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POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NATURAL RESOURCE STRUGGLES IN THE NIGER DELTA, NIGERIA

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Political Economy of Natural Resource Struggles in the Niger Delta, Nigeria

Being the 33rd Public Lecture

Delivered by



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1. Salutation

The Chancellor of Covenant University and Chairman, Board of Regents, Bishop David Oyedepo;
Members of the Board of Regents;
Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Registrar and other Members of Management;
Members of Senate;
Professors,
Guests;
Kings and Queens;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

I present to you a lecture titled 'Political Economy of Natural Resource Struggles in the Niger Delta, Nigeria'.

2. Introduction

This lecture problematizes the natural resource struggles and the attendant bloody conflicts in the oil-rich Niger Delta of Nigeria as a crisis of the Nigerian state. Within this framework, it examines the origin, nature and dynamics of the resource struggles, paying attention to the Nigerian state's policy and politics over the governance of land and mineral resources. It argues that the crisis is political in nature and that, it stems from the resource rights struggles engendered by the state's undemocratic governance of natural resources, not least, land and oil and gas. It identifies and analyzes the groups engaged in the resource rights agitations, the interests they represent and protect and the extent to which they further the prospects of actualizing the peoples' resource rights. It suggests the need to democratize the governance of natural resources, as a potent alternative strategy that will help to actualize the resource rights of the people; to mitigate the bloody resource conflicts; to reverse the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta and; to enthrone democracy and development in Nigeria.

Is the present crisis in the Niger Delta an economic crisis or the crisis of the Nigerian state? This is a fundamental unsettled question that still agitates the minds of policy makers, government officials, scholars, activists and donor agencies because of the worsening trend of the underdevelopment of the oil-rich Delta region that accounts for 90 percent of the Nigeria's foreign earnings. The poor conceptualization of the problem in the region also accounts for why wrong remedies have been administered, leaving the crisis worse than ever before. There is the tendency to fixate the crisis in the economic context, partly because it is in this form that it manifests concretely: decline in income, unemployment, environmental degradation, water poverty, rural poverty, rural landlessness and food insecurity. In the reality of the Niger Delta situation, it is difficult not to locate the crisis as an economic crisis.

However, it is not simply an economic crisis; rather, it is fundamentally, a crisis of the Nigerian state, indeed, a political crisis. It is a crisis heightened by the resource rights

struggle that is rooted in the state's policy towards the governance of natural resources. The tendency to separate the political and economic variables, coupled with the reification of the socio-economic processes concerned with development has eclipsed the origin and nature of the crisis. It is quite misleading to examine the development of the Niger Delta out of the context of the path the state took to development nationally. Located in this context, the development of the Delta region cannot occur in a vacuum, but must subsist within the larger framework of the development of Nigeria.

Viewed in this context, the crisis is brought into bolder relief, when the development is located in the context of the Nigerian state, its policies and politics. As a predator, the Nigerian state is totalistic and all-powerful and this explains why its legislations and governance of natural resources facilitated its usurpation of the resource rights of the people. It accumulates by terror, especially in the mining and natural resource sector where it anticipates resistance from the people on account of its exploitative policies and politics and the operations of the institutions it has created to mediate its surplus extraction. This largely explains why the state deploys its military to oppress and dominate the people to foster its ruthless exploitation of the region.

To a large extent, therefore, the protracted bloody conflicts between the state military and the freedom fighters in the Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta is not only a contradiction of the Nigerian state, but also, the resistance to the state's anti-people policy and the undemocratic governance of natural resources. Also, the struggles are waged between and among the hegemonic and tiny class and the subordinated class within the state over the political control of the mining acreages and access to a share of the proceeds of the sector. At issue, is not only whether development is really on the agenda of the state, but also, the huge policy challenge that the incessant bloody resource conflicts in the region pose for policy makers and academia among others, who are interested in overturning the table of underdevelopment in the Delta region and Nigeria generally.

Granted that, at no time has the political leadership been so visibly shaken by the wave of unrest and disruption of oil production in the Niger Delta than the period, since 2006, when the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta [MEND] launched several decisive attacks on the flow lines and production platforms of the oil companies and held some of their expatriate staff hostage. In fact, this round of fierce attacks on the oil installations signals the prelude to the final onslaught towards the total crippling of oil exploration and production in the Delta region. For instance, national total oil output fell from an average daily production of 1.5 million barrels to 500,000 barrels per day in 2006 and 2007.

