

DYNAMICS OF NIGER DELTA STRUGGLES AND THE STATE RESPONSES: THE STATE OF TERRORISM AND TERRORISM OF THE STATE

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ABSTRACT

Since the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria over fifty years ago, the struggle for control of the resources by the people and to protest against the massive degradation of their environment has changed over time from peaceful agitations to more violent ones. This article examined the dynamics of this struggle as well as the various ways the Nigerian State has responded to the struggle. Locating the crisis in the Niger Delta within the theoretical context of Relative Deprivation and Social Action perspectives, the argument in this article is that various killings, abductions, and bombings, perpetuated by the Niger Delta Militants constituted the state of terrorism. On the other hand, the Nigerian State use of maximum and naked force to subjugate, oppress and dispossession the people of the Niger Delta their natural resources constituted the terrorism of the State. The article suggested that all stakeholders have various roles to play in reducing the various terrorist activities going on both in the Niger Delta and in the other parts of Nigeria.

Keywords: The Nigerian State; Niger Delta; Oil; Militants; Terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country of paradox (Ayoade, 2010). A nation so rich in human and natural resources, yet its Human Development Index (HDI) has remained one of the worst in the world. Of all the problems that have threatened the country's corporate existence, the greatest is the act of terrorism going on the Niger over the control of oil resources. Oil from the Niger Delta region has brought Nigeria to world reckoning. Nigeria's proven oil reserves are estimated at 36.2 billion barrels. With the continuing discovery of new oil wells, it is estimated that the nation's proven oil reserves might increase to about 40 billion barrels in the years to come. Nigeria is the largest oil producer in African and the seventh largest in the world. Its total oil production in 2006 included condensates, natural gas liquids, and crude oil, averaged about 2.45 million barrels per day (bpd), with oil accounting for 2.28 million bpd (Aham, 2008).

Since oil was first exported in 1958, Nigeria has been elevated from a struggling nation to an economically dependent and buoyant country, thereby engendering various development projects (Aham, 2008; Ajanaku, 2008; Ojatorotu & Gilbert, 2010). However, the availability of huge oil revenues and weak political and administrative structures has given rise to a high incidence of corruption, thus neglecting the Niger Delta region. Over the last five decades, the struggle for control of a greater share of oil revenue and protest the massive environmental degradation in the region have progressed from peaceful

agitations to more violent ones (Agbo, 2008; Epelle, 2010; Mukoro & Egbadju, 2010). The responses of the Nigerian State have progressed from simply tokenism to the use of maximum force to quell the agitations and subjugate the people of the region (Agbo, 2008b; Yishua, 2008). These violent struggles, by both the Niger Delta militants and the Nigerian State represent different kinds of terrorism.

THE NIGER DELTA SITUATION: THE CASE OF OLOIBIRI AND Ogoniland

Between 1953 and 1956, oil was struck in a relatively unknown town called Oloibiri. With this, Oloibiri grew to become a big town and a hub that drew people. Soon, helicopters were landing and it became a center of modern civilization. When oil was found, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), the Anglo-Dutch company, marked it with a wild party, which even the locals attended. By 1958, the company had started pumping oil from Oloibiri oil fields, made were made up of 22 oil wells. (Agbo, 2008a; Ojatorotu & Gilbert, 2010). At that time, Oloibiri was a blue-chip town where white men could play lawn tennis, table tennis, volleyball, and football with the locals. After 20 years of oil-drilling, Shell said the wells had dried up. They dismantled their equipment and left in 1978. At present, the glamour and beauty of Oloibiri town has gone and the countenance of the town gives no clue to the great place it once was. When Shell left their camp at Otuogidi, it later became a thick forest (Agbo, 2008a).

Oloibiri is a living tragedy of the Niger Delta situation. When the town was in the reckoning, the biggest general hospital in the old Rivers state was sited at Oloibiri. It has 22 buildings fully completed and painted, but the squabbles prevented the hospital from being commissioned. At present, the buildings have been swallowed by a trespassing mangrove forest and are inhabited by wild animals. Oloibiri women fetched firewood around the complex and hunters set traps for animals inside the buildings.

It is important to note that Shell Petroleum Development Company not only succeeded in winning the contest for Oloibiri, but facilitated Nigeria's birth not just as an oil-producing nation, but also as a member of the league of the world's oil-exporting countries. The relationship between the company and the community left Oloibiri battered, down and out, abused, and exploited. The hitherto bubbling oil-rich community is now a barren land sucked dry of its natural endowments and its environment, devastated by serial oil spillages and pollution. The Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) puts the quantity of oil jettisoned into the environment yearly at 2,300 cubic meters, with an average of 300 individual spills, annually (Ero, 2008; Nwonwu, 2010). Oloibiri is a metaphor of the tragic fate that awaits many more oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta region. While the Nigerian State counts its blessing in trillions of naira from oil revenue, the hapless people, whose land produces crude oil, wallow in abject poverty. Indeed, Oloibiri serves as a metaphor for environmental degradation and neglect (Ikporukpo, 2007).

Ogoniland, on the other hand, is a 404-square-mile (1,050 km²) region in the southeast of the Niger Delta basin. Economically, viable petroleum was discovered in Ogoniland in 1957, just one year after the discovery of Nigeria's first commercial petroleum deposit, with Royal Dutch Shell and Chevron Corporation setting up shop throughout the next two decades. The Ogoni people, a minority ethnic group of about half a million people who call Ogoniland home, and other

ethnic groups in the region attest that during this time, the State began forcing them to abandon their land to oil companies without consultation, and offering negligible compensation. This is supported by a 1979 constitutional addition, which afforded the state full ownership and rights to all Nigerian territory and also decided that all compensation for land would be based on the value of the crops on the land at the time of its acquisition, not on the value of the land itself. The Nigerian State could now distribute the land to oil companies as it is deemed fit (Ikporukpo, 2007).

