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The Niger Delta Conflicts and Federal Government Responses in the Fourth Republic

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Abstract

Nigeria's Niger Delta region is home to proven crude and gas reserve. Years of oil exploration, exploitation and production have resulted in the destruction of the environment and the subsequent loss of means of livelihood of the inhabitants of the region. The people have complained, held protests, and litigation, climaxing in violent conflicts. The objective of this study is to assess the responses of the federal government to the conflicts since the return to democratic rule in 1999 till date. The study adopted descriptive research method, using both primary and secondary sources of data and incremental theory in its analysis to submit that the government needs to do more in both human and infrastructure, while the oil multinationals should improve in their corporate social responsibilities in the region. Findings showed that both government and oil multinationals have adopted stick and carrot approach in their responses and this has not achieved much towards ending the conflict and driving development in the region. The study therefore recommends that the federal government should muster the political will to work with the oil communities towards ending the conflict and also liaise with oil giants to sincerely drive real development for a lasting peace in the Niger Delta in particular and Nigeria at large.

Keywords: Conflict, Government, Multinationals, Oil, Responses.

Introduction

Nigeria is Africa's largest crude oil producer and exporter, and the Niger Delta region of the country is home to the resources where oil exploration and production activities hold sway. It is a unique geo-strategic region that is synonymous with abundant reserves of oil and gas deposits, and very central to Nigeria's political economy. According to Korikiye (2009), the possession of natural resources and the revenues that accrue from it to the federal government have often resulted in internal conflicts due to the role of the state in the ownership and management of such resources. In recent past, conflicts have become a near-permanent feature of the Niger Delta as the region has become a theatre of conflicts, thereby undermining development and the national economy (Azaiki, 2009).

Consequently, years of oil exploration, exploitation and production by multinational oil companies led to environmental degradation and subsequent loss of family/community lands, and livelihood of the inhabitants resulting into conflicts. Over the decades, these conflicts in the region have taken different forms, such as community vs state conflict, between the communities and oil companies, inter-community or intra-community as well as inter-ethnic conflicts (Azaiki, 2009). While the oil multinationals control and dominate the oil industry and pays rents to the Nigerian government. The Nigerian government collects profits from the *petrobusiness* without making any meaningful investment in oil exploration and production (Ngwu, 2014). Similarly, oil and gas revenue in Nigeria have also made corruption a norm thereby undermining the steady and stable development of democratic structures and institutions. In most cases, these revenues end up in private bank accounts of state officials of either military or civilian administration as against public coffers for national development, and to this Nigeria is not an exception. This action has helped to perpetuated poverty, unemployment and inequality in the region in particular and the country at large (Volman, 2003). However, it is within the oil rich Niger Delta that oil production has done more damage to the environment, and general disruption in all spheres of the inhabitant lives thereby provoked extensive violence (Korikiye, 2009).

Following the return to democratic rule in 1999, the Niger Delta region has been engulfed in violent

conflicts, as ethnic militias have taken up arms against both the Nigerian state and their representatives on the one hand and the multinational oil companies and their workers in the region on the other hand. Notorious and prominent among their actions include kidnapping of both foreign and local oil workers for fat ransom, vandalization and looting of oil facilities and installations, illegal bunkering, seizure and occupation of oil facilities in the region and, in few extreme cases, killing of kidnapped victims. These and many more made the region unsafe, politically, economically and socially unstable and contributed negatively to the desired growth and development of the region in particular and Nigeria in general.

Since the oil industry became the main revenue earner of Nigerian economy in the 1970s, it has generated billions of dollars into government coffers annually. The central government controls the revenues from the sale of crude oil and sets up the formula for revenue sharing among the three tiers of government (Okoli & Azom, 2016). The people of the Niger Delta region where the Nigerian state derives greater percentage of her natural resources from have consistently and persistently requested that adequate attention be given to the region as regards social amenities, development and employment opportunities due to decade's long oil exploitation and production activities that have caused them general hardship. Hundreds of miles away from the region, a brand new Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja was built with revenues that accrued from the region within a very short period. This very much has incensed the people and triggered conflict. A perfect case in point that is crystal clear is when one looks at Oloibiri, a quiet, small rural, swampy fertile land where the first oil was pumped by Shell in 1958, it has no single motorable road all round season (Saro-Wiwa, 1985). Corroborating this assertion, Azaiki (2009) posits that the town is a living evidence of neglect and abandonment as it has no portable water, no employment opportunities for its inhabitants, with only one dilapidated community primary school as a symbol of civilization. It only got electricity in 1989, and constant power outage has kept the town in total darkness despite producing crude oil that raked in several billions of dollars into the federal government coffers.