Not surprisingly, the current government had, at its inception in June 2007, inherited a relatively empty treasury, due largely to the sustained detonation of oil platforms by the agitating groups in the region and the sharp decline in revenue from oil export. Shell Petroleum Development Company [SPDC], which accounts for half of the total oil production in Nigeria, had, for the first time, declared consistent *force majeure*; that is, its inability to deliver oil to external clients due to shuts-in as the protesting groups rip open the flow lines and hold oil workers hostage. All this had and still has far-reaching

consequences for the stability of the global oil market. The spate of hostage taking of oil workers became alarming, leading to prolonged shut-in periods forcing more foreign oil companies to move out of the region. Yet, illegal bunkering of oil flourished, in part, because it is an intricate part of the resource struggles, which is borne out of the huge sharp practices perpetuated by the public officials in the oil and gas industry.

In its usual response, the state deployed its military might not so much to maintain public order, peace and security, but as an *alibi* for furthering the exploitation of oil in the Niger Delta. Contrary to the reported general instability in the Delta region, the insecurity arising from resource struggle was target-specific: the oil installations, the fifth columnist and obstacles to the actualization of resource rights.

Yet, the state declared the entire Delta region as insecure and mobilized its military. The headquarters of the Joint Task Force [JTF] is re-located from Warri to Yenagoa as part of the state's strategy of militarizing the oil-producing communities as it accumulates by terror. In fact, there is the erroneous view of the state that, the majority of the communities along the creeks in the Delta region are hideouts for the members of the agitating groups, coupled with poor intelligence; the communities have come under heavy military aerial surveillance, raking and bombardment, as evident in the recent massacre of the Gbaramatu area in Delta State. The communities of Odi and Umuechem in Bayelsa and Rivers States respectively had come under similar military invasion in the past.

Further, the amnesty and its post-amnesty programme of the Yar Adua's government were poorly articulated and hollow. In fact, the programme was nothing less than another variant of the state's usual carrot and stick policy towards the Niger Delta. For, the 'carrot' in the form of juicy contracts and allocation papers to lift crude oil and import refined petroleum products are usually extended to the cronies of the state, which are individuals, top government officials and agents of the state like key business persons and groups like the Association of Traditional Rulers from the Oil-Producing Communities that help to placate the resource struggles. The stick comes in the form of harassments, reprisals, killings, imprisonment among other hard measures meted out to the individuals, and corporate bodies and members of the agitating groups that are opposed to the recklessness and pillage of the Delta region by the forces of state-transnational capitalism. Overwhelmed by the large-scale disruption of oil production and destruction of oil pipelines by the agitating groups across the Delta region, which, in turn, resulted in the sharp fall in national oil out and decline of export proceeds, then Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, together with some self-appointed stakeholders in the region, decided to formulate an amnesty package as an interim measure to secure peace and stability in order for the exploration and production of oil to continue uninterrupted, but the proposed amnesty suffered a setback because it did not appeal to the majority of the freedom fighters and other stakeholders that are committed to the struggle.

Therefore, that the Yar Adua's government experimented with the amnesty plan, is partly an indication that, either his government has not been adequately briefed on the origin and nature of the crisis in the Niger Delta; or that his administration has taken the path of

its predecessor by maintaining the *status quo*; that is, adopting the military option of bombarding the protesting groups and other agitators in the region into submission. The imposition of a lifeline of October 4, 2009 for all members of the agitating groups, which the government mistakenly branded as militants, to ceasefire on the armed agitations in the Niger Delta and to embrace peace, otherwise they would be regarded as criminals and would be made to face the full wrath of the law, has been received with mixed reactions. For instance, the Yar Adua's government's decision to drop the charges of treasonable felony, among others, leveled against Henry Okah, leader of the MEND and his unconditional release after two years' incarceration by the Nigerian state was commended. That other leaders of factions of the MEND like Government Epemupolo, otherwise known as Tompolo and Boyloaf, and those of other groups like the Niger Delta Vigilance [NDV] headed by Ateke Tom publicly turned in caches of arms and ammunitions brought temporary respite to the region and resultant increase in the total oil output.

However, there are still factions within the MEND, and other agitation groups like the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force [NDPVF] led by Asare Dokubo, advocacy groups and members of the critical public that are not well disposed to the amnesty and its agenda as constructed by the Nigerian state for various reasons. First, the emancipation of the people from the state's usurpation of their resources rights and the need to have a sovereign national conference that will redefine the basis of Nigeria as a federation among others, which resulted in the armed agitations over natural resources are not addressed by the post-amnesty programme of the government. Rather, the emphasis has been on the rehabilitation, re-integration and capacitating the youths with artisanal skills that are not only national in scope, but a development crisis that the states in the Niger Delta lack the capacity to resolve.

