

# ROBERT NOZICK'S THEORY OF JUSTICE AND RESOURCE CONTROL IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*This work examines Robert Nozick's theory of justice and how it can help in the actualization of resource control struggle in Nigeria thereby bringing development to resource producing areas particularly in the Niger Delta Region. Lack of fairness, equity and justice is a serious problem facing Nigeria as a country. Thus, fair and equitable distribution of national wealth and resources among states in the country has been an issue. The main objective of the paper is that Robert Nozick's theory of justice could serve as a philosophical blueprint and validation to the issue of resource control which in turn can bring about social justice in Nigeria thereby improving the social conditions of the people especially the resource producing regions. The scope of the paper is within the confines of socio-political philosophy, limited to addressing the grievances of resource producing areas especially the Niger Delta region through the policy of resource control informed and inspired by Robert Nozick's theory of justice. The theoretical significance is that it would contribute to scholarship generally on justice and practically beneficial to resource producing areas in Nigeria especially in the Niger Delta region. The justification is that resource control is a natural right to any resource producing area in Nigeria as affirmed by Robert Nozick. The work employed analysis and reflection as methods to show that resource control is a veritable policy in bringing peace and serenity to the Niger Delta region and the entire country at large. Therefore, it is the finding of the work that resource control could be a panacea to the incessant crisis, restiveness and insecurity in the country especially in the Niger Delta Region.*

**Keywords:** Robert Nozick, Justice, Resource Control, Niger Delta and Nigeria.

## Introduction

Any society that is not built on justice is likely to experience chaos, anarchy and disorder as it is evident in Nigeria particularly in the Niger Delta region. Hence, the core provocation to this work is informed by the injustice meted against regions that produce natural resources

which sustains the entire country economically. Such regions having been naturally blessed with a lot of natural resources; yet, being impoverished, marginalized and wickedly excluded from the developmental plan of the country. Thus, fair and equitable distribution of wealth and resources among states and regions in the country has been a serious problem. Put simply, the Federal Government of Nigeria have failed in dispensing justice in terms of considerable allocation and distribution of resources among the regions in the country. It is quite admissible that the country is blessed or endowed with a lots of natural resources. It is also a fact that such resources are sourced from regions that deserve better, satisfactory and preferential treatment in terms of allocation and distribution from the proceeds of those resources.

The Niger Delta region as a case study which comprises Abia, AkwaIbom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers is the region that earned almost 70% of the national wealth, yet the most rejected and abandoned region in terms of development. This region produces almost all the wealth of the nation particularly incomes generated from oil and gas, yet, not given proper and equitable shares from the earnings. Unequivocally, the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region which is supposed to be a source of happiness and wealth to the people, has turned to a source of suffering and penury to the region. It has become a curse instead of blessings to the region by the selfish activities of the oil companies and the Federal Government. The region is adversely affected by the exploration activities to the extent that the farm lands are destroyed, aquatic lives are adversely affected and the entire ecosystem. Other effects of exploration activities include erosion, canalization, intra and inter-communal conflicts between host communities and short life span.

The question is: how can justice be made available to resource producing areas in the country? In search for a philosophical solution to this economic and social problem, the work intends to use Robert Nozick's theory of justice as a philosophical blueprint in tackling the menace of injustice in the country. Robert Nozick's theory of justice may likely help to actualize the policy of resource control in Nigeria which in turn can bring about development and the needed peace to resource producing areas.

### **Concept of Justice**

The term justice is a multifarious subject that accommodates various definitions and understandings. Thinkers and scholars give different definitions to the concept influenced by their background, school of thought, epoch and clime. However, etymologically, the word justice is derived from the Latin word “Justitia” which means righteousness, uprightness, equity, vindication of right and administration of law. Therefore, justice in its original sense could mean a behavior that is just, righteous, impartial and adherence to stipulated law.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, justice refers to “each getting what he or she is due” (Audi, 1995: 456). Black's Law Dictionary defines justice as “the fair treatment of people; the quality of being fair or reasonable; the legal system by which people and their cases are judged especially the system used to punish people who have committed crimes; the fair and proper administration of law” (Nwikpasi and Duson, 2021:53). The above definition

speaks volume of fair treatment to people by giving punishment to offenders of various offenses and compensating innocent and aggrieved parties or citizens. The Chambers Dictionary defines justice as the quality of being just and awarding of what is due to a person (Nwikipasi and Duson, 2021:53). This emphasizes the quality of being just, fair and impartial disposition of judges in the judiciary in dispensing justice. According to Thomas Aquinas, justice refers to the firm and constant will to give to each one his due (Omoregbe, 1993:112). This notion of justice is based on the fundamental equality of all men. Spinoza in his view defines justice as the habitual rendering to every man his lawful due. Similarly, Miller conceives it as “the respect for the rights of individuals to their good and property of others (Miller, 1976:158). Brian (1967: 189) describes justice in the light of the needs and interest of people likely to be affected by it with no partiality towards the claims of any of those needs and interests are at stake. NkeonyeOtakpor defines justice as the “web” which holds any society together. Like a spider's web, it is very fragile, it needs to be handled and nurtures with care, devotion and dedication (Eze, 2000: 58). Njoku sees justice as a social norm that guides the action of the people in the dealings with one another, it means giving each one what is their right. Also, Nwabueze (1993: 236) maintains that justice means acting fairly towards others without bias or partiality and without harming virtue which induces the will constantly and perpetually to render to other their due in time and places and in given set of circumstances. Curson conceives justice as the virtue which result in each person receiving his or her due. It is the quality of being right and fair (Otakpor, 1994:22). Omoregbe (1993: 45) defines it as giving everybody his due, or treating equals equally. John (2016: 80) in a narrow sense, considers justice as a principle of life that has been associated with the legal system and processes in the society. And such processes are accessible through notions of crimes and punishment, self-defense, law or enforcement and so on. Esikot (2021: 136) argues that when the question of social justice is raised, what comes readily into the mind is the idea of fairness and perhaps also the legal system. In fact, justice is seen as more akin to what the law requires or stipulates. Thus, social justice would have to do with ensuring that there are no unjust treatments in the society whatsoever, and in cases where there are, compensations are given. To Ozumba (2001: p63), justice is “the quality of being right and fair”. To Igwe (2022: 99), deducing from Hume's perspective, sees justice as that which has to do with resolving conflicts among individuals with regard to the distribution of goods, services, benefits and burdens in the society.

