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Mission Statement

The world system is increasingly passing through very disturbing phases. Almost every sphere of life is being subjected to unprecedented crises. Both the human and the physical environments have come to crossroads of crises. There are, for instance, unprecedented episodes of global warming; depreciating conditions of soil fertility caused by, mostly, unregulated human activities; overflowing of banks of oceans and rivers on one hand, and alarming rain failures in different parts of the world resulting in protracted droughts and famine; on the other hand unprecedented frictions in human relationships across the globe resulting in unprecedented inter-personal, inter-group, inter-regional and inter-continental confrontations, among others.

The Nigerian society is caught up at a similar crossroad. This presupposes that what has become, or is becoming, of the Nigerian society is directly a reflection of the predicament of the international community. Indeed, the entire Nigerian system is increasingly becoming alarmingly chaotic, resulting in unprecedented episodes of conflicts and violent behaviours. For instance, relationship within, and between, families is increasingly becoming very confrontational; the echoes of intra and inter-communal or group conflicts and violence are assuming new disturbing dimensions; the educational system is fast proving highly incapable of producing variables for positive national growth and development; the two dominant religions, Christianity and Islam, are disturbingly proving to be avenues for the promotion of intra and inter-religious rivalries other than peace and unity which are supposedly their main tenets; the

political system is fast becoming terrains of unprecedented violence, conflict, misrule on one hand, as the security agencies are increasingly proving to be suspiciously incapable of performing their constitutional roles on the other hand, among many other vices.

Needless to assert at this juncture that conflict, violence and confrontation have become the dominant features of the Nigerian society. This development results from a network of causes. Apparently, therefore, for us to be able to adequately comprehend the adjoining variables responsible for this down trend in our society, much mental, physical and financial energies have to be exerted. This, of course, is the hallmark of **Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Studies, A Publication of Centre for Peace Studies and Conflict Management (CPSCM)**, Taraba State University, Jalingo.

The Centre appreciates our renown academics who have identified with this mission, particularly, the maiden edition of its Journal through their very valuable articles. Our most reputable senior colleagues who have graciously accepted to be part of this mission as editorial consultants cannot be appreciated enough. The Centre has, indeed, put its hands on the plough and pledges to stick to the philosophy of "Forward Ever, Backward Never". We remain resolute.

Akombo Elijah Ityavkase, PhD

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Contents

1. The Effects of the Plebiscites on the Peoples of Mambilla Plateau, Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State, 1959-2002 1-19
2. Origins and Migrations of the Yandang and the Mumuye in the 19th Century 20-42
3. Impacts of Farmer-Herders Conflict in Benue State, Nigeria: Focus on 2016 Agatu Episode and the imperatives of a new Management approach 43-62
4. Israel/Palestine Conflict: The Futility of Israel Concept of Conflict Management and Peace Resolution 63-78
5. The Major Dynamics of Communal Conflicts in Otuasega and their impact since 1960 79-92
6. The Conflicts between Fulani Pastoralists and Cultivators in Taraba State, Nigeria: The Case of the Mambilla Plateau 93-117
7. The Growth of the Jukun-Kona Political and Economic System, 1900–2017 118-132
8. Militancy and Conflicts in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: A Historical Account of the Contributions of the Multi-National Oil Corporations, 133-149
9. The Challenges of Teaching and Learning History in Some Selected Secondary Schools of Taraba State, 1991–2011 150-179

10. Joking Relationship (Samba/Nyaa Sang/ Nu Mel) Among the Mumuye and their Neighbours: A Panacea for Conflict Diffusion in Nigeria 180-196
11. Phases of Development of the Kuteb Economy from 1960-2018 197-211
12. Impact of Terrorism on Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria 212-228
13. An Assessment of The Impact of Library and Information Services in National Development in Nigeria 229-238
14. A Critical Examination of the Role of Ethnic Associations in the Emergence of the Three Major Political Parties in Nigerian's First Republic, 1960-1966, 239-259
15. A Pre-Colonial Economic History of Ekitiland 260-282
16. Politics of Violence in Nigeria: A study of Taraba State, 1991 - 2019 283-297
17. A Historical Analysis of the Causes and Effects of Herders-Farmers Conflicts in Taraba State 298-312
18. Impact Assessment of the United States War on Terror in Afghanistan 313-330