The many contradictions that characterized oil production especially the crises of poverty that define the life of the people in the Niger Delta region amidst the oil wealth have given rise to different forms of group protest and dissent against the government-oil alliance (Akinwumi, 2004). A critical dimension of the history of the Niger Delta conflict in Nigeria is a region rich in natural resources while a majority of its population live below the poverty line as a result of the loss of their livelihood and farmland thus resulting in subsequent conflicts that have lasted for decades now. The situation worsened with the return to democratic rule in 1999 after years of military brutalization and violent crackdown of the region and its inhabitants that ultimately led to the hanging of the environmental right activist Saro-Wiwa and eight of his Ogoni kinsmen by the Abacha regime. Over the years, the oil producing communities adopted various means of expressing anger both non-violent and violent means which led to further escalation of conflicts that saw the former cult groups in the region metamorphosed into militant groups to launch attacks on oil installations and oil workers in the region as well as against governmental authorities. Their destructive activities resulted in Nigeria's oil export being cut by about 500,000 barrels per day through much of 2006 (Marquardt, 2007). That situation escalated with kidnapping of oil workers both foreign and local and remained until the granting of amnesty to the militant groups in the Niger Delta in 2009 by the YarAdua's administration.

On the whole, the argument by the inhabitants of the Niger Delta region over the years has been that a people whose land produces the wealth that sustains the nation cannot be made to dwell in abject and excruciating poverty consequent upon environmental degradation and pollution resulting from oil production activities (*Newswatch*, March

10, 2008; *TELL*, February 1, 2008). They have therefore in different ways been demanding for a fair share of the oil wealth to ensure poverty reduction, enhanced well-being, socio-economic and infrastructural development of the region, or alternatively, be allowed to wholly control theses oil resources (*Newswatch*, January 25, 1999, p.10).

Therefore, the Niger Delta conflicts can be seen as a resource conflict with multiple undertones that cut across all facets of human existence. It is against this background, therefore, that this study examines the various federal government responses to the regions conflict in this fourth republic.

Conceptual clarification

Nigeria's Niger Delta is the world's third largest wetland after the Mekong and Mississipi deltas. It is seen geographically as encompassing the creeks, estuaries, swamps and natural alluvial deposition of the River Niger as it enters the Atlantic Ocean. The Willink Commission Report (1958) sees it as the then Rivers Province without Ahoada or Port Harcourt in the former Eastern Region, in addition to the Western Ijaw Division in the former Western Region of Nigeria. This was corroborated by Adeyemo (2008) when he referred to the present states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers as the core geographical Niger Delta.

Conversely, the UNDP (2006) human development report gives a broader definition of the Niger Delta to include all oil producing areas and other contiguous areas that are seen as relevant for political considerations, administrative convenience and development rationality. Based on this inclusive definition, as adopted by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the Niger Delta region today consists of all the nine oil producing states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers (NDDC).

By implication, the above definition of Niger Delta shows that it cuts across all the three geo-political zones of southern Nigeria, covering all the six states in the south-south zone, Abia and Imo in the south-east, and Ondo in the south west. Thus, Etekpe (2007) terms this expanded definition as the political definition of Niger Delta.

Conflicts

There is no consensus on the exact definition of conflict. However, there is a general agreement among scholars that it is a natural phenomenon that is inevitable in all spheres of human existence and stems from the fact that there is bound to be disputes, disagreements, claims and counter-claims, contestations over resources, values and wealth in the cause of human interaction within a society. Conflict cannot be eliminated from human life activities but it can be controlled. It can occur in various places, ranging from school, work place, communities, states to countries, etc.