To cap it all, it should be noted that justice means different things to different people. Sometimes, the only way to overcome this is to think of justice in terms of what the law says and doing it. But even this may generates another problem because when an unjust law is obeyed, it will still constitutes an injustice. Hence, the concept of justice is enigmatic and conceptually dicey.

### **Robert Nozick's Entitlement Theory of Justice**

Robert Nozick was an American philosopher who was born in Brooklyn in 1938 to a Russian Jewish immigrant family: Max Nozick and Sophia Cohen Nozick at New York. He was one of the most rated and influential socio-political thinkers who contributed immensely to the discourse on justice in the contemporary era of philosophy. Just as other

thinkers, whose philosophies were occasioned by their political circumstances, Nozick's entitlement theory of justice was a reaction to John Rawls' theory of justice particularly his difference principle that anchors the idea of justice as fair and liberal distribution of the benefits and burdens of social co-operation without paying attention to the right of personal entitlement and human dignity. Nozick in his dissatisfaction, challenges some of the tenets of Rawls' difference principle. Nozick in his tirade challenges Rawls' liberalization and communization of talents as disgusting and inhumane, because it diminishes the dignity and self-respect of the autonomous being. He also challenges Rawls' distributive pattern of justice as arbitrary from the moral point of view because one can be entitled to something without deserving to have it. Thus, a person may be entitled to some benefits without deserving them. Lastly, using the betteroff to benefit the worst-off is to violate the Kantian injunction never to use people as means but always as ends. The above highlighted points propelled Nozick to propound his entitlement theory of justice as an emendation to the Rawls' theory of justice.

Robert Nozick's entitlement theory of justice states that the distribution of holding in a society is just if (and only if) everyone in that society is entitled to what he has. In other words, Nozick's theory of justice implies that whether a distribution is just or not depends entirely on how it came about. To Nozick, a more adequate theory of justice would fulfill the requirements or enumerate three principles of justice in holdings. Thus, he declares that if the world were wholly just, the following inductive definition would exhaustively cover the subject of justice in holding: (i) A person who acquires a holding in accordance with the principle of justice in acquisition is entitled to that holding; (ii) A person who acquires a holding in accordance with the principle of justice in transfer, from someone else entitled to the holding, is entitled to the holding; (iii) No one is entitled to a holding except by (repeated) applications of 1 and 2 (Nozick, 1974:151).

Nozick, believes that a holistic principle of distributive justice would simply say that a distribution is just if everyone is entitled to the holdings they possess under the distribution. However, it is quite unfortunate that not everyone follows these stipulated principles as some would steal from others, defraud, enslave, deprive, seizing their product and preventing them from their legitimate entitlements. In consequent, the third principle of rectification is necessary. Therefore, the summary of the three principles are as follows: (i) A principle of justice in acquisition; (ii) A principle of justice in transfer; (iii) A principle of rectification of injustice. These are the corner-stones of his theory of justice.

**The Principle of Justice in Acquisition:** Nozick's principle of justice in acquisition deals with the initial acquisition of holdings which accounts for how people first come to own the natural world property. To Nozick, this is the original position of how wrongful acquisition or appropriation of things started. This includes the issues of how things may come to be held, the process, or processes, by which things may come to be held, the things that may come to be held by these processes, the extent of what comes to be held by a particular process, and so on (Nozick, 1974:150). In other words, the principle of justice

in acquisition involves issues of how property came into possession initially. Thus, Ficker explains:

According to Nozick, the principle of justice in acquisition requires that any “person who acquires a holding in accordance with the principle of justice in acquisition is entitled to that holding. In other words, anyone who acquires a holding justly may assert rights to that holding. For example, if I acquire land, money or moose milk justly, then I can enforce my rights to my holding. Accordingly, without violating my permission, no other person can take or use my holding without violating my rights (2014: 53).

The basic point of Nozick is that a possession is justly held if it was acquired in a just fashion originally or initial in acquisition. Nozick's principle of justice in acquisition appeals to “Lockean proviso” where individual can legitimately claim possession of the natural world. Thus, Locke explains this proviso:

Whatsoever then he remove out of the state that nature have provided, and left in, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the communal, State of nature hath placed it in, it hath by this labor something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other men: for this labor being the unquestionable property of the laborer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others (Nnaji for and Ifeakor 2016: 172-173).

The emphasis of John Locke is that while individuals have the right to homestead private property from nature as the first occupant of a possession by working on it, they can do so only at least where there is enough and as good, left in common for others. In adoption, Nozick adopts the Lockean Proviso by saying that justice in acquisition emphasizes the just appropriation process of previously unowned property. To him, a person who acquires a holding justly is entitled to that holding. For instance, if one cuts a tree, carving the wood and fabricating a chair makes the carver the owner of the property. Therefore, Nozick's principle of justice in acquisition clearly stipulates an original acquisition of holding or the appropriation of things not previously acquired.