Militancy and Conflicts in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: A Historical Account of the Contributions of the Multi-National Oil Corporations

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Abstract

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is endowed with abundant natural oil and gas resources and therefore has enormous potentials for the economic development of the country. Even before Nigeria gained political independence, oil and gas exploration activities had started in the region as early as 1955. The foreign exchange earnings that have accrued to the nation from oil exploration in the region have been largely responsible for the economic development, albeit limited, that Nigeria has witnessed. When oil drilling activities started in the region, the host communities had no premonition of the hazards they will be exposed to in the subsequent years. But sooner or later the operational activities of the Multinational Oil Corporations resulted in massive environmental degradation in the region. Several years of unchecked oil spillage have resulted in extensive degradation in the communities. The pollution has not only affected the soil surface, but also underground waterways. The sea, rivulets and fresh water have all been polluted and as a result, fishing and farming, the major occupations of the people in the region, have been negatively affected resulting in low yields. The inadequate or absent remediation process has not only affected the social relationship between the host communities with government, but also with the Multinational Oil Corporations. The situation further deteriorated following the inability of the Multinational Oil Corporations to provide jobs for the teeming unemployed youths in the region. As a consequence, the region has witnessed an upsurge in militancy, violence, pipeline vandalism, youth restiveness and criminality. This paper examines critically, the negative consequences of the Multinational Oil Corporations' explorations' and exploitation activities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, using a historic-structural and multidisciplinary approaches. The study concludes that violence and militancy in the Niger Delta region are traceable to the poor management of the negative consequences of oil exploration activities in the region.

Keywords: violence, militancy, exploration, exploitation, Multi-nationals

Introduction

The Niger Delta region is located in the Southern part of Nigeria on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean. The region comprises of six states from the South-South geo-political zone, namely, Cross River, Akwa-Ibom, Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa and Edo, including Imo, Abia and Ondo States. The Niger Delta Region is the host of all the oil producing companies in Nigeria. However, the region has been known as a major producer of agricultural produce right from inception, even before the discovery of oil in 1956. Niger Delta was one of the major producers of palm oil, timber and rubber in Nigeria. It was mainly because of these agricultural produce and other important raw materials that the British firmly took control of the region which they named the Niger Coast protectorate (Mitee, 2012).

The Niger Delta people had very high economic prospects, which buoyed by the discovery of oil. The discovery of oil made the region to become the hub of oil business over the whole of West Africa. The Niger Delta people should therefore not be seen as indolent people mainly because of the several conflicts and violence in the area. Before the advent of crude oil business in the region, agricultural produce were widely and intensively propagated and there were no conflicts, violence or unnecessary agitation among the people (Coker Benku and Ekundayo, 1995).

Conflicts most times are products of artificial and ill-conceived problems. In the case of the Niger Delta Region, the recklessness of the Multinational Oil Companies' exploration and exploitation activities, lack of adequate compensation and several other factors have turned the oil rich region into a conflict and violent area. Excessive gas flaring by Multinational Oil Companies has caused global warming challenges which have affected agricultural yield and caused untold hardship to the people (www.nairaland.com, 2016).

Consequent upon the foregoing, the Niger Delta Region that was

once known as a peace loving region suddenly became a place of conflict and violence. The incident of conflicts and violence can be traceable right from the inception of Ken Saro Wiwa's struggle for the Niger Delta people. Ken Saro Wiwa was a renounced play writer and also environmentalist.