The 1970s and 1980s saw the state's empty promises of benefits for the Niger Delta peoples fall through, with the Ogoni growing increasingly dissatisfied and their environmental, social, and economic apparatus rapidly deteriorating. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was formed in 1992, and spearheaded by Ken Saro-Wiwa, to become the major campaigning organization representing the Ogoni people in their struggle for ethnic and environmental rights. Its primary targets and adversaries are the Nigerian State and Royal Dutch Shell.

DYNAMISM OF THE STRUGGLE AND THE STATE OF TERRORISM

Niger Delta armed insurrection did not begin recently; it started when an Ijaw nationalist, named Isaac Boro, led an armed campaign for greater Niger Delta autonomy, resource control, and self-determination for the inhabitants of the Niger Delta. Therefore, a brief review of notable personalities in the struggle, namely Isaac Boro, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and Asari-Dokubo, will suffice here.

Isaac Adaka Boro was born in 1938. He was a celebrated Niger Delta nationalist and Nigerian civil war hero. He was one of the pioneers of minority rights activism in Nigeria. His major goal to remedy the injustice that minority ethnicities in the Delta suffered in a Nigerian state dominated by the large ethnic groups. He started off as a university student's leader, and later became a teacher, policeman, and Nigerian army officer. As an undergraduate student of chemistry and Student Union President at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), he left school to lead an armed protest against the exploitation of oil and gas resources in the Niger Delta areas, which benefited the federal government of Nigeria and a remote Eastern Nigeria regional government. He believed that the people of the area deserved a fairer share of proceeds of the oil wealth. He formed the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), an armed militia with members consisting of his fellow Ijaw ethnic groups. They eventually set up a military camp at Taylor Creek. Their recruits were given training in the use of firearms and explosives in the creeks and bushes. Eventually, they managed to muster a force of about 150 men, split into three divisions (Agbo, 2008b).

On February 23, 1966, the NDVF men attacked a police station at Yenagoa, raided the armory and kidnapped some officers, including the police officer in command of the station. They also blew up oil pipelines, engaged the police in a gunfight, and declared the Niger Delta an independent republic. The revolt was suppressed and Boro and his compatriots were put on trial on a 9-count charge of treason at Port Harcourt Assizes before Judge Phil Eboisie. Boro was found guilty and was jailed for treason. However, the federal regime of General Yakubu Gowon granted him amnesty on the eve of the Nigerian civil war in May 1967. He, then, enlisted and was commissioned as a major in the Nigerian army. He fought on the side of the federal government, but was killed in active service in 1968 at Ogu in River State.

Kenule Beeson Saro Wiwa, on the other hand, was born in the Khana Kingdom of the Ogoni nation in 1941. His father was a forest maintenance officer and his mother, a house wife. He has his early education in Ogoni before moving to the famous Government College, Umuahia, from where he gained admission to the University of Ibadan. At 24, Ken was offered a Graduate Assistant job by the University of Ibadan. Thus, he was set for what looked like a bright future career in academics and intellectual pursuit. He was an accomplished administrator, a poet, a novelist, a movie producer, and an environmental right activist.

In 1990, Saro-Wiwa began devoting most of his time to human rights and environmental causes, particularly in Ogoniland. He was one of the earliest members of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which advocated for the rights of the Ogoni people. The Ogoni Bill of Rights, written by MOSOP, set out the movement's demands, including increased autonomy for the Ogoni people, a fair share of the proceeds of oil extraction, and remediation of environmental damage to Ogoni lands. In particular, MOSOP struggled against the degradation of Ogoni lands by the Shell Oil Company. In 1992, Saro-Wiwa was imprisoned for several months without trial by the Nigerian military government. Saro-Wiwa was Vice President of Unrepresented Nations and People Organization (UNPO) General Assembly from 1993 to 1995.

In January 1993, MOSOP organized peaceful marches of around 300,000 Ogoni people – more than half of the Ogoni population – through four Ogoni centers, drawing international attention to the people's plight. The same year the Nigerian government occupied the region militarily. Saro-Wiwa was arrested, again, and detained by Nigerian authorities in June 1993, but was released after a month. On May 21, 1994, four Ogoni chiefs (all on the conservative side of a schism within MOSOP over strategy) were brutally murdered. Saro-Wiwa had been denied entry to Ogoniland on the day of the murders, but he was arrested and accused of incitement to them. Saro-Wiwa denied the charges, but was imprisoned for over a year before being found guilty and sentenced to death by a specially convened tribunal. The same happened to his other colleagues in MOSOP (Agbo, 2008b).

Mujahid Asari-Dokubo was born in 1964 (his former name was Melford Dokubo Goodhead Jr.) into a middle class Christian family headed by a court judge and a housewife, who also had four other children. He received both primary and secondary education in Port Harcourt and was admitted to read law at the University of Calabar, but dropped out after three years in 1990, citing problems with university authorities as his reason for doing so. He made other attempts to complete his education, but his activism caused him to quit his degree at Rivers State University of Science and Technology for reasons similar to those at Calabar. After dropping out of school, Asari converted to Islam and changed his name to Mujahid Dokubo-Asari. He spent much of the 1990s attempting to become involved in local politics, running for two offices in River State in 1992 and 1998. However, he was unsuccessful in those attempts.