**The Principle of Justice in Transfer:** The principle of justice in transfer explains how one person can acquire holding from another including voluntary exchange and gift. In other words, it states that whatever is justly held can be freely transferred from one person to another. Thus, Shenge and Mchia explain Nozick:

The second principle of the entitlement theory is the principle of justice in transfer, which describes the legitimate process of transformation from one distribution of goods into another distribution of goods. According to Nozick, such transfer action is just if, and only, if both parties voluntarily undertake it. This second principle preserves justice whenever initially just distributions change in accordance with the principle of justice in transfer (nd, 180).

Nozick's position was that it is just for a holding to be transferred from one person to another in as much as such holding was justly acquired. Nozick in this second principle still used Locke's principle to justify his position. Thus, Locke asserts: Again, if he would give his nuts for a price of metal, pleased with its colour, or exchange his sheep for shells, or wool for a sparkling pebble or a diamond, and keep those by him all his life he invades not the right of others, he might heap up as much these durable things as he pleased; the exceeding of the bounds of his just property not lying in the largeness of his possessions, but the perishing of anything uselessly in it (Nnaji for and Ifeakor, 2016: 175). Nozick's point of inheritance from Locke is that as long as a holding was acquired justly in the initial acquisition, the owner of such holding can legitimately transfer such property to whoever he pleases so far as it was not carried out under duress, or not executed by theft, force or fraud. Hence, justice partly depends on how a holding was acquired initially and how it was later transferred from one person to another.

**The Principle of Rectification of Injustice:** Nozick's principle of rectification of injustice states that if the current distribution of holdings is as a result of unjust acquisition, then a distribution which would have arisen had the transaction been just must be rectified. This principle covers the rectification of past injustices caused by the failure to comply with the first two principles. Thus, Nozick makes his point clear:

Not all actual situations are generated in accordance with the two principles of justice in holdings: the principle of justice in acquisition and the principle of justice in transfer. Some people steal from others, or defraud them, or enslave them, seizing their product and preventing them from living as they choose, or forcibly exclude others from competing in exchanges. None of these are permissible modes of transaction from one situation to another (Nozick, 1974:152).

Nozick's point is that the existence of past injustices emanating from the violating of the first two principles in holdings necessitates the principle of rectification of injustice. In other words, a distribution is just if it passes the just test procedure or process otherwise it would require rectification (Adie and Effenji, 2018:80). It is the argument of Nozick that the perpetrators of injustice be obliged by the state apparatus or the judicial court to ensure that wrongly acquired holdings are restored to the legitimate owners. The general outlines of the theory of justice in holdings are that the holdings of a person are just if he is entitled to them by the principles of justice in acquisition and transfer, or by the principle of rectification of injustice. If each person's holdings are just, then the total set (distribution) of holdings is just. Therefore, anyone who acquired what he has through these means is morally entitled to it or the distribution of holdings in a society is just so far as everyone in that society is entitled to what he has.

### **Idea of Resource Control in Nigeria**

The concept of resource control is derived from the individual words resource and control” which literally means the desire or agitation to control, be in charge, manage or

be in total control of endowments of nature belonging to a people. It is a fact that nature have equitably distributed natural resources to all the nations of the earth. There is no nation including Nigeria without natural resources. Take for instance in Nigeria, nature have distributed resources to all the states in the federation. Below is a table showing states and their natural resources:

S/N	STATES	RESOURCES FOUND
1	Abia	Gold, Lead/Zinc, Salt, Oil & Gas and Limestone.
2	Adamawa	Kaolin, Bentonite, Gypsum, Magnesite, Barites, and Bauxite.
3	Akwabom	Oil, Gas, Lead/Zinc, Lignite, Clay, Salt & Uranium.
4	Anambra	Clay, Glass, Sand, Gypsum, Iron-ore limestone & salt
5	Bauchi	Gold, Cassiterite, Columbite, Gypsum, Wolfram & Coal.
7	Bayelsa	Oil & Gas, Clay, Gypsum, Lignite, Limestone & Uranium
8	Benue	Barite, clay, coal, gemstone, marble, salt & uranium
9	Borno	Bentonite, clay, diatomite, kaolin, hydro-carbon, limestone & gypsum.
10	Cross River	Oil & gas, barite, lead/zinc, Lignite, limestone, salt & uranium.
11	Delta	Oil & gas, clay, glass-sand, marble, kaolin, lignite & iron-ore.
12	Ebonyi	Gold, lead/zinc and salt.
13	Edo	Oil & gas, bitumen, clay, dolomite, phosphate, glasssand & marble.
14	Ekiti	Feldspar, granite, kaolin, syenite & tatum.
15	Enugu	Coal, lead/zinc, & limestone
16	Gombe	Gemstone & gypsum
17	Imo	Oil & gas, lead/zinc, lignite limestone, salt & marcasite
18	Jigawa	Butyles
19	Kaduna	Amethyst, aqua marine, asbestos, clay, flosper, gemstone, gold etc.
20	Kano	Gassiterite, copper, gemstone, lead/zinc, pyrochinre, glass-sand etc.

21	Katsina	Kaolin, marble & salt
22	Kebbi	Gold
23	Kogi	Cole, dolomite, Feldspar, gypsum, iron-ore, kaolin & marble
24	Kwara	Cassiterite, columbite, Feldspar, gold, iron-ore, mica marble & tantalite.
25	Lagos	Oil & gas, bitumen, clay, glass-sand, tar & sand.
26	Nasarawa	Amethyst, baryte, barite, coal, marble, mica, salt, talc etc.
27	Niger	Gold, lead/zinc, & talc.
28	Ogun	Bitumen, clay, coal, feldspar, Kaolin, gemstones, limestone & phosphate.
29	Ondo	Bitumen, clay, coal, dimension, stones, granite, oil & gas etc.
30	Osun	Columbite, gold, granite, talc, tantalite & tourmaline.
31	Oyo	Aquamarine, clay, cassiterite, dolomite, gemstone & marble.
32	Plateau	Barite, bauxite, bentonite, bismuth, coal, emerald & wolfram.
33	Rivers	oil & gas, clay, glass-sand, lignite, marble
34	Sokoto	Clay, flakes, gold, granite, laterite, silica & potash.
35	Taraba	lead/zinc
36	Yobe	Soda ash & tintomite, coal,
37	Abuja (FCT)	Cassiterite, clay, dolomite, gold, marble & tantalite.

