

Security and Petroleum Resources: An Analysis of Factors Associated with Persistent Conflict in Nigeria, Niger Delta

Jackson, Onome Robinson^{1*}, Muhammad Tasiu Dansabo², SAID Pius³

¹Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa, Nigeria

²Department of Sociology Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

³Department of Public Administration Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa

*Corresponding author:

Jackson Onome Robinson

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to critically examine global energy geopolitics and the factors associated with persistent and resilient conflicts in Nigeria, Niger Delta. Adopting the critical international political economy approach, the paper argues that most of the strategies aimed at restoring lasting peace and development in the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta are largely an incentive for insurgency, a reward for crime and a vicious cycle, aimed at benefiting the political elite without any real development for those that actually need it in the oil-rich region. If development intervention program of the state and multinational companies must work, it has to go beyond just huge revenue allocation or the symptomatic action of pacifying militants and take a holistic approach using the examples of countries like Norway, United Arab Emirate and Kuwait. The Niger Delta oil producing communities should look beyond continuous agitation for increasing revenue allocation, to include accountability from its leaders who are largely engaged in financial improprieties and corruption

Key Terms: Security, Petroleum Resources, Persistent conflict, Development and Niger Delta.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of energy in the global geopolitical matrix as a major driver of economic activity, and by implication a basic denominator of growth and a fundamental indicator of political power, is well explained by history – especially with regards to how the world's energy use and location pattern has evolved over the years [1]. A recent confirmation of the above position is aptly captured by the final report of the international security advisory board (ISAB) on energy geopolitics which declared that:

The crisis in Ukraine is the latest reminder of how energy permeates the geopolitical landscape and is a fundamental element of national power. It can be a source of political leverage or vulnerability for individual countries, and can promote economic prosperity or instability [2].

Energy is the ability to do work. In a number of ways it is absolutely essential for human existence:

from the sun's energy that heats the earth and makes it habitable; to the energy stored in plants and animals that humans consume to keep their bodies running. As the anthropologist Leslie White once explained "Other things being equal, the degree of cultural development varies directly as the amount of energy per capita per year put to work." Energy = Civilization.

For all but a tiny sliver of mankind's 50,000 year history, the use of energy has been severely limited. For most of it the only source of energy humans could draw upon was the most basic: human muscle. The discovery of fire and the burning of wood, animal dung and charcoal helped things along by providing an immediate source of heat [3]. Next, came the domestication, about 12,000 years ago, when humans learned to harness the power of oxen and horses to plough their fields and drive up crop yields.

The only other readily accessible sources of power were the forces of wind and water. Measured in modern terms, these powerful pre-industrial water-wheels couldn't easily generate more than 4 kW of

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power. Wind mills could do 1 to 2 kW [4]. This state of affairs persisted for a very long time: With less energy use, the world was only able to support a small population, perhaps as little as 200 million at 1 CE, and gradually climbing to 800 million in 1750 at the beginning of the industrial revolution.

At onset of industrial revolution near the end of the 18th century, in a wave of unprecedented innovation and advancement, Europeans began to unlock the potential of fossil fuels. It began with coal. Though the value of coal for its heating properties had been known for thousands of years, it was not until James Watt's enhancement of the steam engine that coal's power as a prime mover was unleashed rendering water-wheels and wind-mills obsolete [5]. Some historians regard this moment as the most important in human history since the domestication of animals. The energy intensity of coal and the other fossil fuels (oil and natural gas) absolutely dwarfed anything mankind had ever used before.

However, in the 1700 and 1800s, these new energy harnessing technologies brought about a farming and industrialization revolution, profoundly changing man's relation to the world around him. Manufactured metal farm implements, nitrogen fertilizers, pesticides and farm tractors all brought crop yields to previously unbelievable levels. Population growth rates soared and these developments enabled a population explosion in all industrialized states [6].