In 1998, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) was formed and he became vice-president and, later, president in 2001. The organization issued the Kaiama Declaration in November 1998, expressing long-held Ijaw concerns about the loss of control of their homeland and their own lives to the Nigerian state and oil companies operating in the region. The declaration and a letter addressed to oil companies called on them to suspend operations and withdraw from Ijaw territory. The IYC pledged to struggle peacefully for freedom, self-determination, and ecological justice, and prepared a campaign of celebration, prayer,

and direct action called “Operation Climate Change” beginning December 28, 1998. The Nigerian government responded with an immediate crackdown on the group. As the IYC's president in 2001, he led the group to pursue an agenda of resource control and self-determination by every means necessary.

In 2004, Asari retreated into his hideout to form the Niger Delta People's Volunteered Force (NDPVF), which later emerged as a major catalyst for unrest in the Delta region. The NDPVF, a militant group, was funded, in large part, by local and regional politicians who sought great profits from the region's oil revenue. The NDPVF quickly escalated an armed conflict with a rival group known as the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), led by Ateke Tom, who was also seeking to control the Delta's oil resources. Both groups engaged in oil bunkering and other illegal forms of local resource extraction. The threats to attack oil wells and pipelines by the NDPVF caused companies operating in the area to withdraw most of their personnel from the Delta, resulting in a massive drop in oil production of 30,000 barrels per day. Due to the constant crisis precipitated by NDPVF and NDV, the government wanted to intervene, but this was a failure. Due to Asari's constant public support for self-determination of his native Ijaw people and independence for the Niger Delta, he was arrested and charged with treason by the State. However, on June 14, 2007, he was released on bail as part of large plan to try and bring peace to the Niger Delta region (Gilbert, 2010).

Besides these three notable personalities in Niger Delta struggle discussed above, there are other leaders of many militant organizations in the Niger Delta. Notable among them are: Henry Okah; Government Ekpemupolo (a.k.a Tompolo); Ateke Tom; ‘General’ John Togo; and Dagogo Farah. Of all the armed groups in the Niger Delta, the Movement of the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) has remained most recalcitrant and most violent in its terrorist operations against the Nigerian State using sabotage, theft, property destruction, guerrilla warfare, and kidnapping to press for its demands. MEND is one of the largest militant groups in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The Movement's stated goals are to localize control of Nigeria's oil, to secure reparations from the Nigerian State for pollution caused by the oil industry, and to totally destroy the capacity of the Nigerian government to export crude oil (Mukoro & Egbadju, 2010).

MEND had originally sought a union of all relevant militant groups in the Niger Delta. However, the identity of MEND is somewhat obscure since its leaders like to remain faceless and, in most instances, its cause has been taken up by completely unrelated groups inspired by the original MEND, one of which is claiming responsibility for some of the violence that has occurred.

MEND has an evolved dynamic approach to conduct warfare. It has been described as "open source" because its analogous to the decentralized communal development process, now prevalent in the software industry, making it extremely quick to innovate and move new technologies and tactics rapidly from cell to cell without the direction of a vulnerable leadership hierarchy. Furthermore, the “open source” affords the movement the opportunity to source their guerrilla fighters mostly from criminal gangs and tribal warrior cults existing in the region to do their operations

It's pertinent to note that MEND has evolved substantially more sophisticated tactics in its war against the Nigerian State than those of previous militant groups in the Niger Delta. The MEND's three tactics are: swarm-based maneuvers; improved firepower and combat training; and effect use of system disruption. Swarm-based maneuvers involve the guerrillas using speed boats in the Niger Delta's swamps to quickly attack targets in succession. Multiple, highly maneuverable units have kept the government's army of occupation and Shell's defensive systems off-balance when defending their sprawling networks. Radically improved firepower and combat training allows guerrillas to overpower a combination of Shell's Western-trained private military guards and elite Nigerian units in several engagements. The effective use of system disruption has been systematically and accurately selected to completely shut down production and delay and/or halt repair. The movement relied more on hostage taking and other clandestine activities to coerce both the Nigerian State and the multinational companies operating in the Niger Delta region.

In a nutshell, the militants, spearheaded by MEND, repeatedly and systematically bombed oil pipelines, triggering an international increase in the cost of oil globally. They have also kidnapped foreign oil workers. It is worthwhile to highlight some celebrated kidnapping cases that have occurred in the region since 2006. In it on record that since 2006, more than more 200 foreigners have been kidnapped, although most foreigners were released, unharmed (Adeyemo & Adeyemi, 2010). For instance, on January 10, 2006, militants kidnapped four foreign workers from an offshore platform and released them on January 30. Also, on February 18, MEND rebels attacked an oil barge and seized nine hostages: three Americans, two Egyptians, two Thais, a Filipino, and a Britain. All but the two Americans and the Britain were released on March 1; the others three were released on March 27. Furthermore, on May 11, Vito Macrina, an Italian, and two other employees of Saipem were abducted and freed the next day. On October 3, a militant group abducted four Scots, a Malaysian, an Indonesian, and a Romanian from a bar in Akwa Ibom state.

In 2007, nine South Koreans and one Nigerian working for Daewoo Engineering and Construction in Yenagoa were abducted on January 10, but were freed two days after. On May 1, MEND seized six expatriate workers from an offshore oil facility owned by Chevron. The group of six consisted of four Italians, an American, and a Croat. On the same day, MEND published photos of the captives seated on white plastic chairs in a wooden shelter around the remains of a campfire. On May 3, MEND seized eight foreign hostages from another offshore vessel. The hostages were released less than 24 hours later, stating they had intended to destroy the vessel and did not want more hostages. On May 25, the pipe laid barge LB300 (owned by Transcostal Off Shore) was attacked a few hundred meters off the Sangana community coastline, near the Aunty Juli Platform. A South African, four Britains and Americans, and one Nigerian were kidnapped. All were employees of Hydrodiye. The hostages were held for 19 days in basic conditions and were subjected to mock executions. MEND claimed responsibility and, at one point, announced to the national press that all the hostages were to be executed. They were all released unharmed. Also, on July 8, a Bulgarian and a Britain working for the Expro group were abducted from a barge near Calabar in Cross River state. They were released August 8, 2007.

