

MISMANAGED NIGER DELTA OIL CONFLICTS AS TERRORISM IN AMATA'S *BLACK NOVEMBER*

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Abstract

The spate of mismanaged conflicts and insurgencies in Nigeria has degenerated to terrorism in various degrees threatening lives and hampering the sustainable economic development and social security of the country. Despite various efforts such as amnesty put in place to check the oil conflicts between the Federal Government of Nigeria and Niger Delta militants, the insurgencies cum terrorism still remain part of the social identities of the region. Since arts reflect and refract life, Nollywood film makers have responded to the imaginative recreation and narration of Niger Delta conflicts, perhaps, with the intention to offer solution to the lingering mismanaged conflicts between the Federal Government of Nigeria and Niger Delta militants. In this regard, Jeta Amata's *Black November* is content-analysed with tenets of post-colonialism for data interpretation and discussion. The findings reveal that Niger Delta oil conflicts remain mismanaged because of the complicity of local and foreign investors in the oil sector with the lack of political will of the government to resolve the conflicts. Besides, some Niger Delta elites, politicians and political class enjoy economic benefits from the lingering oil conflicts and thus, ensure that economic stratification in the region persists. Mismanagement of conflicts often degenerates to terrorism in a state of anomy characterised by inequity and socio-economic stratification.

Introduction

The concept of terrorism is subjective and relative depending on the epistemological and ideological approaches adopted in its description. The relativism and subjectivity of the actions which constitute terrorism and terrorist acts in Nigerian context are informed by the ethno-religious and political diversities of the country. The reason for this is as result of the fact that Nigerians at all levels have been socialised into the culture of hyping ethno-cultural issues to get cheap attention and favour. It is difficult for the country's politicians and the political class to differentiate between terrorism and militancy as well as terrorism and guerrilla warfare. Every action which threatens them, their socio-political and economic interests becomes a terrorist act which needs to be faced with all the security and social apparatuses at their disposal.

In the context of this paper, however, militancy and guerrilla warfare are taken as insurgencies while terrorism or a terrorist act is taken as predetermined and well planned vendetta against the institution(s) of the state. The paper begins with the distinction between insurgency and terrorism. The simple definition of insurgency is the violent attempt by a group of people to antagonise government policies for certain ideological and sociological reasons. In the light of this definition of insurgency, its common synonyms are rebellion, resistance, uprising and revolution. Terrorism, on the other hand, has a larger scope than insurgency. It is a politically and ideologically motivated act of violence to intimidate and subdue the government based on prevailing circumstances of failed diplomacy for intergroup relationships in multiple societies. Despite the difference in the nature of terrorism and insurgence, they have certain things in common: terrorism can be internally motivated and executed, likewise insurgency. The Nigerian political class, perhaps, because of its egocentric attitude usually quickly switches meaning of insurgency or violence with terrorism at the sight of any action which may threaten their security. The recent attack on the National Assembly of Nigeria was described as a terrorist attack by the law makers.

With the above distinction between insurgency and terrorism, this paper does not foreclose the fact that one can precipitate the other if not properly managed. In this instance, a mismanaged insurgency/militancy can degenerate to the act of terrorism as we currently witness in Nigeria. Some of the reported cases of terrorism across the country are direct or indirect consequences of mismanaged insurgencies. The Nigerian nation, just like any other human society, records violence in various forms because of the inability of the rulers and the ruled to manage and resolve conflicts (Ebo 177). The successive governments in Nigeria have not demonstrated strong political will to implement the blueprints of the series of confabs, national conferences and referendums organised to find solutions to myriads of political, sociological and socio-economic problems confronting the country since the time of political independence on 1st October, 1960.

Background History of Niger Delta Oil Conflicts

One of the lingering problems confronting Nigeria since 1960 is resource control, particularly in relation to revenue generated to the federation accounts from oil products that came from Niger Delta region of the country. The problem lingers because the government, foreign investors and other stakeholders in the oil sector are not proactive enough to foresee that the concentration of petroleum resources in Niger Delta region is a blessing in disguise. Besides, the government and the stakeholders in the oil sector do not integrate and internalise the previous lessons from the era of palm oil trade in the region.

