



Is It Always the Economic Stupid?: Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) and Petroviolence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria



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Abstract

Economics narratives of resource rich-conflict correlations have asserted that the availability of natural resources in a given state propels and sustains conflict. This school of thought suggested that drive for the onset and duration of conflict rest on rebel groups' illegal appropriation of natural resources available in a given state. This thesis focused on answering the question if MEND militant group, operating in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is essentially driven by economic considerations in the violent agitations in the oil rich Niger Delta. It sought to provide insights into the militants' reflections and perspectives to an understanding of basis for violent agitation in the region and methods of resistance. The analysis was based on interviews with twelve informants. To enumerate on the conflict, the thesis drew upon the economic and noneconomic narratives of onset and duration of conflict in a resource-rich states. The perspectives and reflections of the informants no doubt threw more light on the persistent in the Niger Delta region involving several collections of militants group and the government.

In the researcher's findings, the informants generally agree that the feeling of discontent and frustration which has built over a long period of time as a result of lack of economic opportunities and joblessness, political marginalization, coupled with devastation of their environment as a result of oil exploration informs the basis for such violent agitation. This was heightened by institutional failure and government repressive measures of earlier peaceful protest. The informants while accepting that their method of resistance namely oil bunkering, kidnapping and oil pipeline vandalization are criminal-oriented acts however claimed that such acts should be seen from the angle of frustration of the youths who are jobless in their prime, yet possesses some level of education and skills that can fetch them some decent jobs considering the availability of Transnational Companies (TNCs) operating in the region. This they claimed was in addition to the well rooted injustices the region has experienced for decades.

The study while suggesting sustainable ways to bring about peace and stability in the Niger Delta region, also made a case for shift from reductionist to more integrated approach while analyzing natural resource-conflict correlations.

Keywords: militancy, natural resources, economic injustice, greed, political marginalization, repressive governance and environmental devastation.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Africa has witnessed devastating intrastate conflicts since the 1960s; the year majority of African states began to regain their independence from the Colonialists (Oyefusi: 2007). These conflicts in most cases revolves round the issue of power and natural resources – access, management and control in most cases contested by a rebel/militia group against the state (Annan: 2004). No doubt, the incessant rise in the conflicts or rebellious movement in continent of Africa particularly in Sub-Saharan region has been linked to availability of natural resources and its scabble by non-state actors (Oyefusi: 2007). The conflict has not only exposed Africa perennial challenges but has equally been subjected to varied interpretations and understandings among policymakers and scholars in the academic field. While from the economic perspective, it has been seen as a conflict engineered more by economic considerations, namely stealing and pillaging of state resources, some other views has also attributed the conflict to noneconomic issues, arguing that it is the persisted structural violence and unequal access to government and economic opportunities that is the main drive for the conflict.

In West Africa, intrastate conflict seems more prevalent (Woodruff: 2005). The oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria for example has been embroiled in a protracted conflict with the Nigerian state. The militant groups in the region has battled the government over the control, ownership and distribution of oil resources available in the region and equally over the structural violence and devastation to the environment caused by oil exploitation that has persisted for decades (Okonta: 2006). The violence has largely been characterized with high level criminal oriented activities like oil theft, kidnapping of expatriate oil workers and vandalization of oil facilities of Transnational Companies (TNCs) in the region (ibid). Government brutal response since the conflict began has equally led to more violent agitations among the militant groups. Among the militant groups involved in these violent activities in the Niger Delta of Nigeria is MEND. This group aside being involved in oil theft, kidnapping and oil facilities sabotage is noted for fierce confrontation with the state military apparatus, the Joint Military Taskforce(JMT) drafted to the region to quell violence (Watts: 2008).

This thesis will therefore focus on MEND militant group. It looks at its goals, modes of operation and mobilizing ideas. The study taps into the reflections of MEND members and their activities, issues and driving force to determine if the group is essentially driven by economic consideration in their violent agitations.

1.1. Africa and its Conflict: Background Statement.

Conflict remains one phenomenon that has rattled mankind for centuries. Through its process, states were formed, nations were built. Conflict has also destroyed states, ruined nations (Tilly 1975). Zartman (2000) argued that conflict has an ontological basis in human needs, and it is the denial which causes violent conflict, or causes re-solvable differences to degenerate into armed violence. The search for peace is even more elusive. Drawing upon assertions by Onoja (1996: 1), *'if the search for peace is as old as humanity, then, the story of conflict, its harbinger is older'*. The implication of this is that conflict has always characterized human society and state relations. That Africa is a land of war couldn't be farer from the truth when viewed against the number of protracted conflict ravaging and plundering the continent particularly from the post-independent period. Indeed, mainstream thinkers and those in the media cycles has seen Africa as a 'hopeless continent'; some others described the continent as the 'most warring region on the planet' (Van Tongerin: 1999). The fundamental fact remains that Africa is in a deep and persistence malaise (Richard 2002).

Woodruff (2005) with signs of optimism concluded that the future of Africa is certainly not all doom and gloom. Nevertheless, the end to violence does not seem in sight in Africa. Virtually all African states exist on a precarious balance like the proverbial fowl and rope ridden with tensions. Many States have witnessed conflict in Africa and the greatest challenge posed by these conflicts is its internally driven character.

In attempt at contributing to literatures on African conflict, Brown (1996) elaborated on the pertinent challenges that has persistently confronted African states, particularly Sub-Saharan states and identified four main clusters of factors that has impeded peace in the continent. These he said includes structural factors which generally has the element of weak states, ineffective security and ethnic divides. Factors such as discriminatory political institution, non-participatory government, state repression, exclusionary national ideologies, elite and ethnic politics are all embedded in the political factors. Discriminatory economic system and unfair distribution of state's wealth informs the socio-economic factors while patterns of cultural discrimination and problematic group histories makes up the cultural factors.

Richard(1999) bringing in the state as a key variable in African conflict argued that African conflict are rooted in the nature and historically grounded institutional failures that has characterized African states. States in Africa are characterized by unconsolidated or non-existent democracies which informs the persistence legitimacy crisis facing most African states

particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Again, most states in Africa lack cohesive national identity while group or subcultural identity is highly emphasized in both economic and socio-political relations. He also identified warlordism and emerging war economy as two factors that speak to extreme violence.

Annan's (2004) analysis made a very strong impact on interpreting violent conflict in Africa states. According to his report at the United Nations in 1998, Africa conflict is diverse and complex, reflecting purely internal, country specifics and international dimensions linked by a number of common themes and experiences, namely the issue of historical legacies, domestic made factors, economic motives and country specifics (2004).

1.2. Conflict: Outlining Africa Perennial Challenges

1.2.1. Colonial Legacies and Ethnic Politics

Historical legacies have fundamentally made peace too elusive in Africa (Annan: 2004). Artificial boundaries created by the colonial powers which arbitrarily divided African societies people and society, coupled with inherited colonial laws and institutions designed to exploit local divisions, not strengthen them sowed the first seed of conflict in African states. These structural deficiencies, Boone (1994) argued have their roots in the contradiction inherent in the exercise of power by colonial authorities seeking to establish hegemony. Post independent African states inheriting an apparently lopsided political system continued with the tradition of appealing to ethnicity in their own attempt to establish hegemony by institutionalizing the divisions which exist by ethnic identity the basis for political and (to a lesser extent) economic participation and by striving to improve the competitive strength of the ethnic groups of the top leaders of the ruling faction (Ake: 1976). The implication of this highly emphasized ethnic consciousness is that it leads to reinforcing politics of identity which can easily create room fierce competition for political space and recognition by groups who feels marginalized. The emergence and dominance of a group invariably gives room for discontent by another group and subsequently put the country's stability and security on the line.

Describing the ethnic-security dilemma engineered by the politicization of ethnicity, Richard (2006) observed that such situation arises when ethnic categories becomes the primary lens through which the public view political events, thereby constraining and aggravating the choices of political elites. In the absence of other viable social categories for the protection of

group interest, one ethnic group's apparent political gain is viewed by the other(s) as a potential loss. This zero-sum politics creates an incentive for elites to maximize their ethnic group's position which in turn makes other groups feel insecure and forces them to act (ibid).

1.2.2. Institutional Failure and Chronic Corruption

Aside these reinforced ethnic politics, another approach to conflict in Africa relates to view of neo-patrimonial school of thought which focused on the *rationality* of corruption and misgovernance within Africa's cultural, social and historical milieu best articulated in the works of Chabal and Daloz (1999). Here, both authors explored the instrumentalization of disorder by African political elites in the pursuit of their selfish goals which ultimately results to conflict, state failure and crises. The nature of politics itself in African states which focuses on capturing and maintaining power has threatened states' continuous existence as a sovereign. politics in Africa for decades has assumed winner-takes-all form and this has ensured that elites adopts all possible means to capture power which is subsequently personalized thereby making caricature of democratic governance.

As pointed by Ake (1994), the elites in government having captured power, monopolizes it and finally regarded the state as an instrument of plunder and brutality; while the populace find solace in ethnic and primordial identities. Under these circumstances, there is apparent lack of accountability and transparency in governance. In addition also, there is high mismanagement of resources as a result of competition of control, chronic corruption and politics of patronage. Obi (1997) reechoed this fact in Nigerian context when he noted that as oil rent flowed directly to the state coffers, those who controlled state power and occupied strategic positions not only used their office as an instrument to control oil, but also as a means of amassing wealth. Issues of corruption, competitive communalism, and over-dependence of other tiers of government (that is local and state) on the centre (that is federal), made the contradiction inherent in 'black gold' inevitable.

1.2.3. Unequal Access to political power and economic opportunities

This factor perhaps is the most perennial problem African States has faced for decades. Socio-political exclusion and inequitable distribution of economic opportunities has characterized virtually all African states. Post-independent African states and leadership subjected states'

power and economy to very tight control within the elites in government (Richard: 2006). Control of state resources gives government a strong incentive to maintain power by all means at the expense of public good. State's wealth are then concentrated in these elites in government while the citizens watch in abysmally as their leaders plunders the country in the process of power and survival politics. This appetite for material wealth no doubt requires the establishment of a hegemony to continuously rip the state while discontent in the society builds up. And a hegemonic state is by nature repressive. More so, the exclusionist strategies of the elites in government which in most cases works against the minority in a given context results to tyranny of the majority (Woodruff: 2005). Outright exclusion of the minority group or certain ethnic group from active participation in the economic Stratum of states in Africa and resort to clientelist government has equally resulted to discontent within societies where such conditions present itself.

1.2.4. External Party(ies) Interest

Third party involvement in the affairs of state usually is based on two factors: either for political gains or economic interest and in most cases, states or institutions adopt all practicable measures – including supporting rivals in a polity – to constantly remain relevant or to achieve their aim(s) In most cases, such measures sustains an existing conflict or suppresses one (Annan: 2004). Many Sub-Saharan African states have witnessed some form of meddling in internal affairs by foreign bodies either within the continent or coming from outside completely. In African context, it seems plausible to say that despite the devastation that accompanies arm conflict, there are many states and individual who still profit from chaos and lack of accountability. These groups of people: state and non-state actors are much more interested in prolonging a conflict since it is under such situation that their economic goals are met. The chance to loot natural resources remains their key motivation.

Regarding the availability of natural resources in sub-Saharan states of Africa, countries with specific abundant resources or scarcity, namely oil, diamond, coltan, timber and even water can experience some level of competition resulting from exploitation that is not healthy for the state (ibid). There may for example be local complaints from a community that seem not to benefit from resources in their locality or complaints over degradation of the natural environment. All these factors inflict on a country some level of discontent that in most cases degenerate to violence.

Strictly speaking, conflict in Africa has interplay of forces in the political, cultural and socio-economic realm. And the consequences of these conflicts cannot be overestimated. It is also a fact that the persistence conflict has virtually crippled African states, causing a high level of discontent in the society and ultimately leading to the emergent of groups that has chosen albeit violently to either challenge the state's legitimacy with the mission of addressing the structural imbalance in the political system; or with the mission of capturing the state and its resources; or merely to fight for economic justice and political inclusiveness. Few examples will suffice to buttress these points raised.

1.2.5. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

If there is one war that has all the ingredients of conflict enumerated war, that can be likened to the Second World War, that has the interplay of local, national and regional dynamics, it is the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Aside the underlying issues of poverty, lawlessness and lack of basic infrastructures, more influencing factor is historical and tied to competition for control of land, natural resources particularly Diamond, water and lately scramble for coltan sought by western countries for manufacturing computers and phones (Shah:2010) and politico-military power dating back to the period of colonialism (Vlasseroot and Higgins 2005). In this protracted conflict, third party involvement is a well-established fact. Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe but more importantly Uganda and Rwanda have been fingered as given support to the rebels of recent (BBC, Reuters: 2012).

The ongoing war which intensified since 1998 has been the world's deadliest conflict since World War II has claimed over 5 million lives, with over 1.5 displaced persons (Shah 2010; BBC: 2012). Over 45,000 die monthly from the conflict and other conflict related impacts – poverty, rape and preventable diseases (Caritas: 2012). The conflict has equally destabilized the Central African region. The country's leadership has equally engaged in mismanagement of the state's resources. Till date, the country in a dangerous state of uncertainty; no doubt she has too many enemies and too much gold and precious stone for peace to any kind of peace deal to last (Woodruff: 273). The recent M23 rebel group led by Colonel Sultani Makenga entrance into Goma, DRC main city poses a great danger for the future of the country (BBC: 2012).

1.2.6. Sudan

Ethnic differences and quest for autonomy has been the cause for much bloodshed in Sudan since independent in 1975. The Arabic speaking government based on Khartoum has been at war with the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLM), a rebel group based in the Christiana dominated south. Exacerbating this conflict is the problem of division of income from oil exploitation (Woodruff: 2005). The consequences of this war have been equally devastating: more than two million has died with over 4 million displaced from their homes (global Security: 2012). Even after the creation of Southern Sudan as an independent state in July 2011, the quest for the control of oil in the south has continuously been a source of tension.

1.2.7. Angola

Angolan society remarked Malaquias (2000) is increasingly acquiring all the characteristics of a Hobbesian existence: death has become banal whether by starvation, in government controlled areas or by bullets, mines or bombs in rebel areas. At the heart of Angola civil war is the question of ethnicity, class and race, repressive and corrupt government; and scramble for oil and diamond. The dominant politico-military forces' reluctance to share power and wealth within an inclusive and multi-ethnic and multi-racial political system has continuously fuelled the feeling of discontent among other ethnic particularly the Ovimbundu from where the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola/National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) draws its support. There is also the aspect of lack of accountability and non-transparency which informs the persistence endemic corruption on the part of the government. The ethnic divide and scramble for positions in government which effectively means control of resources pitched the government against the rebel forces and by extension fuels discontent in the polity (Ganesen and Vines: 2004). The U.S. State Department (2010) aptly noted that:

...the country's wealth continued to be concentrated in the hands of small elite whose members used government positions for massive personal enrichment, and corruption continued to be a common practice at all levels.

The aftermaths of the civil war are huge and its effects have left an indelible mark among the people. It is estimated that 1 in every 334 Angolans has lost a limb to a landmine and Angola now has the highest number of amputees in the world (Winslow: 1998). The health conditions of

the people are disastrous and according to Médecins Sans Frontières (2002, Smith 2003), diseases, starvation and severe malnutrition and mortality far exceeded emergency thresholds.

1.2.8. Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone however, aside institutional failure, misuse and exploitation of state resources particularly diamond played a central role in the devastating conflict in the country from the 1990s. Ibrahim Kamara, then Sierra Leone UN ambassador opined that ‘we have always maintained that the conflict is not about ideology , tribal or regional differences ... the root of the conflict remains diamonds, diamonds and diamonds (Renner 2002). Prior to this period, corruption, cronyism and illegal mining has squandered the country’s diamond riches to the point that virtually all government services were grounded; education and economic opportunities were scarce, making the country a model for shadow state (ibid). In the words of Keen (2000), ‘the civil war in Sierra Leone can’t really be understood without comprehending the deep sense of anger at lack of good government and educational opportunities...; the unequal benefits arising from diamond extraction and inability of the state to adequately tax this sector were part of a wider set of problems affecting all commodities exported from Sierra Leone (Keen: 2003).

Sierra Leone civil war was not also devoid of external power support. Charles Taylor, then president of Liberia not only fomented national but regional instability by providing arm support to RUF while Liberia remains one of the world’s poorest countries. The same applies to Democratic republic of Congo where neighbouring Uganda and Rwanda where till date has backed rebel forces while equally benefitting immensely from the country’s vast gold and mineral deposits (Ganesan and Vines : 2004). The actions of Charles Taylor, that of states of Uganda and Rwanda reveals how armed conflict can be exacerbated by the actions of third party government seeking to profit from rich neighbours. No doubt, the involvement of Charles Taylor forces in Sierra Leone conflict and western Cote d’Ivoire from September 2002 to mid-2003 was driven in part by a desire to obtain control of resources.

The consequences of this civil war are quite enormous: more than half of the population of the country, about 4.5 million people were displaced; another 500,000 people fled to neighbouring states. At least 50,000 people died in the fighting and there are an estimated 100,000 victims of human right abuses, namely mutilation, rape, execution and child abuse (APHRN: 2003; BBC: 2000).

1.2.9. And Nigeria?

The Nigeria state provides an interesting illustration of the failure of the African postcolonial state project. In spite of its immense human and natural resources, the country has failed to effectively harness the resources and deploy them for meaningful development. Since over 50 years of independence, Nigeria has slipped to a shadow state status due to what Beckett and Young described as ‘impasse of permanent transition’ characterized by among other negating elements , predatory military rule, corruption, pretentious ‘transition to civil’, centralization of power through patrimonialism, prebendalism, high level political exclusion and non-participatory government, economic marginalization, obnoxious laws, quasi-federalism and criminalization of the state (Abubakar 2001). Fundamentally speaking, ethno regional identity informs the pattern and processes of citizenship and political contestation in Nigeria.

Nigeria, the 6th largest oil producing nation in the world no doubt has been riddled with oil and political conflict from independence in 1960. Modern Nigeria political history began on the first of January, 1914 with the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorate. The fragility of the nation’s take-off, – the structural imbalance –created Nigeria’s socio-economic, cultural and political woes which resulted to two secession attempts in 1961 (declaration of Niger Delta Republic) and in 1966-1970 (Nigeria-Biafra Civil war) (ibid). The regionalist politics coupled with divisive ethnic chauvinism noted Abukakar (2001) culminated in the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. Till date, the situation of the country and its citizens has largely remained that of “fowl” and the “rope” which is always tension ridden in spite of the fact that Nigeria since 1999 has emerged a democratic state. The discontent in the society as a result of the aforementioned factors coupled with nature of state response to mere protest has continuously made government and governance too exclusive for the populace and encouraged recoil to seeking solace or help from within ones ethnic group.

Again the issue of mismanagement and unfair distribution of state revenue derived from oil resources coupled with endemic corruption has inflicted on the society some hybrid elites interested in continuing with the legacy of stealing from the state and has been a source of discontent among the people who feels so disconnected from the state. This disconnects and discontent has been more fiercely expressed through violence in the Niger Delta where oil, the source of Nigeria revenue is located.

Seen in this light, the Niger Deltans has challenged the Nigeria state on many fronts: right to resource control and self-determination; the question of political and economic

marginalization, unfair distribution of revenue derived from resources in the Niger Delta and also on the question of environmental devastation as a result of oil exploitation. The youths of the region rallied under various groups to challenge the state. Among the groups that adopted violent measure to confront the state for redress in the Niger Delta is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) formed in 2006.

