fair share of the oil wealth that is exploited from their land, youths now take the laws into their own hands by vandalising oil pipelines, kidnapping oil workers for fat ransom and generally creating problems for those they believe are responsible for their predicaments. It is true that schism exists among the region’s various ethnic groups, but frustration occasioned as a result of a sense of despair and deprivation, environmental and developmental issues, transnational oil companies that neglect the ethos of corporate social responsibility are more like it. We argue that the response of Niger Delta youths to Nigerian State’s neglect and apathy of oil multinationals in the region radicalised them into violent militancy.

The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) further buttressed the position when it pointed out quite eloquently and forcefully, the lack of propriety in the handling of oil revenues: “Nigeria presents a remarkable paradox of an enormously wealthy country both in potential and real terms, serving as home to the third largest concentration of poor people in the world. The country annually makes substantial revenue from oil and gas but has apparently failed to provide basic services for its people” (NEPAD, 2008:33).

There are many issues in contemporary public affairs of Nigeria that sustains NEPAD’S observation. In sharing NEPAD’S observation, this paper wishes to explore other issues if only because they contain immediacy and concrete relevance. NEPAD is quick to support its position by highlighting Nigeria’s history of corruption and poor governance: “The greatest challenge confronting Nigeria is how to transform and manage its enormous wealth from oil and gas to achieve socio-economic development” (NEPAD, 2008:7). The degree of infrastructural decay in the region further strengthens the

argument that the lack of infrastructures is among the fundamental causes of distress that stoke militancy in the region (Obi, 2009:3).

It is, indeed, tragic that “the political environment is one in which the Nigerian government has failed to ensure that the people who live in the oil producing areas actually benefit from the oil” (HRW, 2003:3). A respondent, one Alero Alebi John residing in Port Harcourt, Rivers State argued that until the Nigerian State recognises the relevance of the South-South region and decide to alleviate the suffering, militancy and the destruction of the economic and strategic interest will continue. He said: “the oil companies care less about us. They pollute our air, water and environment and leave us to die of strange sicknesses that are associated with oil exploration activities. We are frustrated because despite the rich mineral deposits that we are blessed with, we live in poverty. Pollution from oil and gas flaring has adversely affected the people’s capacity to engage in meaningful farming and fishing activities, which consequently lead to a drastic decline in agricultural output” (Interview, Port Harcourt, October, 24, 2013). What the above statement conveys is that the feelings of frustration and anger in the region were based on the region’s backwardness although the resources that drive the country’s economy are founded there.

An individual who has endured deep rooted economic hopelessness may transform from a frustrated individual to an aggressive one, which in most cases, may end up in violent actions. Again, an individual who is deprived of basic aspiration and who, as a result, suffers overwhelming sense of frustration, is inclined to respond aggressively towards those perceived to be frustrating attempts at living a good life. “Unbearable living conditions” is visibly obvious in the region. It is instructive to note that problem in the region is not setting up commissions by the Federal Government to look into the problems in the Niger Delta but Federal Government failure to implement the commissions’ recommendations; that poverty and hopelessness are direct consequences of government’s monumental acts of neglect; that the problem associated with unemployment explains why socio-economic crisis, political tensions and violence has

been prevalent in the region; and that despite the vast oil economy created in their lands, the benefits have been inadequate to trickle down to them due to endemic corruption in the oil industry (Amaraeibu, 2010:108-112).

Berkowitz (1989:69) drew a distinction between attitudinal aggression and behavioural aggression as direct result of sustained frustration and acknowledged that aggression is a common example of the link between terrible motivation and repulsive emotions and rudimentary feelings of anger and fear. According to him, people prevented from reaching a desired goal become aggressively inclined, especially when the interference is believed to be improper, like a violation of socially accepted practice or is perceived as a personal attack. Gurr (1970:24) argued that the potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity. For him, the primary source of the human capacity for violence appears to be the frustration-aggression mechanism.

Pollution from “oil spillage and gas flaring” has adversely affected the peoples’ capacity to engage in meaningful farming and fishing activities, which consequently lead to a drastic decline in agricultural output. As a consequence, there has been a considerable decline in regional economy as farmers and fishermen are unable to handle job losses and high cost of living and this has triggered more vigorous aggressive tendencies or what Dallard et al (1939:2) called the inevitability of aggression following frustration. With facts and clearer perspectives, this section of the paper has contributed to the understanding that the militancy is fired by mass anger, frustration and general despair and that when a people are denied dignity, resistance and revolution become inevitable.

Effects of Militancy and Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

As stated above, the crisis in the Niger Delta region through the activities of the different militant groups operating there, have brought about some negative impacts on oil and economic activities,

and on governance in general. According to Ibegbu (2007), it was the actions of Nigerian leaders dominated by the majority Northern Leadership such that it neglected the needs and aspirations of the Niger Delta area. In addition to the above, hostility in the area is traceable to lack of opportunity for political participation which in the words of Ibegbu (2007), regimes that deny access to power and persecute dissenters create dissatisfaction among the people. Given this condition, grievances become primarily political without social or economic overtures. What are these impacts?