NIGERIA -- CORE NIGER DELTA STATES



Source: wwwchannelstv.com

The significant economic contributions of palm oil to Nigeria's economy in the decades before the discovery of petroleum oil are given by G. G. Darah thus:

In the 1920s, palm produce alone employed about four million Nigerians. Nigeria led the world in oil palm production and export of cocoa, groundnuts, hides and skin, and contributed a substantial proportion of the world's trade on timber and rubber products (17-18).

The deduction from Darah's view is that the Niger Delta region of the country has been making significant economic contributions to the growth and development of Nigeria since the agrarian period of Nigeria's history. Palm oil trade, in the colonial history of Niger Delta and Nigeria as a whole generated some economic, political and sociological problems because of the economic and social caste systems that prevailed at the time. The economic caste system which prevailed at the time followed the pattern of feudal and capitalist systems: the chiefs, the lords, the serfs, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The social caste was structured as upper class (the white imperialist), the middle class (educated and social elites from Niger Delta) and the lower class (individuals with no access to means of production and its distribution).

The federation of states that constitutes the modern day Niger Delta region of the country has witnessed one form of resource control problem or the other during the era of palm oil production in the region. What we currently witness as oil crises in the region and the whole of Nigeria as a country is a repeat of all the mismanaged conflicts of the palm oil era. The nature and dimension of these palm oil crises have been re-enacted in J. P. Clark's play, *All for Oil*. The play reveals the height of mistrust, betrayal and gross impunity which characterised trade in palm oil before the discovery of petroleum oil in

the region. The current militancy and insurgency in the Niger Delta region reinforces the inability of the government to tackle the resource control problem head on because of some socio-political and economic problems such as ethnicity and visible lack of political will.

The discovery of oil in 1956 at Oloibiri, in the present day Bayelsa State in the Niger Delta changed the political and economic history of Nigeria. This discovery has diverted attention of Nigerians from the agricultural sector to the petroleum sector. Political historians and sociologists have pointed out that the Niger Delta militancy predated the discovery of oil at Oloibiri in 1956. Since the 1930s, Niger Delta people have been clamouring for autonomy and resource control considering the huge revenues that came from palm oil products. In the light of this view, Darah avers that, “the quest for autonomy and self-determination inspired the founding in the 1930s of nationality groups such as the Urhobo Progress Union (UPU) under the leadership of Chief Mukoro Mowoe (1890-1948) and the Oron Union” (20).

This development reveals that Niger Delta people were proactive enough to foresee the resource control conflicts that were imminent in the country. The demands of the nationalities’ groups for autonomous state/territory at the verge of Nigeria’s political independence was turned down by Sir the Henry Willink’s Commission (1957-1958) with the excuse that such demand would slow down the process of Nigeria’s political independence on 1st October, 1960. Instead, the Commission recommended the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1960 to cater for the economic and social needs of the Niger Delta people. The establishment of NDDDB did not stop the agitations at the region for economic autonomy. This followed the discovery of petroleum oil in 1956 at Oloibiri and the attendant problems of resource control.

The resource control problem and resistance of Niger Delta people to socio-economic marginalisation took a new dimension of insurgence with Major Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro insurgent group, the Niger Delta Volunteers Force (NDVF) in 1966. The concern of this group was to declare “an independent Niger Delta Republic with full sovereignty over natural resources (Darah 21). Adaka Boro’s insurgent group was eventually crushed and the leader (Boro) was arrested. At this stage, the Nigerian government pretended that there was no problem. The government did not set up a commission of inquiry to know the remote and immediate cause(s) of insurgence at the time. Rather, the Nigerian government continued to enjoy the economic proceeds from the oil even when the region was not placated. The problem with Nigeria is not in its formation but rather it is in the quality of leadership which demonstrates expertise in solving problem with another complicated problem. All the solutions that have been offered to stem Niger Delta oil crises are riddled with other covert socio-economic and political problems such as corruption and ethnic sentiments.

The problem of the Niger Delta people attracted global attention in 1990s with the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) under the leadership of late Ken Saro-Wiwa. The Movement, through coordinated, organised and non-violent demonstrations exposed the ecological and environmental problems that Ogoni people and other Niger Delta people suffer from to the global audience. This development did not go down well with the military junta of late General Sanni Abacha

who ordered the arrest and execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other eight Ogoni co-agitators on 10th November, 1995.

