

**RESOURCES CONFLICTS AND GOVERNANCE: THE NIGERIAN
DAUNTING CHALLENGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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Abstract

Natural resources conflict, a growing phenomenon, affecting several states in the world, has become a daunting challenge in Nigeria. These conflicts, arising from the struggle and disputes on gold, diamond, timber, crude oil, coal, uranium and lead deposits among others have greatly impeded the state, its people, economy and factors of sustainable development. Nigeria, a mono-economy nation, severely hit by oil conflict politics in its domain is greatly disturbed. This problematic hiccup not only affecting governance with damages, destructions and dislocations of the economy but had created unstable society. A lopsided shortfall depleting output and gains to affecting the means of livelihood, social civility, wages and income and the gross domestic product (GDP). This study mindful of this disequilibrium utilises secondary data and adopts descriptive, analytical concepts and in-depth analysis approach. The study is situated on Conflict and Game Theories. The study revealed that some of the oil producing states uses manipulative tendencies to taunt the government. The study also observed that the government in several respects had not treated the people well due to swapping of gain between the producing states and non-producing states. The study noted that there were general neglect, deprivation, frustration and abandonment meted out to the oil producing states, thereby informing the rise and

incessant conflict and, face- off between the host communities, militants and government officials. The study suggests that government should adopt factors and instruments for sustainable development with capacities; capital infrastructure and human capital development to improving the living conditions.

KEYWORDS: *Natural Resources, Conflict, Governance, Human capital Development, Mono-economy*

INTRODUCTION

Globally, natural resources conflict is as old as mankind. Thus, scholars like Ayokhai (2013), argued that it is a reoccurring denominator of national life in many states of the world. To Eliasson (2015), land and natural resources disputes are major drivers of conflict and violence in the world. That is why a state like Liberia was meshed into civil war for upward of thirteen (13) years on the struggle for who control the sales of diamond, gold and timber among others (Husband, 1998). The Sierra Leone conflict/war, not different either, expanding from 1992 to 2003, between Foday Sanku led ethnic rebel of Revolutionary United Front (RUF) against the government at the centre was not only eager to acquire power but a platform for the ethnic Timine who were marginalized to seek for the control of the natural resources domiciled in their land. The profit from the sale of diamond and gold at Koidu, Tongo field and Kailaugh were seen as a great deal to testing power since independence in 1962 (Got, 1998).

In the same continuum, the control of natural resources had also helped to fan conflicts in many African states like Angola, Congo DR, Sudan and even the war of occupation between the Boers and Britain in South Africa over diamond at Transverse, Cape and Free State in the 18th and 19th century (Hatch et al, 1909), both being foreigners fighting for wealth in foreign land (Langhis, 1910).

Conflict of natural resources cut across regions and states of the world as seen in the cases of England and Ireland, Pakistan and India, Kashmir and Pakistan and many others who were not left out in their separate zone as one conflict of resources had in one time or the other occurred.

However, Nigeria blessed with several natural resources like crude oil, iron ore, lead, aluminium, bauxite, gold and many others is faced with the daunting challenges of not only on how to manage her numerous resources but on initiating viable political policies that could help her actualize the expected goal as a nation. The adoption of quasi-federalism, being a hocus-pocus paradigm in governing the people was a major problematic issue that had ever hunted the state as several component units continually seek for the control of the natural resources in their domain with the centre unwilling to let go. Simply because these resources profits are greatly mismanaged and or used mostly in developing a non-viable or resources draught regions.

Beside this scheming, manipulation and self-imposed problems, a greater policy somersault of the Nigerian State was when she abandoned the processing of all other resources to focus only on crude oil exploration and exportation due to the cheap and quick revenue generation accruing from it, thereby, not only ushering the state into a mono-economy state but also rendering the citizenry weak and lazy to seeing other means of livelihood as alternative. The craze for oil money in the midst of imbalanced system becomes the order of the day as gains and losses had compelled some to question the authority of a person from non-oil producing regions controlling power and resources in another's region (oil producing state). In the same vein, some of the elites of the oil producing region – the Niger Delta who had gained a lot from the power that be at the centre are equally being used as spoilers of the system as they supported all the devious operations in the Delta region.

It is only of recent, like if the scale of blindness covering the eyes of the people had fallen off, that questions of resources, resources control, conflict of resources control and the cry for restructuring had once ensued and taken different dimension.

In that same manner, the Nigerian State were forced to witness several conflict and crises in succession with serious confrontations coming from the militant groups of Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) on the awful treatment of the federal government to them, considering the quantity of oil and money being explored and made in their region compared to the enormity of destruction in the same domain.

Premised on this, the paper tends to x-ray the imports of the arising problematic hiccups, whether it is purely a policy deficiency, defeat, a premeditated act, betrayal of government by its agents in the Niger Delta, neglect and or wilful deprivation against the sufferings of the people who having been pushed to the wall, are merely reacting. On the same premise, the study intend to look at other fundamental issues or factors that might have allowed for all these disequilibrium now affecting the general society existence.

