

Terror Techniques in the Niger Delta and the Question of Justice

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Abstract

Using the analytic tools of Philosophy, this paper subjects the nature of global terrorism and the ethnic youth militancy employed in the Niger-Delta region in Nigeria to a critical and comparative examination. The paper provides rational/moral arguments to establish that while the incidence of ethnic militancy in the Niger-Delta area, as a local manifestation of terrorism, is an attempt at correcting social injustice, it turns out to be itself unjustifiable and unjust. Hence, it should be jettisoned in favor of a more rational and moral alternative.

Key words: Terrorism; Development; Peace; Youth Militancy; Morality

Introduction

Man has a natural tendency to resent, resist and make efforts to either reform or overturn any unjust social arrangement by whatever means available. In the course of human history, men have frequently resorted to the use of various forms of violence to either prevent or correct perceived injustice. In contemporary times, besides constitutional and diplomatic means, war and terrorism are alternative, readily available, even though generally undesirable means of pursuing justice and other specific ends at certain levels of social interaction. The ironic dimension of the use of terror today is that while it is increasingly rejected at the global level, we are witnessing its increasing adoption at the local level in different parts of the world, especially in the developing countries.

Although the use of terror in social relations can be traced back to the 19th century, it gradually gained prominence during the cold war era when it was adopted by the former Soviet union and more particularly the American government to checkmate and undermine each other's spheres of influence in Asia, South-America and Africa. (Mamdani, 2004: 81-118) Towards the end of the cold

war, terrorism gradually became both internationalized and privatized, and with this development, it metamorphosed from a tool in the hands of the world powers to a highly lethal mode of violence in the hands of various private organizations that profess commitment to the pursuit of justice and the rectification of past injustice. By the 1990's terrorism had changed from a low-intensity conflict to one of the most devastating mode of violence the world has ever known. In some important respects, it also took on a distinctive religious character.

Today, the indigenes of the Niger-Delta region of the world are progressively resorting to the use of terror in their quest for justice in their interactions with the Trans-National Oil Corporations (TNOC) operating in their domain and also with the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN). Oil installations are blown up, oil workers; especially the expatriates among them are kidnapped and the corporations forced to suspend operations for varying periods of time.

Our focus is to critically examine the social condition in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, the roles played by the FGN, TNOC and other stakeholders in the region and how these have engendered the resort to terror in the pursuit of justice. We also examine the moral implications of events in the region, as these relate to the questions of justification and justice on the part of the FGN, TNOC and the people of the region who embrace a variant of terrorism, known in Nigeria as Ethnic Youth Militancy. We contend that the resort to terror in the Niger-Delta area is itself as unjustifiable and unjust as the injustice it sets out to correct.

The Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria

The Niger-Delta region of Nigeria is located between the mid-western and the eastern parts of Nigeria. It is home to the oil producing communities in Nigeria and straddles several states: Edo, Delta, Cross River, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Imo, Abia and Ondo states. The region is where the bulk of the national revenue is generated, as the main stay of the national economy is the production of crude oil. As can be expected in any area where oil exploration and other upstream activities take place, the hydrology and the ecology have been greatly impaired since 1956 when oil exploration and production began at Oloibiri and Afam in the Niger-Delta. These have grievous implications on the well being of the people of the region:

In the Niger-Delta, oil pipelines pass under people's houses; beneath their farmlands and under the waters. Sometimes the oil spills into the rivers/farms. The hitherto serene, beautiful natural environment is destroyed. Animals are driven away; the others, which could not escape, perish. The people's traditional occupations of farming and fishing are automatically disrupted....Developmental needs of the people are

ignored. No basic infrastructure, no human capital development scheme, no economic empowerment. (Onyenwenwa, 2000: 126).

Very bad roads, aptly described as death traps, very severe air and water pollution, and land degradation characterize the region. Yet, the region like many of the other regions in the country is devoid of adequate health facilities. There is also the complaint that the indigenes usually do not have any representative in the oil committees set up by government nor have their kinsmen appointed to important positions in government. The indigenes of the region live in a perpetual state of deprivation and squalor.