In 2008 and precisely on September 9, British oil workers, Robin Barry Hughes and Matthew John Maguire, were kidnapped along with 27 other workers when their vessel was hijacked by MEND militants. As at February 2009, they were still being held hostage, and one of them was reported to be "very ill." However, both were later released.

On January 21, 2009, militants from the Niger Delta attacked the tanker, MT *Meredith*, filled with diesel fuel, and kidnapped a Romanian worker. Also, in April 16, Julie Ann Mulligan, a Canadian in Nigeria on a Rotary International Exchange was taken hostage April 16, and C\$700,00 was demanded before the hostage takers went down to \$136,000 before releasing her on Wednesday, April 29. Mulligan came home Friday, May 1. On January 12, 2011, three Britons and a Colombian working for NETCO were kidnapped when their convoy was attacked near Port Harcourt. Also, on April 11, A Nigerian employee of Total was kidnapped by unknown men in southern Nigeria.

Besides kidnapping, MEND had engaged in most successful coordinated terrorist attacks against the state and multinational companies in the Niger Delta and beyond since 2006. For instance, in early 2006, nine officials for the Italian petrol company Eni SpA were killed when armed members of MEND attacked Eni SpA's security forces in Port Harcourt Port. MEND militants briefly occupied and robbed a bank near the Eni SpA base, leaving at about 3:30 p.m., about an hour after they showed up. Also, on May 10, 2006, an executive with the United States-based oil company, Baker Hughes, was shot and killed in the south-eastern city of Port Harcourt. At the time of the shooting, it was not immediately known if MEND had any involvement or not. Witnesses say the attacker appeared to be specifically targeting the US executive. On June 2, 2006, a Norwegian rig offshore vessel was attacked and 16 crew members were kidnapped by the MEND. On August 20, 2006, 10 MEND members were killed by the Nigerian military. The members were working on releasing a Royal Dutch Shell hostage. On October 2, 2006, 10 Nigerian soldiers were killed off the shore of the Niger Delta in their patrol boat by a MEND mortar shell. Earlier that day, a Nigerian/Royal Dutch Shell convoy was attacked in the Port Harcourt region resulting in some people being wounded. On October 3, 2006, a militant group abducted four Scots, a Malaysian, an Indonesian, and a Romanian from a bar in Akwa Ibom state. On October 4, 2006, Nigerian soldiers attacked a militant camp; in the ensuing battle, 9 Nigerian soldiers were killed. On November 22, 2006, Nigerian soldiers attempted a rescue of kidnapped oil workers, which resulted in one soldier being killed.

In 2007, the crisis did not abate, but escalated. For instance, on May 1, 2007 at 4:15 a.m., MEND attacked Chevron's Oloibiri floating production, storage, and offloading vessel off the coast of the southern Bayelsa state. On May 8, 2007, three major oil pipelines (one in Brass and two in the Akasa area) were attacked; shutting down oil production and cutting power to a facility ran by the Italian oil company, Agip, which was part of the ENI energy group. An e-mail statement from a MEND claimed responsibility for the attack and threatened to indefinitely attack all pipelines, platforms, and support vessels.

Moreover, on September 23, 2007, MEND announced that it had officially declared war, and that at midnight, it would be commencing attacks on installations and abduction of expatriates. Furthermore, on November 13, 2007, MEND militants attacked Cameroonian soldiers on the disputed Bakassi peninsula, killing more than 20 soldiers. Three days after this incident, a southern Cameroonian rebel group claimed responsibility for the attack.

Again, in 2008, on May 3, MEND militants attacked Shell-operated pipelines in Nigeria, forcing the company to halt 170,000 barrels a day of exports of Bonny Light crude. On June 20, 2008, MEND naval forces attacked the Shell-operated Bonga oil platform, shutting down 10% of Nigeria's oil production in one fell swoop. The oil platform, Shell's flagship project in the area capable of extracting 200,000 barrels of oil a day, was widely assumed to be outside the reach of the militants due to its location 120 km off-shore. This attack had demonstrated a level of prowess and sophistication never before seen by the rebels; it is now known that all of Nigeria's oil platforms are within range of a MEND attack. On September 14, 2008, MEND inaugurated "Operation Hurricane Barbarossa" with an ongoing string of militant attacks to bring down the oil industry in the River State. In September 2008, MEND released a statement proclaiming that their militants had launched an "oil war" throughout the Niger Delta against both the pipelines and oil production facilities and the Nigerian soldiers that protect them. In the statement, MEND claimed to have killed 22 Nigerian soldiers in one attack against a Chevron-owned oil platform. The Nigerian government confirmed that their troops were attacked in numerous locations, but said that all the assaults were repelled with the infliction of heavy casualties on the militants. On September 27, a week after declaring an oil war and destroying several significant oil production and transportation hubs in the delta, the group declared a ceasefire until "further notice" upon the intervention of Ijaw and other elders in the region.