The government of Nigeria relies solely on the earnings derived from the sales of oil to be able to carry its obligations. The crisis which began since December 2005, has at times, forced oil production shutdowns of up to 800,000 barrels per day threatening Nigerian government's plan to nearly double production to four million barrels a day by 2010 (IGG, 2006:21). The crisis is said to have cost the country an annual loss of 4.4 billion dollars. Already, a quarter of Nigeria's oil output in the estimation of International Herald Tribune has been shut down leading to huge loss of earnings to the government (International Herald Tribune, 2007:1).

The operation of militants in the Niger Delta region rippled across energy markets contributing to higher prices and tighter supplies. It also led to the downsizing of the oil companies' workers. Again, since the start of the militancy particularly hostage taking and attack on oil installations in the Niger Delta region, there had been dearth of business activities as a result of the activities of the youth militants (Sunday Trust, 2007). There was also disruption of telecommunication activities as many base stations of Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN) were shut down in the region due to militants' activities that made them inaccessible (Punch Newspaper, 2007). Besides the trillions of naira that have been lost by the country due to the activities of militants, all the states in Niger Delta region are suffering from infrastructural development such as good network of roads etcetera.

This crisis has brought about serious security implication in the way MEND and other militia groups have been able to withstand the military because of their access to sophisticated weapons which they use in attacking oil platforms and facilities. Kidnapping and hostage taking have also become the order of the day with oil workers and individuals becoming the targets thus worsening the security situation. Precisely on January 11, 2006, hostage taking of oil workers stated in Bayelsa state after the declaration of “Operation Orido Danger” by MEND with the kidnapping of four expatriates (Emma, 2007). The crisis has made illegal bunkering of oil to thrive, which is also the source of funds for the militants operating in the creeks of Niger Delta. In view of the dire consequences brought about by the activities of the militants, concerted efforts should be made both within and outside towards resolving the crisis in order to save Nigeria from another civil war, which aftermath, will be too much for the world to handle.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing, one could see that the fundamental causes of militancy in the Niger Delta did not just start today; it is more than four decades of struggle that is why there is need for its re-examination. Militant groups are proliferating and mutating rapidly. The security situation is deteriorating, with consequences for the oil industry and Nigeria as a country, because of the strategic importance of region to the socio-economic development and well-being of the nation. Again the federal government has not evolved and comprehensive programmes for containing the effect of environmental degradation caused by oil mining in the Niger Delta region of the country.

The issues of peace and conflict are central to all those who are concerned about the future of Nigeria. The only plausible and long lasting panacea to the Niger Delta militancy, youth restiveness and the overall conflagration is good governance epitomised by the provision of the basic needs of the people in terms of shelter, housing, health, education, employment and infrastructure. We found out that the

militancy in the Niger Delta has to do with internal factors as a result of lack of economic growth, poor governance and poor attitudinal response to the concern of the region by both the government and oil multinationals. It is time, for the Western nations that have oil companies in Nigeria to assist in solving the problems instead of remaining aloof. They should assist Nigeria in breaking the jinx being associated with petroleum as devil's excrement, which brings trouble, waste and corruption. Nigeria and other stakeholders should recognise the fact that they all stand to lose if serious efforts are not made to stop the activities of militants in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

The state-centric security infrastructure often deployed in the Niger Delta (ND) by government has proved unproductive both as a strategy of deterrence and as an instrument for homogenizing deeply heterogeneous communities. As a response, it ignores the fundamental issues in the Niger Delta. The militarization of the Nigerian economy under the guise of protecting oil installations complicates the internal security problem, given the multi various factors implicated in conflicts today. Suffice it to note that, even with the application of sophisticated surveillance technology, the security of oil infrastructure cannot be guaranteed without the support and watchful eye of host communities. Besides, such a response tends towards provocation as it merely re-enacts memories of decades of brutal exploitation by successive military governments. Democratic governance is about openness and alternative avenues for individuals and communities to give vent to concerns that would otherwise result in conflict. The militancy in the Niger Delta is therefore an affront on Nigeria's democratic experiment.

To transform Nigeria from a resource-cursed country to a resource-rich country requires a sustained diversification of the economy. This entails the diversification of the oil resource that will consequently save the ecology of oil-producing communities, as well as impoverished people in these communities from death, environmental contamination and health hazards. Through sustainable practices, collaborative partnership and development

dialogue of all stakeholders, especially those in the oil-producing communities, Nigeria can use all wealth to kick-start the engine of growth by diversifying oil money in other strategic sectors, particularly, agriculture and manufacturing. It has become obvious that Nigeria cannot attain full development and realise its full potential by depending on the oil sector alone. For the country to alleviate poverty, create job opportunities and attain sustainable development in line with the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of reducing global poverty, the development of entrepreneurship among its youths must be a priority. With the establishment of small and medium scale enterprises, the youth will contribute positively to the economic growth of the country. The above development strategy requires a proactive ruling elite and government that can sustain coherent social and economic policy processes. The time to act is now.

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