Coser (1956) perceives conflict in terms of the struggle between parties over desirable values. He argues further that it is the struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. Such conflicts may take place between individuals and collectivities. This argument presupposes that struggle over scarce resources constitutes conflict and that the parties involved are willing to get to any length in order to reduce the power of each other so as to achieve their set goals even if they have to eliminate the other. This explains why the government has subjugated, alienated, marginalized and militarized the Niger Delta region for the continuous exploration and production of oil by multinational oil corporations for the continuous inflow of revenue into its coffers. Conversely, it also goes to show the level of resistance demonstrated over the years, the intensity of attacks and destructions from the inhabitants of the Niger Delta on oil facilities and installations even at the risk of their lives and properties, hence the conflict that has lasted for years now.

Similarly, Franke (2007) asserts that conflict is all about gaining a relative advantage of control in the struggle over who gets what, when and how. Thus, the advantage the federal government has in the allocation of resources that accrue from the region, when it is distributed and how it is apportioned over the years is what fuels the conflict

till date. It is this condition that has incensed the people thus making the region a hot spot of conflict rooted in economic, political, social and administrative imbalance that demands changes in the status quo of things and the enhancement of life of the regions inhabitants.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Incremental theory with focus on the various responses (policies) of the federal government since the return to democratic rule as regards the Niger Delta conflicts. The theory is associated with Lindblom decision making in taxation and expenditure. The key principle of this theory posits that public choices arise out of interplay of partisanship, and that administrative decision making involves a continuation of past policies with the least possible modifications to suit changing circumstances. The aspect of partisanship is a truism as successive government in Nigeria (whether military or civilian) has always favored the major ethnic nationalities in all spheres over the Niger Deltans. Policies are deliberately made to put them down because of their minority status despite being the goose that lays the golden egg. It is also crystal clear that the same past policies are repeated with slight modification despite knowing fully well that it will not resolve the issues on ground. This is evident from the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) in 1959 by the colonial administration, to the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1993 in line with the recommendation of The Belgore Commission and down to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000 which is a key response of the federal government in this present republic. The government simply maintains the status quo by not wanting to resolve the issues of underdevelopment. From 1961 to date is over sixty years and any government with good intention to developing the region would have long done justice to decades of pains and sufferings of the people of the Niger Delta region. Therefore, successive governments only paid lip service to the region hence, the conflict. The theory also aims at meeting challenges slowly and progressively. In other words, incrementalists deliberately prefers minimal departures from the status quo and this explains why issues of governance are not treated and dispensed with as at when due. According to Chandler and Plano (1988), that decision makers as problem solvers sometimes lack the intellectual capacity or the time to make a wide search for alternative solutions. However, this study tends to disagree with the lack of intellectual capacity and time as posited, since policy makers as problem solvers in Nigeria have the capacity and all the time to correct decades of injustices done to the region but refused to act positively. On the aspect of alternative solutions, there are numerous solutions that have been proffered but neglected by the government. In addition, the government would have borrowed such policies from other oil producing countries that have utilized their resources to develop their country and are not experiencing oil conflict like the United States of America. It is correct to submit that the federal government of Nigeria is the cause and the dragger of the decade-long conflict in the region. The study therefore urges the present administration to muster the political will to do what is right for once by correcting the mistakes of the past that have resulted in the decade-long conflict in the region.

Essentially, incremental theory is an advocate of a new regime/administration continuing with inherited programs or policies of its predecessors and not introducing a drastic change to them. This goes a long way to show that incremental theory is embedded with political undertone. This situation is further reflected in the "incrementalist decision making sequence" as advanced by the proponents in the following order:

i. Identify the problem
ii. Investigate how similar problems have been handled in the past
iii. Analyze and evaluate few solutions that appear to be acceptable; and
iv. Choose one that can make some positive contributions to solving the problem without drastically altering the existing processes and institutions.

Thus Lindblom (1968) described the above process as "the science of muddling through". He further argued that 'administrators muddle through in response to current issues and circumstances rather than by' the will of those in policy-making positions. This study strongly feels that it is high time the federal government jettisons incremental theory as regards the Niger Delta conflict as well as in other areas that demand problem solving.

Federal Government Responses to the Conflict in the Niger Delta

Oil exploitation and production has led to social and political unrest in the Niger Delta and understandably too, the struggle by ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta for resource control, management as well as autonomy has elicited intense and hostile responses from the Nigerian state. Consequent on the disruptive frequency of conflicts in the oil rich region and its impact on the nation's oil dependent economy in the fourth republic, the federal government had responded to the conflicts from two perspectives. These are the redistributive policy response and the regulatory/ repressive policy response.