Stability of the Nigerian state has been threatened by the militant groups in the Niger Delta from the mid-1990s following the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa by the Abacha military junta (Courson: 2009). The region is an area inhabited by over 30 million people with different cultures, languages and history (Ikpatt and Scott: 2001). They are united by their historical status in Nigeria and share a common identity as Southern minorities (ibid.). Historically, the inhabitants of the region were at the forefront of minority agitations in the colonial and immediate post-independence periods (Saro-Wiwa: 1992). Till date, the situation has deteriorated more than improved. The region's demand and position in the Nigeria federation remains unaltered despite the different commission that were set up to look at the minority question , starting with the Willink Commission of 1957. Oil has only exacerbated the Niger Delta conflict (Dokubo: 2004).

Perhaps, initially driven by the urgent need to address the discontent in the region, the militant groups that emerged particularly MEND gradually descended to acts of predation and criminality. The group seemed to have initiated violence (oil installation vandalization, oil bunkering, kidnapping and other terrorist activities) in the Niger delta, in their attempt at seeking equitable recognition and fair distribution of revenue. Their goals from this period became blurred: justice seekers, freedom fighters or criminals? MEND has not only been involved in oil pillage – particularly by way of bunkering – but are also involved in other acts of sabotage of the Nigerian state.

In response to MEND violent activities in the Niger Delta, the central government responds with more repressive measures that equally fuels more violence. In May, 1999, even under the new democratic dispensation and also in furtherance of corporate violence by oil multinationals, the Chevron-Texaco allegedly flew Nigeria military personnel to their Parabe oil platform where the soldiers killed protesters at the station. In November 1999, the Federal troops killed over 300 citizens of Odi town in Ijaw community; displacing thousands (Clark: 2009). The town was razed down for failing to produce a militant group suspected to have murdered seven policemen. This ultimately had a vicious spiral effect: militancy in the whole region increased and became well rooted.

1.3. Problem Statement

This study focuses on the militant group called MEND. It looks at MEND goals, modes of operation, method of resistance and mobilizing ideas. The study will further tap into reflections of MEND members on not only their activities, issues, driving force but also on economic and socio-political conditions in the Niger Delta to see if economic consideration or gains remains the most fundamental factor in the group's violent agitation to redress injustices in the Niger Delta, namely historical structural violence, political and economic marginalization by the Nigerian government, inequitable oil revenue distribution and environmental devastation (Watts: 2008, Okonta: 2006). In this way, it hopes to provide more insights into understanding the violent agitations in the Niger Delta in general context. It is the contention here that in order to understand the cause of militant violent agitations in the Niger Delta, it is necessary to seek individual militant perspectives and obtain direct views or perceptions from them. This study would therefore give priority to individual accounts and reflections as MEND militant group members in shading lights on the protracted conflict in the region and reasons/mobilizing ideas for violent agitations.

Furthermore, this study seeks to provide more insights into MEND method of operation. Long period of nonviolent protest not yielding the expected led to the adoption of extreme measures by the MEND militant group to demand redress to the underlying issues as mentioned above. The group's modus operandi in the conflict has been characterized with high level of economic sabotage namely oil facilities vandalization, kidnapping for ransom of oil expatriate workers and oil bunkering (Ikelegbe: 2010). This study therefore seeks to elucidate more on such resistance measures that has characterized MEND violent agitations.

1.4. Hypothesis

MEND's violent agitations in the Niger Delta of Nigeria are not only informed by economic considerations.

1.4. Research Question

In the light of the above, the thesis seeks to answer this question: Is MEND militant group essentially driven by economic considerations in their violent activities in the oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria?

The following supplementary questions will no doubt be instrumental in answering the main research question:

- What is MEND, and its' mobilizing ideas?
- Who are the members, any external support in any form?
- What are the issues underlying MEND activities in the Niger Delta?
- What is the basis (reasons) for violent agitation; what are they fighting for?
- What are there modes of operation?
- What are the members' reflections on the economic and socio-political conditions in the Niger Delta?
- What are the benefits of being a MEND member?

1.7. Contribution to Peace and Conflict Research

The conflict perpetuated by militant groups which assumed more terrorist form from 2006 when MEND emerged has persisted with little or no attempt at an analytical explanation (Idemudia & Ite 2006). Consequently, the situation has made effective conflict resolution difficult and perpetuated the confusion of fiction over facts on the causes of rebellious movement particularly in the academic circles. Among policymakers in Nigeria also, there has been a well-publicized shared opinion that militant groups like MEND are basically terrorist groups with the intention to steal, dominate and play on the public empathy for the people of the Niger Delta.

In many economic narratives covering the relationship between natural resources and rebellious movement in developing states (Collier; Collier and Hoeffler: 1998–2009, Ross: 2004, Le Billion: 2001, 2005, Humphrey: 2005, Fearon and Laitin: 2003, 2005) rebel groups are seen as mere predators, entrepreneurs of war. Feasibility of gains is their greatest motivation. Researchers in this category relegate the issues of social identity and group mobilization based on social constructivist point of view when analyzing conflict. Yet, it seems to be the focus of some literatures (Stewart 2011, Stewart, Brown & Mancini 2005, Cheng, Kruger & Daniels 2003) when analyzing resource related rebellious movement and group mobilization.

Factors contributing to strong social identity and group mobilization, quest for resource control and predatory nature of government and rebels alike cannot be separated while discussing whether for academic purposes or for policy making the 'Niger Delta Question' – the never-ending agitation for justice, equity and fairness in the Niger Delta which in the last decade has taken to violent means in its demand.

In an attempt to make an input into the field of peace and conflict research, this thesis would adopt a more integrated approach in its analysis while making a case for country specifics and conditionality while discussing rebellious movements in states. It is not out of place to say

that scholars from Nigerian can contribute more insightfully in the Niger Delta conflict discourse.

Section II

1.1b. Research Methodology

Research methodology means understanding the entire research process – including socio-organizational context, philosophical assumptions, ethical principles and the political impact of new knowledge for the research enterprise (Neuman: 2011). This section focuses on outlining methods adopted in the field study. It focuses on the study area, selection of respondents, and data collection techniques namely interviewing, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and personal observations. It will conclude with researcher's field experiences.

1.2b. Study Area

The field study was carried out in Ezetu, a community of Southern Ijaw area of Bayelsa state of Nigeria; a riverine community only accessible by boat; six hours from the Bayelsa state capital Yanegua. Southern Ijaw is home to vast oil deposits in Niger Delta and also houses majority of Transnational Oil Companies Chevron, SHELL and AGIP. Ezetu community particularly is home to Chevron Oil Company operations. It is only in riverine areas like Ezetu community that large collection of militants can be found. This is for various reasons as Clergy during our interview said. According to him, 'the oil facilities are located in our villages and not in the city'. Also, here we can operate with 'cover' because we understand the terrain better than those soldiers sent to kill us'. Ezetu community was therefore chosen because of easy availability of respondents, proximity to oil facilities and more importantly because of the willingness of the community and potential respondents to cooperate during the researcher' field work.

1.3b. Selection of Respondents

On the potential respondents, among all the militant groups in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, MEND remain the only militant group with wide outreach within the Niger Delta region covering all parts of core Niger Delta comprising of six states in the Niger Delta region of over 30 million people according to the Nigeria population census of 2006 (Ejimbundu: 2007). Secondly, considering the questions the research set out to answer, MEND seems to be the most

appropriate militant group to investigate because the groups it has been claimed has all the ingredients of rebel movement (Courson: 2009).

In the Southern Ijaw axis, MEND seem to be predominant in most villages particularly in Ezetu I and II communities where only the presence of MEND is felt and talked about openly with members not necessarily shielding their identity. MEND equally remains one militant group that has persistently confronted the Federal Military Might in the context of Niger Delta conflict.

1.4b. Data Collection Techniques

The research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research it should be noted is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman: 2001). It could also be explained 'as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world', very much in line with naturalism tradition in research in social sciences (Denzin and Lincoln: 2003, Gulbrum and Holstein: 1997). The researcher attempts to study things in their natural settings, making sense or interpreting social phenomena in terms of the meaning people attaches to them. Considering the nature of the present research therefore, both interviews with respondents, Focus Group Discussions, personal (participant) observation and archived literatures were utilized during data gathering processes.

1.4b.1. Interviews

Interview is probably the most widely used method in qualitative research because of its flexibility (Bryman: 2001). The interview questions strategy adopted by the researcher is partially structured, adopting the principle of semi-structured interviewing. Bryman referred to semi-structured interview as a context in which the interviewer/researcher has a series of questions that are in general form of interview schedule but it is able to vary in sequence of questions. Under this system, there is no strict rule as to how questions can be asked and this is the beauty of it since it helped the researcher tremendously to probing the interviewees/respondents personal views, perspectives and experiences more deeply progressing with essentially interlinked questions that are very relevant to the theme of the interview. Even though such open-minded interviews discourages less literate respondents from participating, takes longer to answer, can put respondents off and equally more difficult to analyze, it is still the most appropriate in qualitative research since it gives the data collected some 'richness' and

allows the respondent to exercise their freedom of expression as much as they want to during interviews (Lincoln and Denzin: 2003).

The interview covers MEND as a militant group; its membership, goals, modes of operation, method of resistance, driving force, perception and criminal orientation and reflections of economic and socio-political conditions in the Niger Delta. The interview involve twelve MEND members who were interviewed at various times and locations as agreed with the researcher. While eight of the informants were interviewed at their work places, four other respondents preferred such interview after working hours in the various abode in the evening. Questions that were asked cut across gains of MEND membership, followed by series of concise questions bordering on their violent activities, reflections and conditions in the Niger Delta. The informants bared their mind as regards reasons or mobilizing ideas for the violent agitations, why extreme measures were adopted in the agitations and the criminal implications of such methods. All the informants equally reflected on their condition in the general framework of economic and socio-political condition in the Niger Delta region.

Having said this, the researcher has the responsibility of ensuring and by extension guiding the respondent along the 'theme line' to ensure that there is minimal deviation from the purpose of the field study and interview. Flexibility on the part of the researcher and respondent was to play a key role during the interview process. The questions asked were sequential and in most cases, linked to the previous ones asked or answered. The researcher was also conscious of the 'pain and suffering' in the heart of the community agitation and therefore moderated the questions asked the respondents to avoid playing on their sensitivity and ultimately imploding.

1.4b.2. Focus Group Discussion

Another effective method in qualitative research and data collection technique is the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This is a form of interview in which there are several participants on a specific topic or theme (Bryman: 2001). Here equally like the researcher-respondent interviews, the researcher is solely concerned respondents' views and reflections on issues in which they are confronted with; in this case, in a group interaction. Semi-structured interviewing was also adopted to be able to draw deeply respondents' views and perspectives. This is advantageous in many ways: it enables the researcher to dig deep into respondents' personal experiences, the respondents are more likely to bring to discussion new ideas and issues that will likely be relevant to the general theme (ibid) of the thesis and finally, under FGD, respondents have the

opportunity to probe each other's views and perspectives on the topic while ultimately enriching the researcher's knowledge.

To give room for open ended discussion and allowing respondents to talk freely and even simultaneously some times since the researcher was taking notes, the researcher was armed with discussion guide that revolves round the issues expected to be covered. The questions are precise, unambiguous and straight to the point. This is basically to give room for easy understanding, in-depth discussion on issues relevant to the research theme. The relationship between the researcher and the respondent is also very important in the discussion process as both may influence each other's opinion. To guide against bias, the researcher allowed all respondents to speak on the same issue/questions under consideration.

An open space usually used for social gathering in the community was used for the FGD. Here I was told, the people gather for important issues to be discussed and nothing one said here has ever been held against him or her. This researcher was told remains the norm of the community that the people has held and transmitted from past generations.

1.4b.3. Personal Observations

During field research, personal observation goes a long way in enriching the researcher's field work knowledge. Participant observation entails the involvement of the researcher in the social life (environment) he or she finds himself or herself. As Bryman (2001) noted, participant observer or researcher immerse himself in a group over extended period of time, observing behaviour, listening to what is said in conversation. Participant observation is often utilized in research in conflict zones (Norman: 2008). Having said this, there is often the question about researcher's trust relationship with communities and respondents. On one hand, participant observation can enhance emotional trust and access, on another hand; establishing close relationship can complicate researcher's transparency and can undercut the cognitive trust developed between researchers and subjects through informed consent (ibid).

In the researcher's field work, his presence as a personal/participant observer in the tensed Ezetu community helped him to establish behavioural and emotional trust with the militants. Both sides created comfort zone less pressure and suspicion. The researcher integrated into the community properly. To facilitate integration, the researcher in some cases participated or played active roles in some works the respondents does. It should be noted that aside carrying

out militant activities, the militants still has some legitimate, though less paying jobs they do within the community.

1.4b.4. Secondary Data

Another good source of data in qualitative research is archived documents that can be analyzed for richer thesis. Systematic data analysis is the analysis by researchers not directly involved in the collection of said data (Bryman: 2001) namely journals, books, magazines and other forms of scholarly printed work. In writing thesis where theoretical issues will extensively be raised, secondary data offers one fundamental advantage for the researcher. It's a potential source of good quality data, largely within reach and cost effective too (ibid). It equally provides an avenue for cross-cultural analysis of events, issues and perspectives. It also saves time. Of course it has its own disadvantages as the researcher is totally familiar with the all the literatures, therefore the period of familiarization is quite lengthy.

1.5b. Field Study Experiences

This section contains concise explanation of the researcher's field study experiences.

1.5b.1. Gaining Trust and Access

Trust even though difficult to secure remains indispensable tool to gaining access to potential field work respondents particularly in conflict situations (Norman: 2008). Trust is often multifaceted, ranging from cognitive trust that sees trust as an individual processes based on rational choices to Emotional trust that speaks to emotional bond among all those who participate in the relationship; not necessarily based on reason or rationale but personal relations. There is also behavioural trust which is basically a mutual reciprocity to behaviour or actions that show trust in each other (Lewis and Weigert: 1985; Norman: 2009). Building cognitive and emotional trust as suggested by Norman is very instrumental to research in difficult conflict situations.

Research in the Niger Delta has two dimensional challenges of trust. First is the challenge of gaining collective trust of oppressed groups or community to gain credibility to carry out the research and on another hand is gaining trust among specific groups in conflict zones. As remarked by Goodhand(2000), research in conflict zones occurs within an intensely political environment and is unlikely to be viewed by local actors as neutral or altruistic. Much as the

researcher tried to lay some foundation for soft landing in the study area, he was still filled with some level of skepticism principally for one reason – the issues of trust. Both the community and the target respondents expressed some level of anxiety over the intention of the researcher; what he intends to do with his findings. However my ‘open nature’ played a tremendous impact in being accepted in the community. Additionally, being a Nigerian and more importantly being a journalist who has covered news in the region severally, it became a lot easier to gain their cooperation. The earlier doubt is quite understandable considering the theme of my field work and of course the tensed environment the respondents lives.

The researcher also made attempt to have a contact/gatekeeper before proceeding for the field study. No doubt, the issue of gatekeeping during field study particularly research covering sensitive issues is a very important factor and decisive in the outcome of the study. Gatekeeping influences the research endeavor by limiting access to data and potential respondents but restricting the scope of analysis and in some cases by retaining prerogatives with regard to what is being published (Broadhead and Rist: 1976). The implication of this is that there is fundamentally an imprint of the gatekeeper from data collection to final analysis and presentation of result except the researcher internalizes the necessary sense of ‘propriety or maturity’ to conduct an acceptable investigation Braodhead and Rist concluded. And this is where my ingenuity played a decisive role. First, I made attempt to meet all the potential respondents, much more than anticipated to interview, created a strong rapport with them, took time to get to know nook and cranny of the riverine community. The gatekeeper first and foremost was excluded from the list of the researcher’s potential respondents and again, during the period of the interviews, he was also excluded. This is me to minimize any kind of influence he might have had on interaction with each respondents. And this paid off considering the relaxed and free flow interaction the researcher had with each respondent. Besides, the researcher took it upon himself to ask each respondent exactly where to meet them for our interaction which he respected.

1.5b.2. Language

Language is of high significance in social research and important component of research. Knowing how words are used and the meaning of specific terms in the local vernacular is frequently viewed as crucial to an appreciation of how the social world is being studied or viewed by its members (Bryman: 2001). Being able to speak ‘pidgin’ (localized) English

Language facilitated greater access to the researcher respondents. It greatly enhanced my ability to communicate with my respondents and to understand particularly words or expressions that were best expressed using the localized English. The respondents can speak good English but the beauty of switching between fluent English and pidgin is that it enabled the respondents to move freely, expressing one another as much as possible during the interview.

On the issue of recording, the research has to rely solely on note taking during the interview as that was the only means of recording allowed by the respondents. It should be noted that in the nature of field research, participant observation and difficulty in writing conspire to ensure that note taking is messy, filled with loose text that makes no claim to be final or fixed versions (Mulhall: 2003). Also, many would concede that note taking is comprehensive to the author. Nonetheless, in the social science research, this is not necessarily a negating factor and doesn't necessarily alter in any form the quality of research (Sandelowski: 1986).

1.5b.2. Security

Security of researcher and respondents is a cardinal task during field study even though it is rarely and seldom addressed (Norman: 2009; Williams: 1992). Regrettably, many researchers have encountered illness, injury or death in the course of field work due to natural and criminal causes. As a general rule, researchers often create 'safety zone' in which to conduct when conducting research in dangerous settings so as to protect themselves and their respondents with whom they are interacting for physical harm or violence during field study (Williams: 1992). Both the researcher and his respondents need to create and maintain a physical and social environment in which both accepts each other's presence.

As researchers in conflict situations, we need mindset that assumes safety and does not lead to fearful behaviour. As succinctly put by Williams, the researcher's state of mind on entering the field must not include far about studying violent people, at least such fears must not be at the front of one's mind. The researcher was assured of his security but was still skeptical considering the tensed nature of the community. One factor contributed to making him feel a bit relaxed and that was the meeting with the traditional Prime Minister who re assured him of his safety. It should be noted that in a typical Nigeria community, respect for traditional rulers is paramount and in most cases more revered than respect for constituted governmental authorities.

First impression during field study is equally very significant in the research safety consideration in the research environment. Wearing clothes appropriate to the setting prevents drawing undue attention and exhibits a sense of belonging in the setting. Williams (1992) noted

that researchers' attire can be viewed as an extension and manifestation of their personalities as well as willingness to fit into the social setting. Being a Nigerian and understanding fully what dressing flamboyantly could mean to a community that has perceived themselves as being marginalized, it was a very important consideration not to be put up with outfits that would ridicule life in the rural riverine community.

Over concern about violence may equally cause researcher to appear afraid or react inappropriately. In every sense of the word, Ezetu community remains tensed community but the ability to put this fear behind one, reassurance from the community and the respondents and the ability to study the environment quickly helped the researcher from overcoming the persistent fear of violence in the community.

1.6b. Structure of the Thesis.

Chapter 1 will have two sections. Section I focuses on general context of conflict and rebellious movement in resource-rich states in Africa while section II will cover methodological issues. It discussed in brief the general but not exhaustive characteristics of African states and rebel movement in the use, control and management of state resources narrowing to rebellious/militant movement in Nigeria where oil has become commodity of violence and weapon of politics. Chapter 2 focuses on an aspect of the 'Niger Delta Question', discussing the trend of violence from a chronological perspective, bringing in the actors in the conflict and the part they played. It focuses essentially on MEND violent role in the oil conflict. Its impact on the people, the society and general institutional framework will be highlighted.