NIGER- DELTA AND THE HISTORY OF OIL

The area called the Niger Delta, which was formerly known as the Oil Rivers or the British Oil Rivers protectorate, with about 70,000km² and makes up 7.5% of Nigeria's land mass is today made up of Abia state, Akwa-Ibom State, Cross River State, Edo state, Imo State, Delta State, Rivers State, Ondo State and Bayelsa State due to government new legislation in 2000 (Wilmolt, 2012). The area also covers over 40 ethnic groups including the Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Igbo, Isoko, Urhobo, Ilaje, Yoruba and the Kalabari amongst others.

In Nigeria, with the discovery of oil at Oloibiri in the oil Rivers in the late 1950s and as development and exploration of crude expands, the oil net of Nigeria that happens to be the biggest producer of petroleum in Black Africa, also increased with over 2 million barrels (320,000m³) of crude in a day. So also the environmental problems and human devastations were on the increase. Although, the actual operations, which includes the exploration of the crude and other minerals were undertaken by multinational corporation (like Royal Dutch Shell and Shell BP, Agip, Chevron, Conoco, Slumberg, Total and Texaco among others) who in turn helped in providing the Nigerian state with necessary technology and financial resources, but the necessary side effect of this overture has a long term problematic consequence even though it was ignored probably wilfully or by sheer negligence as it was not long as expected before the causal effects.

Meanwhile, beginning from the period of oil exploration in Nigeria, there had been international controversies, which seems to centre on who is actually in control, and what seems also to be the fate of the host communities, as such was not streamlined included or taking into cognizance nor was it recognized at all. With the internationalization of oil business and the concomitant drive for oil wealth by both friends and foes of Nigeria with the connivance of the elites, and coupled with the raised issues above, the effects of all these actions were central to the possible devastation, pollution ecocide, kleptocracy, gas flaring, environmental degradation and human rights abuses to which some of the multinational corporation like Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron, and Agip, amongst others were implicated in several quarters as being anti-human in operation and co-habitation. However, one naughty event after the other, that was not clear to many then was, who actually was in control of the Nigeria oil wells in the Niger-Delta? What was the position of the military governments then whom the multinational corporations used diplomatic recognition of regime to keep in power with a huge oil exchange as international praise-singers in the eye of the world? Do the people of Nigeria-Niger Delta have a say to the oil gushing out of their domain? How enlightened were they to fight the course of the itemized issues in controversy? Does this suggest that the Niger Delta problem was not contemporary, but from the origin of discovery to exploration, and now to the advance exploration era?

On this lingered questions, the notion that this study points at is that the whole problem of gas flaring, one aspect of the numerous problems of the Niger Delta region, as affecting the communities and people, which is not probably a disturbance to the government that is driven only by the quantum of revenue generated through oil exploration and burning of gas into the air, might be one of the long projected pointer to the premeditated years of neglect of the people of the region who wallow in their own pain and misery.

Thus, partly agreeing that despite the country's huge economic gains from oil, that one naivety that had confronted the whole situation was the issue of "do not mind the devastating effect of oil exploration, what should be prime and of interest is the wealth and turnover". A crude idea of human existence in a capitalist society where life and destruction means nothing compared to value and gains of profit. Meaning that the issue of gas flaring is not what government can waste resources in tackling headlong. But instead, what might have played out the rhythm are the political intrigues that both the government and their international partners - the multinational corporations, seems to import, impose and display concerning the health hazard to which its general implication goes with the detriment of the communities thereby, hampering sustainable development in the region. In support of this notion according to Wilmot (2012:2-3) the superfluous quantity of oil, together with gas extraction comprising of over 97% of Nigeria's foreign exchange revenue was what the parties were concerned about. This is because much of the natural gas extracted in oil wells in the Delta is immediately burned or flared, thereby causing over 70 million m³ of crude oil per day. The equivalent being 41% of the total African gas consumption, and which also formed the largest single source of greenhouse gas emission on the planet earth. An internationalized consequence, which implies that climate change devastation, could be imminent in the Delta region and the sub-Saharan Africa in general.

In the word of Climate of Justice Programme (2005), and the Urhobo Historical Society (2003), the biggest gas flaring company in Nigeria is the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria LTD. A jointly owned company of Nigeria government and the British government. The activities of these two countries and the oil company that they supervise do not treat or attend to the problems of this region as though they exist on the same earth surface. While the British side parades a pretentious and conservative attitude toward the regions numerous problems while appropriating the mineral resources, the Nigeria government on the other hand sees the region and their protests and campaigns as baseless, economic sabotage and treasonable crime against the Nigerian state, since the federal government by law owed all land and its resources. This act, might equally be the reason as adduced above to the politically coloured treatment given to the problem at hand, since despite the outlawing of the said gas flaring, 20 years ago. The companies had tenaciously flared associated gas, thereby not only violating the enabling regulation and legislation, but had gone further to causing local pollution, environmental disorder and invariably contribution to climate change. It is evident also that the environmental devastation associated with this kind of activities by the industry and the lack of even distribution of oil wealth have been one of the sources or factors arousing numerous environmental movements, conflicts, youth restiveness and the recent confrontation with the federal government in the region by the helpless, jobless, hopeless and confused youths of the region even to this day.