The idea of resource control is that these various resources found in the respective states be controlled and managed by such states and only pay a percentage to the central government. According to Charles (2015:1), resource control can be defined as the practice of true federalism and natural law in which the federating units express primary control over the natural resources within their borders or land marks and make agreed contributions towards the maintenance of common services of the government at the centre. To him, the idea of resource control is necessary for the practice of true federalism and in adherence to natural law since nature cannot be unjust in its distribution of resources. Whatever resource found in your region is yours and need no central

government for management, except the government of such region. The point is that resource control implies regions and states with natural resources to be privileged to manage such resources and have a fair share of the benefits, revenues and royalties derivable from such endowments while paying some tributes to the up-keep of the central Government. Thus, Azaiki shed more light on the issue:

While resource control is a basic economic theory grounded in the fact that land, labor, capital and entrepreneurship are factors of production within the context of federation, it implies that the federating units within a federation have a right to primarily control the natural resources within their borders, and to make an agreed contribution towards the maintenance of common services at the center(2003:163).

Hence, resource control is the emphasis on the autonomy of the states to manage and take charge of the natural resources within their territories. And for the fact that all the states in the federation have resources naturally allocated to them, the argument of resource control is natural and genuine. By way of conclusion, Okolo and Raymond (2014:108) argues that "the essence of true federalism is to allow each state or region in a federation a significant measure of autonomy to manage its affairs. The above is the onus and gist of resource control.

### **History of Resource Control Struggle in Nigeria**

The history of resource control is a long one pointing fingers to Nigeria precolonial society or era. Resource Control is actually a request of an owner of resources to manage his or her affairs without external influence or control. The attempt of government to covet resources from the component units forms the basis of resource control which cut across the precolonial, colonial and the postcolonial periods in the history of Nigeria. Resource control in the pre-colonial era was not an issue at that time because traditional leaders had no intention to covet resources belonging to the people. They were only custodians of resources belonging to the people. Supporting this position, Ekpang Thomas, has explained that just like government, today, is supposed to be number one custodian of the people's resources among pre-colonial Nigerian Communities, the kings, the elders and clan heads, were the custodians of the people's lands and other resources (Ugwu, 2019:21). The traditional institutions maintain fairness, equity and administrative decorum in discharge of their functions because their actions were monitored by the gods of the land. In that case, ill-actions and their repercussions were not far from the traditional rulers which constrained them from perpetrating evils such as covetousness adultery, greediness and others vices in the society. Therefore, the people in the pre-colonial era had control of their resources and there was no need for resource control struggle at that point.

The issue of resource control came to limelight in the colonial period in the history of Nigeria. The scramble for and the partitioning of Africa by the European powers was the beginning of resource control because the primary aim of the white man's coming was to take the resources of the people which was resisted by the traditional rulers and some few

elites. The colonial powers trying to acquire the resources of the people forcefully warranted the kings such as the king Jaja of Opobo, Nana of Itsekiri and Oba of Benin to react and fight for their resources. Thus, Abodunrin (2021:14) corroborates this fact by affirming that first after the abolition of slave trade in 1807 local traders engaged in resource control struggles to participate actively in the trade in oil palm.

The British possession of West Africa particularly in Nigeria deepens the agitation for resource control necessitated by some obnoxious policies introduced in the colonies. Some of such policies like the introduction of indirect rule and the policy of assimilation robbed the people of the autonomy on their resources which were quick enough to replace the welfare-driven land tenure systems of the precolonial societies. Hence, there was an increased resistance by the people to control their resources and the intended dominance by the colonial masters. In an attempt to pacify the people, several constitutions were introduced in the colony. Joseph Egbebulum noted that colonial rule alone (1860 – 1960) gave Nigeria four different constitutions to weaken the urge to demand for resource control. These constitutions include the Clifford's constitution of 1922, the Richard's Constitution of 1946, the Macpherson's Constitution of 1951 and Littleton's Constitution 1954 with different degrees of freedom to accommodate resource control. These constitutions availed the people the opportunity to control their cocoa in the west, groundnut pyramids in the North, and palm produce in the Eastern region, only paying taxes to the central government. But the situation drastically changed at the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta region in present day Bayelsa State at Oloibiri Community. Hence, the agitation for resource control deepens and became critical in the independence era.

After the attainment of independence in 1960, the politics of resource control dramatically changed. The principle of derivation that was initially used as sharing formula favoring generating regions was changed when oil became the mainstay of the country's wealth. Thus, Amucheazi E. hits the point:

Resource Control agitation was borne out of deep-seated feeling of marginalization in spite of the huge petroleum wealth that Nigeria has taken from the oil producing region. The principle of derivation which was the basic formula for sharing revenue when agriculture was the mainstay of the Nigerian economy was consigned to history books as oil replaced agricultural products as the mainstay of the economy. This situation was seen as a conspiracy by the power elite of the three major ethnic groups (Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa – Fulani), particularly because of the absence of oil in any significant quantity in their regions (Egugbo, 2016:187).