Chapter 3 covers the theoretical framework. It discusses literature that speaks to violence in resource-rich developing states, particularly those that speak to oil as a commodity of violence and rebellious movement. Chapter 4 is on data analysis. it discusses the field materials within the context of the theories provided in chapter 3 and data collected in the field. Chapter 5 is basically the summary and concluding remarks.

Chapter 2. Niger Delta Question: History and Realities.

This chapter focuses on the history of Niger Delta conflict, involving both state and non-state actors. It chronicles the activities of the Transnational Oil Companies (TNCs), militant groups specifically MEND and the Nigeria state represented by its security agencies, in this context, Joint Military Taskforce (JMT) made up of the Army, the Police, the Navy and Air Force.

2.1. Niger Delta Region: A Difficult History

2.1. ...a region so blessed

The Niger Delta is situated in the southern part of Nigeria. The region is heterogeneous comprising of several not too distinct cultures. It has a population of about 30 million people according to the 2006 Nigerian census; notable of the all the ethnic groups in the region are the Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Efik, Andoni, Ogoni and Ogba (Ejibunu: 2007). Of all the ethnic groups that make up the region, Ijaw ethnic group remains the largest with communities scattered across the Niger Delta, along the coast, up to Lagos state in the South West. They are equally the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria (Ojakorotu & Olawale: 2009).

The region stands out as the economic base of the Nigerian nation with over 80% of government revenue, 95% of export receipt and 90% of foreign exchange earnings; yet the region has wielded little or no political power (Ojakorotu & Olawale: 2009). Also, TOC infrastructures particularly construction of oil related chemical facilities such as refineries , petro-chemical plants, pipelines, flow stations, oil terminals, dual carriage ways and staff housing states have been carried out in the region. With enormous oil, both authors concluded that Niger Delta should have witnessed massive development in terms good housing scheme, availability of social amenities like water and electricity, infrastructures like schools, employment opportunities and functional HealthCare system.

2.1.1. ... and yet so cursed

Historically, the Niger Delta region depicts a land of ruin in the mist of plenty. The region according to Okonta (2006) is both economically and socio-politically handicapped. It starts with the structural imbalance and deficiency of the Nigerian state in which the Niger Delta in the minority remains the most vulnerable and the victim of Nigeria exclusive government, to the destructive consequences of oil exploitation by TNCs particularly SHELL and Chevron and the styles, terms and patterns of demand of redress to the social, economic, environmental and political injustices in the region which has metamorphosed over time from mere peaceful protest

to arm confrontations. According to Mukagbo, CNN anchorman of *Inside Africa*, Niger Delta is a 'region where time seems to have stood still and where people live the most meager of existence living them bitter and angry from not having benefitted from the black gold... scenes of abject poverty parades the area, very similar to what you find in a refugee camp' (Ejibundu: 2007).

On the other hand is the divide-and-rule tactics and vague promises of TNCs and the government (ibid). These entire elements act together to give rise to what became known in policy cycles in Nigeria and among academics as the *Niger Delta Question* (Ibaba and Ikelegbe: 2010). The interaction of these negating factors brought so much pains, frustration, hopelessness and uncertainty among the people and ultimately forces them to take to arms.

The fact that Nigeria up to the 1999 has been characterized with authoritarian government led by the military since independence in 1960 did not help matters. The regimes of the military right from independence responded with more aggressive measures and extra judicial killings. A classical case that drew international attention to the plight of the Niger Delta people and the activities of the TNCs which defiles all known ethics of oil exploration and more fundamentally exposes government penchant for brutal suppression of peaceful protest is the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other eight Niger Delta environmental activists in November 1995 by the then military Head of State, Sani Abacha (Courson: 2009). This was however counter-productive in quelling the protest or clamour for justice in the area, instead signs that the confrontation will become more violent begun to emerge.

2.2. Niger Delta Conflict and New Democratic Government in Nigeria

The emergence of the democratic government in 1999 raised hope of the Niger Deltans as regards addressing the pertinent issues that has remained unsolved for decades. But that was not to be. Already, the existing laws, namely the Petroleum Act of 1969 and the Land Use Act of 1978 has usurped control of the resources from the people and vested it in the federal government. Secondly, the new democratic government in effect does not see urgent need to addressing the Niger Delta Question but the issue of primitive accumulation still characterizes the existing government. When in August 1999 the youths of Odi, an Ijaw town clashed with the police and allegedly killed some policemen, barely five months into the new democratic dispensation, the federal government retaliated with hundreds of killings and torched down Odi town (Okonta: 2006). This action was also counterproductive. The repressive measure of the government rather resulted to more determination for the restive youths to fight the existing

order since the government leadership then like the ones before them, they are more interested in underdeveloping the region in the process of oil exploitation (ibid).

The Joint Military Taskforce (JMT) that was sent by the government to coerce the youths to submission, like the *gunboat diplomacy* of British in the 18th and 19th century in that same area was counterproductive as they clashed with the youth incessantly. As the youths developed resistance to the JMT and of course the apparent killings of the Niger Delta people by the JMT, they became resolved more than ever to fight the system. What began as a protest in the 1980s and early 1990s metamorphosed to insurgency with different groups emerging to fight for injustices that have been meted out on Niger Deltans and their environment (Idemudia: 2009). Among the groups that emerged and the most violent is the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND).

2.3. Mapping the Niger Delta Conflict: From Agitation to Resistance.

The patterns and time frames of Niger Delta conflict require some deep understanding and appreciation. Agbonifo (2007) and Ikelegbe (2005) noted that analysis of the conditions that have occasioned the metamorphosis of the Niger Delta conflict is still lacking and when offered will provide insights into the underlying factors that drives the conflict, the dynamics of confrontations as well as the manipulations and divisive strategies of the different actor's involved in the conflict. To map out phases in the Niger Delta conflict therefore, I drew upon Dungan (1996) nested theory of conflict and Ibaba and Ikelegbe's (2010) illustration of the trends in the Niger Delta conflict; all of which speak to agitation and resistance.

Dungan's model while offering a logical insight into the complex interrelationship between narrow and broad aspect of causes and dynamics of conflict, distinguishes four interrelated levels of conflicts, namely, issue-specific conflicts, relational conflicts, structural subsystem conflicts and structural system conflicts. Issue-specific conflicts Dungan argued may exist on its own but as the conflict proceeds, it will undoubtedly have the attributes of other levels, suggesting that relational conflict will always have specific issue manifestation, while system substructural conflict will have both relational and issue-specific spin-offs; and system-wide structural conflict will have manifestation on all other levels. Dungan based such postulation on the fact that specific pressure can impel a dispute towards escalation. Moreover, the author continues that the pressure responsible for conflict is not always stand-alone variables but linked very often to structural, subsystem and systemic pressures. Undoubtedly, the conflict Idemudia (2009) pointed out requires the understanding not only of the recent socio-political

realities and economic pressures that define the conflict but also the differential historical pressures that underlie every phase in the metamorphosis of the conflict.

Ibaba and Ikelegbe (2010) noted that the neglect, marginalization and underdevelopment that has characterized the Niger Delta region and generated activism and unrest in the region began during the colonial administration. Accordingly the recent events particularly from the new democratic dispensation in 1999 defined by oil complex and politics constitute merely the tipping point in a conflict that has its root in the colonial era. Ibaba and Ikelegbe opined that conflict in the Niger Delta can be categorized as pre- and post-oil-conflict in six phases, with different strands of engagement characterizing the post-oil conflict.

Table 1: Phases and Character of Resistance in Niger Delta Conflict

Phase	Period	Agitation/Resistance
1	1950 – 1965	➤ Civil agitation for special developmental attention because of unique ecological difficulties and for separate regions because of marginalization by ethnic majority groups.
2	23 February – March 1966	➤ Militant insurgent engagement by Isaac Adaka Boro and the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF).
3	1970 – 1982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Agitations by host communities against Transnational Oil Companies (TNCs) ➤ Demands for basic social infrastructure and amenities, and payment of compensation to land and property
4	1983 – 1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conflict between host communities and TNCs over payment of adequate compensation for damages to land, water and property, and for development projects. ➤ Litigation and peaceful obstruction and protest as the instrument of engagement.
5	1990 – 1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Emergence of civil, community, ethnic and regional groups in response to state and TNCs' insensitivity and repression. ➤ Peaceful demonstration by host communities and

			occupation of oil production facilities, demanding adequate compensation for damages and development attention.
6	1997 – Till	➤	Militant and militia actions against TNCs
	Date	➤	Demand for resource ownership and control by civil, political and militia groups
		➤	Violent confrontations and low-intensity war between militia groups and the state military represented by the Joint Military Taskforce (TJF)

Source: *compilation from different sources By Ibaba and Ikelegbe (2010: 224)*

2.4. Actors in the Niger Delta Conflict

There are basically various actors in the Niger Delta conflict, namely, the Nigerian state, the Oil Companies, the Local Communities and the Militant groups and for the purposes of this thesis, MEND militant is used.

2.4.1. The Nigerian state

State is the organizational instrument of society, which provides it with the necessary cohesive factor and maintains its unity of existence. The fundamental function of the state is the maintenance of social and political order in the society. In the context of Nigeria, the state is like a property that has to be acquired, as such the Nigerian state basically have group of powerful elites who has acquired power to be used at their whims and caprices. According to Ibaba (2009: 21), the privatization of the state defines the character of the Nigerian state. Politics is always seen as a short cut to primitive accumulation of wealth and because capturing the state which implies total control of resources is the ultimate aim of every politician, there is always fierce competition. The dilemma here is choosing between promotion of private and public interest which the former triumph in most situations.

Niger Delta conflict is the outcome of this personification of power by elites in government who deliberately ignore the pursuit of public good to personal interest (Okonta: 2006). The government in many ways has played an active role in the evolving Niger Delta conflict; from conspiracy with the Oil Companies over oil exploitation to outright brutal suppression of protest without recourse to dialogue. Even when there is any form of negotiation between the government representative and militant groups, the government representative

always see that an avenue for self-aggrandizement (Ikelegbe: 2010). Again, the refusal of the state to initiate some development pact in the region and the attendant violent response from the people of the region has always ensured that the state remain an active participant in the general Niger Delta conflict.

2.4.2. Oil Companies

The Oil Companies operating in the Niger Delta in a form of conspiracy with the government has been very active in the Niger Delta conflict (Omotola: 2006). The companies have constantly harassed, intimidated and suppressed the Niger Delta, particularly environmental rights activists who have raised questions about their operation and responsibility to host community. In most cases, the government provides these companies with armed personnel. This singular act contributed to militarizing the Niger Delta with limited possibilities of resolving the problems; rather it has always escalated with the emergence of various militant youth groups to challenge these security forces over what they perceive is their right.

2.4.3. Local Communities

Right from independence, oil producing communities of the Niger Delta has claimed ownership of resources in their land and has challenged the central government for its usurpation of rights of indigenes through various obnoxious laws like the Petroleum Act of 1969 and the Land Use Act of 1978. More regrettably, the communities has responded peacefully to environmental insecurity as a result of Oil Companies activities but the indifference shown by the government and Oil Companies necessitated some change in tactics of demand particularly from the 1990s when it was radicalized (Omotola: 2006). Also, there has been contention on the question of correcting the imbalance in the Nigerian state structure which favours only the minority ethnic groups.

On the question of imbalance state structure, the oil producing communities has argued that state creation has always favoured the three main ethnic groups, the Igbos, Yorubas and the Hausas and since revenue sharing is no longer dominantly on derivation principle but on population, these major ethnic groups are at a very high advantage (Ejibunu: 2007). The communities in the Niger Delta have never failed to express their discontent resulting from their political exclusion in the larger Nigerian state even when their region remains the backbone of the Nigerian state. Regrettably the government has paid lip service to their demand and at in

most cases unleashes brutality on any community that threatens the smooth exploitation of oil resources from the region (Courson: 2009). This partly explains the rise of militant of MEND.

2.4.4. Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) – How the Group Emerged

MEND has remained more elusive than other previously former violent youth groups in Niger Delta. Who is this group shrouded in mystery whose members are armed with little more than mask and a few ak-47 and speed boats? Is it just a desperate ragtag of disillusioned youths, with powerful backers, intent on little more than petty criminality? (Asumi: 2009); a guerrilla movement whose decisions like fighters are fluid (Watts 2008:17), or in the words of Gbomo Jomo, MEND spokesperson, ‘apolitical in structure, fighters, ‘...we are not communists ... or revolutionaries but just bitter men’ (quoted in Okonta: 2006). Or just a bunch of hostage takers and kidnappers who gets rich by ransom, extortion; criminals who specializes in oil theft (bunkering) thereby crippling the Nigerian economy (Fani-Kayode: 2006), or a group whose struggle is for survival, equity, dignity and justice for the people of the Niger Delta (Okonta:2006). Or in the words of an anonymous MEND leader, ‘there is no such thing as MEND. What I do know is that there are armed youths in the creeks who say they have had enough of the Oil Companies’ double standard and determined to put an end to the exploitation of the people’ (quoted in Okonta: 2006). The author himself saw MEND not an organization but ‘an idea, a general principle underlying the slew of communal, civic and youths movements that began to proliferate in the Niger Delta, particularly in the Ijaw speaking area’.

Several factors occurring at different levels gave rise to the rise of MEND. The structural injustices in the wake of the of oil exploitation is an established fact but the fiscal regime of the federal government which removed completely ownership and control of resources from its location (recall the Petroleum Act of 1969 and the Land Use Act of 1978) and the state brutality occasioned by the deployment of the Joint Military Taskforce (JMT) in the region quickened the pace at which MEND not only assumed the role of liberators(?) but also its intent to cripple the Nigeria economy by acts of economic sabotage became manifest. Elias (2009: 11) has argued that ‘the dichotomies and contradictions between exploiters (government and TNCs) and the exploited (oil-bearing ethnic minority communities of the Niger Delta) lie at the heart of the conflict in the region and rise of MEND’.

Petroleum Decree of 1969 which removed control of oil fields front the states origin and vested such power on the central government and the Land Use Act of 1978 that confiscated the oil bearing land if the Niger Delta communities and equally vested such right of control under

the federal government transformed the Niger Delta to a colony of sort where the people bear the brunt of oil production on which the government depends for its revenue. The implication of these obnoxious laws is that the oil companies were answerable to the central government and are only required to pay compensation to local people whose crops has been destroyed during the course of oil exploration (Ojakorotu & Olawale: 2009). Aaron aptly captured (2006) the situation. According to him:

oil has meant for the indigenes of the Niger Delta, wrenching poverty... peoples Rights have come under severe assault by the ecologically unfriendly practices of oil Transnational Corporations. In addition, state laws and policies as they relate to petroleum resources, expropriate the indigenous peoples of the Niger Delta of their 'right' to their natural resources...

The people of Niger Delta equally saw this as another phase of neocolonialism. Ken Saro-Wiwa (1992), a non-violent environmental activist and writer, lamenting the condition of the people of the Niger Delta noted that:

The Niger Delta and are embattled and imperiled since oil was discovered in 1958 , they have been victims of a deadly ecological war in which no blood is spilled, no bones broken and no one is maimed. But the people die all the time. Men, women, children at risk; plants, wild life and fish destroyed, the air and water are poisoned and finally the land dies.

Unfortunately, when this statement is magnified further, one would realize that he was speaking of his time. From the dawn of the 21st century, aside ecological wars, blood are now spilled by both the government represented by the JMT and the militant groups.

Aside the pure negligence and devastation in the Niger Delta, the government suppressive measures in the region gave impetus to the rise of militant groups and the insurgency pattern the conflict in the region has assumed. In attempt to justify the use of force by the government on the communities in Niger Delta, Fani-Kayode (2006), aide to the then Nigeria president, Olusegun Obasanjo said:

When we need to be hard, we have been very hard. We were tough when it comes to Odi town where our policemen and our people were killed by these ethnic militants. And the Federal Government went in and literally leveled the whole place. And the proof of the pudding is in the eating. It has never happened again since that time.

Regrettably, things have taking turn for the worse since he made this statement. As already pointed out, it is this singular act of torching down Odi town that really gave rise to more violence and springing up of fierce militant groups like MEND (Okonta: 2006). This brazenly attitude of the federal government in rhetoric and brutality coupled with already existing devastation of environment and cry of injustice was what the restive youths need to regroup and fight the government. This gave rise to MEND.

2.5. MEND Operational Pattern

...to destroy the capacity of the Nigeria government to export oil'

Jomo Gbomo, MEND Spokesperson (Okonta:2006)

... I believe that economy is the power. Like you may have known, I don't believe in fighting human being. I believe in crumbling the economy. On my way to crumbling the economy, if any military man comes across me and tries to stop me, I mean those people will kiss their graves. My brottet, nozzles is always targeted at the flow station, pipelines.... before we formed MEND, our people were fighting , but it was a war between Ijaw and Itsekiri. That was not the Niger Delta Struggle.

Boyofoaf, Ex-MEND Commander (Elias 2009)

This stated objectives of MEND by its leadership underscores the turn which militancy in the Niger Delta has taken and also contradicts the views expressed by Ojaborotu and Okonta who sees MEND as freedom fighters in the Niger Delta and that of Udughan who sees MEND as purely ethnic militants and not fighting for the generality of the Niger Deltans even though Bolyloaf acknowledges that before MEND, conflict in the Niger Delta was basically ethnic conflict.

MEND in the process of purportedly fighting to redress political, and socio-economic injustices which are the underlying issues in the Niger Delta Question chose economic sabotage as its fundamental rebel instrument. The central government in her continuous attempt at matching violence with more than proportionate violence continued to use suppressive measures to ty to stop the MEND group. More state security apparatus was deployed in the Niger Delta like a war-time situation in an attempt to crush MEND. The JMT presence in the region has not worsened the already volatile situation but has equally connived with the MEND group to get

deeply involved in a more organized and sophisticated business of economic sabotage – oil bunkering (theft).

Another weapon of choice by the MEND group in their confrontation with government is kidnapping and hostage taking first of foreign workers and later of influential Niger Deltans that has close affinity with Oil Companies and the government. Okonta (2006) pointed out that while it is true that there are fringe elements in the Niger Delta who has embraced hostage taking as a lucrative venture, they are not to be confused with MEND. This seems to be half-truth as confirmed by facts. Asuni (2009) opined that certain MEND group use hostage taking for political demand, citing the hostage taken associated with the demand for the release of Asari Dokubo who was held by the Nigerian government and Alamiyeseigha who was also by the state for corruption charges.

There is also this aspect of extortion by the militants and ‘buying peace’ by the Oil Companies (Elias 2009: 20). Both the government and Oil Companies are guilty of this act of financial inducement as pay-offs to cooperative factional MEND leaders located in their territories in order to get the desired peace for operation. It is within this unholy mix of genuine demand for justice in the Niger Delta and criminality of violent groups evidenced by the involvement of MEND in hostage taking, kidnapping, illegal bunkering and extortion that has placed the militant group as a subject of controversy over its role as justice seekers and its criminal inclination (Collier: 1999). Having said this, one cannot rule out completely the underlying issue when discussing MEND activities. As noted by Shadi Bushra (2009).