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

i). Oil, a Natural Resource

Crude oil is a natural resource found in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria in the 1950s. The Nigerian government became more interested in the oil as government after government abandoned all other means of revenue generation to focus on oil cheap money (Parker, 2009), thereby leading the country into mono-economic state. With the intensification for oil gain, the government connived with the multinational firms and local elites to exploit, explore and destroy the aquatic life in the region, therefore, creating artificial impotency to the regions' land, water and agricultural crops. According to Parker (2009), Bloomfield (2008) and Rowell (2005), the people of Niger Delta fight for access to safe drinking water and sanitation owing to oil spills. In support of this observation, the UN (2010) noted that from 1976 to 2008, that there exists 6,800 oil spillages, while the government does little or nothing in seeing to the clean-up or stoppage of this evil activities. Instead, in the words of Nwilo (2008), the government continued denial of the region their basic means of existence. The oil blocs were shared among the elites with non-going to the citizens of the Niger Delta. The profits made from the black gold were equally used to develop all other regions with nothing to show in the Niger Delta region. This blood oil money and the negating activities that followed it, according to Mbachu (2008) informed and raised two problematic groups - the actors to the struggle and the actors to the retention of status quo. However, not bothered about the existence of the crying group, the Nigerian government blames the illegal oil trade, bunkering and balkanization on the militants of the region, while on the other hand, the youth/militant say that the government intent in criminalizing their activities is a plan to do away with their legitimate struggle. A claim and counter claim that had made the drawing of weapon on each other possible.

The government in its continuous playing of the old order evokes its instrument that land belong to the federal government and nobody can stop its statutory duties. A pronouncement that led to the raising of questions on the structure of the Nigeria federalism and the false accomplices that had made it possible these years. To this end, Akwen and Gever (2011), blaming it on recent events argued that it is the reasons for the re-surfacing of kidnapping, violence, insurgency, crude oil bunkering, gang war and hostage taking, thereby making the region a hot bed of vices and crime. Simply, because the government seemed to have derailed from its responsibilities.

ii). Governance and False Federalism in Nigeria

Good governance is when there is social civility, equitability in distribution of means of governance, provision of democratic dividence, obedient to the rule of law and co-existence of all entity. Meaning that it is where the essence of governance is allowed to exist and grow; where the government does for the people what they cannot do for

themselves. And an ideal federalism in its practice has such enshrines in its constitution for the dignity of the citizenry and people.

However, federalism on its own allows for two or more levels of government united while existing side by side. In the composition, each unit possesses certain assigned powers and function. Federalism allows each unit to complement the weakness of the other while encouraging healthy competition toward development.

Meanwhile, from the very day that the word federation of Nigeria was conceived, falsehood was enthroned. This is because it was a quasi-federalism. The falsehood was not only on the policy point that enacted it but the whole system both in practicability, structural and composition was faulty. The system ushered in a kind of governance that was tailored into unitary structure while parading federalism costumes. It gives none of the expected power to the component units. Instead, the component units under allegiance were severally turned into beggars. The fiscal federalism, one of the cardinal points of federalism was hijacked by the centre, the competitiveness of federalism was nowhere as the centre weighed over 89% of the federation power to itself (Okechukwu, 2012).

According to Chukwuma (2010), the brand of federalism in Nigeria defy all known definition and practices as postulated by scholars like Wheare (1964), Riker (1964) Fedrick (1968), Verman (1979) and Sofowoke (2012) among others. To this effect, the absence of true federalism, which is the first daunting challenge facing Nigeria and possibly the will-power to all other problems were revealed. This bad make up, bad governance and the arising problems of the 21st century Nigeriahinged on false federalism and near state failure, thereby making everyone, people and region to pursue separate ideology of anti-Nigerian federation owing to the absence of true federation that negates good governance becoming real.

iii). Resources Control in Imbalance Federalism

According to Okechukwu (2012), one unique thing about an ideal federalism in any state is the processes as enshrined in the constitution of the practicing state, not minding the weakness, strength and unequal blessing of component units. Competitively, units are allowed to harness, harvest and sell the resources found in their domain and pay some amount of the percentage to the centre, who in turn, distributes it equally to other lacking units.

Resource control, therefore means allowing the component units to explore their mineral resources in their domain under the central guide and laws. The centre at the end will be entitled to some percentages of the accrued proceeds or profits. This act do not only create competition among the federating units in terms of development, revenue sourcing

and technological advancement, but it allows each unit to solve its minor problems without the centre being overstressed. Resource control is ingenuity driven and developmental cost-benefit to a state or region that manages it well.

However, the Nigerian type of federation negates the above stipulated merits of true federalism, thereby imposing an uncultured and unrefined system of federalism. It is this self-grown system that had otherwise joined other factors to haunt the Nigerian state, thereby creating an imbalance in the federation. Even when the centre control of resources is currently in force in Nigeria, the excuses that it is fit to bring about or create macro-economic stabilization and the redistribution of income and wealth, are still not attainable. The centre seemed to be doing nothing other than being an architect of its own problems. This becomes obvious as the centre in the name of federalism practices unitary system government. And so much interested in usurping powers of component unit while pretending to be doing something to solve state problems. This stems from the assumption that the central government is alive to its developmental responsibilities to all parts of the country in a manner that demonstrates justice and equity (Chukwuma, 2010). But the absurd in the Nigerian context is that there are imbalances in several areas of the federation, thereby, leading to the meditating and undermining of the ability and capability of the centre by ethnic influence and manipulations. The processes that had encouraged inequalities in fiscal federation and the politicization of the principles governance leading to the present face-off and other incessant clamour for resources control and insecurity in the southern part of Nigeria.