The state ‘murder’ of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his Ogoni compatriots sparked series of armed agitations that the country currently witnesses in the Niger Delta region. This is because the source of the problem – resource control has not been faithfully addressed by all the parties involved in the conflict resolution. After the ‘murder’ of Ken Saro-Wiwa by state authority, many militant and insurgent groups emerged in the Niger Delta region. Barclays Ayakoroma’s assessment of the trend of the oil conflicts between the Niger Delta militants and the Federal Government is reproduced as follows:

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which was the brainchild of the late environmental activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, appeared to blaze the trail in the Niger Delta. The heartless execution of Saro-Wiwa precipitated a chain of reactions that has reverberated to the present day. The Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality of the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC), and the Supreme Egbesu Assembly (SEA), popularly known as the Egbesu Boys of Africa, are some of the youth groups that have been formed to protect the communal interests of the Ijaw (182).

The persistence of the insurgent movements in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region of the country is as a result of the government’s lack of political will to find sustainable solutions to the oil conflicts in the region. Insurgent groups spring up at will in Niger Delta because of the government’s reckless handling of the situation. In recent times, Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) has become notorious and deadly in the vandalisation of oil installations in the region.

Black November as Postcolonial Metanarrative

Black November, a 2012 film produced by Jeta Amata (a Nigerian from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria) is a postcolonial metanarrative of the oil conflicts between the Niger Delta militants and the Federal Government of Nigeria. The film, which was shot in Nigeria and Los Angeles, narrates the remote and immediate causes of the oil conflicts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Ebiere, a Niger Delta young lady is about to be hanged for the alleged murder of community leaders. The militants from the region feel that the only way to rescue her from the gallows is to take the battle to America (the perceived source of the problem). In America, the Niger Delta militants take some Americans hostage in what seems a terrorist attack. The essence is to coerce America to engage the Nigerian government in a diplomatic discussion for the release of Ebiere in Nigeria. American government refuses on the ground that the country (America) does not negotiate with terrorists. Instead, American government uses media manipulation to secure the release of the American hostages. The Niger Delta terrorists are arrested in America and Ebiere is killed in Nigeria.



Pix: Cover design of Jeta Amata's *Black November*

The synopsis of the film reveals it as a postcolonial metanarrative of oil conflicts between the Federal Government of Nigeria and Niger Delta militants. This paper argues that the film text of *Black November* is a postcolonial metanarrative because the subject matter of the film constitutes postcolonial national narratives since the attainment of political independence in Nigeria. It shows that the country is not settled at any point in time because of the government's ineptitude in managing internal crises and insurgencies. This paper's view that the film text of *Black November* is a metanarrative is premised on the fact that its plot focuses on the complex ideological relationship between the Federal Government of Nigeria and a region, particularly on the fronts of resource presence and allocation. Thus, metanarrative is wrought with some ambiguities and subjective perception of crises points. This paper, therefore, corroborates Spivakovsky's view on ideological differences in metanarrative as follows:

All these examples describe metanarratives as ideological or authoritarian systems which require submission. Such "ideological correctness" is fraught with obvious dangers, but meta-narration itself is noticeably wider than its utilitarian modus. For instance, non-ideological metanarrative (a tragic opposition to the repression of freedom or an unnatural way of life, etc.) is not always associated with authoritarianism or violence. The ambiguity of this phenomenon gives birth to numerous problems (1360).

Among the numerous problems of metanarrative is the interpretive apparatuses that should be deployed in the critical reading of the text. Reading the text of *Black November*, therefore requires a step further beyond formalist theorisation which advocates intentional fallacy (a formalist tenet which emphasises that a critic should not examine the intention of the author). In an interview with a journalist at the premiere of the film in New York, Jeta Amata said that his intention to produce the film is to fight the war of the Niger Delta people as different from the ways Asari Dokubo and other Niger Delta militants have been doing. His own mode of warfare is not guerrilla but intellectual. The choice of the film to advance the course of Niger Delta oil conflicts is because of its universal appeal. This medium will afford the filmmaker the opportunity to advocate for global intervention in the plight of Niger Delta people. The achievement of the film is seen in its ability to draw attention and interest of American lawmakers (Bobby Rush and Jeff Fortenberry) to the socio-economic problems of Niger Delta people. These American lawmakers sponsored a joint resolution pressurising the Nigerian government and Western Oil (an American oil company which explores oil in the Niger Delta Region) to be responsible and responsive to the socio-economic and environmental problems of Niger Delta people.