The above insinuated point infuriated the leaders of the Niger Delta region because it was described as an oppression, deprivation, cheating and injustice to the people which triggered the struggle for resource control. The main annoyance of the Niger Delta region was that the country was initially divided into three regions with the agreement to adopt derivation as the revenue sharing formula which was later downplayed and twisted.

Hence, the issue of resource control was an attempt to express their annoyance to the federal government on their failed promises and dubious character. In this connection, the first phase of the resource control struggle from the Niger Delta region after independence was spearheaded by Isaac AdakaBoro who declared the Niger Delta Republic in February 23, 1966 under the umbrella of his Niger Delta Volunteer force. The Niger Delta Volunteer force, led by Isaac AdakaBoro, an armed Militia with dominant membership from Ijaw ethnic group engaged the Nigeria's Federal forces for 12 days expressing their anger in gun battle. However, they were eventually defeated and jailed for treason by the federal Military Government. Fortunately, the military regime of Gen. Yakubu Gowon who succeeded the murdered AguiyiIronsi in a counter coup in July granted AdakaBoro amnesty on the eve of the Nigeria civil war in May 1967. This "twelve-day revolution" marked the initial phrase of resource control struggle that ushered in some commission to addressing the issue.

In addressing the friction between the federal government of Nigeria and the component units on the issue of revenue allocation and fiscal matters, the Raisman Commission of 1958 was put in place. The Commission introduced a new system in which the proceeds from natural resources shall not only be shared among the three tiers government but also be returned to the Distributed Pool Account (DPA) for onward sharing to other states and regions of the Federation. This distribution bears one out on that score. By the recommendation of the Commission, the following were the highlights: (i) Central Government – 20%; (ii) Oil producing Regions – 50%, and; (iii) Distributable Pool Account – 30% Other import duties and royalties are allocated as follows: (i) Central Government – 70%, and; (ii) Distributable Pool Account – 30%. What normally accrues to the Distributable pool Account is to be shared among the Regions on the principles of continuity of government service, minimum responsibilities, population and balanced development as follows: (i) Northern Region – 40%; (ii) Western Region – 24%; (iii) Eastern Region – 31%, and; (iv) Southern Region – 5%

The above operational formula for resource allocation generated other agitations which necessitated the Binns commission of 1964. Some of the highlights of the Binns Commission was its recommendation of an increase from 30 to 35% of duties on general imports and revenue from mining rents and royalties, payable to the distributable pool account. Similarly, it recommended a decrease of the percentage share of the central Government revenue in the distributable pool account was to be allocated among the regions on the principle of "Financial Comparability" using the following formula: (i) Northern Region – 42%; (ii) Eastern Region – 30%; (iii) Western Region – 20%, and; (iv) MidWestern Region – 8%.

Meanwhile, the commission empowers the Nigerian Federal Government to serve as the Bursar who pays the regions producing oil and other mineral resources in the federation. Thus, in its distribution of the distributed Pool Account (DPA), the commission recommended as follows: (i) Central Government – 50%; (ii) Oil producing Regions – 20%, and; (iii) Distributable Pool Account – 30%.

Just as the previous commission and its recommendations, the recommendation of the Binn's Commission had its own lapses particularly the low percentage distributed to the mid-western regions and the oil producing regions. Hence, the Niger Delta region put more bite on resource control struggle. When Gen. Gowon was succeeded by the regime of Major General Murtala Mohammed in 1975 and in 1976 Murtala Mohammed was succeeded by his Vice, General Olusegun Obasanjo after the president's assassination, certain things took place in preparation to the 1980 transition to civil rule. Abayade's commission of 1976 recommended 58.5% for Federal Government, 31.5% for States and 10% for Local Governments. Accordingly, Pius Akigble's commission of 1980 strongly criticized Abayade's report for its vertical distribution of state allocation to the respective tiers of government in Nigeria. Between these Commissions were the land use Act of 1978 in which section 1 of the Act made Nigeria Government the true owner of all lands and all mineral deposits in the country and section 62 (1) of the 1979 constitution went further to give ownership and control of all mineral deposits in the country to the government of the federation. According to Yinka, these controversies created by the 1979 constitution and its neighboring 1978 land use Act, together with the lingering crises of the respective reports and commissions before them, created a strong background to the OMPADEC Decree of 1992 (34) (Ugwu, 2019:24).

Efforts to resolve the lingering resource control crisis in the country led the then military government of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida in 1989 to create a National Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (NRMAFC) Committee. The Commission recommended the payment of 40% to states that are producing Oil equally, 30% to the states on the basis of population. 20% derivation and 10% on social development needs. However, the efforts of the commission were sabotaged on the account of Lack of implementation and corruption. This failure of the Commission resulted to another resurgence of the resources control struggle which eventually led to the establishment of the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) Decree No.23 of July 1992. The Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission ((OMPADEC) was basically established to rehabilitate and develop the Niger Delta Region exposed to ecological damage and environment pollution. However, in another shock, the purpose of its establishment was thwarted as a result of corruption, insincerity, and conflict of interest in the course of execution of the respective objectives of the Decree.

The perpetuation of environmental pollution and neglect of the Niger Delta by the Federal Government, Shell Nigeria and Chevron Nigeria created a perceived need to take violent action especially by the youths from the early 1990s (Raji, Grundlingh and Abejide, 2013: p6). On the account of this, various movements such as the Ken Saro-Wiwa's Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Asari-Dokubo's Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and Ateke Tom's Niger Delta Revolutionary Front (NDRF) etc were formed to fight for resource control in the region. Ken Saro-Wiwa who was like Isaac AdakaBoro, adopted the peaceful and non-violent approach of Mahatma Ghandhi of India and emphasized the neglect and environmental degradation of the oil producing areas. His cry was basically a non-violent campaign for environmental

justice and development of the region. However, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Dube, and KobariNwilewas were arrested in connection with crimes bordering on unlawful assembly, seditious intention and seditious publication at Port Harcourt on June 21, 1993. On November 10, 1995, nine activists from the movement namely BarinamKiobel, John Kpunien, BariborBera, Saturday Dobe, Felix Nwate, NorduEawo, Paul Levura, Daniel Gbokoo and Ken Saro-Wiwa were executed on the charges of "incitement to murder" of the four Ogoni leaders.