Second, the military's rule of engagement to interdict, search and destroy hideouts of the agitating organizations and individuals in the Niger Delta was carried out with the zeal and vigour of a typical war situation. Yet, the state claims it is not at war with these agitation groups and all those opposed to its exploitative policies in the Delta region. If the state were not at war with these groups and its members, then, there should be no prisoner[s] of war, who, indeed, should be qualified for an amnesty.

Third, the state regards the members of the protesting groups as criminals, whereas they are, indeed, freedom fighters. The need to actualize the peoples' resource rights is a national issue, but not specific to the Niger Delta as often misconstrued by many a Nigerian. Technically speaking, therefore, the amnesty is a misnomer in this context. It is all the more so, because there is no constitutional basis for the President to exercise such a power.

Therefore, what ought to have been declared by the government is an *armistice*, but obviously not an amnesty. For, under an *armistice*, both the state's military, the militants and the people in the Delta region are expected to discuss and agree on the need for the military and the agitating organizations to lay down arms in order for the various stakeholders in the Niger Delta, namely, the people, youths, protesting groups, ethnic

nationalities, advocacy groups, scholars, the government to resume discussions on the peace process and the development strategies and programmes for the Delta region.

Yes, there are criminal gangs, cultists and individuals/corporate groups who took advantage of the protracted armed resource agitations in the Delta region to advance their narrow social, economic, social and political interests. Even then, the state ought to have undertaken full scale audit and intelligence of the various groups to ascertain their actual members, instead of assuming that they are all criminals. As a strategy for agitation in the Delta region for instance, taking oil workers hostage is meant to compel the state and the oil companies to discuss resource rights and halting environmental pollution among others. But hostage taking now occurs in Kaduna, Enugu State and Lagos among others, and the motive of the kidnappers, who, in most cases, are the underprivileged in the society, is to forcefully extort part of the huge wealth of the few rich.

Fourth and finally, is the demonstrated unwillingness of the state to come to grips with the reality that, the natural resources inclusive of land and its contents, first, belong to the people and that, it [the state] only holds the resources in trust for the people. This has defined the character of the resource struggles and; it explains why the critical cells that are still left in the MEND, the NDVF among other emerging agitation groups, shunned the amnesty and vowed to continue with the resource agitation.

Further, there is growing general misconception of the crisis in the Delta region that needs to be corrected. The crisis in the Niger Delta is not really so much about the need of the people of the marginalized oil-producing minority ethnic groups across the Niger Delta to have more representations in government as often misconstrued by some scholars [Osagie,1995]; nor is it for them [people] to solely own and control the natural resources found in their communities as misconstrued by some Nigerians, because such a narrow perception negates social justice and equity that the resource struggle is charged to uphold. Nor is it really concerned about the President of Nigeria having to hail from the South-South geopolitical zone where the country's oil is produced or other ethnic appointments; nor has it really any benefit for the import of the struggle by expanding the public bureaucracy as evident in the establishment of the Ministry of Niger Delta even when the Niger Delta Development Commission [NDDC] specifically created to foster the development of the region is acutely underfunded and has been unable to deliver the desired development in the region.

In all appearances, the crisis is not an ethnic crisis, largely because it is manifesting within the territories of the ethnic nationalities and communities of the Ijaw, Urhobo, Isoko, Ogbia, Nembe, Okrika, Kolokuma, Ukwani, Bini, Itsekiri, Ikwere, Ogba, Ibibio and Ilaje among others in the oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta. Nor is the protracted bloody conflict in the Delta region a sign of the extent of the peoples' disobedience of God's commandment. For, God has, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, endowed Nigeria with abundant natural resources for all to use, but not for a few to exploit to the detriment of the majority of the people.