The title of the film reflects its metanarrative nature as a postcolonial text. The title has some significance in Nigerian history. In the month of November 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa and other eight Ogoni environmental and human rights activists were killed by the Nigerian government. With a close reading of the film, this paper is of the view that Jeta Amata attempts to reincarnate Ken Saro-Wiwa's spirit in Ebiere, the female protagonist of the film. This view is premised on the fact that Ebiere represents all that Ken Saro-Wiwa stood for in his life time – peaceful demonstration the improved standard of living for all Niger Delta people, probity, accountability and above all, peaceful resolution of the oil conflicts between the Niger Delta people and the Federal Government of Nigeria. Ebiere advocates negotiation, dialogue and peaceful protest to redress the ecological, environmental and economic problems of the region. Besides, Ebiere suffers all that Ken Saro-Wiwa suffered (brutalisation, imprisonment and eventually, death by hanging). All these issues surrounding the characterisation of Ebiere present the film as postcolonial narrative of mismanaged oil conflicts between the Niger Delta people and the Federal Government of Nigeria. *Black November*, in the light of its characterisation, subject matter and scenery, presents the actual experience of a people in fictional mode. This paper aligns its view with Michael Etherton's conception of actuality in dramatic creativity. He posits that actuality:

...is life, viewed by those who would seek to interpret it to their audience through their art. The first step in the process of transforming life into art, into drama or film is to cast it in the form of a story with the history involving particularisation (a time, a place, characters) and causality (one event leading to another). However, the history in itself is not the film. The story which particularises life now needs to be transformed into a scenario. The scenario gives the story filmic impact by its effective

reorganisation of the history's event into scenes which cope with problems of time and space (59-60).



Pix: *Ebiere and other women being brutalised by the Nigerian Army during a peaceful demonstration*

Peel's description of the circumstances of Ken Saro-Wiwa's death is relevant to this paper's argument that Ebiere is presented in the film as Ken Saro-Wiwa's reincarnate. He posits:

The trouble continued and, in 1994, amid factional disputes within Ogoni, a writer and activist named Ken Saro-Wiwa and some of his colleagues were arrested for allegedly murdering four local chiefs. Despite a lack of credible evidence or judicial process, Saro-Wiwa and eight others were convicted and sentenced to be hanged by a special tribunal set up by the country's military dictatorship (7).

In the context of the film, Ebiere is arrested and tried for the murder of some local chiefs who aid and abet the Federal Government and the oil company. Amata's use of a female protagonist as Saro-Wiwa's reincarnate, perhaps, is guided by national interest in order not to re-open the healing wound of Ogoni people and the entire Niger Delta community. Besides, it is so in order not to suffer proscription of the film when it is eventually released. Like in the actual circumstances surrounding the arrest and death of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the military dictator in the film is not sensitive to the plight of the people.

Jeta Amata presents the historical and sociological experiences of the Niger Delta people to the world through the medium of film. The intention is to re-expose the evils and conspiracies of the Nigerian government and the Western world to the global scene. The primary motive is to use the medium of film to seek redress and reparation for years of damage and exploitation of the human and material resources in the Niger Delta region.

The subject matter and the plot of the film indict the Federal Government for lack of commitment to seek peaceful resolution of the oil conflicts with the people of Niger Delta. This is evident in the brutalisation and victimisation of women who embark on series of peaceful demonstrations to ensure that the government considers the plight of the Niger Delta people. During one of these protests to Abuja, Hosanah (one of the women leaders of the community is killed). The women are not only humiliated; some men who embark on peaceful demonstration are also arrested and put behind bars.



Pix: *Dede and other men are imprisoned for embarking on a peaceful demonstration*

The government's irresponsibility and unresponsiveness to the plight of the Niger Delta region and people force the men to take up arms to defend themselves and their land. The dialogue between Dede and Ebiere reveals thus:

Dede: Ebiere, now no more peace.

Ebiere: Dede, you can do something without resorting to violence.

Dede: Violence is the only language they understand. The men are with me. What the government and the oil company want is war and we will give it to them.