This action of the federal government infuriated the youths of the region and launched offensive attacks on oil companies operating in the region. Thus, Larry and Ekundayo describe their actions:

Thus, at the initial stage of their struggle, militants, in championing the course for socio-economic and environmental emancipation, engaged in sabotaging oil installations, hostage taking, and carrying out lethal car bombings. This perhaps, indicates a pragmatic shift from the initial Ghandhi-like revolutionary struggle by Ken Saro-Wiwa (after the Isaac AdakaBoro era) to a militarized violent movement towards ascertaining the wishes and desires of an average people of the Niger Delta. This finally metamorphosed to the worse form of kidnapping and hostage taking (2017:305).

The Kangaroo execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and ten other human rights activists tremendously increased militant activities in the region. The most active militant groups were the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), Asari-Dokubo's Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Ateke Tom's Niger Delta Revolutionary Front (NDRF) and other smaller and less known groups. In the wider context of under-development, widespread oil pollution, a lack of livelihood options and a largely unresponsive government, militants targeted oil pipelines, hostage tacking, sea piracy, shutting down of Riggs and other nefarious activities. Notable figures on these activities were Government OwezideiTompolo, late Prince Igodo, General Africanus, the Great Joshua Maciver, the Young Shall Grow (Ebikabowei), Eric Ogunboss and several others. Still pressing the demand for resource control, the Ijaw Youth council (IYC) was formed in 1998, and the issuing of the Kaiama Declaration. In the declaration, and in a letter to the oil companies, the militant activists called for oil companies to suspend operations and their withdrawal from the region. The youth body of the Ijaw nation (IYC) pledged "to struggle peacefully for freedom, self-determination, and ecological justice. As part of its (IYC) objective, the Ijaw Youth Council declared direct action and operation climate change beginning from December 28, 1998. In an attempt for Federal Government to frustrate the efforts of the freedom fighters, two warships and 15,000 Nigerian troops occupied Bayelsa and Delta States as the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) Mobilized for Operation Climate Change. On December 30, 1998, the operation of the Ijaw Youths Group began and the soldiers opened fire on them thereby killing at least three protesters and arrested twenty-five of them. Efforts demanding to release the detained protesters still led to the killing of another three persons including Nwashuku, Okeri and GhadaEzeifile. This eventually compelled

the military to declare a state of emergency throughout Bayelsa State, imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew and banned meetings.

In spite of the deliberate efforts of the military to stop the activities of the Ijaw Youths, the Operation climate change continued, and disrupted Nigerian oil supplies all through the region in 1999. In the context of high conflict between the Ijaw Youths and the Nigerian Federal Government (Joint Military Task Force), the military carried out the Odi Massacre turning Odi Town to war zone by destroying the entire community and killing several persons. However, the struggle for resource control continued in forms of attacking oil installations, foreign workers and the military personnel.

In year 2000, the government of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, having tired of the persistent agitations of the Ijaw Youths and the failures of military efforts, undertook to settle the issue of resource control through the establishment and enactment of the NDDC Act of 2000. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) is an agency owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria with the sole mandate of developing the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria. An important function of the Commission is to, conceive, plan and implement, in accordance with set rules and regulations, projects and programs for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta Area (Dibua, 2005:20). In other words, the mission of the commission is to ensure a rapid, even, stable and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically stable, socially buoyant and ecologically regenerative while being politically peaceful.

The NDDC by its mandate, recorded significant achievements in the areas of manpower development, employment, construction of roads, school buildings, rural electrifications, landing jetties, and other development strides in the region. For the purposes of effective and efficient administration, the government of late President Musa Yar'Adua in 2008 created the Ministry of Niger Delta to strengthen the NDDC as a Commission thereby making it as a Parastatal under the Niger Delta Ministry. Both the NDDC and the Niger Delta Ministry were created to fulfil the developmental aims and objectives of the previous boards and commissions saddled with the development of the region. However, both the commission and the ministry has been bedevilled with corruption, instability and mismanagement. Thus, the NDDC and the ministry is not the final solution to the issue of resource control in the region. Youth restiveness in form of hostage taking, sea piracy, pipeline vandalism and operation of illegal refineries increased tremendously in the region.

On June 24, 2009, the Nigerian Federal Government led by former President Musa Yar'Adua officially opened a two-month amnesty window (from 06 August to 04 October, 2009) to all militants in the Niger Delta region in exchange for their demobilization and disarmament in reward of some financial stipends as compensation. The amnesty deal for militants in the Niger Delta was aimed at reducing unrest in the oil-rich region. The Yar'Adua led federal government offered an unconditional pardon and cash payments to militant who agree to lay down their arms. Proving his sincerity on the amnesty deal, late

President Yar'Adua freed Henry Okah, a suspected leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the most active militant group then. Upon his release, Henry Okah accepted the amnesty offer, together with his colleague, Ebikabowei Victor Ben (Boyloaf). General Ebikabowei Victor Ben, also known as Boyloaf, represented all the militants in the exercise assisted by former Governor Chief Timipre Sylva Marlin which the deal was a success. While the amnesty offer was a positive move to reduce unrest in the region, the government did not show willingness to tackle the underlying problems in the region. Thus, the shift of baton on the fight for resource control was shifted to the South South Governors of the Niger Delta region.