Michael Faraday first proved the feasibility of converting mechanical energy into electrical energy in 1831. By 1872, Thomas Edison had invented the light bulb, and in 1882 led development of the first commercial power plant, running on coal.¹¹ Hydro-electric power was first tested and deployed soon after. Electrification proceeded at an astonishing pace [7, 8].

All these new fossil-fuel based technologies unleashed creative energies and allowed an exponential increase in the populations and the standards of living in industrialized states. This economic realignment had enormous negative effects: environmental degradation, inequality, and the empowering of industrialized states to dominate weaker one [9, 10].

By the end of the 20th Century, industrial states were almost fully adapted to fossil fuels. Coal and natural gas provide the majority of power generation; oil remains king of transportation, and is essential in many industrial processes like making plastics and fertilizers [11, 12]. Nuclear power, biomass and hydro-electric power all made inroads into the complete dominance of fossil fuels in the world economy, but taken together, along with all other renewable like wind and solar, they amount to less than a quarter of global energy use [8, 13].

Global Energy Geopolitics

Two fundamental factors that have remain a reoccurring decimal in the unfolding dynamics of global energy geopolitics in the 21st century. First, adequate and reliable energy supply, of which oil and more recently gas (fossil fuel), the world's dominant energy source in the past half century, has been fundamental to the unprecedented and remarkable growth in the world economy, the significant improvement in material prosperity and social progress witnessed by the world's population during the period. Second, the geology and geography of petroleum have and continues to result in uneven global and regional distribution of oil and gas resources highlighted by petroleum resource concentration in relatively few countries.

The contemporary market-driven international economy functions within the fundamental capitalist premise of the continued infinite accumulation of wealth, with little regard for the finite nature of the global system. Ultimately, the global economy operates according to a flawed premise surrounding the infinite and continued availability of natural resources and raw materials. The fact of the matter is that the earth is a finite system with limited amounts of natural and raw materials that can be exploited and used towards capital accumulation. Consequently, the finite nature of the earth's resources is a potential catalyst for conflict and competition both between and within countries. As a direct result, the scarcity of the earth's resources has created an environment in which resource acquisition and subsequent security have taken centre stage within many countries. The continued availability of affordable and uninterrupted supplies of crucial strategic resources has manifested into the securitization of resources and resource supplies [14]. Major oil consumers, such as the US and China, have securitized oil as a fundamental resource necessary for the continued prosperity and functioning of their respective countries [15]. The securitization of oil lends itself to many problems and concerns, such as the willingness and extent to which countries are prepared to mobilize military forces tacitly or overtly to protect vital strategic resource interests.

The securitization of resource interests led to the development of the concept resource wars associated with rapid economic growth leading to a rising demand for and acquisition of raw materials coupled with expected resource shortages and contested resource ownership [16]. The reality of the contemporary global geopolitics is that resource competition is imminent, arising either within countries as has been the trend in resource-rich countries, or between countries as the projected future trend. The securitization of strategic resources as well as the looming scarcity of such resources – especially oil – across the globe, foreshadows a changing geostrategic

landscape driven by access to and acquisition of resources supplies [14].

At present, the world's oil supply and production capabilities are reaching their peak. Global oil production is barely one million barrels a day over global consumption, implying that the rising surge in demand from developing countries, especially China lead to disequilibrium between global demand and supply [17]. Given the ever increasing demand for oil which is set to outstrip supply by 2020 and the subsequent political and economic consequences most probably manifest in an increase in conflict associated with energy and resource security [18]. The potential for conflict is rife in the developing world as 80 percent of the world's oil reserves can be found in the so-called 'global south', residing within impoverished countries with weak political and economic structures [18].