According to Gambo (2008), the redistributive policies refers to those policies that were made towards extinguishing the flames of discontent within the Niger Delta region. Thus, with the emergence of Obasanjo's administration in 1999, he set up a new development policy for the Niger Delta region. This led to the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000. The NDDC was given the mandate of taking charge of the rapid, even and sustainable development of the region (Yishau, 2008). Consequent on the fact that the NDDC was coming on board after a long period of military rule in the country, some Niger Deltans had high expectations as regards developmental strides and an end to conflict in the region. In all fairness, the NDDC seems better empowered in area of financial resources, enabling laws and regulatory mechanism than its predecessor, the OMPADEC (Omotola, 2006). However, the deliberate efforts to under-develop the region reared its ugly head again as the commission was deliberately starved of the needed funds to drive the much needed development by the same government that established it despite the region suffering from deleterious effects of oil production for decades.

It is on record that the then managing director of NDDC revealed that the commission was been owed the sum of 224 billion naira over seven years. He revealed further that the commission received 26 billion annually as against 93 billion (The News 2008). This allegation was never denied by former president Obasanjo, and the decision of the Yar'Adua administration to categorized the said sums owed NDDC as 'unspent funds' that cannot be released did not go down well for the region and points to the fact that the federal government deliberately wants the region to remain perpetually underdeveloped. These action go a long way to explain that the inadequate funding that has bedeviled the commission right from inception is a deliberate attempt at undermining the region. Thus one can correctly infer that the main argument of the federal government of Nigeria lacking the political will to develop the region is a truism since it has always treated funding issues of the region with kid glove.

Similarly, another major redistributive policy/ response from the federal government was the establishment of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs by the Yar'Adua administration in 2008 to augment the NDDC and to provide development in the region. The federal government in 2009 approved about 200 billion naira for the construction of roads, bridges, hospitals and schools aimed at accelerating the pace of development in the region, however the region has not recorded any tangible result till date.

The aforementioned was quickly followed by the proclamation/introduction of the amnesty policy for the militants in the Niger Delta by the then president Yar'Adua, which was aimed at bringing the conflict in the region to an end. This was consequent on the fact that the government was losing billions of dollars in oil revenues due to continuous attack on oil installations and facilities in the region by the militants. This unique response was a major landmark policy that granted an

unconditional amnesty to all the militants that accepted to surrender their arms and ammunition within the 60-day window that expired on October 4 2009. At the end of the deadline, 20,192 persons from the various states surrendered their arms and ammunition, including top militant leaders such as Tompolo, Ateke Tom, and Boy Loaf among several others (Smith, 2013).

According to Kuku (2013), the Amnesty programme was a non-forceful disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation or reintegration with a monthly stipend for all those that accepted the offer of amnesty, meant to last till 2015. He further stated that any programme of reintegration that goes beyond 2015 would be taken over by ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) of government especially for those on university scholarship programmes. Kuku further posited that in October 2010, the federal government received another set of 6,166 ex-militants whose arms and ammunition were submitted to the Joint Task Force bringing the total number to 26,358 by the end of 2010.

Consequent on the announcement of the amnesty policy/programme of the federal government, attacks on oil installations has dropped drastically to zero, and normal economic activities kicked off in the region. Although, the government has not produced a permanent solution to the complex holistic framework needed to provide a permanent peace to the root conflict issues in the region, the amnesty programme was a resounding success at the early stage. Aside the federal government amnesty, some states in the Niger Delta region such as Rivers and Delta have adopted and implemented the amnesty programme as a way of checking militancy and also reducing the level of illegal arms in their states.

However, all the aforementioned responses/ policies have not resulted in substantial development and an end to the conflict, with the exception of the Amnesty Programme that brought down the level of conflict. It also brought down the number of attacks on oil installations to almost zero alongside return to normal economic activities in the region. These have left the inhabitants to infer that the federal government policies were mere palliatives. Corroborating this position, Oviasuyi and Uwadiae (2010) assert that the agencies (responses) were not really established to bring succor or development to the region, but were mere cosmetic efforts as it did not take the federal government of Nigeria long time to develop and transform the federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja to a world class standard with revenues generated from oil. Supporting the above assertion, Duru (2009)states that the Niger Delta region is indeed underdeveloped as home to Nigeria's oil wealth where the inhabitants lack basic infrastructure – good road networks, health care facilities, portable water and good schools.