iv). Violent Conflicts and Restructuring of the State

According to political violent conflict analysts like Gurr (1974), Keith (1946) Bank (1996) and Deutsch (1990) among others, conflict ensues when the centre can no longer hold between actors, people, society and the deprived or frustrated. Although conflict is inevitable and present in every human society but violent conflict, which is the extreme form of conflict is seen to have been aroused by several factors, ranging from deprivation, neglect, frustration, oppression to near survival instinct syndrome. Thus, Cantrill (1961) and Hume (1945) agreed that we recall justice and sympathy, and permit injustice and enmity to take their place in driving home every act of frustration and deprivation with aggression. This means that when the people are deprived, suppressed and frustrated, that they tend not only to strike at their oppressors at first but also oppose and rebel against the authority.

Going further in Marx Das Capital, it is obvious that conflict is a dominant character of human relations. In his materialist conception of history, he posits that the history of human society is the history of class struggle, meaning that the most interesting thing about the society is that conflict is inevitable. That what prevails in society is not order, solidarity or consensus but struggle between groups for control of the means of

subsistence. It also suggests that conflict is either equated with competition or treated as a derivative of competition.

In the context of this study, therefore, violent conflict suggests that it is no longer conflict or struggle for compatible goals but outright violence occasioned by certain factors simply because violence has rendered the competitive nature in question absolute and tends to complicate the struggle beyond the normal way of competing. It also imply that arms and arm struggle might or are now the new phase of the struggle, hence, seeing the militants, rebels and insurgence picking arm against themselves or even against the state as presently occurred in Niger Delta by NDVF, MEND and NDA amongst others expressly revealed the erroneous incapacitation of the Nigerian state in tackling her problems because of poor management of the state.

The violent conflict seen as the only way of calling on the government to look into certain issues as neglect, deprived, frustration and oppression among others while asking for restructuring and repositioning of things in the country portends danger. Restructuring means changing the old way or policies that are outdated to suit the contemporary issues on the ground. The government, therefore, in looking at the Nigerian federation needs to restructure it. Suchact might down tension and other problematic issues arousing violent conflict in the Niger Delta and any other part of the country. To accentuate on this ideas, Clark (2003) asserts that the boys (militants) are fighting for their own survival. They are fighting unemployment, criminal negligence of the area, the dehumanization of our own people and lack of education, development and progress of the Niger Delta. The violent conflict, to Sasay (2008), the militancy in the Niger Delta region has assumed an alarming proportion because of the continued oppression and gross underdevelopment of the area that produces virtually the entire wealth of the nation. This violent conflict and the daunting challenge to the nation also send devious signal to the Nigerian State on what might happen otherwise or in another region tomorrow if their resources becomes the only economic sustenance of the nation, as the violent conflict and growing crisis had brought untold hardship and instability to the Nigerian polity.

v). Mono-Economy and Depleting Economy

Mono-economy is where a country's only source of economic income is coming from or dependent on one source or product. In the process, the country is managed depending only on such income. Every activity and development of the country depends on such economy. Such duties of government like capital project, expenditure, salary, pension, purchases and development fund among others depend on the mono-economy gains. The unique character or state of things with such situation is that the more increase in the expenditure or capital, the less the economy tends to sustain and or carry the growing needs. Against the over-dependence on oil proceeds to which the Nigerian economy have been over-stressed starts to deplete. The depleting economy if not checked or attended to

leads to economic recession. This is not only due to the level of exertion on the economy but encouraged by poor management and corrupt leadership. Depleting economy as witnessed in the Nigerian situation could be one of the major problem imposing serious challenge to the Nigerian state.

vi). National Resources Conflicts in the Niger Delta and Political Disequilibrium in Nigeria.

Crude oil, being the major source of revenue earning of Nigeria under mono-economic tendencies have however, portrayed two ends: the actors and the spectators. This is accompanied by three different characters of the policy formulators, executioners and sufferers. While the policy formulators and executors are the actors, the sufferers fall within the spectator's zone. The Nigerian government and the multinational corporation being the actors and at the same time the executioners are manipulative and cunning while the people of Niger Delta are the sufferers, always prone to violence. And in the word of Gur (1974) above, the people rebel against the authority when the state deprives them of the essence of governance through manipulation, denial and deceptions. The government and her allies (multinational companies) relying on the concept of game theory and the false federation policies, contradict and confuse the whole system into a political disequilibrium that are today the end product of mismanagement and maladministration in Nigeria.