In 1956 when Shell British Petroleum Company, which was transformed from Royal Niger Company, discovered oil in a town called Oboibiri in the present day Bayelsa state, it held a lot of promises for the development of the region and, indeed, Nigeria as a whole. In 1958, the same Company discovered oil in Ogoni land in a large and commercial quantity (Etim, 2003). Consequently, Shell British Petroleum and the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Nigerian National petroleum Corporation (NNPC) started entered into partnership for the exploitation of oil in the area with strong promise to develop the region. On the long, however, the activities of the Company left much to be desired in terms of improving the people's standard of living.

Generally, the exploration of oil in the Niger Delta Region has caused a lot of environmental degradation and hazard which has virtually destroyed the ecology of the region. The region that was once known for massive agricultural produce during the colonial period suddenly became limited to a few produce as a result of the crude oil exploration activities in the region (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2017). The exploration of crude oil in the region has provided more than 90 percent of the revenue of the Federal government of Nigeria. Despite the enormous contribution from the region to the entire economy of Nigeria, the region has remained grossly neglected and undeveloped resulting in conflicts and violence and the emergence of several militant groups. No planned remediation programme has been carried out in the region to mitigate oil exploration activities, despite even promptings from the United Nations (*Punch Newspapers* 2012).

The Genesis of Conflicts, Violence and Militancy in the Niger Delta Region

The genesis of conflicts, violence and the emergence of militia groups in the Niger Delta Region was born out of the frustration of the people and their desire to call the attention of the Oil Companies and the Federal Government of Nigeria to the massive environmental pollution resulting from the activities of the Oil Companies in the region (Kimiebi, 2010). The conflicts began in 1992 in Ogoni land and it escalated to other groups in the Niger Delta region, supporting that compensation should be paid to the people (Bagaji, Achegbulu, Maji, Yakubu, 2011).

In 1979, the Federal Government of Nigeria got the right of ownership of all oil wells and the right to all Nigerian land which eventually gave the Federal Government of Nigeria the opportunity to properly engage the Oil Companies. In all these there was no active investment of the natives in the oil business, neither was compensation paid to the people for several oil spillages that damaged their arable agriculture and fishing activities. The empty promises from the Federal Government of Nigeria were however the main factor that gave room for the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People in 1992. Among other grievances, the people of the region were not satisfied with the environmental and economic impact of oil exploration by the Oil Companies. The elites in the region such as late Ken Saro-Wiwa became the main agitators campaigning for the survival of the people and the protection of their environmental rights (<https://m.dw.com...nigeria..ken-saro>, 2015).

In 1990, Ken-Wiwa launched a non violent movement for Social and ecological justice. In respect to this, there were attacks to the Oil Companies, and in 1993, some Companies in the area pulled out. Because of the conflicts between the people and the Oil Companies and the Federal government, the production of oil slowed down causing reduction in the exchange flow as well as the reduction in

foreign exchange accruing to the country. Several agitations by the Niger Delta people led to the death of several people in the region through assassinations, death by hanging through the court and summary trails. Consequently, the cohesion in the struggle to clean up the Niger Delta region was lost due to several actions of the Federal Government and oil producing companies as well as corrupt practices by highly placed people from the region (Oral Interview with Johnson, 2018). This development resulted in the emergence of many militant groups in the region for the protecting and promoting the interests of the Niger Delta communities.