Although the oil sector in Nigeria must be credited with the increase in the national income, this did not translate into social benefits for the people who have been adversely affected by activities in the oil industry. Whatever advantage they derive is marginal. Only the state, those who control its machinery and the trans-national oil corporations derive real benefits. One of the factors responsible for this is the refusal of oil corporations to respect, and the failure of the FGN to ensure that these corporations observe what is described as “good oil field practices”(Oyebode, 2000: 59). Going by the content of the ‘Oil Mining Lease’,

the lessee in carrying out his activities should ensure that he does not deprive any land, village, houses or watering places for cattle of a reasonable supply of water or interfere with any rights enjoyed by any person”(Oyebode, 2000: 59)

And should there be any deprivation, the lessee should be ready to pay adequate compensation for things such as economic trees, structures fixed to land, objects, etc. In addition, he should not tamper with sacred lands, burial grounds, public installations, markets, etc. Thus, the lessee is expected to be mindful of the demands for conservation and sustainable development.

Unfortunately, both the FGN and the oil corporations that should take direct responsibility for these demands from the perspective of the indigenes of the Niger-Delta, whose lands, waters and prospects of a good life are impaired, are not doing enough to resolve the environmental and consequent socio-economic problems engendered by the oil explorative activities in the region. Previous measures taken by the FGN to reduce the negative impacts of oil exploration and production in the Niger-Delta include the creation of states at different points, the upward revision of revenue allocation, and the creation of bodies like the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Developing Corporation (OMPADEC) in 1992, the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) in 1994 and the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000 (Toyo, 2000: 17). Efforts to protect the environment and

communities in the region also led to the enactment of several laws like the FEPA Act 9 Decree No. 58 of 1988) and the Environment Impact Assessment Act (Decree 86 of 1992).

A reason why these efforts have not significantly improved the conditions of life in the Niger-Delta is located in the nature of the Nigerian state while another is the capitalist orientation of the trans-national oil corporations (Omoweh, 2000: 33). With regards to the Nigerian state, there is sufficient evidence that she lacks the autonomy to effectively pursue the real interests of her citizens. Her political and economic institutions are determined by external institutions and market forces, which do not have any primary responsibility to the well being of the state and her citizens, but to the financial success of the oil corporations within her borders. (Olorode, 2000: 18). Consequently, we often see the state going into partnership with Oil Corporations against their host communities, "allowing interests of the multinationals to supervene over the civic and fundamental human rights of Nigerians in the oil-producing areas, displacing rights to property, livelihood and culture" (Odia, 2000: 69). In this regard, Omoweh accurately describes the Nigerian state as "a specific public force dominating the larger society through the system of institutional or class mechanism to cater for its selfish political, economic and social interests, and those of its local fronts and foreign capital in all sectors of the Nigerian economy including the energy sector" (Omoweh, 2000: 35).

The problem is further complicated by the fact that political elites who are supposed to use the various structures, policies and institutions set up by the state to enhance social condition in the Niger-Delta region are not committed to this end. Rather, they are more interested in using these structures and institutions for personal benefits. Julius Ihonvbere provides an accurate account of the political elites as follows:

Members of the political elite have grabbed power directly and through the working of various power sharing arrangements and have turned around to use that power to dominate, abuse, marginalize, terrorize, exploit and intimidate non-bourgeois communities and constituencies. The criminal looting of public funds, the mismanagement of the public services, the gross inefficiency of the bureaucracy, and the absence of basic facilities needed to make life comfortable for the majority are indicators of the failure of the Nigerian elite and its use of political power. (Ihonvbere, 2000:78).

The Oil corporations, given their capitalist orientation and the consequent bid for profit maximization have also not helped matters. This is because their profit motives are usually at odds with the development needs of the country and the welfare demands of the people of the Niger-Delta region.

They are usually unmindful of the requirements for conservation and sustainable development, which have become concretized in 'good oil field practices', and also very reluctant to compensate their host communities for harm suffered as a result of their operations. A standard example is the case of the Ilaje community in the Niger-Delta region: All efforts made to dialogue with the officials of Chevron Nigeria limited were "administratively and tactically turned down", (Raji, et al, 2000: 145) as they refused to respond to all the letters written requesting for audience to discuss the problems the community was facing as a result of the operations of the oil corporation..

Resort to Terror

As rightly pointed out by Francis Bacon, rebellions are nursed by much poverty and much discontent. The deplorable socio-economic and environmental conditions of the communities in the oil producing areas, the perception of the people of the region that their basic rights are being violated in addition to their dissatisfaction with the responses of government and oil companies made the people of the region to resort to demonstrations. These were initially carried peacefully in an attempt to gain the attention of government and the relevant oil corporations.