Although, with few elites from the Niger Delta region being used as a pawn to the people, has messed up the entire region. Thus, Clark (2005), Abati (2009) and Biakpara (2010) among others argued that the government at the centre relying on the falsehood of the federation, the wealth of the Niger Delta region was used to develop Lagos and make Abuja the shining light of Africa to the detriment and nakedness of the Niger Delta. In the same continuum, the Ogoni bill of rights was also treated with levity by government, thereby informing the populace of the region that the government is not ready to attend to their problems. Thus, propping up the emergence of militant groups and warlords in the creeks (Biakpara, 2010), to confront the federal government against her shortfalls. With the situation in the Niger Delta degenerating into full anarchy, the armed youth gangs who had emerged started fighting for the control of oil wells and resources in their localities (Akwen and Gever, 2013). The attacking of oil installation, kidnapping, oil bunkering and pipeline vandalism becomes a daily and minute affairs as the militants were armed with superior weapons and very defiant in confronting the federal troops, thereby confirming the view of Eliasson (2015), that when natural resources are poorly managed or inequitably shared that tension, quarrel, dispute and conflict might ensue, because the oil is a very important source of livelihood, income and influence for countries and communities.

Accepting the above contention, Straus (2012), also notes that conflict over access to means of livelihood such as natural resources of oil among others are part of the changes that had evolved since the end of cold war. To this assertion, he further posit that the geo-political slights since the end of cold war are leading candidates to explaining the changing dynamics, frequency and character of warfare in the sub-Saharan Africa, especially as occasioned by natural resources.

Crazy enough to this angle, as seen in Nigeria where several conflicts and violent crises since after the enthronement of democratic governance had been a prevalent issue in the country, thereby explaining the kind of problems that had for long accumulated to bedevil the country. Instance of this is seen in the first tenure of democratic rule since 1999 where it was like a hell let loose as every ethnic group of OPC, APC, Bakasi-boy, Egbeju, MASSOB, Ijaw Youth and other militants and violent prone groups like NDVF, MEND and NDA among other struggle with the government exclusively to appropriate or have a fair access to the appropriation of the natural resource in their homeland.

Notorious as these groups are has damaged and helped to render the sliding economy into perpetual coma and recession in the recent months, a reason that had compelled political economist to post the question of what are the major causes? What has gone wrong in the management of the state resources? Which is the possible way out? And what are the needful that must be attended to in saving the state from total collapse?

However, in whichever way one tends to look at the raised question, one unique fact about conflict of natural resources as presently taking place in Nigerian Niger Delta, is that it affects state governance, especially where there are other factors or abridged system make up in the mode or type of governance, which irrevocably helped to either extend or short change the course or actual goal of governance (Chukwuma, 2010). This observation not far-fetched from the Nigerian environment explains the kind of problematic paradigm of the state of things in the country. Thus, faced with the daunting challenges of economic recession, insecurity and lopsided governance where unitary system of governance were exchanged for federal system in a quasi-grand style called federalism; where federalism only exists on paper and feared to be practised in practical terms. The managers of the state in this regard need to have a national rethink about Nigeria unity, wealth and welfare of the people.

In the word of Williams (2011) and Omason (2009), the emergent of democratic institutions in Nigeria had actually helped to expose the ills with Nigeria in terms of the numerous challenges of nationhood confronting her. The long years of military rule had also helped to midwife and cover the engendering problems with the nation in terms of stability and peaceful co-existence. Meaning that, with the daunting challenges of quasi-federalism, corruption, economic mismanagement and misplaced priorities as seen in the

case of using the wealth of another area to develop another region, the Nigeria nation deserved to be restructured.

THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

Mindful of the level of devastations, destruction, dislocation and distortions in the Niger Delta owing to the effects of oil exploration and exploitation, gas flaring and social disequilibrium this section adopts Conflicts theory and Game theory. The above theories are combined in the course of this inquiries even though they are examined separately, while the link establishing them plays a complementary role in the research investigation towards bringing the events and activities in the Niger Delta to the fore on the issue of natural resources conflicts.

a). Conflict Theory

Conflict, according to Boulding (1962:1) is an activity that is found almost everywhere in the world of man. Amongst all the categories of conflicts, political conflict seems to be most devastating and destructive, both in idea and actions. Dahl (1987) asserted that conflicts arise as a result of many factors, including struggle for power and privileges, and differences in social status. Such social status as economic class, income, wealth, position and occupation counts. Other factors as differences in education, ideology, religion, language, region and family origins amongst others also encourage conflict. In essence, conflict is a situation of competition, in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of other (Boulding 1962:1-12).

According to Coser (1967:42-54) conflict occurs among individuals; group and organizational interest, when they happen. It can lead to clash among actors, resulting to death, owing to its violent nature.

Laue (1990:17-18) postulated that conflict is a natural and inevitable part of all human social relationship. It is the escalated, natural competition between two or more parties about scarce resources, power and prestige. Parties in conflict believe they have incompatible goals and their aim is to neutralize, gain advantage over, injure or destroy one another. He went further to state that conflict can escalate to a psychopathology, social disorder and war. Conflict is a social phenomenon, and is multi-faceted. There are some which are very beneficial, while others are destructive.

Scimecca (1990:30-33), while observing that the theory of conflict explains human behaviour in terms of self-interest, and the perpetuation of the social order by the organized coercion of certain groups over other groups, went on to state that although political conflict takes several different forms, what is crucial for understanding social behavior; is the degree to which people are in positions to control others, and how this is

related to the accumulation of wealth, power and status that arouses conflicts amongst them.