Emergence of Militant Groups in the Niger Delta Region

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria with great economic potentials has ironically become a conflict and violence zone. The vast abundance of natural resources being controlled by the multinationals, contrasts with the abject poverty of the people of the Niger Delta. The region where most of the country's wealth is been generated has remained in abject poverty. The region is characterised by lack of infrastructure, access roads, basic medical facilities, power supply and high fuel cost. The foregoing factors are some of the factors responsible for the conflicts and violence in the Niger Delta region. The conflicts and violence in the area are triggered by a number of factors such as revenue allocation and the formulae being used in revenue sharing and youth restiveness in the region. Some people have supported that allocation to oil producing Niger Delta areas should be increased to take care of the problems associated with crude oil production. The derivation percentage to the region should be increased to take care of unforeseen circumstances and environmental degradation associated with oil exploration activities (Nasiru, 2012). Other causes of conflicts and violence in the Niger Delta are the refusal of the Multinational Oil Companies, to pay adequate compensation to the Niger Delta people and also put in place latest oil production technologies to limit oil spillage in the

region. Unemployment among the youth is another major factor fuelling the conflicts (Okah, 2010).

.....In recent times, because of lack of compensation by the Oil Companies on one hand and government's silence on the other hand, a lot of militant groups have emerged in the Niger Delta. Their objectives include, struggle for survival of their people, payment of compensation, development, social justice and promotion of youth employment, among others. Prominent among the militant groups in the Niger Delta are, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) and the Niger Delta Liberation Front among others, are the groups vandalising oil pipe lines and kidnapping people in the Niger Delta area (Nathaniel, 2018).

Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta group began in January 2006 with the kidnapping of four foreign oil workers as well as claiming responsibility for attacking oil pipe lines in the Niger Delta. It has also disrupted the global oil supply as a result of attacks on pipe lines and this group is largely made up of Igaw youths (Hanso, 2007)

Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) is a prominent militant group that was launched by late civil rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1990. The group was against the Royal Dutch Shell and the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the neglect of the Niger Delta. The agitation of the group was mainly for upholding the right and the benefits of the people. They were several protests especially on environmental degradation and economic neglect. The agitations eventually led to the death by hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and nine others. Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) was founded in 2004 by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari with the interest of gaining control over their oil and it is also one of the largest militant groups in the region. This militant group had always demanded for

large shares of oil wealth from the government, and failure on the part of government to meet their needs had resulted to oil bunkering and pipeline vandalisation (Nyiayaana, 2015, 132-138).

The Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) is another militant group in the region led by Ateke Tom since 2003. The group is made up of Ijaw youths around Port Harcourt, and their main arm is to take control of the oil in the region, because of the marginalisation by the government and the multinationals operating in the region (Wikipedia.org).

Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) this is one of the most recent and destructive groups in the Niger Delta region. This group is mostly composed of young adults. The activities of the Niger Delta Avengers from 2016 become a major concern to the polity because of the serious security implications of its activities. In 2016, the group attacked oil facilities causing the shutting down of oil production and the slowing down of Nigeria's economy. This singular incident grossly slowed down the Nigerian economy and was one of the major factors responsible for the Nigerian economy going into recession in 2016. This led to the shutting down of other oil terminals causing a short fall in oil production. The group's spokes man General Murdoch Agbinibo most times issued statements of threats against the Multinationals. The group struck oil installations in the Niger Delta leading to massive revenue shortage by the federal government Nigeria. (Sharea Reporters, 2018)

The Niger Delta Liberation Front was established in 2005 by John Togo whose main aim was to liberate the Niger Delta region by gaining its independence. The leader of this group was killed in July 2011. The militant group is closely associated or linked with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta because their ideologies appear the same and their operations around Port Harcourt and its environs.

The militant groups have made several attempts to control the

exploration of oil in their land, even through bunkering and several other criminal methods. The conflicts between successive governments and the people of the Niger Delta, particularly the militant groups have remained, causing violence and unrest for the people and massive economic losses to the nation. Suffice it to say that these groups are concerned about the economic development of the people, protection of the ecosystem, mitigation of the adverse health consequences of oil exploration, the inability of Federal Government and the Oil Companies to respond positively to the yearnings and aspirations of the Niger Delta communities (Odeigah, 2015, 80-85)..