On the contrary, the minority ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta are daring the *Leviathan* on a fundamental national development crisis that the major ethnic groups have not contemplated. In fact, some preliminary agitating groups are emerging to extend the frontiers of the resource rights struggle to the heavily mineralized Middle Belt of Nigeria; a trend the Nigerian state is bent to nip in the bud, because of the threat it poses to its survival. Without doubt, the revolutionary pressures against the Nigerian state over the need to democratize resource governance appears to be mounting, particularly as more people, communities and groups from the minorities outside of the Niger Delta have come to understand that, the resource agitations are concerned with the actualization of the peoples' ownership and control of, and their rights to natural resources and; that the need to democratize the governance of the resources will help to empower the people especially the rural dwellers, in the development process. Resource rights struggle is by no means an attempt to exclude the state from access to natural resources or strip it of its political power of resources. Instead, the struggle is aimed at empowering the people to have a say in how natural resources are to be exploited; how the proceeds from such resources are to be shared and used in the kind of development that they desire. That way, the people will become the means, the end and the essence of such a development. [Omoweh, 2006; Ake, 1978]

If the treatise of Walter Rodney on *How Europe Underdevelop Africa* were a guide to the protesting groups in the Niger Delta, then the Nigerian state should not be a *usurper* of the resource rights of its own people.[Rodney, 1972] Nor should the Nigerian state collude with the transnational capital to underdevelop its own people and region. For, the ultimate interest of foreign capital to extract the natural resources and leave the host communities as aptly captured by Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* [Fanon, 1963], as evident in the communities in the extinct old Oloibiri field in today's Bayelsa State, where the SPDC and the Nigerian State explored and produced oil for two and half decades and finally pulled out in 1980. The oil company even knocked down all its flow lines as if oil was never produced there, but for the 'Christmas trees', oil museum, and the heavily polluted environment and the Kolo River.[Omoweh, 1998] The protesting groups are committed to halt a repeat of the Oloibiri experience in the Delta region. At this juncture, there is the need to understand the origin, nature and dynamics of the resource struggles in the Delta region.

3. The Origin and Nature of the Crisis

As noted, the crisis in the Niger Delta is the crisis of the Nigerian state, its policy towards natural resources and mode of surplus extraction from the mining sector. The crisis is political in nature. What is the origin and nature of the crisis? In answering this question, there is the need first, to understand the path the state took to development inclusive of its type of capitalist development in the mining sector and; how the contradictions it engendered have, in turn, precipitated the agitations for resource rights. Let me elaborate on this.

Development does not occur in a vacuum. The Nigerian state, which practically refers to the political leadership, happens to lead the development. The irony of the situation is

such that, the tiny fraction of the hegemonic political class, which controls the state political power, is naturally interested in the reproduction of itself as a class and the reproduction of its hegemony before thinking of the people and their wellbeing. In part, because the political class has to survive before it can pursue development, if need be. And its survival strategy resides with manipulating the ignorance of the people to its parochial gains and; to adopt defensive radical posture by pretending to be interested in the wellbeing of the people whereas its ultimate aim is to take side with capital to exploit them. In reality, what this means is that, the state may formulate development policies, plans and programmes and devise strategies for implementing such development, but development is not really on its agenda.

Further, there is the need to dissociate the state from the government in order to gain a deeper insight into the origin and nature of the crisis that attends its mode of surplus extraction. To regard the state as a public social force which is objective in the sense that it is public and uses its monopoly of coercion to police and guide the society impartially can be quite misleading. Rather, the state is a specific modality of class domination. It is an institutional mechanism of class domination with a measure of autonomy, which, in turn, institutionalizes the equal treatment of unequals that underlies capitalist relations.[Ake, 1996; Omoweh, 2005]

Viewed in this context, the state is not only a mode of institutional domination, but also, a living contradiction of interests, institutional powers and forces. Within the state structure, for instance, the dominant or hegemonic institutional powers and social forces struggle to dominate the subordinate social forces that, in turn, resist their subordination and disabilities and struggle to regain entry to the *ancien regime*. It is in this context that development policies and strategies are formulated and, they are undertaken under pressure from the necessities of this struggle so much that development is hardly on the agenda, but using political power to accumulate.

Worse still, with a weak productive base, limited autonomy and ineptitude, the state and the institutions that make it a reality cannot really embark on any successful capitalist development, but at best, resort to rent seeking and patronage. In fact, the ineptitude of the domestic bourgeoisie brings into clearer focus, how its penchant for rent seeking results in the awful underdevelopment of its own people. Little wonder, the Nigerian state has consciously chosen to be a willing tool in the hands of the forces of imperialism, particularly after the rise of transnational capitalism of which it [state] is inevitably an intricate part since the 1960s.