...the overarching theme of this and other similar resistance effort, the liberation of the land occupied by an irresponsible foreign goliath cannot be dismissed as ‘terrorism’. It is this oversimplification that forces people into arms. Whether we regard the pain of others, regardless of how many borders or oceans are between us with indifference, we open the door for such violent groups. We invite them into a world which doesn’t recognize shared purpose, but instead chooses to reward those who recklessly pursue power and wealth. Without addressing the problem e helped fashion, we have all but invited such extremism into our shared world.

Shadi no doubt captured the precarious stability propelled by politics of exclusion, structural violence, non-participatory governance, environmental devastation, corrupt elitist/clientelist government and weak institutions of the Nigerian state necessitating such an implosion that so far seem unabated.

2.6. Summary

This chapter bring to focus Niger Delta region and its difficult history of conflict; moving from mere peaceful protest at the initial stage to open and armed confrontation in the new millennium. In the conflict itself are four main actors namely the TNCs, the State, communities in the Niger Delta and the Militant Groups. It equally highlighted the impact of the actors in the conflict. More specifically, the chapter brought to focus MEND militant group, discussing how the group emerged namely the historical structural injustices in the region, marginalization, environmental devastation, and government obnoxious laws aimed at the control of oil resources and lastly as a response to government brutal suppression of peaceful protest. It outlined MEND operational pattern which cut across economic sabotage like oil facilities vandalization, hostage taking and oil bunking and underlying grievances; from political exclusion to socio-economic inequalities.

Chapter3. Conceptual Framework

This chapter attempts a conceptualization of natural resources – conflict correlations. It discusses the economic and noneconomic conceptual issues concerning conflict in states with vast natural resources. The debate since 1990s over drives for conflict in resource-rich states particularly in developing states has revolved round economic and noneconomic issues. While economic narratives have focused on looting (of natural resources) drives of the opposing elements or violent non-state actors in a state as the most determinant factor for the onset and duration of conflict in a state with vast natural resources, noneconomic issues on the other hand dwells on some underlying elements of structural injustices, economic and political marginalization and deficiencies in state structures felt by a group accumulating over a period and building discontent; enough to cause revolt. This chapter therefore focuses on discussing these economic and noneconomic narratives of natural resource-conflict correlations; while also enumerating on various criticisms of the two approaches.

3.1. Conceptual Approaches to Natural Resources and Conflict Discourse

This section takes a look at conceptual issues so far raised or addressed in the natural resources-conflict correlations.

3.1.2. Natural Resources and Greed – Explaining the Economic Narratives of Conflict

The economics of war narratives holds that natural resources increases the risk of conflict by providing source of finance for rebel groups either by extracting and selling the commodity directly or extorting money from extractive industries. The narratives rest on three premises: financing, recruitment and geography. This is the core of economics of war argument on the onset and duration of civil war or rebellion embedded in the greed hypothesis. Greed hypothesis is the part of RC tradition largely popularized by mainstream economic researchers, particularly Collier and Hoeffler's works (1998–2009) that deals with pillaging of natural resources, particularly oil by the rebels during conflict. Collier pointed out that it is very likely that fundamentally there could be structural injustices on ground namely expropriation of land, environmental and ecological disaster and other social maladies including repressive regimes shouldered by the local population but the drive and duration of war is not shaped by these factors but by the greed of the rebels. Nonetheless, rebels can wedge war under the guise of justice seeking in effect they are predators enriching themselves through illegal resource extraction and extortion (Renner 2002). As Renner noted, both state and rebel groups have

commonly used natural resources to finance conflict. Collier in his discourses on the economics of war didn't quite agree. He solely blamed the rebels appeal to pillaging state resources as the drive for rebellion and its duration.

Collier and Hoeffler in the economics of war analysis did not deny long standing grievances as a factor in civil war but simply see grievances as less significant or insignificant. He asserted that there is a self-sustaining vicious cycle in which the spoils or rents of resource exploitation fund war, and war provides the means and condition that allowed continued (duration) illegitimate access to these resources. Most economic analysis doesn't see any motivation for rebellious movement except where rebellion is materially feasible, where rebels can sustain the group financially; conflict will occur; where there are unemployed and (un)educated youths, rebel groups multiplies and where the environment is suitable for rebel movement, rebel group thrives. Economic analysis from which Collier based his argument sees rebellion like a form of organized crime or more radically, as something that's better understood from the destructive circumstances in which it is feasible rather than worrying about what might motivate its participants' (Collier 2006). All sorts of grievances, including lust for power is found more or less equally in all societies Collier noted.

Le Billion (2001) added another dimension to the discourse of greed narratives. It focused on the geographical characteristics of natural resources and resources' lootability to determine who can obtain certain resources. Since natural resources are mined on site, how difficult the production is and its transportation cannot be artificially determined. Therefore, in order to provide rebels with feasibility during armed conflict, natural resources must be something that can be looted and obstructable. Humphrey (2005) added another dimension to geography as one fundamental element of drives for conflict. In his analysis of resource-conflict mechanisms, he holds that natural resources located in mountainous and creek areas are more lootable. This assertion for example goes against Collier prediction that oil cannot be looted or be obstructed (Ross 2004); even though Ross focused on offshore oil.

Keen (2000) has argued that lootable resources can stimulate rebels' incentives for continuing civil war as well as its increases its feasibility for fighting. Accordingly in war time, individual rebels can be committed to war than peace in order to continue gaining access to the 'spoils of war'. However, Keen did not deny the interplay of ethnic allegiance and indoctrination as fundamental in analyzing the onset of war. He noted that while it is plausible to argue that the presence of natural resources may affect conflict escalation, and duration, but these are not the only goal. On the Sierra Leone war, Keen (2000) was of the view that diamond should in fact be embedded in an understanding the civil war in Sierra Leone. According to him, 'the civil war in

Sierra Leone can't really be understood without comprehending the deep sense of anger at lack of good government and educational opportunities.... In the overall context greed has undoubtedly played a role. The failure of the state to provide economic security was matched by a failure to provide physical security' (2000: 35).

Empirical analysis by economic scholars and authors that has adopted instrumentalist approach to exploiting natural resources related conflict, has demonstrated that rebellion has always been propelled by predation for rents in resource-rich states. To these mainstream researchers as the researcher indicated earlier, insurgency against the state stems from greed of the rebels – greed in three fronts: financing (appropriation of natural resources), recruitment (Opportunity to induce fighting power made possible by high population of unemployed youths), and geography (situation or location favourable to rebel groups - mountainous terrain and creeks). Murshed and Tadhoeddin (2007) aptly captured greed as the economic opportunity to fight' and should be distinguished from socio-political grievances.

3.1.3. Critiques of Economics of War Analysis

Not all scholars agreed totally with the view that ascribes drive and duration of conflict to greed. While Stewart (2011) saw greed hypothesis as too individualistic for denying the role of ethnic identity and inequality, Ganesan and Vines (1999) saw the entire greed hypothesis as provocative and compelling to a point. Both authors argued that there is evidence that greed is often not the determinate factor for rebel group behavior. Cynical exploitation of ethnicity both authors argued caused the civil war in Cote d'Ivoire and the Rwandan genocide; Colombia's civil war equally existed long before the cocaine boom in the 1970s. Going further, Ganesan cited the civil war in resource-rich Angola which began about twenty years before União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola/National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) started financing its operation with illicit diamond mining.

Another vague aspect of the greed hypothesis is that many of the actions of rebel groups are by definition illegal and as such, such groups are naturally prone to seek illegal means for financing its activities. In the 'absent of an international patron willing to finance weapon purchase, rebel groups tap into the illicit sources of finances in which way as organized criminal and terrorist networks smuggle and trade in contraband'(ibid).

The greed thesis also considered less significant or ignore the role of government of resource-rich states play in the onset of conflict. Both government resources and the revenue that flow from those resources goes hand-in-hand with endemic corruption, culture of impunity, weak rule of law and inequitable distribution of public/natural resources. While mainstream

researchers see such government as predatory autocracies; yet they were considered less significant as the drive for onset and or duration of civil war, instead holding feasibility for predation by rebel groups as responsible but the situation in many countries as would be noted below while expanding on noneconomic factors speaks in the latter's direction. While not faulting Collier and Hoeffler's market analogy of the economics of war, De Soysa (2002) observed that one major weakness of the greed hypothesis is that it lacks or did not take into consideration institutional component in the analysis of resources-driven conflict.

Fearon (2005) indeed provided the strongest challenge to economics of war analysis linking natural resources to high risk of rebellion. Working on re-estimating Collier and Hoeffler's country-year observation using country-year observation, Fearon finds that the significance of statistical association between natural resources and onset of conflict vanishes in the country-year regression, meaning that the earlier findings by Collier is not robust and can't withstand sample and data average. Ross (2004) in his fourteen cross country empirical studies however agreeing with economics analysis came to the conclusion that oil appeared to be linked to the onset of rebellion but not its duration. Humphrey (2005) equally saw the effect of oil exploitation in the onset of conflict but asserted that such relationship worked because of the interaction between natural resources and institutional failure, a view that takes us back to concept of state capacity of De Soysa (2000) and political inequality in the HI paradigm

Humphrey's (2003, 2005) in his contribution to the economics narratives of the natural resources-conflict correlations argued that other factors may be present that would have affected the duration of conflict; that is the existence of third parties – states and corporations who benefits from conflicts particularly in resource rich countries. An example is the way in which Uganda and Rwanda government, even till date have continuously intervened in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo; a conflict that itself has been impelled by competition for lucrative resources. Secondly, the involvement of Charles Taylor's forces in Sierra Leone conflict through funding the rebel group, Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and also its stake in Western Cote d'Ivoire from 2002 – 2003 was also driven in partly by a desire to obtain control of diamond and cocoa respectively.

Political ideology is equally very instrumental to the rise and duration of conflict. While ascribing to greed hypothesis, Herbst (2000) observed that economic incentives perspective cannot be the complete picture for rebel movement; that indeed, political ideology is a potent weapon in a rebellion. It is for this reason that the likes of Jonas Savimbi of UNITA and Charles Taylor did not retire to a pleasant and peaceful environment even after making millions of dollars but still went on with the dangerous mission of trying to capture that state. Furthermore,

during the ‘Operation pay yourself’ at the battle of Monrovia in Liberia in 1996, there is evident that Charles Taylor’s troops took some military objectives instead of being consumed by what Ellis (1999) called ‘commercial fratricide’. Equally most rebel leaders don’t live to enjoy the war booties; most often they are killed by the opposition forces, own colleague or by accident.

In general context, political ideology and force of coercion is fundamental in the analysis of conflict in resources-rich states. The economics of war analysis denies this fact completely. If this econometric analysis should hold sway completely in all cases, then, one can equally conclude that Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison in order to gain power so as to steal from the gold and diamond mines; and not the genuine struggle against apartheid. Put more succinctly, political ideology and ethnic indoctrination/allegiance provides a set of reasons why people risk their lives in rebellion (Herbst: 2000)

As noted in the immediate paragraph above, material reward for membership or primordial sentiment that is often relegated in the discourse of rebellion is the force of coercion. This critically has to do with the question of ‘no choice’ during conflict. During rebellion, rebel commanders have always utilized the force of conscription to enlarge the rebel group. Most youths in this case are uprooted from their communities to join the rebel forces. The civil war in Sierra Leone is another good example where the force of conscription was adopted by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to fight the rebel cause. Richard (1995) while describing the force of coercion in RUF noted that youths were conscripted and encamped for military trainings, local primary school buildings being pressed into service as camps headquarters. Another dimension to this force of coercion is the force-cum-self-inflicted psychological trauma that makes it virtually impossible to live the rebel group. Cohn and Godwin-Gill (1994) noted that a typical Mozambican National Resistance Movement, (Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana) or RENAMO practice was to take a soldier who joins voluntarily back to his village and force him to kill someone he knew. After the murder, there is no chance that the youth soldier will ever return to his village.

However, to more other researchers, particularly those that define natural resources related conflict from the social constructivist point of view, rebellion are not driven by economic forces or considerations but by the aim to assuage strong and objective grievances which result from group divide or hate as a result of social fractionalization or group(ethnic) identity, political exclusion represented by level of dictatorial repression and marginalization of ethnic minorities represented by ethnic composition, inequality and vengeance (Travaglianti: 2006; Okonta: 2006).

3.2. Natural Resources and Grievances – Explaining the Noneconomic Narratives of Conflict

Central to the noneconomic narratives of rebellion is the emphasis on cultural (ethnic) identity, group marginalization and inequalities; and weak state structure (Frances: 2010, 2011; Murched and Tadjoeed 2007, De Soysa: 2002). An individual or group may derive utility from certain normative behaviour appropriate to his identity but considered deviant by other groups. This type of behavioural paradigm, against the argument of Collier, maybe related to solving ‘collective action problems’ without which organized large-scale violence is impossible. It is for this reason that Kalyvas (2008) raised an objection to econometrics analysis of conflict. Kalyvas noted that attempts to reduce the violent excesses of civil war to calculative and cognitive processes fly in the face of countless testimonies of emotional escalations leading to outbreak of collective violence.

While the loot seeking narratives focused on the greed of the rebel group as the predominant systemic explanation for rebellion, justice seeking rebellion can in effect be discussed as a rebellion occasioned by grievances embedded in socio-economic, cultural and political failures of a given state namely repressive regimes characterized with brutality, corruption and mismanagement of states resources, non-participatory government and political exclusion, economic dislocation, ethnic polarization, marginalization, environmental devastation, poverty of the majority particularly in the minority and other forms of inequalities that characterizes most resource dependent developing states. All these factors are embedded in issues raised in the relative deprivation and Horizontal Inequalities (HI) concepts, two elements that shaped the noneconomic narratives of conflict.

3.2.1. Horizontal Inequalities (HI)

The feeling of marginalization, inequality and strong cultural identity felt by a group in a state has often resulted to high level of discontent among a dissatisfied group and can often be a source of conflict as the discontent builds up. HI as a concept implies inequalities among culturally defined groups measured along socio-economic lines including resource-based assets, access to basic infrastructures, income levels and employment opportunities. There is also political inequalities which encompasses differences in political opportunities, participation and power; and cultural inequalities which implies differences in culturally defined groups, measured along ethnicity lines, differences in recognition and standing of language, religion, custom, norms and practices. Fundamentally, the HI concept as part of grievance narratives revolves round the idea that it is the combination of cultural differences, political and economic

inequalities running along cultural lines that in part explain contemporary violent conflict (Stewart and Brown 2007; Stewart 2011).

The notion of HI brings together ethnicity and socio-economic motives while explaining causes of civil war or rebellion. Accordingly, Stewart noted, group identity (more specifically defined by cultural differences) can become a powerful agent and led to violent conflict when they overlap with other inequalities namely political and economic inequalities (Stewart: 2002). Humans from the primordialist and constructivist perspectives tend to associate with a gene group for identity, value perception and acceptance.

Gellner (1964) opined that there is a universal need to 'belong, identify and hence exclude'. Even though Stewart defined groups adopting the social constructivist point of view, against the instrumentalist approach adopted by Collier, insisted that ethnic differences are real to groups and very effective in advancing group interest and worth to fight and die for. Cultural boundaries is a powerful sources of group mobilization for rebellion, she concluded; adding that it is more pronounced in states with consistency in political and socio-economic differences. Nigeria for example doesn't perceive big differences in education but do perceive big differences in access to jobs, contracts, regions inequalities, regional resentment about distribution of natural resources wealth.

Furthermore, countries with huge dependent on natural resources are most often embroiled in persistence conflict resulting from income inequalities, inequitable distribution of social amenities and heavy exploitation of natural resources. According, Humphrey (2005; Murshed and Tadjoeddin: 2007) argued that there are at least four variables that responsible for this scenario. Countries with middling levels of dependence on natural resources maybe experiencing transitory inequality as part of development processes, economies that are dependent on natural resources may be more vulnerable to terms of trade shocks, the process of extraction may produce grievances resulting from forced migration, land and water devastation, ecological disaster and natural resources wealth most often would be seen as unjustly distributed.

Østby (2008) in analysis across 55 countries including Nigeria between 1983 and 2007 revealed a significant rise in the likelihood of conflict in countries with severe economic and social HI. In her analysis, she defined groups in terms of ethnicity, religion and region and came to the conclusion that there is a significant relationship between HIs and the onset of violent conflict. Wimmer, Cederman and Min (2009) in their compilation of global data base for 1946 - 2005 showed that countries with high degrees of political exclusion are more likely to experience armed conflict. This conclusion was further reinforced in Cederman et al (2010) findings that

political inequalities defined in terms of exclusion from power and not-participatory government, in addition to economic inequalities jointly raises the risk of violent conflict.

3.2.2. The Weak State Factor

In some cases also, the emphasis on ethnic identity, economic inequalities and the conflict it generates is not necessarily a stand-alone factor without some defects in state structures. All these factors taken together might not necessarily be the strongest drivers for conflict without some fundamental defects in the state structure namely weak democratic system, appalling security apparatus, mismanagement of state resources and power politics by political elites. As De Soysa (2000, 2002) noted, countries with abundant natural resources and in most specific cases of developing nations witnesses not only conflict but slow growth rate and virtually absence of development indices as a result of government inability to harness resources to effective maximum utility. De Soysa remains one of the proponent of this school of thought that ascribes institutional failure to conflict escalation or sees a connection between natural resources abundance, conflict and state (in)capacity.

In assessing a state's capacity, De Soysa (2000) opined that societal and political degradation may lead to conflict and equally perpetuates bad governance, capricious political processes, corruption, underdevelopment and other forms of structural injustice. Misappropriation of a country's natural resources wealth and 'political factors such as rent-seeking, corruption and other dysfunctional political processes are likely to be locked up in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment and armed conflict (Fearon and Laitin: 2005). Throwing more light on the weaknesses of the state structures, Aloa (2007) argues persuasively that there is no direct correlation between natural resources and conflict beyond the structures, processes and actors associated with the management and control of natural resources. Ballentine and Nitzschke (2003) argued that combatants' incentives for self-enrichment and opportunities for insurgent mobilization created access to natural and financial resources were neither primary nor sole cause of rebellious movement but they interact with other factors such as long standing socio-economic and political grievance, inter-ethnic disputes and security dilemma brought about by weak and unaccountable system of governance.

3.2.3. Relative Deprivation

The notion of relative deprivation dates back to Gurr's (1970) work. Gurr has opined that those that are the most frustrated either in absolute terms or relative to their expectations are the most likely to participate in conflict. For example, educational achievements may raise the aspiration

of young people but they will become frustrated if unemployed, occasionally venting their feelings as political violence against established authorities. In one of Gurr's hypothesis, he opined that 'the potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity. It goes therefore by saying that deprivation as a micro-foundation for conflict whether perceived or imagined remains a predisposing factor to violence in a given society where such condition presents itself. Some empirical studies would buttress this point further. Kirwin and Cho (2009) in a study conducted specifically in 17 Africa countries covered by the Afrobarometer found that among other factors that grievances defined in group perception of how they are treated by the government are strongly associated with political violence and higher levels of participation in demonstrations.

3.2.4. Critique of Noneconomic Forces in the Analysis of Conflict

Economic scholars' empirical findings while concluding that the set of variables representing rebel opportunity or greed akin to loot-seeking are the main reasons for civil war outbreak asserted that grievance or justice-seeking narratives focusing on ethnic divide, political exclusion and repression and other social maladies embedded in HI as insignificant to be attributed to the risk of civil war and its duration.