The presence of large supplies of resources in African countries serves as a catalyst for conflict and political upheaval. The fundamental importance attributed to resources by the developed industrialized nations of the 'global north' continues to fuel and perpetuate conflict and political turmoil within Africa's resource-rich nations. The strategic importance of oil and minerals to the United States of America and China in particular, has greatly altered their relationship with Africa and African countries and will continue to do so [14]. Paradoxically, the presence of strategic resources in African countries manifests in artificial power to the political centre and a subsequent lack of access to benefits accruing from resource wealth by Africa's long-suffering citizens [19]. The resultant effect is an increase in conflict over access to and control over strategic resources. Detrimentially, the presence of external actors serves to fuel and exacerbate conflict by supplying financing, military assistance and political legitimacy to otherwise neo-patrimonial governments. Conflict over resources therefore greatly influence and affect the political and economic vulnerabilities of resource-rich African countries [16].

The emerging trend of external involvement in Africa by both China and the United States for control over resources has a large impact on the political climate on the African continent. While competition for strategic resources in Africa is the fundamental characteristic surrounding the stylized 'new scramble for Africa', the political, economic and social benefits derived from this quest to secure African resources must, in turn, be weighed against the potential to fuel and exacerbate conflict on the continent [20].

Events across the continent illustrate how energy resources can create conflict, fuel insurgencies, and generate grievances. Disputes over the domestic allocation of resources can quickly become international economic or national security issues.

Nigeria has long been plagued by a complex brew of corruption, sector mismanagement, oil theft, and oil spills that has created the conditions for armed insurrection in the Niger Delta region and limited the country's potential.

The Conflict in the Niger Delta

According to Sarah [21], "The Niger Delta has the largest drainage area in the world". The Niger Delta wetland and mangrove territory is the largest in the world and most extensive in Africa. The Niger Delta accounts for 77.4% of Nigeria Wetlands or 3.2% of total land mass of the country".

The region is made up of people with distinct and distinguishable cultural background that has sustained them since ages. The people harmoniously interacted with their environment according to their level of technological sophistication and depended on environmental resources for their livelihood as their major occupation was fishing, farming and salt making [22].

Today Niger Delta has assumed strategic prominence in Nigeria Political economy due to the regions huge endowment in petroleum resources thereby raising the stake of the region indigenous people as well as the government and international organizations [23- 27].

However, the development profile of the region presents a paradox. The Niger Delta remains the poorest and highly degraded region. Ecological devastation has rendered farming and fishing atrophy previously the main occupation of the people. These contradictions of riches over decades have unsettled the region, degenerating into a violent flash point of conflicts in the agitation for environmental justice and resource control sustained by ethnic militia, tribal warlords and unemployed youths [28, 29]. This conflicts and agitation internationalized and elevated the plight of the delta minorities to a prime position in both internal and international discourse [25].

Given the internationalization of the Niger Delta question, the region received massive attention from many quarters, specifically the parties accused for the devastation of the region being the Nigerian state and the multi-national oil companies as reflected in the Nigeria state implementation of constitutional and institutional measures as deliberate efforts towards the resolution of the region's conflicts and infrastructural deficit. Typical examples include:

- 1960–1966: Niger Delta Development Board
- 1972–1994: Niger Delta River Basin Authority
- 1992–1999: Oil and Minerals Producing Area Development Commission(OMPADEC)

- 1998: Petro Trust Fund, Popoola Committee Review
- The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) set up in 2000
- 2008: Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs
- 2009: Amnesty to the militants [30]

Some other efforts as identified by Mangut and Egbefo [31] include

- Government at different level encourages oil companies to improve the infrastructure of their hosting communities.
- The establishment of the Niger Delta University and the Federal University of petroleum Resources as instrument for appreciating and collectively adopting ways

of ameliorating the problems associated with oil exploration.

- Encouragement of companies to give scholarship schemes to Niger Delta students studying specified courses in tertiary institutions.
- Utilization of the Educational Trust Fund proceeds for developing infrastructure in the educational institutions and for given internal and overseas scholarship awards to the indigenes of Niger Delta.

It is important to note that in spite of huge sums of money allocated to various States and Local governments in the Niger-Delta, incidences of poverty persisted.