Generally, the inability of the Multinational Oil Corporations to provide jobs for the teeming unemployed youths in the Niger Delta region has become worrisome, and is one of the reasons for the conflicts in the region. As a consequence, the region has witnessed an upsurge in militancy, violence, pipeline vandalism, youth restiveness and increased criminality in the nation. Criminality in the region has reduced the activities of the Oil Companies, especially in situations where oil wells are shut down for security reasons. A lot of major foreign investors have also had to go elsewhere for the fear of being involved in unprofitable ventures.

The Effects of Exploratory Activities of Multinational Oil Companies in the Niger Delta Region

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been embroiled in violence and conflicts between the government, Multinational Oil Companies and the Niger Delta people. These conflicts and violence have affected a lot of families and their livelihood. In recent years, the Itsekiri and Ijaw militias in Delta and Ondo states fought and killed several people and destroyed property worth several million of naira respectively. Similarly, in 1997, the Warri youths had a clash with the Ijaw youths over the establishment of a new Local Government headquarters. This clash resulted in six Shell Petroleum fuel stations

taken over by the youths. Furthermore, communal clashes or ethnic squabbles have been known to result in seizure of oil pipe lines by the youths leading to stoppage of oil production. Other negative consequences include environmental hazards caused by oil production activities in the area (Oral interview with Eweseudo Sunday, 2018). The pollution of the land has also resulted in low yields of the agricultural produce. The following are some of the consequences and problems associated with the extraction of crude oil in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Environmental pollution: The extraction of crude oil in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has polluted the air, the land and the water thereby imposing numerous dangers to aquatic life and the people. Most areas in the Niger Delta region lack access to good water as a result of pollution of the environment (Ugboma, 2015). The global memorandum of understanding signed by Chevron Nigeria Limited, a major Oil Company in Nigeria, in 2005 was denounced by most of the host communities because of the Company's inability to meet the needs or the demands of the people. No serious attention has been paid to the issues of protection of the environment by either the Oil Companies or the Federal Government of Nigeria (Owabukeruyeleye, 2000).

Lack of adequate compensation from the companies: Another problem with crude oil extraction in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is the lack of adequate compensation by the Multinational Oil Companies and the Federal government of Nigeria to host communities. Among the compelling factors for the justification of payment of compensation include the event of oil spillage or other environmental hazards as a result of oil exploration activities. This has inadvertently encouraged youth restiveness, violence, oil theft, bunkering and other criminal activities prevalent in the Niger Delta region. Some of these criminal activities by the young people in the communities have led to pipe line explosion, massive fire out

break and several deaths of the people of the Niger Delta Region (Oluwaniyi, 2010).

Hazards of gas flaring: Gas flaring in the Niger Delta region has several consequences on the ecosystem and the inhabitants of the communities. Some of the consequences result from fact that this technology of gas flaring is out dated, wasteful to the natural gas reserves and dangerous to the human lives. Unfortunately, the Federal Government of Nigeria has not been very proactive in addressing this urgent problem by continually changing the date for the stoppage of gas flaring in the region (Soeze, 2007).

Oil Spillage: Since the inception of oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, oil spillage has been common as a result of wrong operations or the old technology used by the companies. Oil spillage in the region has destroyed and polluted a lot of farm lands, roads, water and crops. The region has also experienced a number of manmade disasters because of oil pipe line leakages. Most of the leakages come from equipment failure, vandalism of pipe lines either by criminal elements or from the disgruntled youths in the region. It should be noted that, during oil spillage, most times the oil floats on the water surface invariably killing the fish, impoverishes the soil and also destroys the components of the ecosystem, leading to the degradation of the mangrove forests thereby negatively affecting the livelihood of the people (<https://www.wilderness.org>).

It is necessary to recall that in 1971, massive oil spillage occurred in Ebubu-Ochani around Ogoni community of Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State, leading to the death of several indigenous people. This and a combination of several factors led to the formation of militant groups in Ogoni land. It is common practice that whenever environment and economic conditions of the people deteriorate to unbearable level, the communities naturally become unhappy.