On January 30, 2009, MEND called off its ceasefire and was suspected to have carried an attack outside the shores of Nigeria. In that wise, the Equatorial Guinean government blamed MEND for an attack on the presidential palace in Malabo on February 17, which resulted in the death of at least one attacker; however, MEND denied involvement. On May 15, 2009, a military operation undertaken by a Joint Task Force (JTF) began against MEND. It came in response to the kidnapping of Nigerian soldiers and foreign sailors in the Delta region. Thousands of people fled their villages and hundreds of people died because of the military offensive. Also, MEND claimed responsibility for pipeline attacks on June 18–21 on three oil installations belonging to Royal Dutch Shell in the Niger Delta. In a campaign labeled by the group as "Hurricane Piper Alpha", Chevron was also warned that it would "pay a price" for allowing the Nigerian military use of an oil company airstrip. On June 18, MEND claimed it had blown up a Shell pipeline, as a warning to Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, who was arriving to Nigeria the next day, and to any potential foreign investors. On July 6, 2009, MEND claimed responsibility for an attack on the Okan oil manifold. The pipeline was blown up at 8:45 p.m. (3:45 p.m. ET) Sunday. The militants claim that the manifold carried 80 percent of Chevron Nigeria Limited's off-shore crude oil to a loading platform. In a separate action on the same day, the group said that three Russians, two Filipinos, and an Indian were seized Sunday from the Siehem Peace oil tanker, about 20 miles from the southern port city of Escravos. On July 11, 2009, MEND carried out its first attack in Lagos. Militants attacked and set on fire the Atlas Cove Jetty on Tarkwa Bay, which is a major oil hub for Nigeria. Five workers were killed in the attack. This attack attracted a lot of condemnation from the Oodua People Congress (OPC), who threatened a reprisal attack should another attack be launched by MEND. As of October 17, 2009, MEND had resumed its hostilities against the Nigerian State, the oil industry, and its collaborators. However, October 25, MEND announced unilateral truce and accepted the government's proposal for reintegration.

Furthermore, on January 30, 2010, MEND called off its unilateral truce and threatened an "all-out onslaught" against the oil industry. On March 15, 2010, two bombs exploded at a Government House of Nigeria during the Post Amnesty Dialogue in Warri. The bombs killed three people and injured six more. The explosion damaged the Government House and other buildings in the area. MEND claimed responsibility for this attack. On October 1, 2010, Nigeria leaders were celebrating the country's 50th Independence Anniversary at the Eagle Square, Abuja, when two bombs exploded during a parade. In that attack, 12 were killed and 40 people were injured. The bomb was just one kilometer away from President Goodluck Jonathan (Adepengba, Oyedele, Ijioma, Soriwei & Amaefule, 2010; Oloja, Ogodo & Olise, 2010). MEND claimed responsibility and also claimed to have sent a warning in the form of an email to journalists half an hour before the bombs detonated. On November 8, 2010, gunmen raid an oil rig off Nigeria, kidnapping two Americans, two Frenchmen, two Indonesians, and a Canadian. MEND claimed responsibility. On November 15, 2010, MEND attacked an Exxon Mobil oil platform, kidnapping seven Nigerian workers.

In a nutshell, militants in the Niger Delta, especially MEND, have made oil exploration activities almost impossible with their organized and coordinated attacks and assaults on oil exploration infrastructure and personnel. However, the state has responded in more brutal manner.

THE STATE RESPONSES AND TERRORISM OF THE STATE

It is pertinent to note that despite the state brutal and repressive posture of the agitations in the area, early in the life of oil exploration in the Niger Delta, the need to pay special attention to the region because of its difficult terrain did not entirely escape the attention and the attention of the State. As a result, the state embarked on a number of chequered efforts to develop the region. The first of such effort was the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB). This was the product of Sir Henry Willink's Commission of 1958, which recommended that the area deserved special developmental attention. But it was not until 1960 that this board came into being. It had the mandate to manage the developmental needs and challenges of the region, then, segmented into the Yenagoa Province, Degema Province, the Ogoni Division of Port Harcourt, and the western Ijaw Division of Delta Province. But for the seven years the board existed, it made no significant mark. It faded into oblivion with the military coup of 1966 (Yishua, 2008).

Years after the Nigeria civil war, no special attention was given to the region. But following the return of the country to democratic rule in 1979, the region was remembered again. Following agitations for a special focus on the development of the region, the Shehu Shagari administration set up a President Task Force, better known as the 1.5 percent Committee, with the mandate to address the peculiarities of the region. It was allocated 1.5 percent of the federation account to carry out its assignment. The coups that brought Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Ibrahim Babangida to power did not immediately stop it. However, a few years into the Babangida's regime, it was abandoned. Hence the Task Force could not make any success of the mandate given to it.

In 1992, the Babangida regime set up the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). The regime gave OMPADEC the mandate of turning around the faces and the phases of the region. However, by 1999, when it

ended, OMPADEC had achievements projects that had no direct bearing on poverty reduction, which is considered a major challenge in the region. However, serious allegations of corruption were made to its leadership.

When Olusegun Obasanjo assumed power as a civilian president in 1999, the region was in chaos. His administration came up with the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) with the mandate to facilitate the rapid, even, and sustainable development of the region to become economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative, and political peaceful (Yishua, 2008).

While being inaugurated as the Nigeria's President, Umaru Musa Yar'adua promised to address the problems of Niger Delta region. Thus, in September 2008, he created the Federal Ministry of Niger Delta. However, the ministry has become another bureaucracy, with its pioneering Minister embarking on a wasteful familiarization tour of the region, even when he is from that same part of the country.

It is also pertinent to note since oil was discovered in the region, the region has been receiving a mere tokenism, while the Nigerian State has been reaping billions of dollars (Odion-Akhaine, 2008; Onuorah, Olayinka, Adeyemi & Salau, 2009). For instance, in 1953, the derivation principle in revenue allocation was 100 percent. By 1960, it went down to 50 percent. During the Nigerian civil war, it was almost zero because of the need to fund the war. By 1982, it was put at two percent, and by 1984, it was reduced to 1.5 percent. Also, by 1992, it doubled to three percent. Ever since 1999 the derivative has been put at 13 percent, although there have been clamours and campaigns for either total resource control or a minimum derivative of 50 percent (Agbo, 2008b; Amaechi, 2010; Ugwuoha, 2009).