The implications of all this for development are that, the unresolved contradictions within the dominant class and the intensity of the struggles for power and for resources to survive have shifted the concern of the state managers, indeed, the political leadership, away from economic development to politics. The preoccupation of the political elites becomes politics of survival. In such a circumstance, politics cannot be a game, but has taken the form of warfare or zero-sum in which the winner takes all while the loser even loses its inalienable human rights. Political power becomes coterminous with wealth, which once acquired; the holder defends it by all means and at all cost. Herein lies, in part, the crisis that inheres in the path the state took development.

In no area has the crisis been brought into clearer relief than with the state mode of extraction of surplus from the mining sector and its attendant contradictions. Essentially, the state uses its political power to amass wealth, because of its weak productive base. It is not that the state managers do not realize such a limitation, they do. But it profits those entrusted with management of the state to use their political positions to accumulate instead of investing in entrepreneurship and development. This accounts for why the state has merely continued with its predecessor's exploitative policies, politics and institutions under colonial capitalism. Not surprisingly, the state first, established its political control over the country inclusive of its natural resources at independence; then, it formulated and still enacts legislations that permit its model of capitalism in the natural resource sector and; finally, it created specific public institutions to mediate its surplus extraction. Let me elaborate on this, beginning with the exploitative import of state legislations on natural resources.

Like its predecessor, the Nigerian state has, on account of its materialist interest, denied the people their proprietary rights to natural resources and in the process transformed them into *tenants of the state* or *squatters* in their own ancestral homelands. Contrary to the expectations of the majority of Nigerians at independence, the state policy towards natural resources had, rather than give them hope of getting back their lands and other resources, further alienated them from the state and the natural resources. For instance, the British Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1890, which empowered the colonist to exercise control and administration of its colony [Nigeria] among others, and its natural resources inclusive of the right to control and dispose waste and unoccupied land in the territory, was graciously inherited by the Nigerian state. Under the Act, proprietary rights only derived from the colonial state and, it was aimed at the non-recognition of the proprietary character of the 'indigenous' people and communities of the colony, which in this context, refers to the rural people, rural communities and their resources inclusive of those in the Niger Delta region.

Worse still, the imposition of the English law on the colony, which ought to have been revoked or modified to suit the interests of the people at independence, is continued with by the post-colonial political leadership. For instance, studies on land in Africa, notably those by Denman, Ollenu, Omotola and Moyo have demonstrated that, land was no man's creation, but a gift from God; however, they noted that the ownership of land was rooted on the basis of first occupier and its use over a long period, spanning not less than twenty years without any counter claims.[Denman, 1978; Ollenu, 1958; Omotola, 1988; Moyo, 1995; Riddell, 1987; Toulmin et al, 2002 and]

Other natural resources like the wetlands, creeks and rivers were communally-owned. These considerations partly explained why the structure of land ownership remained at the individual, family and communal levels, though traditional rulers or council of elders of communities had, in most cases, held land in trust for the communities and their members. Such structure of land and natural resource governance was considered timid by the colonial state, explaining the imposition of the English law inclusive of its Land Laws that denied the customary rights of the people and community to natural resources.

First, it was the Mineral Act of 1908; then, revised in 1912 and subsequently, changed into the ominous Mineral Act of 1914 that vested sole ownership of land and its contents inclusive of all natural resources on the surface and underneath it, on the colonial state, which held it in trust for the Crown.

That is not all. The Nigerian state continued with the Mineral Act of 1914 that vested ultimate power over the ownership and control of land, minerals and other natural resources on itself after October 1960. Thus, in 1963, the Mineral Act of 1914 was formally renamed the Mineral Act of 1963, which was refurbished as the all-embracing Petroleum Decree/Act of 1969. It was part of the Act dealing with land that was redefined as the Land Use Decree/Act of 1978 and currently, the Land Acts of 2004 while the thrust of the Petroleum Act was sustained and bred subsequent legislations in the oil and gas industry. These legislations were renamed in 2004 without any major changes.

Even though the legislations on land and natural resources vested ultimate power over land and its contents on the state, individuals, families and communities resisted the usurper of their resource rights – the state. It was such resistance that led, in part, to the enactment of the Land Use Decree of 1978, as recently refurbished as the Land Acts of 2004, which gave the state further power to acquire land for public interest, despite the fact that, in reality, it was yet another plot by a cabal in the state, especially the top brass in the military to acquire land purportedly for agricultural development as the military prepared to hand over the reign of government to an elected civilian political leadership in 1979.