However, to Stragner (1967:15-23), conflict is an unfortunate but basic characteristic of human nature. She upheld that conflict leads to violence, which will attract attention where all civil methods fail. To her, conflict occurs over means to achieve goals. It is inherent in human condition. She concluded by saying that every major advancement in individual, group and societal civilization has resulted from conflict, and we certainly agree that bloodshed and destruction have followed from many conflicts.

Another scholar, Deutsch (1990:38-49) argued that conflict can be positive. Thus, he noted that conflict has many positive functions; it prevents stagnation, it stimulates interest and curiosity. It is the medium through which problems can be aired and solution arrived at. It is the root of personal and social change. Conflict is also often part of the process of testing and assessing oneself (individual, group, nation-state and the international system) for corporate improvement. He further noted that conflicts engender systemic innovation and compel new management techniques.

In another realm, Banks (1996:439) contended that conflict is both inevitable and necessary. It is inevitable, because both people and groups have basic needs, expressed in society through competing values, clashing in order to provide the catalyst for development. Without this life would hardly be worthwhile in term of change and progress. He submitted that conflict can be functional, but that its functional benefits can sometimes be accompanied by dysfunctional costs: hostility, rigidity, violence and destruction.

Thus, going by the above contentions, it is imperative to agree with Ekoko (1996:441) who asserted that the causes of conflicts in Africa are multifaceted; that the frequency and regularity are extremely high; that no sub-region in the continent is free of major conflicts, and that as a result, the level of insecurity, instability and chaos are also abnormally high in Africa. The natural resources conflict in Niger Delta fell within intra-state conflict, occasioned by the mode of governance, ethnic dominance, denial to control resources in the domain, swapping of resource profit to better non-resources zone, abandonment and wilful neglects.

Apart from the neglect of the Niger Delta region leading to natural resources conflict, group interest and the drive for value retention were seen to have contributed in modulating the different stages or dimensions that the conflict had taken place. This value retention and differing interest invariably, lead to abysmal violence, the quest to control their oil, the open confrontation and poor policy initiative that had greatly affected the

people thereby making many indigenes of the region to see survival as an unattainable goal (Gurr, 1974).

According to the views of the scholars above and at the same time acting as a guide to our case study, Keith (1946:105-109) opined that man is born of competitive spirit. That man is by nature competitive, combative, ambitious, jealous, envious and vengeful. He further noted that in the struggle for survival, that is, the struggle for integrity, control of domiciled resources and values, which often reaches such extremity of decision-making, with the resultant effects leading to the use of force, violence, conflict and war among others.

Consequently, incompatible goals, apart from the acts of frustration and deprivation, generate conflicts in several ways. This becomes clear when examined from sequential scenes of events in the case study, and the numerous other conflicts that had bedevilled Nigeria, to which all are collapsed into as a daunting challenge facing the nation. A question to be asked is, can the drive of incompatibility of goals, which is seen as natural and inevitable reasons for most conflicts mean that Nigeria, may never get out of conflicts except the otherwise? Providing answer to this does not mean that conflict cannot be dislodged, or curtailed to the barest minimum. (After all not all conflict are desirable), but it does mean that, to achieve that, we must accept that conflict is inevitable and a necessary evil in every human society and that the government should look inward toward restricting of her old policies to accommodating the contemporary issues. The first step in putting an end to conflict is to find its root cause. The second is to allow the parties in the conflict to see reason towards dialogue, by disagreeing to agree, and then to make peace. In making peace, of course, each must be ready to relinquish certain or some part of the contending factors. While at the same time agreeing to accept the view and feelings of others who must also reciprocate accordingly.

The third is that when the root causes of the crises are found, and agreement is reached through dialogue; then comes the points raised by (Gurr 1974) who noted that frustration and aggression, which are the main causes of conflicts, are treated in the course of dialogue, while the incompatible goals are shared among the contending parties. Conflict resolution mechanism, while been applied today to any conflict situation must take the root cause of the crisis serious. This is to guarantee the successful and peaceful end of the conflict, as such when not properly managed, can take another dimension to escalate. Meaning that the government must re-visit and allow true federalism to be in Nigeria.

b). Game Theory framework

This section, reference to the situations mentioned above also employed Game Theory framework to back up the research argument. Game Theory, which combined manipulation, scheming and propoganda to achieving desired objectives are also seen

been displayed in the course of the natural resources conflicts in Nigeria Niger Delta. Thus, scholars like Plano and Riggs (1953) opined that it is a body of thought dealing with rational decision strategies in situations of conflict and competition, of which each participant or player tends to maximize gains and minimize losses. In tandem to this assertion, Mager (1972) argued that it is a form of arithmetic mode of interactions of actors striving to maximize their utilities. To Newman and Magestern (1957), it is used to define the economic man as a rational actor who believes in gain rather than losses. Agreeing with this contention, Stranger (1960) posits that game theory is a domineering concept with the intent of greed and logical reasoning of manipulating others against their desires, against the society and against the entire system. In the same continuum, Levy and Thompson (2010), argued that game theory is the act of rationally advancing security, power and wealth in any societal contest.