It is important to state that the Land Use Decree of 1978, which deprived the region its land, vested ownership of all land in the hand of the Nigerian State. Also, the Petroleum Decree of 1969, amended in 1993 (Decree No. 52 of 1993, known as Osborne Land Decree; and the National Inland Waterways Authority Decree No. 13 of 1997) served to only complete the deprivation process. There is also the controversial issue of maritime boundary of coastal states solely for the purpose of derivation, which the federal government puts it at 200 nautical miles from the low water mark. The target is to deprive the states of their offshore oil wells.

In August 2009, the State offered the Niger Delta militants a stage managed amnesty deal (in which the militant ceremoniously handed in their second-rate weapons) so that oil exploitation and exploration would continue undisturbed and unhindered. In the deal, there was a turnout of more than 15,000 fighters - far beyond the State's projections of 10,000 for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program (Adejumobi, 2009; Akpan & Olise, 2009; Obasi, 2009; Oliomogbe, Ebiri, Bello).

Besides the tokenism which the state has given to the region, the state has also applied maximum force in suppressing and subjugating the legitimate demands of the region, thus accentuating the terrorism of the state against the region. The terrorism

of State against the region actually started back in 1960s (Odion-Akhaine, 2009). It continued and even extended towards the end 2010.

On May 21, 1994, soldiers and mobile policemen appeared in most Ogoni villages. On that day, four Ogoni chiefs (all on the conservative side of a schism within MOSOP over strategy) were brutally murdered. Saro-Wiwa, head of the opposing faction, had been denied entry to Ogoniland on the day of the murders, but he was detained in connection with the killings. The occupying forces, led by Major Paul Okuntimo of River State Internal Security, claimed to be searching for those directly responsible for the killings of the four Ogonis. In that incident, the state engaged in deliberate terror operations against the general Ogoni population. By mid-June, the security forces had razed 30 villages, detained 600 people, and killed at least 40. This figure eventually rose to 2,000 civilian deaths and the displacement of 100,000 internal refugees (Ganago, 2010; Ilenre, 2010).

In that terrorist attack by the state, nine activists from the movement who would become known as 'The Ogoni Nine', consisting of Ken Saro-Wiwa, John Kpuinen, Dr. Barinem Kiobel, Baribor Bera, Paul Levura, Daniel Gbokoo, Felix Nuate, Saturday Dorbee, and Nodu Eawo were arrested and accused of incitement to murder, following the deaths of four Ogoni elders. Saro-Wiwa and his comrades denied the charges, but were imprisoned for over a year before being found guilty and sentenced to death by a special convened tribunal, hand-selected by General Sani Abacha, on November 10, 1995. The activists were denied due process and, upon being found guilty, were hanged by the Nigerian state. The executions were met with an immediate international response. The trial was widely criticized by human rights organizations and the governments of other states, who condemned the Nigerian government's long history of detaining their critics, mainly pro-democracy and other political activists. The Commonwealth of Nations, which had also pleaded for clemency, suspended Nigeria's membership in response. The United States, the United Kingdom, and the EU all implemented sanctions, but not on petroleum (Ganago, 2010; Ilenre, 2010). Shell claimed it asked the Nigerian government for clemency towards those found guilty, but its request was refused. However, a 2001 Green peace report found that two witnesses that accused the "Ogoni Nine", later admitted that Shell and the Nigerian State had bribed them with promises of money and jobs at Shell. Shell later admitted having given money to the Nigerian military, who brutally tried to silence the voices which claimed justice.

Furthermore, in 1998, the IYC asked all oil companies' staff and contractors to withdraw from Ijaw territories by December 30, 1998, pending the resolution of the issue of resource ownership and control in the Ijaw area of the Niger Delta and demanded a sovereign national conference to restructure the Nigerian State. The Government of General Abuldsalami Abubakar responded by sending in the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) and several Niger Deltans were massacred.

Towards the end of 2010, following the nation's 50th Independence Anniversary, bombing in Abuja on October 1st by MEND, which thoroughly embarrassed and ridiculed the Nigerian State, continued restiveness in the region and reoccurring pockets of kidnapping, hostage taking, and insurgent activities in the creeks of Niger Delta. Hostilities resumed between the State's JTF and the renegade militants, signaling the collapse of the stage managed amnesty deal (Okhomina, 2010; Sayo, Fanoro, Ebiri & Etim, 2010). In one of the largest military offensive in the region in the post-amnesty period (Delta, Bayelsa, and

Rivers States to be precise), the JTF, on November 15 & 21, 2010, respectively, raided militant camps and arrested 25-year-old Obese Kuna, a MEND commander, and 62 militants, who were among the thousands of former militants that accepted the Federal Government amnesty in the region and freed 19 kidnapped oil and construction workers made up 12 Nigerians, two Americans, two Frenchmen, one Canadian, and two Indonesians. In the said military offensive, 45 AK-47 rifles, 12 general-purpose machine guns, several thousands of assorted ammunition, brand new military boots and vests, combat uniforms, telescope, several GSM mobile phones, laptops, communication gadgets, such as walkie-talkie, barges with MEND insignia, bullet proof vests, and the sum of 673,000 naira (Akasike, 2010; Ebiri, 2010).