Table-1: Federal allocation to Niger Delta state including excess crude account

S/N	State	Month	Year	Allocation	Population
1	Akwa Ibom	July	2016	N17, 831,804, 082.85	3,920. 208
2	Bayelsa	July	2016	N19, 197, 410, 863.92	1, 703, 358
3	Delta	July	2016	N18, 622, 320, 305.22	4, 098. 391
4	Imo	July	2016	N7, 366, 417 410.84	3, 934,899
5	Ondo	July	2016	N9, 060, 035, 806.15	3, 441, 024
6	Rivers	July	2016	N25, 833, 754, 405.07	5,185, 400

FAAC Breakdown of July, 2016 Federal Allocation to States

Table-2: States, Years and Net Allocation to States and Local Government Councils in Niger-Delta (1999-2004)

S/N	State	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1	Abia	N2.688 B	N10. 311B	N12. 807 B	N12.807 B	N15.861 B	N19,732 B
2	Akwa Ibom	N4. 216 B	N27.457 B	N37.119 B	N29.394 B	N45.819 B	N40.454 B
3	Bayelsa	N2.671	N19.087 B	N24.518 B	N21.637 B	N37,329 B	N36. 502B
4	Cross River	N3.208 B	N11.333 B	N12.722 B	N15.422 B	N19.994 B	N15.253.B
5	Delta	N4, 391 B	N31.941 B	N45. 632 B	N53.152 B	N64.399 B	N48.768 B
6	Edo	N3.253 B	N11.810 B	N14. 267 B	N15.027 B	N20.102 B	N16.551 B
7	Imo	N3.293 B	N13.097 B	N17.150 B	N19.862 B	N24.297 B	N19.818 B
8	Ondo	N3.026 B	N14.656 B	N20.151 B	N19.990 B	N24.696 B	N20.256.B
9	Rivers	N4.459.B	N22.815 B	N27.963 B	N40.308 B	N53.580.B	N40.960.B

Source: Adapted from Onah & Ifedayo [25]

Federal Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) records show that from May 1999 to July 2014, the nine states collectively received N4.19 trillion as 13 percent mineral revenue derivation. The records show that out of this amount, the six South-South states with a combined population of 21.04 million got N2.511 trillion or about 60% of the total.

Their population figure amounts to 15.13 per cent of the total Nigerian population based on the 2006 Census records. Rivers State got the largest chunk of the derivation funds with N1.03 trillion, followed by Akwa Ibom with N910 billion, Delta N792.5 billion, Bayelsa N721.9 billion, Edo N47.1 billion and Cross River N38.7 billion. The three oil-producing states outside the South-South region with a total population of 10.1 million got N280.6 billion within the period. The states are Ondo N176.7 billion, Imo N57 billion and Abia N46.9 billion. Apart from the 13 percent

derivation revenues, the oil producing states also rake in billions from the Federation Account in monthly statutory allocations.

The region also benefits from other interventionist agencies, like the Ministry of Niger Delta, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), and the Amnesty Programme and oil companies. The national coordinator of Ogoni Solidarity forum and a human rights activist, Celestine Akpobari notes:

There is nothing to justify those trillions received by the oil-producing governors. It is sad that, such money was shared by the oil-producing states. It is sadder that there is nothing to show for the N4.2trillion.”“Not even one-tenth of that amount was actually expended on developmental projects that have direct bearing on the people. It is a pity that no single

state in the Niger Delta today can boast of pipe-borne water. The governors instead invest in projects with little relevance to the people. "Tell me of what relevance is a multi-billion Naira golf course or stadium to the ordinary people? That is why ... the people are always trooping to Lagos and other cities to eke out a living." "What Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom and Rivers got "is enough to turn the fortune of many countries in Africa. But what we have are governors building stadia and other projects with little relevance to the public. That is why Niger Delta people are still wallowing in abject poverty and environmental degradation."

Despite these efforts and accompanying huge financial allocation to improve infrastructure, tackle poverty, insecurity and conflicts in the region, it is curious and mind boggling that the problems rather than abate have exacerbated, become resilient and almost intractable. It is against this back drop that, we seek to demystify and analyse the factors associated with persistent conflict in the Niger Delta using the critical international political economy approach.