Therefore, if game theory involves the manipulation of numbers, persons and materials to achieving a set goal, whose rules are defined vis-à-vis the distribution of resources and the strategic possibilities that are open to each player in the employment of these resources, then, the questions this study raises are: why has the government abandoned true federalism to practicing quasi-federalism (Unitary system) of government? Why has the government neglected the area that produce the wealth of the nation to better the dry resources zone? Why should the Elites of the Niger-Delta be used to manipulate the region to their detriment for long by the powers that be at the centre? What are the possibilities that the flooding of the country with illicit small arms and light weapons are not politically motivated since substantial evidence implicates the political class as seen at every crises? Why are illicit arms a bait to conflict in the society with insurgency rearing ugly heads in almost every part of Nigeria with Niger-Delta region becoming more volatile? What do the actors who encourage the in-flow of small arms and light weapon into the country to fighting resource control tend to achieve? What are the possible implications of this illegality to the general society? Is it possible that these sponsors and their agents intend to undermine the territorial integrity of the country by any means? Should we also agree that corruption helped to make it difficult to solving Nigeria problems? What are Nigeria's strategies for national cooperation and integration towards security, good governance and human rights? Do the present government have in mind restructuring of the country? Can true federalism as obtained during regionalism be allowed to flourish for better governance of the country? These are some of the vital questions addressed in this study. Taking into cognizance that apart from the political class and the government, whether ruling or in opposition utilizes the concept of manipulation, scheming and propaganda to suffocate the governed into perpetual fear, to which arms struggle in the quest for resource control are the brain behind all confrontations. And government not yielding to demands has not only made conflict a daily occurrence but both a bait and trend in the present context, especially, the period preceding and post- electioneering contest to the economic recession stage.

POLITICAL GOVERNANCE AND NIGERIAN DAUNTING CHALLENGES IN THE 21st CENTURY

Frankly speaking, Nigeria's history of governance had long been situated on series of misgivings, right from the period of pre-independence, independence, post-independence, military incursion and democratic wavering and ineptitudes among others, due to the kind of mockery and political shenanigans that trailed the system of state governance. With mockery of true federalism that was established since 1954, the composition, structure and disposition of the Nigerian state has defied everything about the much talked about and expected good governance that are still very remote and inaccessible (Chukwuma, 2010) to society and people.

Thus, problems of awful true federalism, corruption, economic misplaced priorities, maladministration and conflict of natural resources in the Niger Delta had become a great daunting challenge to the country in this 21st century.

Against this shortfall in the state of governance in Nigeria; to which the adoption of quasi-federation had helped to impose unstructured polity in the system, several factors are however, noted to have also aided the severing of this man-made unit that had existed since before independence to date to a nation with uncertainties. Factors such as fear of the Southern domination, poor education in the North, poverty of natural wealth in the North, high development level of the South, ethnicity and ethnic bigotry, the early domination of the armed forces by the Southerners and the inferiority complex of the Northerners among others, to which the North tried to overcome by turning everything to their favour against the South through the unfortunate civil war had not ceased.

Another undoing to the state of governance in Nigeria was also the Northern ploy to control what was not in their domain while running the country like a private fiefdom on a false federation. Like the act of determining who owes oil blocs, who explores crude, who controls NNPC, who becomes Minister of Petroleum, Minister of Finance, Minister of Justice and Minister of Works, Minister of Federal Capital, which area should be developed, who developed what and which area and so on. And never asked about the place where the money is coming from, which also authenticates the observation of William (2011), that we have been using their oil to drive our cars, fuel our aeroplane, and keep the wheels of our economy turning, but those in the Delta have had their land, their lives, their dreams destroyed. Therefore, prompting Clark (2005), to say that it is this long established imbalance and neglect that are being challenged today. The youths of the Niger Delta and other areas that are greatly marginalized must survive; they must have a say to the wealth accruing from their area that are being used to develop other region. Just as attested to by Bloomfield (2008), that Nigeria is one of the World's biggest oil producing state, but the scramble for riches has brought ruin to the region and the people owing to gross mismanagement and thievery.

Although, natural resources conflict/war has been fundamental to African states, but one pathetic thing about the Nigerian situation is that there are several interests, several actors and several misgivings, beginning from the lapses in policies, objectives, and the government down to the role of inability to providing for the people what they cannot provide for themselves. All, possibly culminating to the factors that aided the recent confrontation in the creeks among armed groups and government armed forces – owing to the vandalism of pipeline and oil installations and the depleting economy. The fallout have been blamed on the government stancethat was encouraged by the level of awareness, enlightenment and globalization, and coupled with the level of information showing that the Nigerian government had allowed the above mentioned ills to linger for long while manipulating and exploiting the Niger-Delta region without any cause to tackling the long over-bearing problems that had remained unattended. Evidence available had shown also that insurgent strategies and militancy tactics reflect the nature of political authority in Nigeria, in which each fight to control the available spheres (William, 2011). As both the government and the people manipulate each other to gain advantage, and where they fall apart, war and conflict becomes the next line of action owing to the aroused disagreement, deception and cheatings among others that exists within. For instance, one could easily adjudge, if not, where was the Niger-Delta militants in the six years of their kinsman’s rule? Was the corruption and deception tackled? Why didn’t they clamour for resource control? Why was everyone silent on the issue of restructuring and true federalism? To further increase this misery, the factionalized armed group, particularly in the Niger-Delta whose activities had mesmerized the national economy sees all these as reason to fighting the Nigerian government, the populace on the other hand also showed keen interest and strongly awakened on the issue of restructuring the country, to which each geopolitical zone is desirous in controlling their natural resources. But on how these challenges can be tackled without the continued war of natural resources, the government might be advised to open up the state for proper competitions that will put an end to the plagued corrupt system, reducing the power of the centre from authoritarianism-bureaucracy to decentralized-bureaucracy, from lopsided and unsustainable economy to developmental and institutionalized system that would put an end to violent, conflict and environmental damages. A plus that may equally enhance good governance and social civility.