While dismissing the impact of grievance on risk and duration of civil war, particularly the issue of ethnic differences and political repression, Collier (1998; Ganesan and Vines: UNHRC 1999) said, 'ethnic tensions and old political feuds are not starting civil wars around the world... economic forces such as the trade in natural resources is the culprit'. Furthermore, Collier (2006) in continuous attempt to render the noneconomic forces very insignificant in interpreting civil war and its duration admitted that it is easier to free-ride on a justice seeking rebellion, hence the confusion. Going further he said, '... essentially, every militant group or rebel according to public perception is motivated by genuine and extreme grievances fighting to redress such injustices'. Motivation and public perception has no place in Collier and Hoeffler (2006, 2009) empirical study and analysis. He however conceded some space to grievance narratives while he opined that 'at one extreme, rebellion might arise because rebels aspire to wealth by capturing resources extralegally. At the other extreme, they might arise because rebels aspire to rid the nation or the group of people with which they identify of an unjust regime' (Collier: 2000).

Potentially, economic considerations could explain many of the inter-state and more significantly intrastate natural resources-related conflicts across Africa states considering the

level of plunder and poverty that has persisted particularly in resource rich states which makes youth very vulnerable to joining armed groups. In the latter case, both the political elites, those that depend on them; including violent groups are all part of the vicious cycle that has ensured that African states are looted while stability, peace and development has remained too elusive. In all the circumstances however, poverty, marginalization, political exclusion and inequality cannot be ruled out as a lure or drive to joining armed groups with the sole of objectives of correcting the injustice.

Nigeria is a country that is rich in natural resources particularly oil and gas located in the Niger Delta. The country has equally been plagued with conflict right from 1960s. For the purposes of this thesis, the researcher will be concerned with oil conflict emanating from the Niger Delta since 1990s carried out by various militant groups whose method of operation has continuously posed the pertinent question of what drives them in the academic and policy cycles. Among these militant groups is MEND. Is MEND essentially driven by greed? How much can the natural resources reductionist approach account for MEND violent actions in the Niger Delta of Nigeria?

3.3. Summary

Natural Resources related conflict no doubt has dominated debate among scholars in the social sciences. While economic scholars principally associated drive and duration of conflict in resource-rich states with availability of natural resources, speaking to greed hypothesis, noneconomic scholars attributed such conflict not necessarily to availability of resources but on certain fundamental underlying forces that speak to structural deficiencies in the state; informing the grievance and Weak State hypothesis. While virtually conflict-ridden African states can easily pass the ‘greed test’, it is still plausible to say that there is more to natural resources related conflict and this might perhaps inform the drive of conflict before greed of fighters overshadows prior elements.

Chapter 4. Data Analysis and Presentation

This chapter presents and discusses field data. It starts with the respondents' background information, such as education, occupation and living. In doing this, it brings to fore how these factors influences their participation in the violent agitation in the Niger Delta as MEND militant group members. The chapter also discusses the basis for violent agitations, modes of operation and method of resistances by MEND militant group. It equally dwelled on reflections of its members on the economic and socio-political conditions of the Niger Delta. By tapping into the respondents' narratives through the lens of conceptual framework in the previous chapter, the study seeks to explain if indeed economic gains is the most determinant or motivation factor for the violent agitations by MEND militant group in the oil rich Niger Delta of Nigeria. Based on respondents' views and related theoretical issues, the chapter will attempt reconciling the economic and noneconomic narratives in the natural resource-conflict correlation discourse.

4.1. Informants Presentation

4.1.1. Anonymity and Protection in Data Analysis

As remarked by Hanna (2013: 49), 'we are the products of the life we live: everything we have done and experienced influences our action today. This is why the scientific efforts to understand and explain human experiences begin with informant's background in time and place. At the same time however, the informants' privacy and security have to be taken into serious consideration, despite the need for detailed background and contextualization of information'. Militancy or rebel against the state is a treasonable felony with dared consequences (Aaron: 2010). Nevertheless, non-State actors or more mildly, the discontent in the society still engage in the acts that is capable of causing complete State disintegration or total institutional collapse.

Having said this, a realist view on difficult terrains like Nigeria speaks volume of a neglected past, present and future of a country that possesses enormous mineral potentials that can be used to transform the country if only the revenues for such resources are managed or utilized effectively. The reverse is however the case and nowhere is this felt more than in the region that houses Nigeria greatest money-spinning resources – oil in the Niger Delia region of Nigeria. Here the frustration that has been being building up for decades has erupted many times and government '*go-to-hell attitude*' as voiced by Tomboy has worsened the already bad situation.

The volatile situation in the Niger Delta, coupled with government brutality has necessitated that most violent groups has not only emerged but in most situation act under

'cover'. The fears generated by this government attitude of victimization necessitated that the researcher during data collection and adopted all practical measures to conceal the respondents identity as they requested. Jacobsen and Landau (2003) noted that one of the significant yet unacknowledged problems relating to respondents' safety is the issue of security breaches from the researcher's confidentiality lapses. And of course, confidentiality is important to encourage cognitive and emotional trust, two important levels of trust between researchers and respondents required for field study in the social sciences as mentioned in the methodology section of Chapter One. In keeping faith with this element of social research, the researcher assured the respondents of confidentiality as regards identity throughout the process.

By so doing and in the process of data analysis, herein, pseudonyms were used in place of real names of respondents. Background information that will follow is therefore written without reference to respondents real names while the details provided are real as provided by the respondents themselves. Concealing the respondents' identity to an extent might blur the narratives but every study' presentational approaches differ (Silverman: 2005). The researcher has therefore chosen the 'compromise' – balancing act between the researcher's aspiration to do a good research and efforts to protect respondents' identity respectively.

4.1.2. Respondent Presentation

For the field study, a total of twelve MEND members were interviewed. Nine has acquired university education outside their region while the rest three has acquired skilled training. Eleven of the respondents in real terms are unemployed but does some odd jobs that do not correspond with their field of specialization while one does boat engine repairing in the riverine community. The acquisition of university education and skilled vocation ordinarily should have translated to employment or any form of good empowerment but the educated and skilled youths has largely remained unemployed ; at best doing some odd jobs in the mist of abundant natural resources and TNCs operating in the region that could have employed these youths. As a result, discontent and frustration sets in, providing the volatility and opportunity for the jobless youths to vent their anger on the system through active participation in violent militant activities.

The respondents were aged between 21 and 29. Of all the twelve respondents, three are married while the rest nine are not but has girlfriends. Two of the married respondents have a hut attached to their parents' main building where their siblings stay as their parents are dead. The rest ten still live in their parents' house with siblings. Out of the ten, all has lost both or either parents and in six cases are the bread winners of their families. It has to be noted that the ages of these militant are the most active age in any given population. The near total absence of

jobs can inform group mobilization for conflict and perhaps in the process provide and guarantee an alternative means of survival, no matter how dangerous provided it can enable them meet their responsibilities as many of them could and does have dependents. Both the married informants and unmarried informants have almost equal responsibilities and dependents, namely, their parents, siblings, wives, girlfriends and children.

Table 1: *Respondents current status in the community*

Pseudonyms	Level of Education	Specialization	Field Occupation
Cheke	Higher	Engineering	Electrician
Picasso	Vocational	Skilled Work	Boat Engine repairer
Tomboy	Higher	Engineering	Fuel Merchant
Kenja	Higher	History	Fuel Merchant
Koko	Higher	Political Science	Fuel Merchant
Paulo	Vocational	Welding	Fuel Merchant/Welder
Friday	Higher	Accounting	Fuel Merchant
Theo	Vocational	Carpentry	Fuel Merchant/Carpenter
Clergy	Higher	Engineering	Fuel Merchant
Zando	Higher	History	Fuel Merchant
Caleb	Higher	Political Science	Fuel Merchant
Jordan	Higher	Fine Arts	Fuel Merchant

Source: *Field Work (2012)*

4.2. MEND Mobilizing Ideas for Violent Agitation in the Niger Delta

This section will discuss the persistence mobilizing ideas and reason for the Niger Delta struggle and conflict which started in earnest after independence in 1960. In doing so, reference will be made to data from researcher's field work and some literatures.

4.2.1. Long Road to Freedom – Opportunities Deprived and Destroyed

Comparatively, the Niger Delta has witnessed a huge deficit and deprivation in the economic and socio-political sphere of the Nigerian nation in spite of the abundance of oil resources in the region and equally accounting for over 80% of revenue accruable to the Nigerian state (Okonta: 2006; Ojatorotu & Olawale: 2009). The marginalization and underrepresentation both in economic opportunities and government participation indeed has a long history (Tebekaemi:

1982), a fact that has been inculcated in the minds of the generations of Niger Delta youths. This is what Koko (2012) has to say:

We have lived at the mercy of the Igbos, Yorubas and more particularly the Hausas. That they are the majority ethnic groups is not enough reason for us to be dominated, marginalized and deprived of our own resources. These are the people that collaborate with the oil companies to steal from our land. We are determined to stop them this time around.

Describing the loss of economic opportunities, Cheke put it in these terms:

See the lands our parents use to farm, oil has destroyed it. We can't even go fishing again in our rivers here because oil has polluted our rivers. We don't have fish there again. The government gave us no job and on that destroyed our own natural economic opportunities. They allowed the oil companies to destroy our farm land. We virtually have no means of livelihood we can rely on as a result of these destructions. If you are the one living here under these circumstances, won't you get frustrated, particularly when you are convinced that your natural environment has enough resources to ensure that you don't suffer? My brother, we have enough reasons to fight this government and oil companies and if death comes in the process, fine. We are not the first to die.

Indeed, Niger Delta is a 'double tragedy' (Caleb). First, it spoke of the disaster the Niger Delta region has become since the discovery of oil in the region in 1956 and the level of destruction and poverty that still permeate the region till date. On the other hand, it echoed the economic and political marginalization the region has witnessed and the urgent need for change.

Niger delta is synonymous with poverty (Idemudia and Ite: 2006). This in every sense is paradoxical considering that the region houses 20 billion of African's proven 66 billion barrel of oil reserves and accounts for more than 85% of Nigeria Gross Domestic Product (GDP), coupled with over 95% of national budget (Aaron: 2005). But this is the stark truth: the region has been abused, neglected, manipulated and marginalized in two fronts – politically and economically. The institutionalized structural deficiency that has put the region in very disadvantaged position in participatory governance and of course the character of Nigeria state which until 1966 has been characterized with successive military dictatorship has caused deep anger and frustration in the region. The region as noted produces more than 85% of the state revenue, remained the most underdeveloped and with no access to power (Okonta: 2006). Considering the resentment caused by this political servitude and economic slavery, the likes of Isaac Adaka Boro mobilized his

NDVF group for the first attempt at confronting the state violently and subsequently declared the Niger Delta Republic as a separate State (Tebekaemi: 1982). The revolution was botched as early as it started. This marked the beginning of armed confrontation between the Nigeria state and the people of Niger delta. This perhaps marked the birth of MEND in coming.

With growing sense of economic hardship, bitterness and political exclusion, public protest became the only viable means of the people to express their discontent and grievances. Unfortunately, such protest were not only worsening the legitimacy crisis of the military government, but also became a threat to their primitive accumulation schemes. The rentier and militarized nature of the Nigeria state saw the stakes in such protest or agitation as too high for any kind of retreat because it will totally erode the basis of its legitimacy and continued reproduction (Idemudia and Ite: 2006). Koko put the height of discontent in these terms:

This is the height of government rascality. You are taking our resources, no sign of government presence here in terms qualitative leadership and under your watchful eyes, Oil Companies are destroying our environment, our farms and water, and we are getting poorer by the day and when we complain, you sent your soldiers to kill us. And when we then fight back, our communities are finally bombed. Is this a government or what? This is why we won't stop. We will continue to challenge them to free ourselves from this bondage.

Koko while reflecting on the economic and socio-political situation of Niger Delta saw this as brutality on the part of government but nevertheless more determined to keep fighting for his 'community cause'. For Jordan, death is a better option than to continuously witness the level of poverty, injustice, joblessness, crowned with government insensitivity in the Niger Delta. *MEND will never stop to fight for freedom in all corners of Niger Delta until government decides to address our demand'* he concluded.

4.2.2. Obnoxious Decrees and Political Marginalization – The Structural Deficiencies

The history of the Nigeria state has been dominated by three major ethnic groups: the Yorubas from the South-West, the Hausa-Fulani, from the North and the Igbos from the South East (Ejibunu: 2007). Equally, the history of political domination or exclusion in Nigeria cannot be told without the mention of the minority groups in the Niger Delta. This region whether by deliberate act or omission has been continuously marginalized or excluded from the mainstream positions in government until lately with the emergence of a Niger Delta indigene, Goodluck Jonathan as first, the vice president, then acting president and in 2010 after the fraudulent presidential election became the president; the first ever Niger Delta indigene to hold such

position at the national level. Participatory governance has continuously eluded the people of Niger delta. To compound the minority issues question, the Federal Military Government in 1969 enacted the Petroleum Decree that vested the ownership of oil resources onshore and offshore on the federal government against the ideas or tenets of federalism. In 1978, the Land Use ACT was enacted nationalizing all land both in urban and rural areas and vested ownership on the state and local government.

Both Petroleum Decree and the Land Use Act rob the communities of the Niger Delta of their land and resources and by extension to right of existence. In both instances of the law, it was stated that compensation will have to be paid to any community whose land has been taken for official use by the government or TNCs (Watts: 2008). Ironically and even more provocatively to the people of Niger Delta, this provision did not go beyond policy enactment as both the government and the TNCs in most cases did not live up to the letters of the Decree and Act and in most cases undercut drastically communities they are responsible to pay compensation to for land usage. Compensation from oil spill is even the most neglected (Okonta: 2006).

The democratic government which came into effect in 1999 came with vague promises having failed to address or shown any sign of commitment to the development and empowerment of Niger Deltans. Theo was to describe it this way:

They said it was because it was in the military era; that things will be different this time. What is the difference now? What did Obasanjo (referring to former president of Nigeria, 1999 - 2007) do other than to send JMT to kill us? Those ones are even thieves. They not only killed us and but at the same time connive with us to steal oil.

The issue stealing of oil will be discussed elsewhere here. Going further, Kenja said:

Even our brother that is there now (referring to current president Jonathan from Niger Delta), what has he done for his people? Anyone that gets to that sit of power quickly forget the promise he made before getting there and get drunk with power. Nonsense!

As situation remained the same, the youths who are apparently disillusioned continue to demand for equitable recognition in the Nigerian state or to the extreme right to self-determination and control of resources in their land (Ejibundu: 2007) which the Petroleum Act and Land Use Act has made virtually impossible. The government brutal response has exacerbated the feeling of exclusion and heightened the demand for redress. The likes of Ken Saro-Wiwa saw the need for peaceful protest in the 1990s but were not spared by the suppressive tendencies of the

government. In what has been generally known as the ‘Ogoni Nine Execution’ (Okonta: 2006), Ken Saro-Wiwa and the rest eight environment activist who has demanded peacefully redress to injustices done to the people of Niger Delta were summarily executed by the Nigeria Military government in 1995.

The militarization of the Niger Delta region and the repression of nonviolent protest during this period thus intensified in the wake of this trails of sorrow, tears and blood synonymous with the execution of the Ogoni nine. In the dawn of the democratic dispensation in Nigeria in 1999, president Obasanjo has already shown signs of being sheep of the old block, after all, under his watchful eyes, in 1969, the Petroleum Act was enacted. Also, human right abuses in the region continues and in some cases, entire communities are raised down by JMT when TNCs reports that youths in a particular oil bearing community are threatening oil facilities or threatening security (including personnel) of a given place (Watts: 2008a). The torching of Odi town in August 1999 is a clear example. As remarked by Zando:

They thought they will stop us by killing us but we multiply by day. Are we not here today still asking for one thing - political and economic emancipation?

4.3. Basis for Violent Agitation by MEND

This section discusses further the salient issues that has continuously affected the people of Niger Delta and has been part of the grievances that has informed violent protest in the region. Following the hanging of the Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Niger Delta environmental activist by then Abacha military junta in 1995 for his peaceful protest, opposition to the perceived political servitude, economic slavery and the institutionalized structural violence in the Niger Delta intensified. The peaceful protest of Ken and other Niger Deltans was seen as a treasonable felony and totally against the spirit of predation which has characterized successive military government in Nigeria. The new democratic government from 1999 which going by the tenets of a true democratic state ought to be subject to the constitution and of course makes transparency and accountability its watchword instead carried on with the spirit of brutality, refusing to implement the developmental-oriented and empowerment promises it has made. It started with the torching Odi community by the government on the news that some youths, ‘some bunch of criminal gangs’ has killed some policemen (Okonta: 2006).

The touching of Odi and thousands of people that was killed, maimed or displaced fundamentally sowed the final seed of discord for future confrontation between the Niger Delta youths and the government (ibid). The murder of MEND members that has gone to negotiate

peaceful release of hostages taken in Letugbene community by another militant group crowned it all (Luqman: 2011). Friday in a reflective mood remarked:

most of us cannot forget in a hurry how our sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers were killed in that community; how our members were killed by the JMT when they were going to negotiate and rescue some foreign workers that were kidnapped in Letugbene. I am here today because of these two reasons. I must fight like they did to rescue our land and resources from these Oil Companies and government or die trying.

While rooted structural deficiencies and repressive styles of governance has generated conditions that allow resentment and violence to fester in the Niger Delta according to MEND, thus forming essentially mobilizing ideas of the group, several other underlying factors affecting the delta more directly contributed to the discontent and frustration in the Niger Delta societies and provided basis for violent agitation and challenge and confrontation against the government. Table 2 below contains litany of discontents among MEND group. The table is in no other of preference and in the course of the discussion below, no other of reference will be followed. Fundamentally some elements mentioned will be embedded in difference subsections.

The drivers of violence according to MEND and corroborated by the researcher’s findings during field work includes the following:

Table 2: Reasons/basis for Violent Agitation in the Niger Delta

<p>*Poor leadership and governance</p> <p>*Corruption</p> <p>Environmental and ecological disaster</p> <p>Rising unemployment</p> <p>Low or absence of qualitative education and healthcare</p> <p>Insecurity</p> <p>Appalling social infrastructures</p> <p>Poverty</p> <p>*Inequitable distribution of political and economic opportunities</p> <p>*Economic and political marginalization</p>

Source: *Field work data* (2012)

*partially discussed in the last two subsections but would also be embedded in the subsections that would follow.

4.3.1. Subjective Levels of Poverty and High Sense of Injustice.

Available data on the poverty level in the Niger Delta showed that poverty has declined in the region on the eve of the 21st century (Francis and Susan: 2008) and of course till date when compared to other regions of Nigeria particularly in the Northern states, the poverty level in the region is not necessarily the highest. Having said this, it is important to point out that poverty indices alone do not explain the disaffection among the people in the Niger Delta. The region has remained volatile due to high of sense of injustice driven by levels of inequality and subjective levels of poverty. Relative deprivation of a people manifest through strong sentiment of marginalization or neglect influenced by perception of not only ones own current level of comfort but about relative prosperity of others and one's own sense of judgment. This is exactly where the sense of poverty and marginalization of the people of Niger Delta lies. The relative deprivation felt by the people is more propelled by consideration of the wealth generated by the government from the resources in the region and benefit accruing to the region. Jordan provided the most elucidation details of their perception of poverty and injustices in these terms:.