Theoretical Explication

A careful review of the literature on the Nigeria Niger Delta conflict reveals a general proclivity towards explication predicated on social psychology, social strain, biological and social contract theories.

Advancing the position of biological theory, Olumati [32], noted that some individuals are more prone to anti-social tendencies than others due to their genetic make-up. Some of these persons have such physical characteristics as excessive long arms, hairiness, large jaws, extra toes/fingers, big heads, etc. Such persons by virtue of these —extra genetic features are easily irritable, pugnacious and above all restive. The Niger Delta militants and agitators are individuals or groups who possess any of these characteristics and are therefore more likely to be easily agitated once they feel deprived or shortchanged.

Social psychology is interested in how peoples' thoughts, feelings and behaviors are influenced by the actual and implied presence of others [33]. Social psychological explanation of the Niger Delta conflict argues that, conflicts and agitations in the Niger Delta region is a direct consequence of a combination of social and psychological variables. For this theory, there are three main reasons why conflicts have remained pervasive in the Niger Delta region. First are the predisposing factors such as, broken home, parental brutality, parental neglect, child abuse or some other traumatic event in the individuals' life. Another is the attracting factors (Pull Factors) such as belief that agitators can make an easy life or make a lot of easy money from ransom after kidnapping, oil theft and illegal oil refining. There are also precipitating factors

(Push Factors) such as poverty, unemployment, economic challenges or other environmental influences that can push people into militancy [14, 34]. Social psychological factors that also spark off restiveness in the Niger Delta include land disputes between families in a community, or boundary disputes between villages in the region. These situations are exploited either by war-hungry elders/chiefs in the community or inflamed by the youths themselves especially in the region where there is a high unemployment rate among the youths. Chieftaincy succession disputes in some communities are also volatile issues that have fanned the embers of youth restiveness in the region as they are easily recruited, armed and positioned by contestants to aid them in their inordinate desire to ascend the coveted throne.

The strain theory was first developed by Emile Durkheim in his study on suicide, but was later refined by Robert k. Merton, and then by Ronald Agnew in the 1990s. Merton argued that deviance depends on the extent to which the society provides the means to achieve cultural goals. For Merton, crime (militancy) is one of the reactions to the societal roadblocks in achieving socially accepted goals; which many join to alleviate themselves from their economic situations [35]. Agnew in his work "pressured into crime", stated that "people engage in crime because they experience strains and stressors. For example; they are in desperate need of money... crime may be a way to reduce or escape from strains". The strain theory proposes that, crime occurs as a result of the feelings generated by negative relationship with others. Agnew's strain theory suggests behaviors such as militancy and restiveness characteristic of the Niger Delta region are rather corrective actions taken to cope with socio-economic demands.

Another explanation found in the literature on the Niger Delta question is John Locke's social contract theory. The pillar of this theory is that governments are set up by the collective will of the citizens to protect their lives, liberty and property. Man's acquisitive tendencies in the state of nature are likely to make him infringe on other people's properties (whether God-given or laboriously acquired) and government's main duty is to mediate amicably between the aggressor and the oppressor not to take sides. Sequel to the above, Locke's theory is unequivocal in its insistence that once a government reneges in its duty to safeguard the interest of its citizens, the latter has the right to resist its tyrannical, biased, prejudicial or cavalier tendencies. Thus, militancy and restiveness in the Niger Delta region are reflections of the level of discontent by the most vocal part of the population to draw government's attention to its abdication of its assigned duties. Put slightly differently, conflicts in the region is a reflection of the crises of state failure and collapse currently being witnessed in Nigeria [36].

The above explanations have been criticized on the grounds that they provide monolithic analysis while the persistent conflict and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta requires a multi-dimensional and a multidisciplinary explanation. It is against the backdrop of the above shortcomings that, we adopt the critical international political economy approach.