Sharing the same view, Olowu (2010) posits that a first time visitor to the region does not need further evidence of the roots of the conflict since the region bears a vast tell-tale signs of marked under development, abject poverty, naked squalor; lack and neglect of basic infrastructural facilities like portable water, passable roads and equipped hospitals. In the same vein, arable land, and vast farmlands have been turned into unproductive resources as the same level of wanton destruction to land has been done to marine life, leading to declining resources for the people whose livelihood depends highly on fishing.

The second response of the federal government is the regulatory or repressive responses/policies that are aimed at undermining, stopping or if possible to decimate the agitation/mobilization force of ethnic nationalities in the region (Gambo, 2008). Here, the federal government had responded through violent means where it used the armed forces and police to carry out extra-judicial killings in the region. A major case of repressive response was witnessed in Odi community in Bayelsa State where angry youths killed twelve policemen deployed to maintain peace in November 1999. The inability of the community to produce the perpetrators of the crime led to the deployment of a combined team of soldiers, naval personnel and mobile policemen who carried out a heavy attack on the community. The operation was said to be 'the largest deployment of troops since the Biafran war'

(Omotola, 2006; Azaiki, 2009). At the end of the operation, more than 2,000 people were killed, many more were injured, an enormous amount of resources (including buildings) were destroyed with no hope of rehabilitation.

A similar repressive policy worth mentioning is the invasion of the peaceful community of Ohoror-Uwheru in Ughelli North Local Government Council of Delta State on Thursday, January 15 2004 at about 2.00am. The task force code named "Operation Restore Hope" came with seven trucks of combatants accompanied by three armour vehicles and over ran the community in the early hours and burnt down several houses (Azaiki, 2009). Many people lost their lives through gunshots, some drowned in the surrounding swamps and rivers in an effort to escape from the rampaging soldiers. According to the villagers, cattle-herders came to graze in the community, and the youths intercepted them and asked them to go back since their cows had destroyed their farmlands the previous year. One of the cattle herders attacked a girl who lost one of her eyes; the herders were said to have ignored the directive. The youth had arrested one of them and asked for compensation for the destroyed crop by their cattle previous year, the rest ran away and in the process three cattle got stuck in a barbed wire fence and died. The herders reported the incident to soldiers from Bomadi and Warri who came and invaded the community.

In a contrary view of the above account, the commanding officer of the Operation Restore Hope claimed that trouble started when the Ohoror youths attacked a small unit of soldiers. He also alleged that a soldier was given a machete cut and his rifle snatched, and that the unit's effort to cordon and search the community to fish out the stolen rifle led to the invasion.

In a similar manner, in June 2009, the Nigerian military expedition in camp 5, a militia camp under Government Ekpemupolo (a.k.a. Tomplo) located at the outskirts of Okerekoko community in Western Niger Delta was attacked and destroyed by the military Joint Task Force (JTF). In the process, many civilians were killed, homes destroyed and several people were displaced (Korikiye, 2009). In retaliation, the militants will always blow up pipelines thereby reducing oil production which invariably affects the nation's economy negatively. From the historical point of view, the resort to violence by the federal government had not really helped to resolve issues; rather, it has always heightened conflict in the region, thus making military option counter-productive. It will be correct to infer that the people of the region seem to derive more inspiration from the violent acts of the government and to equally develop corresponding response thereby leading to the vicious circle of violence that does the country no good. Thus, many incidences of repressive federal government responses are abound in the region that has remained counter-productive.

A historical excursion into federal government responses (policies) to the issues and conflict in the region dates back to pre-independence. At the 1957 and 1958 constitutional conferences, the people of the region expressed their fears over domination by the majority ethnic nationalities and demanded for a state to be created for them. This led to the setting up of the Sir Henry Willinks Commission of Inquiry to look into the fears expressed by minority ethnic groups that agitated for the creation of a new state for them from the existing ones. The report confirmed that the fears of the minorities were real and showed the need to create a state to assuage their fears; however, no state was created from the existing three regions. Rather, the Commission's report recommended the declaration of the Niger Delta as a separate area for development which led to the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NNDB) in 1961 (Ibaba, 2005; Azaiki, 2009). The main function of the board was to advise the federal government, the western and eastern regions as regards physical development of the region. Unfortunately, the NNDB failed due to its lack of executive powers since its powers were mainly advisory, and also due to insufficient funds to execute developmental projects.