I went to the university in Abuja and have equally lived in Abuja. I have seen the affluence displayed by politicians in Abuja, I have seen the wealth across the city. I have seen the road, bridges and how constant they have electricity. Those things are not available in our communities even in the smallest measure. Yet, it is from here Chevron Oil company pumps thousands of barrels of oil every day. Again, apart from lately that we have clamoured for a petroleum minister and Madueke (referring to the current Minister of Petroleum in Nigeria, Allsion Mudueke) was appointed, do you realize that most ministers of petroleum has always come from other regions? Do you realize that Abuja, Nigeria state capital was built with our resources? Do you realize that our resources have provided millions of jobs to non-Niger Deltans? You think poverty is all about how much you have in your pocket? Compare the kind of development you see around you here with what you see elsewhere outside Niger Delta and tell me if we are being treated fairly in spite of the resources available in our land.

4.3.2. Environmental degradation and Livelihood

The degree of ecological disaster and environmental damage in Niger Delta is amazing. Given the dependence of livelihood of an average Niger Deltan on their environment², the destruction of the environment through oil spill, gas flaring and deforestation by TNCs operating in the region has more than ever made the region very vulnerable and had had 'deleterious impacts'

(Frances and Susan: 2008). By extension therefore, protecting the natural environment of the region has a correlation with protecting rights and economic wellbeing of the inhabitants of the region. Environmental disaster in Niger Delta remains the birth pangs of the unregulated and unethical explorative activities of the TNCs operating in the region. It is an established fact that oil spills has negative impact on marine life (needleless mention the oil spill that destroyed aquatic life in the gulf of Mexico in 2010 in USA as a clear cut example) and therefore the huge population that is dependent on fishing and farming as sources of livelihood in the region has been rendered not only hungry but jobless since fishing and farming forms part of their daily lives and occupation.

It is important to stress at this juncture that oil spill is not necessarily only as a result of corrosion or operational failure of TNCs but also as a result of oil pipeline vandalization, part of ongoing economic sabotage perpetuated by the MEND militant group as one of its forms of resistance politics that will be discussed later. Tomboy remarked:

We cannot deny not to have destroyed Chevron oil facilities and that resulted to oil spillage but it should be understood that we are only resorting to extreme measure to be heard when other methods has failed.

The second largest gas flaring state after Russia is Nigeria, precisely in the Niger Delta region. Even though the Nigerian government has attempted to institute policies and laws to control gas flaring, the penalties imposed for flaring gas has been too modest to achieve any tangible goal(s). No doubt, oil spill, gas flaring and gradual destruction of available tropical rainforest as a result of deforestation by TNCs in their insatiable quest for land has extensively contributed to the discontent in the Niger Delta communities necessitating confrontations between the Niger Delta communities, TNCs and the federal government. Grievances therefore cannot always be phrased only in social, economic, political but also in environmental terms.

4.3.3. Unemployment Levels in the Niger Delta

Unemployment no doubt, particularly of the youths has driven and sustained high levels of violence and criminality throughout the Niger Delta region (Francis and Susan: 2008). Oyefusi (2007) opined that high levels of unemployment limit the avenues available for the Niger Delta to move out of poverty and equally reduces the opportunity cost of turning violent forms of struggle to criminality. This perhaps informs the idea among militant groups and more specifically researcher's respondents that whatever method of resistance that they adopted to

press home their demand is justifiable under the appalling level of unemployment among them and equally state repressive responds to earlier peaceful protest. Cheke remarked:

In the first place, what brought us to the creeks? Is it not lack of jobs in the city after graduating and of course to contribute to salvaging our community and resources from the hands of our exploiters who are the real criminals?

The fact that Nigeria is an export-oriented economy makes matters more complex. Employment in the oil sector requires high skilled labour with little or no room for locals that still lack the technical knowhow required in the highly professional oil industry. This on its own is seen as a deliberate attempt to exclude Niger Deltans from employment in the lucrative oil industry and for long has sown the seed of discontent between TNCs and Niger Delta youths. Paulo made some rhetorical statement: Tomboy and Clergy was to pose some rhetorical questions in this regard;

Don't they have a place for welders? Does that require any high level skills that I have not yet possessed? Even Clergy and Tomboy that read engineering in the university, can't they employ them as junior staffs or train them more in engineering to suit their needs?

Re-echoing the discontent and frustration caused by unemployment, Tomboy posed these questions:

Don't they have administrative work for others that did not measure in science or engineering fields but still show signs of competence? What happened to training? We know they use to train these guys they bring here. Can they train us to get us better equipped to serve them? And you expect us to be happy? And when some of them are kidnaped and ransom is demanded, they quickly rush to pay. Don't you know that encourages more kidnapping since some of us could make money from that? Teach us to fish and not force us to make you give us fish. Empower us. We are prepared to acquire more skills if they want to train us but they just don't want us. That is the problem. They prefer waiting till we strike.

The deterioration of the environment in the Niger delta region has equally undermined employment opportunities (Francis and Susan: 2008). More than 60% of the Niger delta population depends on the environment as source of livelihood and these same sources of livelihood (arable land and water) have been completely wiped out by pollution related to oil extraction by the TNCs. The best alternative argued Picasso (2012) is:

To join MEND to contribute to rescuing the remaining land and more importantly our resources from these companies and government. Some of us have equally

joined with the clear agenda of getting rich because of quick cash that comes from some of our activities that is quite dangerous. Violence caused in this cases I must confess is a manifestation of crime but how can you stop some of us when there are no alternatives like jobs? Everything now, from oil bunkering, to kidnapping and oil pipeline vandalization is now done in the name of movement for the emancipation of Niger Delta.

The implication of this mix is that there is now a thin line between militancy for just cause and criminality in the Niger Delta as a result of lack of employment and deprivation. Kidnapping and oil bunkering is now touted as not only a method of resistance but an attractive means of earning income. This economic incentive is very plausible and consistent with Collier (2001) assertion that unemployment drives (un)educated youths to joining militant groups.

4.3.4. Prevalent Social Injustice

In comparison to other parts of Nigeria, low or no education at all and near- unavailable healthcare system is prevalent in the Niger Delta region. In the area of education, the region has barely 40% literacy rate. The proportion of pupils enrolled in primary schools is less than 39% and even with that as Watts (2008) noted, the few schools available lack facilities like toilet, desks, books and astonishingly no roofs in a region known to have high volume of rainfall. Ibeanu and Luckman (2006) in a study conducted in the Niger Delta region concluded that only about 27% of household have access to drinking water and 30% has access to electricity, both below the national average. There are 82,000 people to a doctor and in some areas, it is over 132,000 people to a doctor, more than three times the national average of 40,000. While 76% of Nigeria children attend primary schools, only 30-40 % attends primary schools in some of the Niger Delta region (Akaninyene: 2010). All these put together speak volume of the appalling social infrastructure in a region that contributes 85% of Nigeria revenue and 95% of GDP of the State.

Niger delta has lost everything to the Nigerian government and the TNCs. As Koko put it:

we have given everything to Nigeria and what do we get in return, untold hardship, pollution, joblessness, hopelessness and in the mist of that they are still killing us and you expect us to fold our hands and watch this perilous acts continue? When Ken Saro-Wiwa approached them peacefully, what did he get? With our other brothers, they met their untimely death. Now, we taken death and we will continue to approach them with all means possible. It is all about battling

to take back what is ours. It is all about fighting against injustices to our environment, our conscience and our lives.

4.4. MEND Resistance Measures in the Niger Delta Conflict

In this section, the resistance measures, also seen as criminal-oriented violence activities of MEND group will be discussed. First, the section will start by making a correlation between green and grievance factors in the Niger Delta conflict while also providing a table that chronicles the activities that characterizes the said method of resistance. More concise explanations will follow in the subsections.

4.4.1. Greed and Grievance: Two Sides of a Coin

In the Niger Delta conflict, there is a thin line between greed and grievance as a driving factor in the conflict. Even in general context, criminality and conflict cannot be separated. While institutionalized marginalization in the economic and political sphere, environmental devastation, government brutality and poor and unaccountable leadership has been attributed to the conflict in the Niger Delta, can oil bunkering, kidnapping, oil facilities vandalization, cash for protection policy and political thuggery which are all criminal-oriented and associated with many activities of MEND be said to be genuinely the best method to protest the injustice in the Niger Delta or just basically an avenue to tap from the 'honey pot' offered by the volatile situation in the resource rich region?

As Lichback (1987) argues, opposition groups decide which tactics to employ on the basis of both availability and relative cost and efficacy. He went further to define cost of a given tactics as the resources necessary for the execution of the tactics plus the amount of government repression as seen in the number of opposition group members who are killed by the government, that the group incurs in response to its use of that force. Nonetheless and as Zando would admit and earlier emphasized by Okonta (2006), key members of MEND have taken advantage of the anarchic situation in the region to engage in criminal activities and violence for their personal interest and not necessarily in the interest of Niger Delta. These resistance measures (criminal acts?) taken together and more fundamentally made possible by more external forces have no doubt made violence in the Niger Delta profitable.

Using economic lenses to look at MEND activities will no doubt provide a reductionist idea that MEND is essentially a criminal syndicate bent on illegal appropriation of oil resources in the Niger Delta through various means specifically oil bunkering, cash-for-protection policy

and kidnapping. Also, this perception does not see the involvement of external actors plausible. Predation after all is associated with rebels (Collier: 2006). While this is very likely, noneconomic narratives view violence in larger context other than through the lens of resistance measures which has characterized economics of war school of thought.

Okonta (2006) differs slightly specially on the issue of kidnapping by MEND group. In his words, ‘it is significant that since MEND began to take hostages early in the year, none has been harmed. Government officials have sought to represent this aspect of MEND’s activities as racketeering, claiming that the militants usually extort ransom from hostages and the government before the former is released. While it is true that there are fringe elements in the Niger Delta who have embraced hostage-taking as a lucrative commercial venture, they are not to be confused with MEND militants’. The objective of the latter Okonta continued is ‘political: focus the attention of Western governments and the world media on the Niger Delta when they grab these hostages and exploiting the bale of publicity thus generated, announce their grievances and the demands on the Nigerian government’.

It will be appropriate at this point to draw a catalogue of MEND criminal-oriented activities in the pursuit of emancipation of Niger Delta from the repressive and exploitative grip of the government and TNCs. Thereafter, elements of resistance politics will be discussed.

Table 3: *Litany of MEND violent activities in the Niger Delta*

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. MEND issued a statement regarding the oil workers: “Be assured therefore that the hostages in return, will remain our guests... the hostages are in good health and have adapted fairly well to the conditions under which the people of the Niger Delta have been kept”.
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.
On June 2, 2006 a Norwegian rig offshore Nigeria was attacked and 16 crew members were kidnapped.
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
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, Nigeria soldiers attacked a militant camp, in the ensuing battle, nine Nigerian

soldiers were killed.
On November 22, 2006, Nigerian soldiers attempted a rescue of kidnapped oil workers which resulted in one soldier being killed
2007
On May 1, MEND attacked Chevron's Oloibiri floating production, storage, and offloading vessel off the coast of the southern Bayelsa stat; killed 10 people, MEND seized six expatriate workers, consisting of four Italians (Mario Celentano, Raffaele Pasceriello, Ignazio Gugliotta, Alfonso Franza), an American (John Stapelton), and a Croat (Jurica Ruic).
On May 3, 2007, 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
May 7 hostages were taken from a pipelay barge of Nimbe area of Bayelsa they were released 23 days later. they included Britons Americans and one South African
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 run by Italian oil company Agip, part of the ENI energy group. An e-mail statement from a MEND spokesperson said, "Fighters of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) attacked and destroyed three major pipelines in Bayelsa state... We will continue indefinitely with attacks on all pipelines, platforms and support vessels".
2008
On May 3, 2008, MEND militants attacked Shell-operated pipelines in Nigeria, forcing the company to halt 170,000 barrels per day (27,000 m ³ /d) 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
On September 14, 2008, MEND inaugurated Operation Hurricane Barbarossa with an ongoing string of militant attacks to bring down the oil industry in Rivers State
In September 2008, MEND released a statement proclaiming that their militants had launched an "oil war" throughout the Niger Delta against both 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 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.

2009

MEND called off its ceasefire on January 30, 2009

Equatorial Guinea blamed MEND for an attack on the presidential palace in Malabo on February 17, which resulted in the death of at least one attacker. 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.

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 they 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.

July 6, MEND claimed responsibility for an attack on the Okan oil manifold. The pipeline was blown up. The militants claim that the manifold carried some 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 (32 km) from the southern port city of Escravos.

July 11, MEND carried out its first attack in Lagos late. Rebels 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 strike.

Oct 25 MEND announces unilateral truce and accepts the government's proposal for reintegration

2010

Jan 30: MEND called off its unilateral truce and threatened an "all-out onslaught" against the oil industry.

March 15: 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
October 1: Two bombs exploded at Abuja during a parade. 12 killed 17 injured. Bomb was 1 KM away from President Goodluck Jonathan. MEND claimed responsibility and also claim to have sent warning in the form of an email to a journalist half-an-hour before the bombs detonated.
November 8: Gunmen raid an oil rig off Nigeria, kidnapping Two Americans, two Frenchmen, two Indonesians, and a Canadian. MEND claimed responsibility
November 15: MEND attack on an Exxon Mobil oil platform, kidnapping seven Nigerian workers
November 21: The rebels say they have sabotaged an oil pipeline feeding the refinery in Warri in the Niger Delta.
2011
March 16: A bomb exploded on an oil platform Agip in southern Nigeria. MEND claimed responsibility.
2012
April 13: MEND carried out deadly attack on Agip Oil Pipeline at Clough Creek, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area.
December 17: 5 Indian sailors aboard the <i>SP Brussels</i> were kidnapped by MEND militants. The entire ship was looted and set ablaze about 40 miles from shore. All 5 men were released on January 27, 2013 for an unknown amount of ransom
December 18: 4 South Korean oil workers were kidnapped by MEND gunmen from an oil plant in the Niger Delta. All 4 men were released on December 23.
2013
February 5: MEND militants claimed responsibility for attacking and destroying an oil barge operated by an Indian company. No workers were taken captive and all militants escaped with minor injuries.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Emancipation_of_the_Niger_Delta

4.4.2. Oil Bunkering as part of resistance measures

Oil bunkering (stealing) is one of the most criminal oriented activities carried out by MEND militant group. At the height of bunkering, it is estimated that over 300,000 barrels per day is stolen amounting to more than 13% of total daily oil production (Francis and Susan: 2008). *'It is a way of taking what belongs to us'*, Kenja was to say when asked to air his view on the fact that

MEND has variously been described as a criminal minded group. While it is plausible to say that oil bunkering has really provided drives for recruitment into MEND, it is even more fundamental to add that such illegal and huge business couldn't have been possible without some level of conspiracy with external forces namely, political elites, the military, oil companies employees and of course the foreign partners who buys the stolen oil and like Clergy said, '*exchanges some quantity for guns*'.

While implicating the state in the business, the former Head of Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) in Nigeria, Nuhu Ribadu offered the most precise explanation for this business. According to him, 'the state is not even corrupt. It is an organized crime' (Watts: 2008). Ribadu, an anti-corruption czar in Nigeria did not exonerate the State from criminality(predation) as regards oil bunkering in Niger Delta but general framework of the economics analysis hold the rebels/militants solely responsible and at the same time describing such State in the words of Collier as a Predatory Autocracy (Collier: 2006). This is a contradiction. As Caleb noted:

I agree we break oil pipes to steal oil but that is a way of survival. Don't you know we have responsibilities? In place of no jobs, no income, family to cater for and also presents of such resources in our mist, what do you want us to do? Sit down and die of hopelessness? And if you call us criminals, how will you describe those men that provide us with cover, sponsors our operation and those that buys the oil? You need to understand that this is not one man business. It is not even MEND business alone. It won't stop now, not even in the future provided we have those men (referring to military officers, local political elites and TNCs employees) as being part of the business.

Oil bunkering no doubt is a crime and occurs across the entire 'panoply of institutions and TNCs involved in oil business' (Watts: 2008). If it is not a contradiction in the general context, then, the Niger Delta oil conflict in Nigeria should be treated separately. As remarked by Zinn (2005), Nigeria seem to represent a striking exception to Collier and Hoeffler's prediction and also the more acceptable myopic views in government cycles that sees MEND and other militia groups in the Niger Delta reign as criminals and miscreants who has over the years been involved in illegal oil theft and other illegal activities and must now be removed from the free flow of oil (Courson: 2009). However, it should be noted that in the first place, the volatile environment provided the ripe condition for oil bunkering. In the vicious petro-syndicate business also are unemployed youths that must survive by all means possible, militia groups, corrupt law enforcement officials,

political elites, corrupt TNCs employees and established international buyers and market ever present (Okonta: 2006).

Fundamentally, oil bunkering has remained a cog in the wheel of Nigeria economic development and has continuously fuelled long running insurgency in the Niger Delta. It is indeed very profitable and forms strong incentive for becoming a MEND member; even though there are more members of MEND more interested in genuine cause of the Niger Delta struggle. Koko admitted that that much as dangerous as the business seems, '*we make millions of naira per day*'. Supporting this view is an assertion by an analyst close to the government who told BBC that the militants make close to \$30 Million per day. 'They would kill you, me or anyone to protect it' (Asuni: 2009: 2).

Having said this, it is important to point out that oil bunkering can only flourish in a climate of instability, conflict, chaos and huge gaps in effective leadership. Moreover, complexity of players in the illegal business makes it virtually impossible to tackle effectively. Since part of the resources gotten from bunkering is channeled to buying arms or in some cases as pointed out exchanged for guns and ammunition, the tendencies that there is no end in sight for the conflict can be substantiated. To this extent, economics of war analysis has a strong point on the duration of conflict but not its drives since the conflict situation provides a cover for oil theft whose profit is ploughed back in terms of arms acquisition to sustain the conflict. Meanwhile, the underlying driving forces are those elements of frustration, disillusionment, servitude in the face of state officials' daylight plundering of state resources in the region.

4.4.3. Kidnapping and Ransom Payment

Another weapon of choice by MEND is the idea of hostage taking or kidnapping of oil workers; particularly foreign workers from United States of America, Britain and other parts of Europe. Kidnapping by MEND in the Niger Delta speak to two directions. While it speaks to criminality of the activities of the group, it also serves as a means of making a political statement. The catalogue of MEND activities in Table 3 speaks to this direction. Kidnapping on its own is a criminal act but the controversy that this has generated among economic and noneconomic scholars on the drives of war in resource-rich states and more specifically in MEND hostage taking in Niger Delta is: to what ends are these hostages taking?

Economic narratives would easily conclude that it is for ransom meaning profit-oriented kidnapping. This is true to that extent that this view is referring to only fringe elements of the MEND group. As Okonta pointed out, hostages-taken by MEND group is basically aimed at capturing the international media attention; not necessarily for publicity sake but more

importantly to expose the general appalling conditions in the Niger Delta people, their environment and exclusive government run by Nigeria elites that lives minority group, particularly of the Niger Delta isolated. Coming to the defense of his group, Theo said:

MEND is not a kidnapping group. We have one common objective and that is to rescue Niger Delta from total collapse as a result of government neglect, unfair distribution of revenues and economic opportunities, marginalization and pollution. Also, I can't deny we kidnap expatriate workers but not necessarily for money. Go and check record of kidnappings by MEND and see how many cases we have demanded ransom before releasing our hostages. Though some of us still make money from it but ask yourself, if we are all kidnapping to make money, why should we go to Letugbene to negotiate to release kidnapped oil workers by another faction, where in the process, JMT killed our members? Does it make any sense?