Obsessed with its unbridled quest for acquiring land and exploiting its contents, the custodians of the Nigerian state failed to recognize that land and its resources such as forestry, wetlands and wildlife constitute a common resource, which are not characterized territorially or an *ad hoc* aggregation of people or group as an entity, but by crucial ontological factors, notably its availability across generations past, present and future and that, they help to create and re-create the social production and reproduction of the people. Also, the state willfully ignored the age-long traditional mechanism created for democratizing the governance of natural resources. Structurally, the commons are governed by social hierarchy, which starts with the family as the first level of decision-making; second, is the clan and lineage and; third, the community. Each level of decision-making is designed to respond to issues regarding rights, allocation, use, management and overall governance of these resources on the basis of need, scale, function and sustainability. The decisions taken at each level are, in most cases, taken with due reference to common values, protection of the people, family and community as a whole and their proper governance, which transcends generations.

Having created the legal regime to facilitate its surplus extraction, the stage was now set for the state to extract surplus, a model that, on average, resulted in the underdevelopment of its own people, their communities and country generally. An analysis of the kind of capitalist development the state still promotes in the natural resource sector is ideal at this point, paying attention to mining, because it presents a deeper and holistic understanding of how the forces of state and transnational capitalism

dominate, exploit, pillage and usurp the resource rights of the people of the Niger Delta, nay Nigeria.

As noted, with the provisions of the Mineral Act of 1908, as amended in 1912 and 1914 and; further amended in 1963 and renamed as the Petroleum Decree of 1967 and 1969 and now re-enacted as the Mineral Mining Act of 2004; and part of which later became the Land Use Act of 1978 and now the Land Acts of 2004, all Nigerians have been turned into squatters in their own ancestral homelands. In its attempt to implement these legislations, the state created specific public institutions. Even though these legislations provided for a *usufruct* rights for the people; that is, rights to only use the land, such rights is automatically revoked when oil or any mineral is explored and produced in the said land. As far as the state is concerned, the individual, families and communities that own the land where seismic operations are carried out do not require any prior knowledge from the mining companies once the state has allocated the mining acreages to mining capitals-local or foreign. In most cases, such mining blocks are the places of abode of the people, their farmlands, communal fish farms and wetlands, sacred bushes with cultural and sociological significance among others. Worse still, to the state and foreign oil/mining capitals, the acreages are purely regarded as a minefield, where the ultimate interest is to extract the mineral, irrespective of the consequences for the security of the environment and the people.

In effect, it is a misnomer to talk of environmental degradation in the oil-producing communities. For, the entire oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta have been turned into a minefield, as evident in the continuous of flaring of gas for 24 hours in the past 50 years. Yet, the inhabitants of the oil-producing areas are deemed to have no legal basis to protest the relatively reckless manner with which the state, SPDC and other operating oil companies are ‘shelling’ their environment and lives. This has fired the aggression of the people against the state and oil companies. I shall return to this later.

To enforce its legislations on natural resources, the state did not only create special organs like the defense ministry to annihilate all forms of opposition, as evident in the deployment of the military and the police to forcefully create the environment for oil and gas exploration and production to continue in the Niger Delta. The state created the Forest Guards to guard against the logging of timber and use of the forests by the inhabitants of the rural communities for their livelihoods. Also, the state established other public institutions that mediated its surplus extraction in the mineral sector. Notable among such state-owned ministries and agencies are the Ministry of Land and Survey that helped the state to exercise its control of all lands in the country; the National Geological Survey [NGS], Kaduna that provided critical data on solid mineral inclusive of oil initially, to facilitate the state’s allocation of mining blocks; the Nigerian Mining Corporation [NMC], Jos and, the Nigerian Coal Corporation [NCC], Enugu to help the state to intervene in the exploitation and production of solid minerals, while it relied largely on foreign mining companies for mineral production and export. Others are the Nigerian National Oil Corporation [NNOC] the forerunner of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation [NNPC], Lagos when Nigeria joined the Organization of Oil Producing and Exporting Countries [OPEC] in 1971 to further state capitalism in the oil

and gas sector, while the Petroleum Inspectorate Unit [PIU] later renamed the Department of Petroleum Resources [DPR], Lagos is to facilitate the state's allocation of oil mining acreages and the issuance of oil prospecting and mining licenses.