THE IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This study having examined the various issues arising, natural resources conflict in the Nigerian Niger Delta and how it has impeded on state of governance in the country cannot over state, the fact that there are several implications that needs to be nipped in the board toward promoting healthy system and proactive peace engagement society.

The number of growing threats to the national polity also explains that failures to restructuring of Nigerian federation might degenerate into a severe state collapse as

anarchy, violence and possible war might lead to nation-states that make up Nigeria tilting towards disintegration.

Meanwhile, it is evident that the consistent failure in addressing the issues that arose the natural resources conflict, which abound, might continually instil instability and crisis among the actors within the nation. The clash between the government troops and the militant away from the already existing problems of unemployment, poverty, and environmental destruction, damages to the waterfront, waterways and aqua-lives among others in the region may continue to breed violence and social misgivings.

The current war and destruction of oil wells, oil installations and oil pipelines, which has damaged to a great extent the nation's economy leading to recession and state failure is a pointer to the many daunting challenges that needs to be revisited. The Nigerian economy solely dependent on oil at present and has been grounded leading to high inflation and economic recession and suffering of the masses has also thrown up a new challenge, thereby adding to the several hiccups affecting the polity.

A grave implication of this crisis is that the situation has raised many violent youths only interested in what they will gain; create a deep seated enmity between the oil producing states and the non-oil producing states; creates high incidence of jobless youths who are ever ready for violence.

This natural resource war or conflict might not end immediately unless the government put a good relief measure on ground to reducing the negating effects. The government and the populace must agree on how to chart a course towards enthroning total stability in the system.

Actors to Nigerian project must put aside all kinds of scheming, manipulation, denial and pretentiousness towards advancing the course of the nation. The correction of all the noted anomalies is very necessary.

The study, therefore, suggest that the government should make open the governance system, adhere or if impossible, attend to the idea of restructuring the Nigerian federation, where all the component units will be allowed to complete favourably among each other, appropriate their resources and make input to the national purse.

There will be end to natural resources conflict, if the stakeholders, actors, militants and the necessary communities are carried along by the government. The national economy that had consistently depleted will equally be revived if the government aid agencies to do the needful.

CONCLUSION

There are arrays of problems and contradiction inherent in the Nigerian constitution vis-à-vis the power of the federation, which is the brain child of the negating daunting challenges facing the country. This systemic and structural make up needs to be revisited. Going by the fact that all noted impediments has implicated faulty base. To which governance in recent time could be seen to have favoured violent conflicts. This is because the issues leading to natural resources conflict as located in the falsehood establishing the country have tenaciously blind-folded the managers of Nigerian state, thereby resulting in poor administration and poor management of the national wealth to affecting the entire foundation.

Thus, the adoption of the two theories above is not without reasons. The theories examine the several role of actors to the Nigerian project. In the process, the government, the militant, the elites and the multinational corporation among others were adjudged as having played a role in the suffocation of the common masses. It further explains the intrigues employed by both the government, militants, agents and agencies in handling the issues of natural resources. The place of thievery and the swapping of policies and gains that at times arose violent conflicts were explained and exposed. For, to the government misappropriation and wilful denial as noted in the course of inquiry were not only discouraging but seemed to be one of the factor that arose and angered the indigenes. On the side of the militants, thievery, balkanization and fight for oil wells and the destruction of oil installation leading to violent conflicts against the pains of the communities who were locked in the cycle of extreme poverty, widespread unemployment, environmental pollution and social injustice that was on the increase clearly manifest a depraved society who had long been manipulated, leading to violent conflicts (Rowell, 2005). The elites of the region who had for long criminally manipulated the indigenes, both young, youth and the old were exposed as they continued to partner with the government and Multinational Corporation in exploring and decimating the Niger Delta region. This also reveals the kind of leadership in the Delta, thereby partly blaming the woos of the region on the local elites and the traditional rulers.

Importantly, the causes of natural resources conflict in the world, particularly, as obtainable in the Nigerian Niger Delta has been partly due not only to the humiliating neglect, denial, deprivation, abandonment and wilful damages but combined with the sorrows and pains of oil spills, which have polluted the rivers and land, making fishing and farming impossible with the Delta polluted beyond recognition, exemplified the onus of the struggle of the people who want to survive, despite all odds.

The government on the other hand, having been weighed down by the mistakes of the past with an enclosed mono-economy syndrome needs to change some of its policies, amend or overhaul some of her constitutional sections, schedules and paragraphs by way

of restructuring the state or encouraging a total devolution and decentralized system of governance towards creating an enabling society.

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