Sadly, government's response is to brutally put down such protests and demonstrations using the state apparatus of coercion rather than engage the communities in dialogue. Indeed, the prevalent opinion is that government only intervenes in the Niger-Delta crisis when the communities there become restive, and this is usually to "silence protests, quell demonstrations and riots and draft counter-insurgency squads into oil-producing zones to restrain, destabilize or generally "pacify" them"(Odia, 2000: 68). We have an example of this in the Ilaje community incidence of May 28, 1998. Instead of seeking for some rational means of attending to the claims and grievances of the community, Military Police and Army personnel were dispatched to attack the representatives of the community. Two of the community's representatives were shot dead on the spot with several others sustaining gunshot wounds (Odia, 2000: 68). We have a similar account that on October 30,1990, the young men of Umuechem in Etche LGA carried out a peaceful demonstration to demand for provision some essential social amenities and compensation for oil pollution of their farmlands and rivers. Unfortunately, the state security agents misunderstood the actions of these unarmed demonstrations and attacked them with teargas and gunfire. 50 people were reported dead with about 550 houses destroyed and the Mobile Policemen turned the episode into a festival to feast on the natives' domestic animals and farm crops (Nwauzi, 2000: 136).

Besides, both the government and oil companies are also reported to deliberately instigate communities against each other so as to keep them divided, weak and distracted from the real causes of their problems. This is done to give the façade that the crisis in the region is primarily

ethnic. For instance, Chevron allegedly paid a sum of fifteen million naira to a particular ethnic group to exterminate the Ijaje people (Raji, et al, 2000:145). In addition, oil companies are empowered by the FGN to raise their own private systems to defend oil installations and also contribute to the training of the Nigerian Police personnel that would operate in the oil-producing zone.

The hostile responses of the FGN and the oil-corporations led the Niger-Delta communities to conclude: "oil companies such as shell, AGIP and Chevron have colluded with the military and successive governments of Nigeria to wage a war of economic exploitation, environmental degradation, and the institution of internal colonialism" (Olufemi, 1999). Consequently, the youths in the region began to mobilize themselves into militant ethnic organizations, committed to the use of all available means, including violence to reject and redress of all perceived injustice against them by the government and oil corporations. Examples of these include the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Niger-Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) and the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC). Today, their demand is not just that Government and Oil Corporations fulfill their social responsibilities in the region, but that the people of the region begin to control their resources and design relevant or appropriate development strategies for their communities.

Sadly, this marked the beginning of a vicious circle of violence in which the region is trapped, with these militant ethnic groups increasingly adopting the techniques of terror at a time when terrorism is being globally rejected as a hydra that must be done away with at all cost. The aim of this approach, according to militant youths, is to fight against the persistent violation of their rights, ensure that justice is done and secure a justifiable local control of the natural resources in their region. Having attempted, unsuccessfully, other non-violent alternatives, they embrace the assumption that while the use of violence may be generally undesirable in itself, it remains the only or most available and effective means of facilitating social change (Horowitz, 1973: 171-172, 187).

In the words of Oronto Douglas, the militant leader of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), the struggle is to "achieve cultural change and free the peoples of the Niger-Delta, and the Ijaws in particular from decades of environmental pollution, political oppression, unjust and archaic socio-economic structures" (Olufemi, 1999). This development gives credence to the claim that "man has a natural tendency to resent, resist and make efforts to either reform or overturn any unjust social arrangement by whatever means available"(Ekanola, 2005: 44-45). Today, hardly would a week pass by without "stories of kidnapping, invasion of oil platforms, hijacking of helicopters belonging to oil companies and bloody confrontations between youth groups and police" (Ihonvbere 2000: 105).

Nature of Global Terrorism and the Niger-Delta Debacle

There are pointed similarities between the techniques of terror adopted by the militant youths of the Niger-Delta region and terrorists operating in the international arena, suggesting the influence of the latter on the former. One is that both claim to be pursuing the rectification of past injustice and the establishment of a more just social order. They both claim to be fighting against different forms of injustice perpetuated by corrupt and authoritarian regimes, resulting in the collapse of the social organizations and institutions that should provide social services and facilities as a means of promoting social welfare (Sheth, 2005: 30-31). Islamic terrorists, for instance, claim, among other things to be fighting against the injustice inherent in the fact that for over half a century, Muslims in Palestine have been slaughtered and assaulted and robbed of their honor and of their property. Their houses have been blasted, their crops destroyed. For the ethnic militants, the injustice they are fighting against is manifest in economic backwardness, socio/cultural relegation, educational backwardness, lack of political clout, lack of government recognition and the use of military force to suppress the legitimate and peaceful demand for justice, all culminating in the complete devaluation of human life in the region (Onyenwenwa, 2000: 123).