By and large, 'exploiting this blaze of publicity' has really worked. The international community and media do not necessarily talk about MEND without exposing the devastation of the region by the TNCs, structural deficiencies and other forms of social maladies in the region.

Equally, so many cases have been instituted by Niger Delta communities at the International Criminal Court (ICC), Hague, The Netherland against Shell and Chevron, two largest TNCs operating in the Niger Delta. Some of the cases were won by the communities concerned and others are still pending (Mouawad: 2009). Discussing these cases is immaterial here.

Succinctly, there are mixed interpretation to MEND idea of hostage taking as part of resistance measures in the Niger Delta conflict. While it can be argued to be for the ransom that is paid in some cases, it can also be as a mean to an end; in the sense of drawing attention of the international community to not only environmental devastation but also economic and political marginalization of the region thereby politicizing the rather criminal act. In both cases, they have succeeded. It should be noted that the likes of Ken Saro Wiwa who was hanged with his fellow activists by the military government in 1995 has sought to draw international media attention via writings and peaceful protest. He was labelled a felon and was given a summary execution.

The execution of the activists further exposes the nature of the military government which is generally repressive characterized with gross abuse of human rights and its' unwilling to rise up to personal examples of good and accountable leadership. The 21st century violent protests therefore are hinged on the understanding that the government is not ready to redress the injustices in the Niger Delta. Even though the development and empowerment the Niger Delta

communities yearn for is still far in sight, Picasso's assertion that '*There is no way BBC and CNN will be talking about us and our plight here if we don't draw their attention. Do they know us? No. Do they care about their citizens? Yes*', confirmed that the attention of the world has been brought to the devastation, injustices and plight of the Niger Delta people; regardless of the extreme measure adopted to make that happen. In section 4.5, the actions of MEND Spokesperson, Jomo Gbomo as would be highlighted confirms the power of the media in furthering MEND objectives.

4.4.4. Political Thuggery in the Niger Delta

Political violence and thuggery is an established fact in Nigeria politics. Political élites hereafter refer to as godfathers' attempts to ascend to power by all means possible. The Nigeria political scene is dominated by chronic corrupt and desperate godfathers who adopt all practicable measures to acquire political power including hiring thugs to intimidate, maim or kill their opponents before, during or after elections. Also, the assertion made by the former Nigeria president, Obasanjo, that politics in Nigeria is a 'do-or-die' affair confirms the deadly political terrain that exist in Nigeria (Tenuche: 2009).

Where do militants come in here? – As political thugs to implement the biddings of their godfathers in exchange of a huge pay out. Fundamentally therefore, militant groups in the Niger Delta exist not only for the struggle of the Niger Delta emancipation but are sustained by local political élites to be used before, during and after elections to cause violence and 'deal' with opponents as was the case in Rivers state in 2007 (Watts: 2008b). On participation in political violence, Koko said:

Election in Nigeria has never been without violence. Even though it is not good to cause trouble during elections but it has remained the practice here because our politicians take advantage of our condition. Sincerely speaking, we are hired by them to help them win elections by all means and since we don't really have any source of income apart from oil that we sell, we easily agree. Don't also forget that if we don't support them, our 'business' is also at risk. Do you know without us, most of them in government now might not get to that position? Before you came, we had a bye election. Have you asked how it was conducted? Go and ask people.

Apparently, their linkage is firmly established. This factor is significant in the sense that the militants basically see this avenue for money making as an alternative means to living in the absence of state's support or empowerment. Under this scenario, corruption binds both the local

political elites and militants together in a vicious cycle – a highly corrupt state with highly corrupt and power intoxicated state officials and political thugs built on clientilism and patronage. In all, what provides money for these elites – oil. What do the local elites seek power for? – To control rents from oil via primitive accumulation either legitimately through official (mis)management of state revenues or illegally through oil bunkering in conspiracy with the militant-cum-political thugs. Where is the oil located? – In the Niger Delta region.

As pointed out by Ross (2003) and De Soysa (2000), oil hinders democracy and causes political degradation through failure of governance structures. Oil provides rents that fuels corruption. Typically and considering the foregoing, corruption remains endemic for it sustains both militant groups and political elites. Oil, corruption and failure of governance all operate in a vicious cycle binding the élites and the militants together. At various times in the country particularly during election, both political élites and the militant-cum-political thugs work hand-in-hand. Nuhu Ribadu (The Economist: 2007) again put it better: ‘in Nigeria, when you fight corruption, it fights you back. Unless the problem of corruption of corruption is tackled, Nigeria may not reach her desired destination due to greed by her political and ruling élites’.

4.4.5. Cash for Protection and Surveillance versus Oil Facilities Vandalization

The most striking aspect of the resistance politics in the Niger Delta conflict is the apparent presence of TNCs in the conflict dynamics in the form of cash payment for TNCs facilities protection, buying of consent and compliance, a fact that has no firm analytical presence in the economics of war narratives on the drives and duration of violence in resource-rich states except through coercion. As most economic narratives, particularly Collier and Hoeffler’s greed hypothesis argued, TNCs and the state are the unfortunate entities that are predated by rebels. These TNCs themselves while not agreeing that they are deliberately instigating rebellion with such huge payout – as most times such merry-go-round cash payment doesn’t get to all parties thereby causing friction and conflict – acknowledged that they are a central part of the political dynamics of community conflict (Watts: 2008b). Trying to describe the impact of the cash-for-peace policy, Jordan said:

The cash payment by TNCs is a fact and it’s still going on. However, it has really caused many problems for us because sometimes, our top leaders who gets the money doesn’t make sure it goes round. And even when it is given to community heads, there is always a problem in disbursement. Chevron has had this problem with us many times.

Most TNCs see this cash payment as a method of buying consent, compliance and protection of oil facilities as I had pointed out. This cash-payment-for-protection and surveillance can also be seen from the prism of state incapacity and institutional failure. The government not being able to discharge its security of lives and property function due to in part ineffectiveness as a result of ill-equipped and less efficient law enforcement officials or corruption at the top leadership makes the heavy reliance on the ferocious militant groups with sophisticated weapons inevitable or a better option. It is more like putting a house in the care of a potential burglar for a fee. The TNCs therefore has the option of ‘buying peace’ and also protecting their facilities from the militants groups or risk more attacks from the militant groups who have the geography of the Niger Delta at their fingertips. ‘*Chevron knows better that neglecting us here...*’, Caleb retorted.

MEND violent group as Obi (2010) noted has used not only surprise attacks or sabotage of oil installations linked to production and export but also secrecy surrounding identity of its core operations and sophisticated media to shore up campaign against perceived injustices on the part of the government in the Niger Delta.

Whether paying to buy peace or protection or paying for surveillance purposes, it is clear that these acts sustains conflict since security is vested in the hands (in this case MEND) of those that has special interest in the conflict, hence the vicious cycle continues. As aptly captured by (Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart: 2010: 7), ‘some Niger Delta watchers lament that a peace that is “bought and paid for” rather than negotiated leaves the root causes of militancy unaddressed’.

4.4.6. Availability and Protection of Small Arms Market

Small arms and light weapons of growing sophistication has become increasingly available in the Niger Delta (Okonta: 2006). Efforts has been made by successive government to mop up available arms in the Niger Delta through the arms-for-cash exchange (Francis and Susan: 2008) but these efforts has been ineffective and fruitless for two reasons. Oil bunkering is a huge business that demands protection at all cost and like the analyst referred to earlier pointed out with BBC, the militant groups can kill to protect the business. Secondly, the government arms-for-cash policy is not as lucrative as the business the guns helps to sustain – oil bunkering and oil facilities vandalization. As if to wrap up the discussion during FGD, Zando queried:

What happened when some of us turned in our weapon to the government in 2010 in return for the empty amnesty program promised by the government? Are we not back to square one?

4.5. The Struggle Must Continue: Greed or Grievance

MEND has been involved in violent activities that speak to greed and grievance narratives of civil conflict. Nonetheless, their violent (and criminal activities) cannot adequately be discussed without the complexity of other actors involved in the vicious cycle of conflict in the Niger Delta. As vividly put by Kalyvas (2001; Watts: 2008), viewed from the micro-level sorts, insurgencies, an oil insurgency in this case resembles “welters of complex struggle” in which the notion that the rebels are criminals who operate against law abiding states fails to capture the dynamics at work. Group interest Kalyvas argue are often localistic and region specific, yet, their specificity stems from the structured totality of the national and regional complex tied to a mix of political, cultural and socio-economic forces.

MEND’s greed more fundamentally displayed in the resistance measures cannot totally be separated from the underlying grievances of the Niger Delta people which concisely put is based on protracted socio-economic and political injustice; or according to the group’s spokesperson, Jomo Gbomo includes fighting ‘for the control of oil revenue by indigenes of the Niger Delta who have had relatively no benefits from the exploitation of our mineral resources by the Nigerian government and oil companies over the last fifty years (Ross: 2008). Quoting verbatim Jomo Gbomo in the interview with Ross:

‘We have a growing radical majority in our ranks that are of the opinion that our soft methods are not working. They appear to be correct because the Nigerian government and oil companies are still not taking us seriously. We have the capacity to be as ruthless and as callous as attacks witnessed in Iraq. We are capable of setting off as many car bombs as we wish and pack them full of shrapnel to maximize casualty. Our fighters can set rigs on fire with all the occupants onboard. This is a final option which we are toying with’.

More elaborately, the idea of fighting for equitable representation in government which also informs MEND violent confrontation with the Nigerian state rest on the fact that the region that produces 85% of Nigeria total revenue has been not only economically marginalized but politically underrepresented in government at the federal level. Zando in voicing their preparedness to continue with the conflict said:

My brother, let me tell you what you need to know. Now we have told you what our problems are. Our demands from the government are so simple and did not start today. It’s not enough to export our oil and live us without jobs. It is not enough to destroy our environment through pollution and live us without any means of livelihood. Develop our region, give us good roads, good healthcare,

build schools, empower us, give us jobs. Until the government decides to take those issues seriously, we will not stop fighting them. Aluta continua! (general laughter)

The feeling of marginalization, inequality and hopelessness which has built in the region over time has apparently caused so much frustration and disillusionment; so also was the demand for redress which has had historical phases as enumerated in chapter two. The successive and historical phases of brutality of government in response to demand for fairness, equity and justice by the Niger Delta people necessitated the emergence of a more fierce confrontational measures adopted by MEND with the emergence of democratic government since 1999. Ever since MEND began its confrontation against the state, the operational pattern has not changed; at best minimized but fundamentally, the demand or redress of the underlying causes for the violent confrontation which in a nutshell revolves round development, empowerment and equal representation in government has not been met.

4.6. Reconciling Greed and Grievances Narratives.

Drawing upon Grass (1986), the accusations and counter-accusations between the government and the frustrated in the Nigerian society has remained unabated. While the government sees everybody that challenges his authority and actions as misguided elements or criminals, the discontent youths that chose the violent route to express their frustration equally sees the state as a rogue institution characterized with unaccountable leadership, failed state structures and corrupt political elites. Simply put, political elites in Nigeria have been robbing the nation with strategies of greed and selfishness. Oil in the Niger Delta; the devastation it has caused, quest for its control and distribution of revenue it has thus far generated, acting upon more fundamental discontents and frustrations already generated by well rooted economic and political marginalization of the Niger Delta region has been at the centre of the controversy and agitation in the region that has assumed the extremist measures since the emergence of MEND in 2006.

MEND no doubt is not devoid of criminal tendencies. But can greed and grievance be reconciled in MEND violent activities in the Niger Delta? First and fundamentally, economics of war analysis on the drive and duration of conflict in resource-rich states rest on three premises: Financing – appropriation of natural resources by the rebels to help keep financing the war and of course group aggrandizement, Recruitment – opportunity to induce fighting power made possible by high population and of unemployed and uneducated youths and thirdly geography which implies that rebel groups thrives in difficult terrains namely place mountainous and creek areas.

On financing of militant groups like MEND, it is indeed truism to say that funding rebel movement or conflict is essential for its continuation. However, several factors must have made such financing feasible and possible. These factors in the case of MEND or generally in the context of militancy in the Niger Delta of Nigeria include oil bunkering, the established conspiracy of the rentier states, officials of TNCs and international cooperation as firmly confirmed by Caleb, a direct participant. Quoting him again:

... And if you call us criminals, how will you describe those men that provide us with cover, sponsor our operation and those that buys the oil? You need to understand that this is not one man business. It is not MEND business alone.

While oil bunkering which MEND to an extent has been found culpable and therefore speak to economics of war analysis, there is however the established factor of local political élites involvement which speak more not only to greed, thereby contradicting Greed hypothesis but more fundamentally speaks volume of state failure – unaccountable leadership and mismanagement of resources by state elites.

Seen from another perspective, financing of militancy in the Niger Delta wouldn't have a subject of discussion at all if on the part of government that adequate measure has been made to address salient issues that has persisted in the Niger Delta revolving squarely on economic emancipation and empowerment as against the present economic marginalization, participatory governance and representation as against political exclusion and ethical and well regulated oil exploration as against the present unregulated and unethical exploitation which has destroyed their source of livelihood. If for example some percentage of the revenue generated from oil is ploughed back efficiently into the development of Niger Delta and empowerment of its teeming jobless youths, it is possible that oil bunkering won't be part of the resistance measure of militancy in Niger Delta considering that there will be violent agitations in the first place. But the huge gap between such massive revenue generated from oil in the region and the (under)development in the region made possible by chronic corruption and mismanagement of resources by state officials one hand and local political elites on the other has made it practically impossible to avoid the temptation of stealing oil. These predatory tendencies of the elites have not gone unnoticed by the militants whose older brothers and fathers have earlier and persistently demanded a change in the status quo of governance with less violent conflict.

The MEND group did not just get embroiled in oil bunkering principally to finance the conflict. The conflict in the first place was part of the complexity of the Niger Delta struggle. However, some notions supported by many scholarly work (Watts: 2008, Okonta: 2006, Idemudia and Ite: 2009, Collier: 2004, Ross: 2004) and of course data from field work speak

volume of some fringe elements engaged in oil bunkering as part of the strategic means to tap from the honey pot of the rentier state, Nigeria predominantly occupied by the elites. All these factors are like leprosy affected fingers of body linked together by varied objectives. Financing Niger Delta struggle through oil bunkering by MEND no doubt is taking grievance to the extreme. Grievance does not give rise to greed but greed can overshadow grievance during conflict and this is exactly what has been happening in the Niger Delta struggle involving militants, the government and TNCs. And it is for this reason that it seems plausible to say that militancy in the Niger Delta is self-sustaining and greed-oriented.

On recruitment, the lure and drive to becoming a member of MEND or indeed any militant group in the Niger Delta is high with the high case of unemployment, uncertain future and lack of adequate education in the region. Also, many MEND members joined the group out of the need for vengeance since some of their relatives, brother or sisters has been intimidated, maimed or killed by the repressive government while they are in pursuit of justice in the region. Kenja summed up how members are being recruited. Surprisingly, it is all voluntary. According to him:

Look around and the hopelessness you will feel is enough to make you take that decision to join us. Here, we have little hope of survival, how much more when we have siblings and parents still looking up to us? Violence is now a means of survival here. Outside our petty business which you see and you know it can't sustain us, the option is to join militancy and strike when necessary. Also, being part of us offers you another chance of survival by working for the politicians...outside our oil (bunkering) business

More so, as regards lack of education which Collier for example has argued has been one fundamental factor of recruitment, available literature (see Francis and Susan: 2008) and field data gathered by the researcher shows that lack of education is only in relative comparison to other regions of Nigeria. This is confirmed more as nine of the militants' interviewed are graduates. Three others are well skilled in various fields but are engaged in petty jobs, like their graduates counterparts. It is plausible to say therefore that unemployment based not on lack of education but lack of opportunities for alternatives means to living has greatly influenced recruitment in the these violent groups in the Niger Delta.

Also, since militancy serves other purposes particularly being used as an instrument of disorder in the political sphere, it is very likely that these groups has multiplied in number based in the remuneration that is accruable from participating in political thuggery during election, speaking to complete institutional failure. Unemployment and political thuggery cannot be

treated in isolation when discussing greed dimensions of Niger Delta struggle or better still, when discussing recruitment drives for MEND militant group.

On geography, the fact that TNCs has operational bases in the Creeks of Niger Delta makes it possible for MEND to operate with cover and of course supports that economics of war analysis that opined that rebel movements thrives more in difficult terrains with namely mountains and creeks. The MEND group comprises of youths of Niger Delta and knows the terrain of Niger Delta very well, more than the TNCs as Jordan reiterated. Geography indeed plays a critical role in shaping the success or failure of rebel movements and in the Niger Delta case, MEND group has fully utilized this advantage.

4.7. Summary

Summing up these controversies and rhetoric surrounding Niger Delta struggle and MEND violent activities is the contention that grievances and violent agitations among the Niger Delta people which has been overshadowed by the extremist measures in the process of airing their views and to capture international attention to their plight may not have transcended to greed if underlying grievances mentioned at various points in the analysis and also in Chapter Two of this research work has been taken care of. Hence, the linkage between economics and noneconomic drives and duration of conflict in resource rich states cannot be disputed generally, except or more specifically as Zinn (2005) noted, Nigeria represents a striking exception of economics of war predictions.

Protracted grievances and repressive regimes gave rise to the violent pattern the conflict in the Niger Delta has taken while greed has characterized the resistance measures the conflict has equally taken. Sustainable solution to a protracted conflict starts from tackling underlying causes. The negation of this fact during negotiation or peaceful settlement has ensured that no lasting peace has been reached in the intra-state conflict in Africa. The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program (to be highlighted in the next chapter) initiated to end the conflict in Niger Delta in October, 2009 failed completely right from the start because of the wrong approaches to the whole program. In no time, as soon as the DDR started, its loopholes became manifest and most of the militants returned to active combatants.

Violent agitations by MEND in Niger Delta over economic marginalization and political servitude in the Nigeria state no doubt transcends economics of war analysis that holds greed as the driving force for the onset and duration of conflict. From analysis of available literature referred to and data collected from field by the researcher, grievance can be deduced to be the premeditated factor and the fundamental drive for the conflict in the oil-rich Niger Delta while

greed of not only the militants but also of the political elites, TNCs employees, the military and the international participants worked together to give the violence a purely economic-oriented colourations. The state repressive tendencies, the chronic corruption of the elites, the utter mismanagement of resources and weak state structures equally reinforced the violent nature of Niger Delta struggle. It started immediately after Nigeria independence in 1960 with revolution initiated by Isaac Adaka Boro and his Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) compatriots, then moved to a peaceful phase of the protests which culminated in the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other activist who has challenged the militarized state over devastation of Niger Delta environment by TNCs and marginalization of the Niger Delta people. The protests, violent or not were all met with government brutality.