On December 1, 2010, the state continued its unrelenting terrorist acts against the Niger Delta region as there was heavy fighting between the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) and the renegade militants under the aegis of Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF), headed by “General” John Togo, who was earlier declared, wanted by JTF. Although some militants were captured, Togo escaped. In that attack, there were scores of casualties when the militants were completely subdued by the superior fire power of JTF, which overrun ‘Israel Barracks’ of the group located in Ayakiromo and Okirika, respectively. The operation lasted over an hour and was undertaken by combined forces of all JTF components (Emmanuel & Akinwumi, 2010; Harri-Okon, 2010). In fact, one report said over 50 villagers were killed in the attack when members of JTF got enraged upon learning that Togo had escaped. It also was reported that one mobile policeman and eight soldiers died in the attack. The Defense Headquarters in Abuja claimed it had earlier warned the villagers to vacate the affected areas. However, the entire Ayakiromo was displaced (Nwosu, Ojo, Okonkwo & Kings, 2010; O’Neil, 2010).

THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND DISCUSSION

This article is anchored on two theories, namely the Relative Deprivation and Social Action theories. Relative deprivation is the experience of being deprived of something to which one believes oneself to be entitled to have. It refers to the discontent people feel when they compare their positions to others and realize that they have less than them. Schaefer (2008) defined relative deprivation as the conscious experience of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities. It is a term used in social sciences to describe feelings or measures of economic, political, or social deprivations that are relative, rather than absolute. The concept of relative deprivation has important consequences for both behavior and attitudes, including how a group perceived itself and the subsequent actions it would take. That is when people who feel deprived of what they perceived as being entitled to may engage in collective action to press home their demands. Also, individuals may engage in a protracted socio-political struggle as being witnessed in the Niger Delta when they perceived that their means do not match their goals.

An American sociologist, R.K. Merton (1938) was among the first to use the concept of relative deprivation in order to understand social deviance, using French sociologist Emile Durkheim’s concept of anomie as a starting point. In one of the first formal definitions of the relative deprivation, Walter Runciman (1966) noted that there are four preconditions of relative deprivation (of object X by person Y): These are that;

- 1 Person Y does not have X
- 2 Person Y knows of other persons that have X

- 3 Person Y wants to have X
- 4 Person Y believes obtaining X is realistic

Furthermore, Runciman (1966) distinguished between egoistic and fraternalistic relative deprivation. The former is caused by unfavorable social position when compared to other perceived “well off” members of a specific group. The latter is an unfavorable comparison to other perceived “well off” groups. Relative deprivation may not necessarily be permanent. That is, it can be experienced by people that experience expansion of rights or wealth, followed by stagnation or reversal of those gains. Such phenomena are also known as unfulfilled rising expectations.

In summary, relative deprivation occurs where individuals or groups subjectively perceive themselves as unfairly disadvantaged over others and perceived as having similar attributes and deserving similar rewards (their reference groups). It is in contrast with absolute deprivation, where biological health is impaired or where relative levels of wealth are compared based on objective differences, although it is often confused with the latter. Subjective experiences of deprivation are essential and, indeed, relative deprivation is more likely when the differences between two groups narrow so that comparisons can be easily made than where there are caste-like differences. Applying this theory to the subject matter of this paper, people observe that the Niger Delta struggle is premised on the fact that the region has been deprived for a long time, when compared to other regions in Nigeria, which are not contributing as much as the region, yet their environment and means of livelihood have been polluted and devastated (Agbo & Ofuokwu, 2008; Ero, 2008). It is this feeling of relative deprivation, as well as their subjective definition of their situation that have prompted militants in the region to engage in certain action (lawful and unlawful) to draw the attention of other Nigerians and the whole international community to their plights.

The above theory is complemented with the Social Action theory. In defining the social action, Max Weber (1964) said:

...action include all human behavior and insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it....Action is social insofar as by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the individual... it takes account of the behavior of others and thereby oriented in its course.

Based on the above assertion, individuals act in accordance with their own definition of the situation. This includes, willingness or otherwise to act and active or passive acquiescence and may be oriented to the past, present, or future behaviors of others (Coser & Rosenberg, 1976). For Weber (1964), all human behavior does not amount to action, neither is every human action ‘social’. Behavior should be deliberate to qualify as ‘action’. Action, in turn, must be interpreted in terms of its subjectively intended meaning to the actor, including the effect the actor wants the action to have on ‘others’. This makes it amount to social action (Rex, 1961; Coser & Rosenberg, 1976; Menzies, 1982).

Cohen (1968) has identified some features of Social Action to include:

1. The actor has some set of goals to achieve and his action is geared towards achieving these goals;
2. Action involves selection of various means towards the achievement of goals;

3. The actor always makes some assumption concerning the nature of his goals and the possibility of achieving them;
and
4. The pursuit of goals and the selection of the means occurs within the situation, which influence the course of action

From the above features of social action, one can argue that for an individual, action has an end or a goal and it is rational, although from the perspective of an observer such action might seem irrational. In this case one can argue that the action of the Niger Delta Militant pressing for a greater share of oil revenue and protesting against massive degradation of their environment may be considered rational. On the other hand, the action of the state dealing with armed insurrection in the area to ensure a continued source of government revenue and to preserve the unity of the country may also be considered rational.

Consequently, what the Social Action theory suggests is that any instance of action (or unit of act) stems from the ends that the actor is concerned to attain; the definition of the situation. These include the range of alternatives actions that are perceived to be available and the choice of means that are likely to be effective, bearing in mind what the action will achieve as well as what may be the reaction of others.

Mannell (1974, p.56) summarized the Social Action perspective this way:

Firstly, people's actions are directed towards the achievement of ends, goals, and objectives. Secondly, people select appropriate means and procedures from those available to attain their goals. Thirdly, courses of action are considered by the conditions of the physical and social environment. Fourthly, individuals have emotions and make moral judgments, which influence the selection of ends and means as well as their ordered priority. Finally, actions are to be explained by the subjectively intended meaning given to them by the actor or roughly by the (actor's) perception and definition of the situation.