The existence of definite political objectives (Gunaratna, 2001: 3) is another feature common to both the 'international terrorists' and the militant youths of the Niger-Delta. At the global level, the prominent political objectives of terrorism include getting Israel to evacuate Palestinian territories, enhance the political and economic rights of the People of Palestine and other parts of the Arab world and discourage America from supporting Israel in her crusade against Palestine. Similarly, the militant youths of the Niger-Delta aim to gain an appreciable local control of the mineral resources of their region, undermine the obstinate protection and support given to oil corporations operating in the region by the Nigerian state and ensure the protection of the basic rights of the communities in the region. The slogan of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) is "Resource Control and Self Determination by Every Means Necessary".

Also common to both international terrorists and the militant youths of the Niger-Delta is the use of violence designed to create fear in their victims and compel them to accede to their demands. To this end, their targets range from civilian population, key government officials and strategic public utilities: airports, railway stations, bridges, hotels, schools and buses. Their methods of operation include bombing, assassination and kidnap. The immediate aim is usually to produce chaos and endanger civilian population with the ultimate objective of mounting pressure on governments and other organizations to grant their requests, which is usually political or economic in nature.

There is also the suggestion that the resort to the techniques of terror by the militant youths of the Niger-Delta has been influenced by global terrorism. For instance, Asari Dokubo, the leader of the Niger-Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) appears to have been influenced by Islamic terrorism as he embraced the use of "every means necessary", which includes violence, to achieve specific political and economic ends only after he traveled to the middle-east, where Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism is very rife. As a result of the contact with Islamic fundamentalism, he converted to Islam, changed his name from Dokubo Melford Goodhead Junior to Mujahid Dokubo-Asari and embraced the use of terror in the pursuit of social justice (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3713664.stm>). It should be noted that the title Mujahid he adopted simply means one fighting for justice or one fighting a holy and just war.

Now, granted that international terrorists and the militant ethnic youths both claim to be waging a just war, a fundamental question that needs to be answered is if their crusades are truly justified. Focusing on the case of the Niger-Delta, we would endeavor to answer this question from two perspectives: the end being pursued and the means adopted in pursuant of the end in view.

The Questions of Justification and Justice

To have a clear understanding of the question of justice as it is related to the resort to terror in the Niger Delta, it is important that we quickly clarify the important distinction to be made between saying that an action is justified and that it is just. When we say that an action is justified, we mean that there are some considerations that render the action reasonable, sensible, rational, sound or even practical and to be expected of rational agents in relevantly similar situation. However, an action is said to be just if it amounts to giving concerned individual(s) or groups of individuals their dues, with "dues" interpreted as "legitimate claims", encompassing what they have rights to or deserve (Ekanola, 2005: 51).

Now, the stated objectives of terrorists can be summarized into two: rectification of past injustice and the establishment of a social order considered as more just than the already existing order. This may be interpreted as involving rectifying past violations of rights and denials of deserts, and also setting up social structures and institutions to ensure that rights and deserts are effectively protected and promoted. To establish these objectives, terrorists operating in the global arena as well as in the Niger-Delta employ the means of violence, which come directly in the form of political assassination and kidnap of key government officials, killing of ordinary citizens as was witnessed in the 9/11 episode and the bomb attacks in Britain in 2005, destruction of vital social structures like airports, bridges and bridges or indirectly through different forms of psychological violence.

The relevant questions to ask with regards to the ends and means of terrorism as they are unfolding with specific reference to the Niger-Delta include: (1) Are the objectives of terrorists justified? (2) Are the objectives just? (3) Can the terror employed in the pursuit of the stated objectives be justified? (4) Can the means be said to be just

Starting with the question of the justification of the stated objectives of terrorists groups, which basically is to redress past injustice and enhance social justice, there appears to be some reasons suggesting that the objectives are justified. One is the natural tendency humans have to resent, resist and make efforts to either reform or overturn any unjust social arrangement by whatever means available or to support, protect and perpetuate any order, which effectively protects people's rights and honors their desert (Ekanola,2005: 52). Indeed, many of the historical cases of the resort to violence result from the perception of some form of injustice, and the determination to undermine it and establish a more just order.

The fact that the use of violence is often one of the most available means of facilitating social change also renders terrorism as apparently reasonable. This is especially so because groups that resort to terror often believe that they lack the capacity to engage their oppressors or adversaries in a full-scale war. Hence, the resort to terror, also known as low intensity violence, is designed to surreptitiously achieve ends that have, hitherto, proved to be elusive. In addition to this is that terrorists often justify their approach by the claim that all other alternatives have been tried and have failed to achieve ends, which they see as non-negotiable. As such, as advocates of the just war theory would say, the technique of violence is adopted as a last resort.