The hope raised by new democratic government in Nigeria for the Niger Delta people for economic recovery, empowerment, development and political emancipation was however dashed when the government toed the line of its predecessors with more brutal repressive measures using the famous and well hated JMT. All these gave impetus to the rise and mode of operation as the researchers informants admitted. These modus operandi or simply resistance measures are what have been muddled up in the greed narratives of the conflict as was discussed here also. The chapter also made allusion to the fact that the MEND is ready and bent to continue attacking the government considering the statement made by Jomo Gbomo, MEND Spokesperson and the kidnapping and bombing of oil facilities of late which MEND has claimed responsibility. This chapter concluded by reflecting on the need to link economic and noneconomic drives in the analysis of MEND and violence and indeed of any militant/rebel group regardless of the resource-rich state in question.

Chapter 5. Summary and Concluding Remarks

This chapter contains summary of the research study and findings. Its concluding remarks chronicles concisely measures so far aimed at addressing salient issues that has been the source of conflict and has threatened peace and stability of the Niger Delta region since Nigeria independence starting with the Willink Commission of 1958 to the last attempt, the Amnesty Program initiated in October 2009. Lastly, there were recommendations made by the researcher, not only to policymakers in the Nigeria state on more workable ways to stopping violence in the Niger Delta but also to academic researchers in the field of peace and conflict studies.

5.1. Summary of Study

The study focused on answering the question if MEND militant group is essentially driven by economic considerations in the violent agitations in the oil rich Niger Delta of Nigeria. It sought to provide insights into the militants reflections and perspectives to an understanding of motivations and modus operandi for militancy in the oil rich Niger Delta. The analysis was based on qualitative semi-structured interviews and FGDs with twelve informants. To enumerate on natural resource-conflict correlation discourse, it drew upon the economic and noneconomic narratives of onset and duration of conflict in a resource-rich states. The perspectives and reflections of the informants no doubt threw more light on the persistent in the Niger Delta region involving several collections of militants group and the government.

In the researcher's findings, the informants generally agree that the feeling of discontent and frustration which has built over a long period of time as a result of lack of economic opportunities and joblessness, political marginalization, coupled with devastation of their environment as a result of oil exploration informs the basis for such violent agitation. This was heightened by institutional failure and government repressive measures of earlier peaceful protest. The informants while accepting that their method of resistance namely oil bunkering, kidnapping and oil pipeline vandalization are criminal-oriented acts however claimed that such acts should be seen from the angle of frustration of the youths who are jobless in their prime, yet possesses some level of education and skills that can fetch them some decent jobs considering the availability of Transnational Companies (TNCs) operating in the region. This they claimed was in addition to the well rooted injustices the region has experienced for decades.

Even though many of militants still derive some economic gains from such acts, it can be deduced that such acts should be seen from the angle of frustration of the youths who are jobless in their prime and possesses some level of education and skills that can fetch them some decent jobs considering the availability of TNCs that exploits oil in the region but that wasn't the

case. They have to balance living in misery, without jobs and failing in their responsibilities with fighting to correct such injustices that in the first place put them in that hopeless situation. All the informants interviewed claimed that economic consideration was not thought of before joining MEND but not all admitted incentives do exist for MEND members. Giving the level of structural injustices in the Niger Delta couple with the joblessness that characterizes the active youths in the region, the militants as claimed by the informants saw participation in militancy as a heroic act aimed at savaging their communities that has for decades being denied economic opportunities and political participation and representation in spite of being the economic backbone of the Nigeria nation. Hence the rise of militants groups and violent confrontation with the government which till date in spite of various measures adopted to curb it has remained unabated.

5.2. Rethinking Peace and Development in the Niger Delta of Nigeria

5.2.1. Agitations and Initial Efforts at Peace and Development

Violent agitation in the Niger Delta as captured by Obi (2006) can be explained as a microcosm of the larger Nigeria State within the context of equity, access to oil resources and power by oil-rich communities, self-determination, ethnic autonomy, lack of political participation, democratic accountability, underdevelopment and wide spread poverty. The government on its part, in spite of the sustained brutality in response to violent agitations has equally instituted Commissions and developmental agencies to look critically into the Niger Delta perennial challenges and a more sustainable solution to the crises (Ikelegbe: 2010). The Willink Commission was the first to be set up in 1958 to look into the complaints of the ethnic minority in the Niger Delta revolving round marginalization and developmental neglect. The Committee reported the Niger Delta to be poor and backward and therefore recommended fast tracked development for the region. This was followed by more.

As articulated by Ikelegbe (2010), there was also the Belgore Committee of 1992 which was set up to prepare thirty-year master plan for the development of oil producing areas and the Committee recommended massive infrastructural development of the region. There was the 1998 Popoola Committee that looked into the increasing restiveness in the Niger Delta which eventually recommended development in the short, medium and long term as the only way to tranquility in the region. There was equally the Ogomudia Committee of 2001 and the Presidential Panel on National Security of 2003, both set up to examine the insecurity and other oil related crises in the Niger Delta. Both also concluded that restiveness as a result of oil

externalities and accompanying hardship and poverty is the reason for the persistence violence and recommended that rather than the military solution to the problem, grievances should be addressed and development efforts should be accelerated.

There are other Committees between 2004 and 2008, among them, the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta established 2008 which among other recommendations, suggested an increase in ‘derivation revenue’ – measured according to the quantity and availability of resources in each state of the region – to 25% with another dedicated fund to accelerate sustainable development. The Committee also recommended the release of one of MEND leader, Henry Okah and undertaking by militant groups to cease hostilities against TNCs and the government – oil facilities vandalization, kidnapping and oil bunkering. All these reports or recommendations of committees in many ways failed due to lack of unpreparedness of foresight in institution policies and formidable framework that can facilitate post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction (Ikelegbe: 2010).

Aside these Committees, Developmental agencies were also set up and funded by the State as Structures for policy and execution of developmental programs in the area of infrastructure, social amenities and economic empowerment. The agencies include Niger Delta Development Board (1960) and Presidential Committee in the Development of Oil Producing Areas. There was the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) established 1992, the Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund set up in 1995 which ended up benefitting northerners (Oluwaniyi: 2011) and last but be the least are the Niger Delta Development Commission set up in 2000 and the Ministry of Niger Delta set up in 2008, both still in operation. All was unsuccessful.

Considering the persistence appalling infrastructures in the Niger Delta, the well-rooted joblessness of the youths, the level of poverty, the heavy militarization of the region, and of course the persistence MEND strikes, the Developmental Agencies particularly in the 21st century in spite of having well laid down plans, has failed so far in implementation of its stated objectives. Here again, the problem has been the government fire brigade approach to developmental plan and conflict that apparently is fundamentally rooted in the people’s conscience for decades.

No one captures this better than Isaac Adake Boro, leader of the Niger Delta Volunteer Force who led his militia group for the first revolution that marked the beginning of the clash between the Nigerian state and the people of Oil rich Niger Delta. In his words, ‘...remember all your poverty stricken people, remember too your petroleum which is being pumped out daily from your veins and fight for your freed’ (Courson 2009: 7). Till date, oil is still pumped from all

corners of Niger Delta without any transformative measures put in place to take care of the frustrations and hopelessness' that has permeated the minds and orientation of an average Niger Delta youth or more specifically Niger Delta militants. They are still fighting for freedom as recent oil facilities vandalization and threats by Jomo Gbomo, MEND Spokesperson. In his words:

There will forthwith be no pause in our assault on the Nigeria oil industry. There will be forthwith sustained strikes on all pipelines and facilities remotely related to the Nigeria oil industry (Folaramni: 2012).

The Nigeria government is equally good at making laudable plans and setting up agencies for development with no corresponding agility and commitment to implementation. A new government in place means a plan or programs and the previous plan and agencies for the same program almost completely relegated. The vicious cycle continues and nothing tangible is done to redeem the precarious balance in the region. The Amnesty Program initiated in 2009 to end the violence fell into this category too.

5.2.2. Amnesty Program in a Vacuum

The conflict in the oil rich Niger Delta has persisted since the first organized insurgency was carried out in 1966 by the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) with varying degrees of destruction and dislocation of the Niger Delta communities (Courson: 2009); and equally with numerous attempts at peaceful settlement. It however intensified in the new millennium with the emergence of more ferocious militia groups that has continually threatened the economic and political fabric of Nigeria as a state. By 2009, government took a rather bold, realistic and pragmatic step to end the conflict by initiating DDR program to bring about not only relative peace in the region and perhaps beyond but to demobilize the militants and reintegrate them fully into their various communities and provide them a better alternative means of living. Expectedly, there was some appreciable success as regards disarmament, demobilization but virtually no successes as regards reintegration processes owing to various reasons.

Fundamentally, government and other supporting agencies adopted a fire brigade approach to the whole process. The DDR program began with a fundamental error: there was no negotiation (apart from calling few militant leaders for a meeting [Okonta: 2006]) or agreement or any integrated dialogue or solicitation of imputes into the whole processes (Ikelegbe: 2010). The processes, planning and implementing structure was not based on all inclusive participation of all parties; not just the militants but also the regional leaders and communities (ibid). These groups aside the ex-militants are all vulnerable groups in the conflict that ought to be included

and participate in the DDR program but they were relegated or isolated from the DDR program which ultimately marked the failure of top down approach of the program. Ikelegbe (ibid) concluded that the goals, policy, planning, implementation and the management of the program have been sort of dictated and imposed, rather than negotiated.

Essentially, in the whole general pattern of DDR, the less involvement of ex-combatants and affected communities into the whole process, the less ownership and commitment the ex-combatants would claim and show towards the entire process. This was the error in the Amnesty Program in Niger Delta started late 2009. To have planned and wanted to implement the DDR program unilaterally from the top marked its failure from the start. More so, the presence of Joint Military Task Force (JMT) – a well-armed state security apparatus that has been various accused of extra judicial killings –during the DDR process in the region runs contrary to the mission of DDR which essentially is peace building through peaceful means and not necessarily peace enforcement.

The reintegration plan was even the worst initiated plan. It was difficult to identify any concrete integrated and sustainable plan of rehabilitation and reintegration of the ex-militants and their families. The government did not initiate any tangible measures to empower the ex-militants and their families. As remarked by Pouligny (2004: 17), ‘neglect of poverty reduction and public welfare has affected the long term economic sustainability of welfare of war torn societies’. As was retorted by ex-combatant in Mozambique, ‘the government told us, you are now equally poor. You have been integrated back into the basic poverty’ (ibid). This is a fact most militants cannot accept since militancy in the first place has offered them alternative means of living in place of government economic and political marginalization which is the core grievance of the militants (Okonta: 2006). Hence, the decision to remobilize and continue insurgency in the Niger Delta region was an easy one to make.

Besides, the availability of stockpiles of arms even after disarmament was also very instrumental in the resumption of conflict in the region (Ikelegbe: 2010). Furthermore, like the case of the Afghanistan reintegration processes, the self-serving spoilers of these militant groups saw the DDR program as an opportunity for self-aggrandizement and in most cases undercut ex-combatants enlisted under their group of their due entitlement; one factor that also contributed to the return of insurgency in the region, aside government DDR policy failures. This singular factor calls to question again the selective pattern of DDR agenda and processes. Essentially, the DDR in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria code named Niger Delta Amnesty Program (NDAP) was a failure from beginning. If anything, it exposes government unpreparedness to end the conflict, weak policy formulation and finally lapses in the post conflict reconstruction processes.

5.3. Road to Peace

There are various elements of conflict resolution processes. Among the elements are dialogue and negotiation, peaceful settlement and management of actors in conflict. These are the factors the Nigeria government has not thoroughly considered while initiating measures to end the Niger Delta conflict. As stated earlier, one fundamental flaw of the earlier Amnesty Program established in 2009 was that it was not made within the framework of negotiation and peace. As the researchers informants confirmed, while most MEND militant leaders were consulted, their inputs and that of their regional leaders were not taken into consideration towards fashioning programs to end the conflict (Fieldwork: 2012). MEND for example was of the view that any negotiation should revolve round resource control, development of Niger Delta region, employment and empowerment, withdrawal of the JMT from the region and last but not the least subsequently conducting free and fair election. The ill health of the then President, Musa Yar'dua stalled the peace processes but though dragged on reluctantly (Ikelegbe: 2010).

Aside the Amnesty Program that has had a rather insignificant positive result, till date, there is no agreement or any framework for peaceful settlement of the protracted conflict. While the Ministry of Niger Delta exist and the NDDC, these seems to be toothless agencies as regards development strands in the Nigeria Delta. In some cases, it has been seen as agents for official fraud, much like the Amnesty Program that has been run like a lucrative venture for state officials. Thirdly, aside a handful collection on militant leaders, Tomboy (Fieldwork: 2012) pointed out that majority of the militants in the conflict and their communities have not been taken into consideration in so far as the road to peace is concerned. Practically speaking, the DDR as initiated by the Amnesty Program in 2009 has never been adequate for productive engagements and inducement to disengage from violent agitations in the region, hence the re-emergence of more threats and actions from MEND lately. The researcher has therefore suggested the following measures as road to sustainability and peace in the Niger Delta region.

5.3.1. Reconstruction and Cleaning Up the Niger Delta Region

For a sustainable peace to prevail in the Niger Delta, the following steps will be very instrumental: there should be massive development in the Niger Delta region, at least to balance it with level of development in other regions in the Niger state. As it is now, Niger Delta is in ruins. Social infrastructures is lacking completely. Watts (2008) painted a gloomy picture of primary schools with no roofs; yet, the region has the highest amount of rainfall round the year in Nigeria. As the researcher observed, the arable lands and fishing waters has been completely ruined by oil pollution through spillage from TNCs and or as alleged in government cycles by

sabotage as a result of oil pipeline vandalization. At this point, who bears the highest blame in the conflict is immaterial. All informants interviewed blamed the government and the TNCs while the government holds the militants youths culpable (Fieldwork Note: 2012). Equally is the contribution of the government which in some cases torch whole community in the attempt of getting rid of militants - miscreants.

The TNCs should be made accountable for the destruction of the environment and means of livelihood of the people while the government should also apologize for its repressive measures at curbing violence in the region over the years and embark on massive reconstruction and rehabilitation of the displaced, destroyed properties, devastated communities and damaged social services and amenities; all wrapped up in transitional and restorative justice. The judiciary at present is living up to its responsibilities both within and outside the shores of Nigeria as regards addressing some cases of injustices in the region perpetuated by TNCs and the government. Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC) so far has been made to pay various communities and are still negotiating with farm owners and communities where they are have being found guilty of oil spillage by Dutch Courts in Hague, the Netherlands; ironically, SPDC parent home (Rowell: 2013).

Equally, a Federal High Court in Nigeria has ordered the Federal Government to pay almost \$300 million to Odi Community over human right violations and destruction of the environment (John: 2013). As part of measures to curb violence, TNCs can train to their standard and employ Niger Delta youths; graduates and youths with skills alike. This can guarantee some level of security and instil sense of belonging in them. Besides, the desire to destroy oil facilities will be minimized as this would mean creating an unstable work environment and loss of revenue to the companies which might translate to irregular incomes. As Ross (2004) pointed out 'if mining causes conflict because it produces grievances over environmental degradation and access to jobs, the solution might be greater community involvement on the part of the mining firms.

5.3.2. Addressing Unemployment, Political Participation and Reintegration

The culture of empowerment and productive activities has eroded the youths in the Niger Delta. In its place is a culture of laziness, easy funds and surprisingly lavish lifestyles particularly of militant leaders made possible by oil bunkering, cash-for-protection policy of TNCs and ransom taking after kidnapping. The researcher's informants expressed strong displeasure with the high level of unemployment and political exclusion which pushes them to accept any available alternative to as a guarantee or pattern of survival and living up to their immediate and extended

responsibilities. Becoming part of militant groups as most of the researcher's respondents claimed is an alternative form of employment in itself with some guarantee of daily income albeit illegally by appropriating oil resources and other criminal-oriented acts. The informants also confirmed that political elites use them as tools of disorder in politicking as indicated in chapter 4.

All stakeholders, the government, Civil Liberty Organization (CLO) and religious bodies can get involved in changing the attitude of the youths towards a productive lifestyle while the government institute drastic reformist measures in the form of well supervised skill acquisition program and industries where such potential skills can be channelled. And of course, TNCs should endeavor to engage graduates and skilled youths in their areas of operation in the Niger Delta; if and when need be, train them to the level of technicality required to work in oil industry instead of excluding them entirely from employment which only serves to increase tension and conflict. Local content in TNCs in Niger Delta region can guarantee some level of stability and peace in the region.

There is also the need to demilitarize the Niger Delta region for any sustainable peace. Both the JTF and the militant groups has contributed to militarizing the Niger Delta, as such a 'culture of impunity, machismo and might (Ikelegbe: 2010) is pervasive and reigns supreme in the region. This pervasive culture of armed violence and insecurity has to be transformed to more amenable cultures that shun violence as the best alternative measure or means to peace or achieving stated objectives as in the case of MEND and other militant groups in the Niger Delta. For now, this seems not to be the case as most militant groups, particularly the most violent, MEND, has resurfaced to continue violent agitation against the state. Its resistance measures has not changed either – oil bunkering, oil facilities vandalization and in some cases, hostage taking; reinforced by cash-for-protection racketeering.

5.4. For a More sustainable Peace in the Niger Delta: Involving Peace Agents.

It is plausible to say that there is chaos, violence and collapse of the economy and political authority in the Niger Delta region following the sequence of conflict. It is a fact that there still exist pools of people of goodwill in the region, progressive minded individuals and groups with practical support could emerge as a core group that can return Niger Delta to the path of sustainable peace. They include community leaders who in spite of the involvement of some of their folks in the conflict, has distinguished themselves in honest and selfless service to the local people and their communities by criticizing policies of government and TNCs and also pacifying

the youths when the government visits with their usual repressive measures. These leaders can be found in various ethnic communities and self-empowerment/improvement unions and in various churches denominations in the Niger Delta.

There are also inspiring youth leaders in Niger Delta communities who have distinguished themselves as strong voices for their communities, commanding large followership. Added to these groups are various local and International Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) working in the Niger Delta over the years with enormous knowledge of the region. These groups has interacted closely with the people and therefore able to articulate the various issues confronting the Niger Delta and the way out. These NGOs has also been a strong voice for the people; particularly taking their case to the international community.

These and many more credible agents of peace, well rooted in the social fabric of the Niger Delta are available in the region. The challenge therefore is for the state to work out a strategy with these bodies, along with the representations of communities in the region, fashioning out what are conditions and ingredients for sustainable peace, reaching a deal that will be acceptable to all, most importantly to the local people themselves who ultimately are the guarantors of whatever agreement arrive at.

Having said this, it is a prerequisite to institute accountable and transparent governance both at local, state and federal level to provide leadership required to effectively implement these laudable means to sustainable peace and progress. Such initiatives cannot be well rooted if the state continues to recycle leaders who in the first place have brought the country to its knees with unaccountable and repressive leadership, chronic corruption, persistence ethnic politics, clietilism and mismanagement of resources.

5.5. For the Purposes of Peace and Conflict Research – A Note for Researchers

This thesis has sought to broaden our knowledge on the natural resources wealth–conflict/civil war correlations. Drawing from both economic narratives and noneconomic narratives of conflict in resource rich states and very extensively from interviews with selected MEND militant groups, this study realized that reductionist approach to resource based conflict doesn't paint a complete picture of natural resources–conflict correlations and therefore suggested more elaborate undertaking and interpretation that can capture comprehensively conflict dynamics in a state with vast resources– an integrative approach. Taken separately, economic narratives and noneconomic narratives of resource based conflict are half way to the true facts respectively and cannot comprehensively capture the fundamental drives for conflict in resource-rich states.

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