Critical theory was developed by a group of German neo-Marxists notably Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse who were based at the institute of social research in Frankfurt. Critical theory consist largely of criticisms of various forms of social and intellectual life ranging from the economic determinism of Marxian theory from which it draws its inspiration, scientism of the discipline of sociology, the cultural impression of the individual in modern society, to the absolutism of positivistic methodology and international relations.

The main contribution of this theory is in its effort to steer Marxian theory in subjective direction at both individual and cultural levels. At the cultural level, the critical theorists argue that the economic determinist have over emphasized the importance of economic structures at the expense of other aspects of social reality such as the culture. In particular, the critical theorists concerned themselves with what Habermas [37] described as “legitimations”, which are simply defined as systems of ideas developed by the political system or any other system to legitimate its continued existence. Such systems are designed to manipulate the masses into accepting the legitimacy of the prevailing political system and the status quo of the existing social arrangements in the society.

At the individual level, the critical theorists are concerned with actors and their consciousness as well as what happens to them in the modern world. Through ‘legitimations’ the consciousness of the masses is controlled to the extent that they no longer perceive domination as a problem, let alone strive to liberate themselves.

A second aspect of the critical theorist’s main contribution is in their dialectical approach, which stress the importance of social totality. A hint of this notion of social totality may be found in Connerton’s [38] statement:

“No partial aspect of social life and no isolated phenomenon may be comprehended unless it is related to the historical whole, to the social structure conceived as global entity”

This approach rejects a focus on a single aspect of social life outside of its broader context such as that promoted by the economic determinist.

This view also has methodological implications. Fundamental to the critical theorists’

method is a concern for both diachronic and synchronic approaches. Whereas the synchronic approach focuses attention on the interrelationship of the different parts of society within the social totality, the diachronic approach concern itself with ‘‘ the historical roots of today’s society’’ as well as its future direction [39]. We noted that although all begin with a dialectical disavowal of the economic determinism of the early Marxists: they often go in separate directions and in spite of their differences they all align themselves and base their dialectical structure on Marxian analysis.

International political economy is concerned with the ways in which political forces (states, institutions, individual actors, etc.) shape the systems through which economic interactions are expressed, and conversely the effect that economic interactions (including the power of collective markets and individuals acting both within and outside them) have upon political structures and outcomes. Unlike the broader field of international relations, power is understood to be both economic and political, which are interrelated in a complex manner.

Nigeria has emerged as a vital partner in US energy security policies due to the growing instability of world oil supplies [40]. American interests in Nigeria are guided by America’s long-term strategic interests of securing oil resources in Africa. To ensure the continued prosperity of Nigerian oil, the US has pledged millions of dollars in military and technical assistance to maintain a strong Nigerian state. In 2010, the US Department of Defense made provisional plans to sell \$4.5 million dollars’ worth of military equipment to Nigeria and has guaranteed another \$12.6 million dollars’ worth of equipment coming from US private arms manufacturers contracted by the state. This is followed by a commitment for military training of Nigerian army officers in combat operations and administrative functions [27]. The intended purpose of providing military equipment and training is directly linked to the strategic rationale of US national interests, ultimately ensuring that the Nigerian state is able to protect US companies, Exxon Mobile and Chevron Texaco, and their related oil operations in the Niger Delta.

The derivative effects of the resource economy in Nigeria have fuelled the latent characteristics of resource-based conflict within the state. Fundamentally, the conflict arises from the marginalization and successive exclusion of the people in the Niger Delta from reaping the economic benefits of their oil-rich region [41]. The region has been continually marginalized and subjugated, with little or no economic, social and political development. In short, the Niger Delta has greatly contributed to enriching the Nigerian state, whilst successfully becoming the poorest and least developed region of Nigeria [40]. Consequently, there has been an increase in popular and

violent resistance to multinational and government agencies operating within the Niger Delta. Since the 1990s, the resistance has become widespread and far-reaching throughout the Niger Delta with concerted efforts to halt production by abducting and holding multinational staff ransom, and hijacking helicopters, boats and shipping vehicles. There is also violent armed resistance by youth militias and militant groups [40]. Today the conflict continues unabated with little or no reprieve for the impoverished peoples of the Niger Delta region.