However, these state-owned agencies and institutions are a bundle of contradictions due, in part, to the desire of the hegemonic class within the state to privatize these agencies to foster its parochial gains. The resistance from the subordinate class to have a decisive say and share in the allocation of the natural resources further reinforced the weakness of the institutions to mediate state capitalism. In essence, the lack of development in the economy is not really a failure, but it mirrors the nature of the struggles going on between and among the various institutions that make the state a reality. For instance, the NMC could not stop the illegal poaching of its acreages across the country by private mining companies, which are proxy companies of the key custodians of the state.

Ostensibly, the PIU later renamed the DPR, was created to act as the state policeman in the oil and gas industry, but the materialist interest of the state resulted in its weakness to undertake such task, as evident in the reliance of the agency on the foreign oil companies, the culprits, to determine the extent of oil spillage after reported cases of such incidents. Not only that, the same state that created the DPR has, on account of its limited interests and those of its cronies and of foreign capitals, reduced the agency to a mere collection units of all applications for mining leases and licenses, as the ultimate power to approve the allocation of leases and licenses resides with the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who, in most cases, doubled as the Minister of Petroleum Resources.

In no other area has the contradiction of state capitalism in the mining sector been brought into greater focus than the cronyism that has rocked the entire oil and gas sector. In Nigeria, the ineptitude of the domestic bourgeoisie accounts for its entry into politics, as it remains the major and most lucrative business in town, in part, because it only requires the domestic bourgeoisie to have links with those in control of the instruments of state to secure allocation papers to lift crude oil or import the refined petroleum products, or to obtain mining blocks and the oil prospecting and mining licenses, or to act as a front for the domestic and foreign capitals and for which it was paid huge commission.

Patronage still remains the rule rather than the exception in the mining sector since 1960. According to the *African Confidential* Volume 39 of 1996, virtually all the nation's past and present heads of state and president have been indicted as major players either directly or by proxy in the country's energy sector. They have, both when in office and after retirement, continued to maintain strong links with the oil sector, deciding who gets which oil block and its renewal, licenses to lift crude oil and refined petroleum products, among others.

Under the late Abacha's regime, for instance, the majority of the allottees of oil blocks were his friends, ministers and fronts of foreign oil capital, especially those of Asian extraction represented by the Swiss-based Glencore that fronted for him. Others like the Cliffco Company believed to be owned by a traditional ruler from the eastern Nigeria; Disc Oil Company that belonged to the Daniel Kanu, who was rented by the junta to

organize the group called the Youth Earnestly Ask for Abacha [YEAA]; Continental Oil Company owned by Dan Etete, one-time oil minister was awarded OPL 56; Dajo Oil that belonged to former chief of Army Staff, Ishaya Bamiyi, got OPL 322; Oziko Energy Resources whose ownership was traced to Admiral Mike Ahkigbe, was allocated OPL 241 and; OPL 247 was allocated Heritage Oil and Gas believed to be owned by General Ibrahim Babanginda.

In June 1999, the Obasanjo-led government cancelled all allocations without advancing any serious reasons for such action, even though the majority of the previous allocations was cancelled and re-awarded by subsequent governments. The newly approved foreign oil companies to lift Nigeria's crude oil consisted of government agencies from South Korea, Kenya, Tokyo and Canada and international trading companies like Total International Oil, France; Trigural Denhaar, Amsterdam, Arcadia, London and Itochu, Japan and for the joint venture operation, Calson of Bermuda, Duke Oil Services and Napoli Limited. If anything, it was yet another false start that was meant to create a new regime that would foster its exploitative intentions.

Contrary to the declared objectives of the founding members of the OPEC, notably, to wrest control of oil exploration and production from the oil companies, using the instrumentality of the joint venture to domesticate oil technology among its members, Nigeria's experience has been lop-sided and woeful. It is not that the state managers do not understand the kind of predicament the country is faced with in the oil and gas sector; rather, it stems from the penchant of the state to consume wealth, but not ready to really generate new wealth. The foreign oil companies still operate the joint venture, with the state contributing its shares for oil exploration and production; shares that it rarely pay its cash calls, but calculate its equivalent in crude oil, while leaving the oil companies to bear the financial cost. In some cases, the state adopt the production sharing contract, in which case, the oil company is left to foot the bill for finding and winning oil, with the *proviso* of bearing the loss should it fail to strike oil, but given a reasonable period, say five years, to recover its cost should oil be found.