The South-south delegates to last National Political Reform Conference in Abuja while highlighting the negative impacts of the lack of resource control on the people of the Niger Delta emphasized that the Niger Delta region, a virgin Community, rich in oil deposits has been sapped, sucked, mocked, subdued, despoiled, repressed, oppressed, desecrated and deserted. In the same vein, the south-south governors expressed their annoyance that the region suffers from unimaginable environmental degradation and pollution. Arable and grazing pieces of land have been lost to oil spillages, as well as other aquatic lives adversely affected. Therefore, the resource control struggle is a call and move by the people of the region to take their destinies into their own hands in order to ensure the environmental protection and restoration of the Niger Delta territory to a productive and environmentally friendly region.

Recently on November 24, 2020, the South-South governors led by IfeanyiOkowa demands for restructuring, resource control and true federalism at Port Harcourt during a consultative meeting with the federal government. IfeanyiOkowa, the then chairman of South-South Governor's Forum demanded for true federalism guided by the principle of derivation, revenue sharing and resource control by each state of the federation. Therefore, the issue of resource control struggle is a continues one as long as the demands of the region are not met. What is necessary at this point is a guiding principle that can facilitates its realization. As seen above, the present resource control struggle fight is basically for the South-South governors but they need Philosophical framework and guidance as their basis of argument in the struggle.

### **Nozick's Justice and Resource Control in Nigeria**

This seems to be the crux of the entire discussion because every other segment is a prelude to this aspect. Robert Nozick's entitlement theory of Justice as primarily concerned with respecting the rights of the people, especially their rights to property and self-ownership is a blueprint in the realization of resource control struggle in Nigeria particularly to the resource producing areas. Nozick's entitlement theory as justice in acquisition, justice in transfer and rectification of injustice are guiding principles and philosophical validation to the resource control struggle in Nigeria. Meticulously, resource control as the insistence of the people of resource producing areas to control and manage their natural resources can only see the light of the day if the right principle is applied. Robert Nozick's justice readily fits in as a philosophical framework for its realization. Thus, a proper

understanding and application of Nozick's justice would serve as a catalyst in the realization of the resource control struggle, which will in turn bring about the following benefits to the resource producing areas and to the entire country:

**Resource Control and Socio-Economic Development:** There is no way the resource producing areas such as the Niger Delta region can socio-economically develop if the resources belonging to the people are controlled and managed by non-indigenes like the Federal Government. The region can only develop socioeconomically if the wealth and the resources belonging to people are controlled and managed by the people themselves. A practical condition of the country shows that those who control and manage the resources of the country stand a better chance to develop his or her region. This became incontrovertible with the instance of the North and the West been more developed than the South-South and the South-East because they are in the helms of affairs of the country. Statistics shows that the Niger Delta region that generate 80% of Nigerian income and its foreign reserve have only 11.99% of total roads constructed by the central government, compared to 19.4% in the North-West, 22.69% in the North-Central, 22.68% in the North-East and 13.27% in the South-West which clearly indicates that the South-South region is grossly under developed because they do not control and manage their own resources.

The South-South region lacks good roads, electricity, hospitals, drinkable water and anything good in modern life. The Niger Delta region still lives a rustic life where they cook with fire hoods, drink from the rivers and schools without qualified teachers. In fact, the life pattern in the Niger Delta is not quite different from the early man because their resources are controlled and managed by intruders. However, this narrative can change for the better if the resources of the region are controlled and managed by the people themselves. The reason is that controlling and managing the resources personally by the people would promotes responsible behavior and efficient management of the resources, which in turn, can bring about holistic development to the regions. Hence, below are some reasons resource control is far better than external control by the Federal Government: (i) It promotes responsible behavior and efficient management. This is because private ownerships have strong incentives to undertake cost effective measures for proper improvements to reap the fruits of their investment; (ii) Private ownership and control makes people accountable for their actions and thereby promoting general welfare; (iii) Through specialization or division of labor and trade, it encourages individuals to develop and employ resources in a way that they would be advantageous to all; (iv) Private ownership and control encourages innovation and creativity that are prerequisites for social progress, and; (v) It encourages wise conservation of resources with positive and beneficial implications for intergenerational equity and suitable development (Antai and Basse, 2014:5). Therefore, resource control by resource producing areas in Nigeria is sine qua non to the development of such regions as validated by Robert Nozick's theory of justice.

**Resource Control and Peace, Security and Stability:** Since independence in 1960, insecurity has been a feature of the Nigerian State as conflicts in different parts of the

country have continued to make life insecure. In the Niger Delta in particular, violence has been the bane of the region where conflicts have been occurring for over four decades. Beginning from the pre-colonial period, the region has witnessed a series of conflicts, which had their roots, initially in the protest against injustice, and in recent years in the quest for resource control (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2017:1). In other words, the region had experienced so many forms of violence, destruction and even killings of innocent souls which has affected the peace, stability and safety of occupants in the region. The crisis in the Niger Delta is linked to the marginalization and injustice meted against the people of the region. In reaction to this government's wicked attitude, exploitation and dispossession of the region, some militant leaders such as Henry Okah, Government Ekpemupolo, Ebikabowei Victor-Ben, Asari-Dokubo, Ateke Tom and other leaders of the region demanded for resource control. This struggle for oil wealth fueled a violence between the militant groups and the Federal Military Forces which had turned the region into war zone leading to panic, fear and loss of lives and property. Thus, the area has become a hot bed of violence, insurgency, kidnapping, hostage taking, oil pipeline sabotage, crude oil theft, gang wars, internecine struggles and so much else by way of anarchy & chaos (Afinotan and Ojakorotu, 2009:191). The question is: how can peace, stability and security return to Nigeria as a country? The simple answer is the Federal Government's acceptance and adoption of the resource control policy. If the resources belonging to respective regions are controlled by the people, peace, security and stability would return to Nigeria because resource control is the root cause to most crises in the country.