The ultimate intention of the people within the Niger Delta has simply been to access the large financial benefits from oil production, which they perceive to have been stolen from them by corrupt politicians and foreign oil corporations. The reaction from multinational oil companies and the Nigerian state has been what Michael Watts has termed 'petro violence' [42]. As such, 'petro violence' refers to the joint initiatives by Nigerian military forces and oil companies to secure oil production and the environment against social unrest within the Niger Delta [42]. Foreign oil companies and the Nigerian state are thus driven by the need to secure and maintain oil production within the Niger Delta at the ultimate cost to the impoverished people in the region. The result has been an exacerbation of the conflict between militant groups and the Nigerian government. Increasingly disturbing, however, are the allegations surrounding the deployment of US marines to conduct security surveillance and to protect oil installations and shipments. The involvement of the US military in securing strategic oil resources in Nigeria is not a far-fetched allegation and in fact, US military engagement on the African continent is because it views Africa as strategically importance.

The effects of oil exploitation on the Niger Delta and the greater tenets of political stability within the Nigerian state serve as a prime example of the role of oil in internal resource conflict. Furthermore, the Nigerian case study also exemplifies the role of international politics in facilitating, exacerbating and perpetuating conflict over resources. Consequently, Nigeria is not an isolated case on the African continent as the presence of natural resources acts as a catalyst for either conflict or repression or both.

The persistent conflicts and underdevelopment of the Niger Delta region can be located within the context of the inherent contradictions of the international capitalist political economy. Allan Schnaibers' criticism of the central focus of the global capitalist production system in the work of Schaefer succinctly captures this contradiction:

"Global capitalist system creates a tread mill of production because of its inherent need to build ever expanding profit: This tread mill necessitates creating an increasing demand

for products obtaining natural resources at minimal cost and manufacturing products as quickly, as cheaply as possible no matter the long term, social, health and environmental consequences [43]".

The principal mechanism for sustained capitalist profit maximization and exploitation are the MNCs that dominate oil production in the Niger Delta in collaboration with the state itself representing the interest of the political elite rather than the masses of the Niger Delta [44]. Thus, the exploitation of the petroleum resources continues while the people suffer deprivation, environmental deprivation, poverty and general underdevelopment leading to tensions and conflicts.

Petroleum resources discovered in the Niger Delta is therefore, the foundation and determinant of social relations that produce persistent tension, conflicts and general underdevelopment of the region. The conflicts and tensions of interest emerging from these relations to the means of production are between the political elite, the state and multinational companies pitched against the people of the region.

The political elite are of particular interest here. In the context of Nigeria and by extension the Niger Delta the political elites, refers to a class of elected representatives, civil servants, political appointees and so on [45]. It is important not to think of the political elite only in terms of office holding politicians. Robert Putnam has used the word political elite to mean the political class, which he defined as those with more power than others (Chiefs, traditional rulers, community heads, religious, women and youth organizations leaders). Power, in the sense of ability to influence directly or indirectly politics and state activities [46]. The nature and character of the political elite in Nigeria is summarized by Adio thus:

"Those that were not misguided and corrupt, were just plain inefficient, either in military or civilian garbs, they were of the same hues, more interested in power and wealth than in the emancipation of their people and sustained by neo-colonial and imperialist interest, they cultivated personality cults, repressed their people, pursued bogus policies and grandiose projects and turned the state into personal possession [47]".

With political elites of this nature in the Niger Delta, it is not surprising that persistent conflicts and underdevelopment have remained a re-occurring decimal in the unfolding dynamics of the region. Funds allocated by government, oil companies and other non-state actors for infrastructural development, poverty alleviation and youth empowerment in the region are either

mismanaged or pocketed by the corrupt political elites in the Niger Delta. It is curious to note that the political elite are not interested in the end to the conflicts in order to guarantee continuous flow of funds into their private pocket while the people live in abject poverty.