Dede's resolution initiates the oil conflicts in the film text. The men form an insurgent group frustrating the efforts of the oil companies through kidnapping of expatriate oil workers and destruction of oil installations. This development affects productivity and revenue of the oil companies and the Federal Government of Nigeria. Judging from Dede's reaction, this paper is of the view that the Federal Government has provoked a war that it may have no political will to put to an end. This is clearly evident in the sociological and political evidences in the country and also in the context of the film text. Dede and other men in the film make a choice of the path of war to liberate their land and at the same time to improve the lots of the people. Reading the film text beyond its context reveals that some militants embraced the path of war with the Federal

Government of Nigeria for their selfish material benefits. The military government's access to security apparatuses makes it more convenient to repress the Niger Delta agitations and struggle for resource control. The security operatives, particularly the Nigerian Army are power drunk and therefore, engage in unprovoked attack on the community.



Pix: *Officers of the Nigerian Army victimising the Niger Delta Community*

As a postcolonial metanarrative, the film text of *Black November* attempts a holistic evaluation of the problems of Niger Delta people and their region. The film looks inwards for the cause of the problems among the Niger Delta indigenes. The region suffers from the sabotage of the local chiefs and some educated elites in its further and persistent exploitation. The Western Oil's proposal to compensate individual victims of the explosion is hijacked by the leaders of the community for their selfish material benefits. The deduction from this is that the reparation and other benefits meant for the masses and the community are diverted by some selfish community leaders and educated elite.

The attitude of the Niger Delta elders with the educated and social elite is best described by Aimé Césaire's idea of *colonisation-thingification*. In his argument, Césaire describes *colonisation-thingification* as:

When a people is colonised and “nationalised,” they become a tool used by the dominant hegemony for the furthering of economic, military, and religious ideologies which, of course, benefit the coloniser and are masked as a positive means to “improve” the lives of those colonised. How confusing is that for an indigenous people? (21)

The Niger Delta elders and elites become tools of sustained exploitation and victimisation of the land and people of Niger Delta communities. The Federal government of Nigeria

and the foreign oil companies mask their intentions of “goodwill” for the betterment of the people. Unfortunately, the violation of the land and people of Niger Delta has reached a point which requires critical and objective interventions by all the stakeholders irrespective of sociological, political, economic, ethno-cultural and social backgrounds of the parties involved.

The Nigeria government needs to re-integrate Niger Delta youths and women into developmental projects and programs of the country. Niger Delta people suffer untold hardships and neglect from the Federal Government of Nigeria and for these reasons the youths are agitating for the self-control of the natural resources coming from the region. Niger Delta people now have double consciousness as regards their relationship with the whole of the country. The present double consciousness found among the Niger Delta people is in consistence with Dubois description of the concept:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; *two souls two thoughts two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder* (Emphasis mine) (38).

The two-ness of Niger Delta people is found in their perception of themselves and their problems against the background of how the Nigerian government has perceived them. The consequence of this, therefore, is that the Niger Delta people first identify themselves with their communities (Niger Delta) before they identify themselves with Nigeria. This, perhaps, accounts for unremorseful destruction and vandalism of oil installations and facilities in the country. In the view of Dede, in the film text of *Black November*, the Federal Government of Nigeria has turned them to militants. The dialogue between him and Ebiere reveals thus:

Ebiere: See what you have turned to, Dede, a mere criminal.

Dede: I became what the government has turned me to.

On the intervention of Ebiere, Dede and other militants are ready to make peace with the Federal Government of Nigeria and the oil company. The peace deal fails because of the inactions of the government. Instead of peace talk, the government team attends the meeting with armed police men. Nobody survived because of the crossfires between Dede’s team and the Federal Government team. This situation explains one of the reasons for the persistence of oil conflicts in Nigeria. There is mutual mistrust between Niger Delta militants and the Federal Government of Nigeria.

In their country which controls the commonwealth of all the citizens, Niger Delta people have the feeling of *unhomeliness*; they feel insecure and marginalised. The government institutions and some other local collaborators sustain the unhomeliness among the youths and women following the pattern of *othering* system of the colonial time. This othering system is complemented by divide and rule system where the few

minority among the Niger Delta people benefit from the commonwealth of the entire people. Substantiating this argument, this paper makes reference to the condemnable actions of the local chiefs in the film. The unhomeliness, in the context of this paper is taken as ‘psychological limbo’ of individuals who have the feeling of being displaced in the community. In the light of this, the description of unhomeliness here is consistent with Tyson’s conceptualisation of term that unhomeliness does not suggest lack of home but rather it means not being at home. In his view, Tyson posits:

Being “unhomed” is not the same as being homeless. To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak (421).