Another major comprehensive and institutional response to the regions conflict was the establishment of the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992,

to tackle the problem of underdevelopment in the region (Omotola, 2006). Unfortunately, the hydra-headed monster called corruption led to its demise. in the country.

Similarly, another key redistributive policy of the federal government is also visible in the area of revenue allocation formulae known as the derivation principle. Derivation means giving to a region a sum it contributed to the central revenue. Prior to the production of oil on a commercial scale in the 1970s, the formula was on a 50-50 per cent basis, meaning the central pool and the region of derivation shared the revenue equally. As oil assumed both strategic and economic importance in the country, the derivation of revenue that goes to the oil producing states was adjusted downwards to 20 per cent by the Murtala/Obasanjo regime (1975-1979). The Shagari administration (1979-1983) reduced it to an inconsequential 2 per cent. This was further squeezed to 1.5 per cent by the Buhari/ Idiagbon regime (1984-1985). It was slightly adjusted upward to 3 per cent by the Babangida regime (1985-1993). Again, it was finally adjusted upward to 13 per cent by the Abacha regime through the1994/95 constitutional conference due to the growing conflict in the region and has remained same till date regardless of the increasing agitation and conflict. This derivation principle is at the heart of the conflict since the wealth derived from the Niger Delta region is siphoned off by the federal government and used for the development of the majority ethnic nationalities which breeds conflict. It is also on record that resource distribution in the country has historically been skewed to favour the Northern region and has remained so till date.

According to Omotola (2006), the 13 per cent derivation given to the oil producing states has been such that disempowered them as the 'original' owner of oil from the bulk of the revenue generated from their God given resources. He further posited that the situation was so bad that the derivation principle was almost removed from revenue allocation at the expense of other principles like land mass, population, etc. which put the Niger Delta region at a disadvantaged position. It will be correct to assert that the derivation principle has over the years been used and manipulated by those in power (military or civilian) to suit their whims and caprices at the expense of the region. Since oil the major resource that feeds and keeps Nigeria afloat is gotten from the region, there is an urgent need to redress this injustice, especially knowing that oil is a non-renewable resource that will be exhausted someday. It will be most unfair that at the end of it all, the Niger Delta region will only have its degraded environment, poverty and penury to show case to the world for being the resource base of the nation. Thus, an upward review of the derivation principle will go a long way to assuage the region and local communities where the resources are gotten from in order to compensate them for the damages done to their environment.

All the aforementioned go a long way to explain that the inadequate funding that has bedeviled the various commissions right from inception is a deliberate attempt at undermining the region since issues of funding developmental projects in the region is treated with laxity by the government.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have assessed the various responses of the federal government as regards the Niger Delta conflict in the fourth republic. The recurring conflicts attest to the failure of those responses to serve as a solution to the problem at hand. There is the urgent need to overhaul all the responses /policies so as to bring the conflict to the barest minimal level. Presently, the situation in the delta is still very fragile and is likely to return to intermittent conflict or a full blown insurgency. The inability of federal government to convert the amnesty policy into something more permanent is serving as an incentive for pockets of conflict to continue to rock the oil-rich region along-side oil theft and the emergence of new crops of militant groups to demand for their own share of resources. Decade-long military approach as well as cosmetic responses has not doused the conflict either. Rather, the Niger Delta conflict has over time grown into a highly pervasive resource conflict comprising of many dimensions rooted into imbalance in political, economic, ethical and psychological disparity.

Recommendations

The federal government should as a matter of urgency address the issues of poverty, social inequality, lopsided developments, deprivations, absence of infrastructure and services, unemployment, and other genuine agitations of the people.

The federal government needs to increase the financial allocation that goes to the region so as to help address developmental concerns of the region by the upward review of the 13 per cent derivation to at least 30 per cent.

The government should put in place a strong regulatory mechanism on the activities of oil companies to ensure that they operate within global acceptable standards to check environmental degradation of the region.

Government also needs to deal decisively with issues of corruption that has bedeviled the institutions and agencies created to drive development in the region.

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