What the two theories (Relative Deprivation and Social Action) suggest is that the armed struggle in the Niger Delta is as a result of several years of neglect of the region. The dynamics of the Niger Delta struggle, which, over the years, has progressed from peaceful agitations to acts of terrorism, including illegal oil bunkering, pipeline vandalism, hostage taking, kidnappings, serial killings, and bombings, are all attempts to react and deal with their relative deprivation. They are the manifest and obvious social action of a group of desperate and subjugated people seeking environment justice. This may not have produced any clear cut results or benefits, except wanton destruction of lives and property; however, there are clear indications of the irresponsibility of the Nigerian State in finding a pragmatic approach to deal with Niger Delta crisis. The State, in an attempt to continue to subjugate the region and its people, has used simple tokenism and maximum force to crack down on the militants, thereby committing terrorist acts against the Niger Deltans.

Obviously, from all indications, millions of oil revenue generated by the region had been either pilfered or squandered by successive regimes in Nigeria in frivolous and white elephant projects which have no impact on lives of the people of the region and by extension most Nigerians (Ayoade, 2010). Thus, the basic infrastructure are virtually and clearly non-existent not only in the Niger Delta region, but also in the other parts of Nigeria. This has made life very difficult for ordinary Nigeria

and has continued to manifest itself in all indices of human development over the years. For instance, the latest figures (Anuforo, 2010) from the United Nation's Human Development Report (UNDR) put Nigeria's life expectancy at birth at 48.4 years, a little rise from the 47.7 years recorded for the country in 2009. The report also put Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) at 0.423, which made Nigeria be ranked at 142 out of 169 countries with comparable data.

The terrorist acts perpetuated by both the militants and the state, respectively, have a number of implications. First, that the militants are able to carry their terrorist acts outside the Niger Delta area by bombing Lagos in 2009 and Abuja on October 1, 2010 showed the extent to which insecurity in Nigeria has degenerated. In relation to this, the widespread abduction and kidnapping for ransom, which has gradually extended to other parts of the country, buttresses this point. That terrorist acts could be planned and executed in Abuja by the Niger Delta militants without detection. This has serious security and development implications as no serious investor would want to invest in an unsecured environment (Ayoade, 2010; Ojatorotu, 2010). Second, the use of the force, threats, and counter-threats by the state to deal with the Niger Delta crisis will harden rather than soften deep-rooted sentiments over the conditions of the people who reside in the region of Nigeria as they see themselves as freedom fighters. It is such moral justification that gives impetus to the militants to continue to engage in the acts of terrorism, both within and outside the region.

Third, the use of force through military tanks and weapons to suppress the people's right to freely express the feelings of unfair treatment unleashed on the Niger Delta people for over half a century by the Nigeria State, on the long run may weaken the capacity of the state to build a prosperous and united Nigeria. This kind of feeling promotes mutual distrust and suspicion since oil is the mainstay of the Nigeria foreign revenue (Odion-Akhaine, 2009).

And finally, as for the militants who have located camps all over the creeks, the use of internal insurrection, particularly the kind that promotes bombings and abductions, hostage takings, and kidnapping, will not serve the best interests of both the militants and the region, rather it will continue to jeopardize lives and property in those areas and villages where the militant camps are located. When the state unleashes its terrorist act against the militant camps, the other entities and villagers are equally affected. These villagers suffer the double tragedies of environmental pollution and degradation, in addition to the terrorist acts of the state. With this, no meaningful and visible development will take place in the region as humans and sustainable development requires minimum security.

CONCLUSION

The Niger Delta crisis is one out of several terrorist activities going on in Nigeria over the last fifty years (Madunagu, 2011; Sanni, 2011). The frequent use of naked force by the Nigerian State to solve the problem of Niger Delta and other terrorist activities in other parts of the country without first addressing the fundamental issues that brought about those agitations and resistance is belated. In essence, this suggests an obvious sign of a failed state struggling to survive. Therefore, the long term solution to the Niger Delta crisis will definitely involve restructuring the Nigeria state so that each region will control resources located in its region. In the interim, the remnant and renegade militants operating in the creeks of the Niger Delta must, as a matter of necessity, lay down their arms in order to engage the state in constructive and meaningful dialogue, while

the flagging and chequered amnesty programme initiated by the State should be resuscitated, reinvigorated, consolidated, and carried to a logical conclusion to yield desired results. Also, all corrupt politicians from the area who have embezzled and misappropriated the State's funds meant for development projects must promptly be brought to trail to serve as deterrent to individuals and politicians wishing to follow their footsteps.

The State should muster enough political will through appropriate legislation to ensure that oil companies operating in the area are adopting international best practices as regards to oil exploration and exploitation. With this, the massive gas flaring and other forms of environmental degradation and pollution going on in the region unabated will be brought under control. Finally, the kind of terrorism perpetuated by both the militants and the Nigerian State will continue to cost human lives and limit the capacity of the state to develop the area and make the Nigeria State insecure for any kind of positive investment, industrialization and also keep both the oil and non-oil workers in Nigeria in perpetual fear and apprehension.

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Endnotes

1. Terrorism as used in this paper means senseless and unbridled massacre of people either by the militants or the State over issues that would have been settled through dialogue.
2. UNPO is an international, nonviolent, and democratic organization (of which MOSOP is a member). Its members are indigenous peoples, minorities, and unrecognized or occupied territories who have joined together to protect and promote their human and cultural rights, to preserve their environments and to find nonviolent solutions to conflicts which affect them.

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