But do these considerations really justify the use of terror as is being witnessed in the Niger-Delta region? Can we really appeal to the human tendency to employ violence in resisting injustice to justify terrorism? Is it really true that all other non-violent alternatives have been tried and proved as ineffective? To quickly answer these questions, I would first state that the disposition to resort to violence is not always a good human trait that should be encouraged, not to talk of appealing to it to justify terrorism. Rather, this tendency should be seen as a trait of inhumanity in man and an "ideal of inhumanity and unreasonableness that give birth to war"(Joy, 1952: 130, 213). It corrupts man and triggers off a vicious circle of violence, which tends to destroy society. Besides, there is sufficient empirical evidence to the effect that violence of any kind scarcely engender any positive social change. Where people have been able to resolve their differences after the use of violence, such resolution is achieved not on the basis of the violence employed, but on the negotiation and dialogue. Organized violence of any kind, more often than not, only deepens the hatred, distrust, hostility and general ill will between members of conflicting groups rather than achieve any productive result.

It is also questionable that the militant groups of the Niger-Delta that have resorted to the use of violence have actually exhausted all other peaceful alternatives. It is indeed clear that they have not exhausted all constitutional machinery at both the national and international levels to achieve their objectives.

A consideration of the ill effects of the techniques of terror in terms of loss of human life and destruction of invaluable social infrastructures and other economic costs, not just on the nation, but also internationally cast further doubts on the justifiability of terror in the Niger-Delta. Apart from the fact that several lives have been lost in the wake of clashes between militant youths in the Delta region, oil installations worth several millions of dollars are regularly vandalized or blown up and oil workers, especially the expatriates are increasingly becoming targets of assassination and kidnap. Consequently, there is now a palpable sense of insecurity in the entire region, with the social condition fast approaching the Hobbesian state of nature in which human life is short, nasty and brutish. And, interestingly just as the militants render the survival of the ordinary citizens in the region insecure, theirs is also equally, if not more, insecure. This suggests that the approach of terror involves a paradox: while the use of terror is designed to redress past injustice, promote a more just social order and guarantee a better life for the militants, it turns out that it renders the lives of the militant more insecure for as long as they embrace use of violence and terror.

With regards to the question of the justice of the basic objectives of the ethnic militants of the Delta region, we may reasonably contend that the idea of justice is all about making legitimate efforts to have rights and deserts satisfied. And, to the extent that ethnic militants are trying to have their fundamental rights and deserts satisfied, their efforts may be said to be just. What seems as the most relevant rights that militants may claim to have been violated may be summed up under the right to development, explicitly stated in three articles in the International Commission of Jurists draft. (Shivji, 1989: 32-34). These articles maintain that individuals, groups, peoples and states have a right to participate in and benefit from a process of development aimed at realizing the full potentialities of each person in harmony with the community. It also includes the notion that the human person should be the subject and the object of development, its main participant as well as its beneficiary. This right is construed as applicable at all levels of social existence: community, local, national, regional and global. Finally, all other human rights are seen as interdependent and inseparable elements of the right to development.

We may identify a corollary duty emanating from the right to development. This would be derived using the Kantian presupposition that each human person has a natural inclination and also a duty to preserve herself/himself and also to pursue self-fulfillment and perfection (Bacarlow, 1994: 185-

1992). This duty might serve as a further justification for the drive by militant youths for the creation of a social condition that would facilitate the preservation, fulfillment and perfection of life in the Delta region.

However, although the stated ends of the militants may appear just as ends, the means adopted in achieving them radically discredit them, thereby rendering their crusades as immoral and unjust. One feature of the resort to terror that undermines the justice of the ends of terrorism is that it involves the violation of the rights and deserts of other people. Going by the U.N Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the fundamental rights, which all people have as human persons include the rights to life, earn a living, political participation, security of person, freedom, property and privacy (Bacarlow, 1994: 185-192). These rights are inalienable and inviolable, and anything that violates or hinders their exercise is considered to be unjust as justice is simply about protecting and promoting these rights. For instance, the right to life of ordinary citizens and also key officials are severely violated as they are often targets of terrorist' killing. They are also prime targets of kidnaps as they are frequently held hostage, thereby violating their freedom and security rights. Likewise, by destroying vital installation like oil plants and bridges, terrorists not only violate the security rights of the general citizenry, they also violate their subsistence rights as they would be significantly hindered from having free access, not only to employment and a secure and favorable condition of work, but also to the goods and services necessary for meaningful subsistence. In effect, the mode of operation of terrorists seems to be one that seeks to correct injustice and pursue justice by perpetuating other forms of injustice. This seems ironic, absurd and immoral, and in the final analysis counter-productive.