While partly blaming the Nigeria state and the multinational oil companies for neglect, the political elite in the Niger Delta have taken advantage of the situation to fraudulently enrich itself by collaborating with government and the oil companies. The political elite have encouraged, supported and assisted the activities of self-proclaimed freedom fighters like Asari Dokubo, Tompolo, Ateke Tom etc. This is because they benefit from the crisis that continuously makes them relevant while the Niger Delta remained embroiled in conflict, insecurity and underdevelopment. This explains the apt description of the Niger Delta political elites and self-acclaimed freedom fighters as fortune hunters.

Future Strategic Proposal and Recommendations

The consideration of the future sustainable use of the oil revenues from the Niger-Delta to ensure peace and prosperity in the region, it is pertinent to examine some recent models in other countries. A recent innovative approach to the sustainable use of oil revenues was put in place in Chad, where the oil revenue from the country's Doba oil field will be used effectively for important investments in health, education, environment, infrastructure and rural development to reduce poverty.

The Chadian model was developed under a new law which provides for 10 percent of the special oil revenue account to be placed annually in a savings account for future generations (future generations fund); 80 percent to be spent in priority sectors such as education, health, rural development, water resources and the environment; 5% for the oil-producing regions for special development projects; and the remainder 5% for general government operating expenditures.

An Oversight Committee was established to monitor all the revenue flows and approve the spending from a special oil revenue account. The Committee has members from the executive branch of the government, the legislative branch, the judiciary, human rights groups, women groups and faith based organizations. Half of the members of the Committee have no ties to the Chadian government. Similarly, in Kuwait, the UAE and Norway, revenues from oil and gas has been used for the welfare of the present and future generations [5], Welfare being not only pure economic benefit, but also education, health, safety, environmental restoration and protection, and the quality of life in general.

Thus, if the development intervention program of the state and multinational companies must work, it has to go beyond just huge revenue allocation or the symptomatic action of pacifying militants and take a holistic approach using the examples of countries like Norway, United Arab Emirate and Kuwait and the following recommendations may be useful.

- Commensurate beneficence of the oil producing areas should be accelerated. Thus as revenue flows are increased to the region it should be accompanied with supervised sustainable programme, with supervision provided by non-profit organizations which allows different communities to handle their increased revenues with a degree of autonomy that is dependent on the amount of capacity within the community for the handling of such revenue flows, until they can completely do so autonomously and in a sustainable way.
- Environmental concerns in the region should go beyond rhetoric. Action should be taken on zero tolerance for gas flaring, and such other factors which degrade the environment of the Niger-Delta during exploitation.
- The political matrix upon which the regional economy can develop is very important, therefore, it is necessary to nurture a transparent democratic process which respects the sovereign will of the people as expressed through their votes and consultative channels that allows unrestricted media attention, as well as the development of a political leadership that is accountable
- Measurable indicators for value creation in the region should be established with the roles of all stakeholders specified and consequences for abdication of roles also spelt out. This should be made clear especially in the creation of values in investments on employment using oil revenues, transfer of skills and technology and social infrastructure for recreation, health and education. The achievement of these indicators should be monitored and coordinated by a consultative forum which involves communities in the region and other stakeholders.
- A periodic review of the Niger Delta development commission (NDDC) and amnesty programme with the beneficiary stakeholders involved in the design, implementation and evaluation from the pre, peri and post conflict a period.

CONCLUSION

The Niger Delta oil producing communities should look beyond the question of continuous agitation for increasing revenue allocation, they must as matter urgency demand accountability from its leaders who are largely engaged in financial improprieties and corruption. In that way the dividend of state and multinational companies' interventionist program will be felt by the people and hence reduction in the feeling

of deprivation that ultimately lead to conflict and insecurity.

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