The youths, which constitute the larger percentage of the Niger Delta population, are unhomed in Nigeria because of the economic and social marginalisation of the region. The youth’s feeling of unhomeliness is informed by years of neglect, poverty and unemployment. This paper, therefore, corroborates Ekpo’s view that, “youth restiveness, partly fuelled by unemployment, hunger, ethnic conflict and deep feeling of neglect, is still a serious problem in the Niger Delta, accounting for over 90 percent of Nigeria’s petroleum production” (1). With the administrative ineptitude of Nigeria government, the Niger Delta people have become psychological refugees in their own country.

Niger Delta Oil Conflicts and International Conspiracy

The persistence of the oil conflicts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is partly connected to the conspiracy of the Federal Government of Nigeria and foreign multinational oil companies. This paper, therefore, aligns its argument with Tunji Azeez’s view that:

While the government and the multi-national oil companies like Shell Petroleum Development Corporation, Chevron, Mobil, ELF, etc. are smiling to the banks, the people of the Niger Delta are left in abject squalor (199).

The above offers some explanations for the complexity of the oil conflicts and the narrative motif of the film. Its narrative motif consolidates series of sociological and socio-political problems delineating Nigeria’s national identities since the attainment of political independence on 1st October, 1960. Nigeria’s foreign diplomacy reveals dependence of the country on Europe and America, and in recent time Asia, particularly China for financial and technical assistance on matters that affect the socio-political existence of the country. These foreign countries often render assistance, perhaps, because of the large amount of oil deposits and blocs in the country.

The terrorist attack on American soil in the film is a reflection of the film maker’s ideological orientation about the nature and dynamism of international conspiracy between the Federal Government of Nigeria and America, through Western Oil Company. Tamuno and other Niger Delta militants are of the knowledge that Ebiere’s

death can be averted if America is put on hold through terrorist attack. After the hostage taking, the following dialogue reveals the nature of international conspiracy in the film:

Tamuno: You must document this

Journalist: You set me up

Tamuno: We are not bad people. We do not want to hurt anybody

Terrorist 1: We export crude oil to you and you export refined oil to us. Why?
Because Western Oil and our corrupt government will not allow our refineries to work.

The film, which was made from the sociological and historical evidences of oil conflicts between Niger Delta militants and the Federal Government of Nigeria, validates Keeley's description of conspiracy theory as follows:

A conspiracy theory is a proposed explanation of some historical event (or events) in terms of the significant causal agency of a relatively small group of persons, the conspirators, acting in secret. [...] It proffers an explanation of the event in question. It proposes reasons why the event occurred (116).

Though the government and the foreign collaborators are of the view that their dealings are still in secret, the film narrative has told the whole world that Europe and America's interest in Nigeria is selfish. The conspiracy is sustained because of the continued exploration of the oil for the material benefits of the conspirators. The awareness of the conspiracy between the Nigeria government and America may have informed the characterisation of the film which involves artistes and professionals drawn from Nigeria and America. This blend of artistes is aimed at achieving some diplomatic relationship to improve on the ethics and aesthetics of the film. The casting of individuals such as Mickey Rourke (an American actor and screenwriter), Kim Basinger (an American actress, singer and fashion model), Akon Opuwei (an American singer and songwriter), Sarah Wayne Callies (an American actress), Anne Heche (an American actress, screenplay writer and director), Wyclef Jean (an American-based singer and actor), Vivica Fox (an American actress, producer and television host), and a host of other American actors and actresses, is to get the permission of American government for the use of human and material resources in America for the shooting of the film. Apart from making the film maker get permission from American government for the shooting of film of that magnitude in America, the inclusion of American actors and actresses is also aimed to make the film have a global appeal to audience of different nationalities.

America and other foreign countries do not have genuine interest in Nigeria. The primary reason for the global interest in Nigeria is the availability of oil as mainstay of the country's economy. Foreign powers and multinational companies enter into a diplomatic relationship with the government based on the understanding of the ingrained corruption in Nigeria's system and lack of political will of the government for sustainable socio-economic transformation of the country. The genesis of this problem is traced to the creation of Nigeria as a country. In one of those curious twists of historical fate, the

creation of Nigeria coincided almost exactly with awakening interest in the country's potential as a source of oil (Peel 41).