**Resource Control and Wealth Creation:** The reason behind the enormous wealth in the Northern and Western parts of the country is the oil wealth they controlled and siphoned from resource producing areas particularly in the Niger Delta region on petroleum resources. In other words, oil exploration and its gains in the Niger Delta has produced enormous wealth to multinational oil companies such as Shell, Mobil, Texaco, Agip, Elf, Chevron and to those who control such wealth particularly those from the North and the West, leaving the people from the Niger Delta in abject poverty and penury. Government officials and oil dealers from the Northern part of the country have enriched themselves to the extent that they have become the richest people in the country. All the rich and wealthy personalities in the country are found in the Northern and Western parts of the country because they control the wealth of the resources found in the Niger Delta region and other resource producing areas. Thus, the chief source of resentment and annoyance among the various peoples in Nigeria was the way resources are controlled and managed especially oil wealth and activities which has polluted the host communities' air, water, tore up their lands, disrupted their traditional ways of life and a sense of community, juxtaposed with the enormous wealth it produced for others particularly those in the helms of affairs from the Northern and western parts of the country. In like manner, if the resources found in the host communities are controlled by the people themselves, riches and wealth would be created in those areas. Therefore, if resource control is granted to resource producing areas, it would produce enormous wealth to the people.

**Resources Control and Economic Progress:** Resource Control as requested by the resource producing areas particularly in the Niger Delta is a gateway to economic progress which entails elimination of poverty, life expectancy, good health and life, self-reliance and economic prosperity of the region. There is no doubt that the Niger Delta region is blessed with numerous natural resources and being in charge of these resources would attract economic growth and development to the region. In other words, resource control and management can help to reduce Poverty and Facilitates rapid development in any economy. Thus, Oladimeji (2014:290) observes the importance of resource control which includes: (i) Reduction in the poverty level in the country thereby bringing about economic development; (ii) Becoming the bedrock of a market-driven economy; (iii) Leading to proper and effective usage of resources (iv) Enhancing life expectancy or individuals, and; (v) Bringing about fiscal discipline, accountability, openness and transparency. Borrowing leaf of the above, resource control would sine qua non a pathway to economic progress in Nigeria.

**Resource Control and Regional Identity:** Resource producing regions such as the Niger Delta region is the most despised and rejected region in the federation. The identity of such regions are not known among the comity of nations in the country. This may not be unconnected with the fact that such regions had no control of their resources which has resulted into widespread poverty, penury and underdevelopment of their regions. Just like the saying that the poor man has no voice in his family, the Ijaws, Ibibios, Urhobos and other nations from resource producing regions have no voice and identity in the midst of the major ethnic groups such as the Hausas, Yorubas and Igbos. The point is that just because the resource producing regions does not have any Control over their resources, even the multinational oil companies pay only homage and respect to the Federal Government of Nigeria. May be, that is the reason all oil companies locate and situate their head offices in Lagos and other cities outside the oil producing regions. Therefore, for oil producing regions to be recognized as geographical entities, resource control is sacrosanct.

**Resource Control and Social Harmony among States:** Resource Control is a prerequisite for social harmony in Nigeria. This is because the current structure of Nigerian Federalism has constituted an impediment to national integration, economic cooperation and social harmony. In other words, the current structure of Nigerian federalism is anchored on centralization of power which has incapacitated the regional governments to control their resources. The point is that if every state is allowed to control and manage their resources, there would be mutual cooperation and social harmony among states because there will be no issue of cheating, jealousy, and injustice emanating from allocation and distribution of resources in the country. The basic point of argument is that the current pattern of resource allocation and distribution by the Federal Government does not promote national unity and social harmony. The various regions in the country are not equally treated when it comes to revenue allocation. Resources financially allocated to the Northern region is proportionally more than what is given to other regions, may be because there are more local governments in the North than other regions.

This does not promote national unity, as ill-feeling arises among the regions in the federation, particularly regions generating the wealth of the nation. Therefore, if resource control is adopted, all these feelings of being cheated, maltreated and unfairness would naturally disappear which can bring about social harmony among states.

**Resource Control and Healthy Management and Competition among States:** Since resource control would permit each state to control and manage their resources, every state would judiciously manage their resources for efficient profiting which in turn would promote healthy competition among states. Therefore, adopting resource control across the federation would bring about economic growth arising from healthy competition among states.

### Conclusion

The basic fact is that injustice is the root cause of social and economic problems in Nigeria which has resulted into incessant crises across the country. Regions that are blessed with natural resources are marginalized, oppressed and unjustly sidelined in the distributive table in the country. On the other hand, the regions that produce national leaders who coordinate and control the affairs of the country use the wealth of the resource owners to develop their regions. Thus, the South-South and the South East who have the wealth of the nation wallow in abject poverty and penury, while the North and the West swim in economic prosperity, wealth and rapid development. However, the study shows that resource control is the solution to this social malady. When states and regions that own the natural resources control and manage their resources, they use them to develop their areas which can put a stop to all these incessant crises across the country especially in the Niger Delta Region. But, the resource control policy may not come to fruition without a philosophical framework which Robert Nozick's theory of justice readily fit in to serve as a blueprint for its actualization. Therefore, Robert Nozick's theory of justice as justice in acquisition, justice in transfer and rectification of injustice is a blueprint to the actualization of resource control which can guarantee, peace, wealth creation and rapid development to resource producing areas.

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