However, by submitting that the crusade of violence and terror embarked upon the ethnic militants in the Delta region is unjust, we do not by any means imply that their adversaries and targets, the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Oil Corporations in the region, are on the path of justice. They are obviously not for they initiated the vicious circle of injustice, violence and terror in which the region is trapped by the flagrant violation of the rights and deserts of the people of the region. This is further accentuated by the excessive and unjustifiable use of military force to violently suppress the legitimate and illegitimate attempts of citizens of the region to seek redress for violation of rights and establish a more just social order. An example of the excessive and unjustifiable use of force in response to an illegitimate action of the citizens in the region is the military invasion of Odi community in Bayelsa state in November 1999. Below is a graphic description of the massacre that took place there:

The East-West road was cordoned off by the Orashi River at Mbiama and by the River Niger at Patani. Thereafter, a major military operation commenced, via the use of heavy artillery, aircraft, grenade

launchers, mortar bombs and other sophisticated weapons. So ruthless, savage and thorough was the operation that it could only have been intended to achieve a genocidal outcome.

It is difficult at this stage to establish the number of those killed, but we have received reports of mass burial, mass cremation and the disembowelment and mass dumping of corpses in River Nun. Two weeks after the operation, the stench of decomposing bodies dumped into various creeks could still be perceived from one kilometre from the town. We saw, so many corpses by the roadside as we drove along. The body of an old man, still clutching firmly to a copy of the Holy Bible, lay decomposing in a pond behind the Anglican Church, a chilly testimony to the scorched-earth objective of the invading troops contrary to the officially declared objective of the mission: to arrest the hoodlums who allegedly killed some policemen. So complete was the destruction that crops were razed, yam barns were burnt, garri processing plants were willfully wrecked, canoes were set ablaze, and every house in the entire community, with the exception of the First Bank, a Community Health Centre and the Anglican Church, were burnt down. No aspect of the community's existence was spared. Places of worship and other sacred places, including sacred forest and groves, churches, ancestral shrines and burial places, were demolished. We received reports that the soldiers looted many of the buildings and made away with the valuables before setting them ablaze. A yet-to-be established number of person, arrested and taken away by the soldiers to military barracks in Elele, Port Harcourt and Warri, were yet to be seen two weeks after the operation. We saw no single livestock, poultry or other domestic animals except a stray cat. The community's 60,000 inhabitants had tied into the forest or been arrested or killed. Only a few thoroughly traumatised old women, old men and children could be seen around, some of them suffering from fractures and other injuries sustained while trying to escape from advancing soldiers (www.africaaction.org/docs99/odi9912.htm).

An interesting feature of the Niger-Delta crisis is that the government and the TNOCs on one hand and the militants on the other hand both claim to be for justice and peace. But they seem to operate different conceptions of justice. While the government and TNOCs conceives of justice in terms of the continued central control of resources and the complacency of the indigenes of the region to the various violations of their basic rights., the militants define justice in this context in terms of the

preservation of their basic rights, which include having an appreciable control over the resources in their community and an increasing enjoyment of basic social amenities. Be that as it may, it is clear that both parties in the conflict have chosen to adopt the approach of violence in the pursuit of their different conceptions of justice. Sadly, this has only trapped the region in a cycle of violence, with grave repercussions on the prospects of social development, not only in the region, but the entire country as whole.

Concluding Remarks

Finding a viable solution to a social problem often require an adequate understanding of its actual origin and real nature. Thus, an objective of this paper has been to lay a foundation, and also channel a promising direction for a search for a plausible means of resolving the Niger Delta crisis by exposing its roots and nature. To this end, we have endeavored to establish that central to the origin and character of the Niger Delta crisis is injustice on the parts of government, TNOCs as well as the ethnic militants who claim to be seeking to rectify past injustice and establish a just social order through the use of the techniques of terror. However, our central thesis is that the approach of terror adopted by the ethnic militants to correct perceived injustice is in itself both unjustifiable and unjust. Hence, any proposal that would be effective in resolving the Delta crisis must directly address the issues of injustice that characterize both the genesis and the character of the crisis.

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