In *Black November*, the diplomatic relationship between the Nigeria military government and America prompts the militants to take their struggle to America with the belief that taking some Americans hostage will prompt American government to enter into diplomatic talks with Nigerian government for the release of Ebiere who is due for execution. They (the militants) do not have any other ulterior motive of creating unnecessary confusion and panic in America. Tamuno, while commenting on their terrorist act in America says "we are not bad people. We do not want to hurt anybody".

The international conspiracy contributes to the execution of Ebiere. This argument is given because Western Oil and the international community are no longer comfortable with Ebiere because of her education, exposure and experience in international conspiracy. She is one of the beneficiaries of Western Oil scholarship and yet, she does not allow that to affect her concern for the welfare of her people. On several occasions, she had warned the government and Western Oil that one day, the people will revolt to claim back their land. In one of the meetings to decide the compensation for the people who lost their lives in oil explosion, Ebiere retorts:

Ebiere: You come to benefit from our land. What did you give in return? What you gave in return is sickness. You make us hungry and you feed us. You killed our loved ones and you offer us money. If you do not change your ways, people will rise.

Ebiere's statement puts Western Oil and the American government on their toes. The company makes different offers to Ebiere in order to suspend her struggle for the well-being of her people. Since Ebiere believes in the struggle for the betterment of her people, Western Oil and American government are convinced that the only way to ensure peaceful operation in the region is to eliminate her. For this reason, American government does not show any interest to intervene in Ebiere's execution. American government rather insists that its country will not negotiate with terrorists.

To ensure that the terrorist acts of the Niger Delta militants are put in check, the American government deploys all strategies of crises management for the safety of lives and property. All the security operatives in the country with full arms and ammunition are present at the scene. Besides, the government deploys the use of media to disempower the terrorists. This action shows the significance of media in international diplomacy and conspiracy.



Pix: *Niger Delta Militants jubilating after the fake news of the release of Ebiere by the Nigerian Government*

Ebiere is eventually executed and the Niger Delta militants in America are all arrested. The end of the film still validates the global assumption that America is always on top of every situation that may affect her sovereignty and global integrity. Political history has revealed that America displays uncommon courage in the face of terror as it is seen in the country's reaction to 11th September, 2001 terrorist attack on American soil.

A critical reading of the film reveals that it ends on a note of caution that the Nigerian government and international conspirators should not yet rejoice with the death of Dede, Ebiere and other militants arrested in America. The strugglers have only been dealt with but the struggle is still unattended to. The only thing which can bring this struggle in the Niger Delta region to an end is the government's demonstration of strong political will to address the oil conflicts in the region with a sense of probity, accountability and fairness. Ebiere gives birth to a baby boy while in prison. This is symbolic in the interpretation of the oil conflicts in the film. The birth of the baby boy from Ebiere's pregnancy for Dede metaphorically presents the idea that oil conflicts in Niger Delta region is generational as it is witnessed in the contemporary Nigerian society. Having lost his parents at infancy, the boy becomes a communal child growing with the history and sociology of his people.

Conclusion

The reading of the film, *Black November*, reveals socio-economic and political problems which make the oil conflicts in Niger Delta region of Nigeria linger for some decades. The government has not properly managed the conflicts. The best way to address the problem is to critically evaluate the remote and immediate causes of the conflicts for practicable and sustainable solutions. The casting and aesthetics of the film justify its potential to make strong political and sociological statements about the oil conflicts between the Federal Government of Nigeria and Niger Delta people.

The film maker's choice of the film medium to advance the struggle of Niger Delta people is premised on the fact that the medium of film has universal appeal to audience of different nationalities. A postcolonial theorisation of the film reveals the trajectory of colonial history in the nature and complexity of oil conflicts between Niger Delta militants and the Federal Government of Nigeria. Western Oil and American government in the film influence a lot of decisions of the Federal Government of Nigeria particularly in the welfares of Niger Delta people and the eventual execution of Ebiere. The oil conflicts in Niger Delta region of Nigeria can be properly addressed with government strong political will to evaluate the cause of the conflicts and the extent of the damage following the principles of 3Rs (reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction), which were adopted at the end of the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970).

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Filmography

Amata, Jeta. *Black November*. Script: Jeta Amata. Cinematography: James Michael Costello, Tommy Maddox-Upshaw. Editors: Debbie Berman, Lindsay Kent, Adam Verney. Company: Wells & Jeta Entertainment. Year: 2012. Language: English. Duration: 95mins.