The militant groups in the Niger Delta region are therefore basically formed to checkmate the excesses of the Oil Companies. The devastation is really awful. Unfortunately, successive governments have refused to be sensitive to the plight of the Niger delta people. It has been indicated that oil-spill has adversely affected the nutrient level and fertility status of Eleme soil (Nwosu, 2009). One of the major negative consequences of oil exploration is oil spillage which damages the ecosystem. It is pertinent to note that the vegetation of the Niger Delta Region consists of extensive mangrove forests, swamps and rain forest. The recurrent spillages of oil in the region have been a major issue that has become worrisome to the people. Estimates of 5 to 10 percent of the mangrove forest have been wiped out leaving the land unproductive and with some of the rainforests fast disappearing.

Furthermore, the oil spills do spread out to farm lands and water ways destroying aquatic life and other crops, including the mangrove forests which have really been a veritable source of timber to the people of the Niger Delta region. The oil spills into water ways have specifically negatively affected the fishing industry. The Niger Delta which was formerly well known for fishing as its main occupation has lost this important economic status due to poor environment management by the oil companies. Similarly, The rivers and the waterways that provide drinking water and water for various other domestic uses have become contaminated by the oil spillage (Odimegw, 2018).

Health hazards: There are many health hazards associated with the exploration of crude oil. Oil exploration has exposed many people to sicknesses such as respiratory tract infections, allergic skin diseases and even chromosomal disorders. Other health hazards include deaths on injuries caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes (Nwosu, 2009). Some of these earthquake result from the damaging effects on the ecosystem as a result of activities of heavy duties

equipment. Drug or substance by the youths, in particular, resulting from loss of sources of livelihood and frustration has resulted in accidents claiming lives as well as causing injuries and with many youth having mental disorders. Their oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta Region are not without their complications on the health of the local inhabitants. Among the dominant health hazards include recurrent chest and skin infection. (Oral interview with Ezenwo Matthew, 2018). Unfortunately, little is done in terms of improving health facilities in the area or even subsidizing medical services.

Recommendations

The Niger Delta that was once known for peace has recently become a region of violence, because of marginalisation, subjugation, oppression and consequent poverty caused by the Multinational companies in the area. One of the recommendations to foster peace in the region is for the Multinational companies to pay compensation to their host communities to help mitigate the negative consequences of oil exploration activities. The federal government of Nigeria and the Multinationals Oil Companies in the region should put in place infrastructure such as good roads, electricity supply, hospitals, creation of jobs and skill acquisition especially by the teeming unemployed youths. However, the Federal government should be committed to its amnesty programme and its rehabilitation of the ex-militants. The federal government should also reduce the impunity of the Multinational Oil Companies in the region.

It is pertinent to note that in 2012 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ordered the Federal government of Nigeria to hold the Multinational Oil Companies accountable for environmental degradation of the region, and that fines should be imposed on Oil Companies for the environmental pollution. The Multinational Oil Companies it further added should be made to clean up the land because of the oil spillage which has destroyed the

eco-system and aquatic lives in the region (Opejobi Seun, 2016).

Conclusion

The oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria has enormous economic potentials but it has become a region of conflicts and violence as a result of the poor management of the consequences of oil exploration by the Multinational Oil Companies operating in the area. The Oil Companies, as agents of neo- colonialism, have destroyed the ecosystem of the region causing low agricultural yield and lack of adequate compensation to the people of the Niger Delta.

The devastating effects of oil production has also resulted in massive environmental degradation, increased agitation, violence, conflicts, youth restiveness, criminality, insecurity and poverty. Unfortunately, government presence has been less inclined towards dialogue and less sincere in its approach, responding to the agitation of the Niger Delta communities for the purpose of mitigating the growing incidence of militancy in the area. Instead, the Niger Delta people are being intentionally schemed out of important decisions regarding the survival of the Region.

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