The joint venture agreement has become an *alibi* for the oil companies to pass the buck on the pillage of the oil-producing communities and the attendant natural resource struggles in the Delta to the Nigerian state on the ground that, they are merely the technical operator of the agreement. And that the oil companies are indeed, a junior partner in the agreement on account of the lower percentage of their contributions to find and win oil. One of the implications of the argument of the oil companies is that, the joint venture in which the state shoulders more than half of the cost, should be held responsible for the crisis in the Delta region. Invariably, this holds the state largely responsible for the underdevelopment of the oil-producing areas; it pushes the blame back to the oil companies that are actually the operators of the acreages.

In all appearances, therefore, state capitalism, as fostered by the joint venture agreement, is parasitic and has deepened the country's technological dependence on the foreign oil companies. That the Nigerian state, through the NNPC, has facilitated the training of oil engineers is not in doubt. Even the oil companies have embarked on manpower

development in the oil and gas sector, because that will facilitate its capitalist exploitation of the sector. But in all this, Nigeria lacks the equipment, in part, because of lack of industrialization, which is as critical in technology development as the required manpower. For instance, virtually all the component parts required for constructing an oil rig, either on-or off-shore, are sourced externally and herein lies, in part, the nature of the country's deepening technological dependence.

From the foregoing, it can be argued that, the path the state took to development and its policies towards natural resources and the mode of surplus extraction in the mining sector are a recipe for violent and bloody struggles. It is in order to examine the nature of the resource struggles in the Delta region.

4. The Nature of the Resource Struggles and the Reactions of the State

For over four decades, the struggles for the peoples' rights to, and control of, natural resources in the Niger Delta have been raging. The armed agitations actually began in 1966/67 with the late Isaac Adaka Boro and his fighting force mounting heavy blockade on the rivers and creeks in today's Bayelsa State to stop further exploitation of the resources of the region by the Nigerian state and foreign capital. Concerned with the need to reverse the relative backwardness of the region, the uprising mounted by Boro demanded among others, that the Delta region be carved out of the Nigerian federation. The subsequent creation of Bayelsa State out of the Rivers State, long after Boro was killed under suspicious circumstances during in the Nigerian civil war while fighting on the side of the Federal troops, has not reversed the worsening trend of the underdevelopment of the region. In fact, the rise of water scarcity in Bayelsa located in the heart of the third largest wetland in the world, coupled with the 80:20 ratio of salt water to fresh water in Bayelsa State that is 80 percent water and 20 percent land presents the tragic situation of the extent of the underdevelopment of one of the core oil-producing states in the Delta region. [Omoweh: 2008] Perhaps, this accounts for why the resource struggle in the Delta region is fiercest in Bayelsa State.

To an extent, resource struggle was the immediate trigger of the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, though the nature of the politics played in the first republic would have made the war inevitable. Following the creation of the state of Biafra by Odumegwu Ojukwu, which included the oil producing areas and, the subsequent killing of oil men, the Federal Military government interpreted such action as attempt by leader of the Biafra to corner the country's oil resources. Then Gowon's junta quickly responded by creating a 12-state structure in 1967, notably, Rivers State, all with the intension to placate the secessionist bid of Ojukwu. Yet, the natural resource struggles continue to deepen.

Even though the debacle exploded by then Boro ignited further resource agitations across the Niger Delta in the early 1970s, they were largely non-violent protests and barricading of access roads linking the various oil wells by the unarmed inhabitants of the oil-producing communities. Then the resource struggle was not well articulated and this could explain why the people of Bomu did not protest the historic oil spill caused by the rupture of Shell's major oil pipeline connected to the Bonny terminal in 1970, with no

form of post-spillage cleaning undertaken by the company and the state; nor was any effort made to restore the environment of the community to normalcy. In fact, by 1984, studies conducted on the creek and the rural livelihoods of the affected community of Ejama Ebubu showed significant pollution of the flora and fauna of the area. In 1979, one of the storage tanks of SPDC in the Forcados terminal had its underneath valves loosened with over half a million barrels of crude oil lost to the environment; yet both the state and the company did not undertake any study to evaluate the consequences of the spillage on the ecosystem of the Delta region.

In 1980, the blow-out of the off-shore rig in Finima operated by Texaco spilled for two weeks with an estimated 2 million barrels spilled and all lost to the environment; yet, the state exonerated the oil company, even when it was caused by equipment failure. Though the cutting of oil pipelines by illegal bunkers had started in the Niger Delta, resulting in promulgation of the Anti-Sabotage Decree of 1975, with a death penalty for anyone caught oil, it was not really conceived as part of the resources struggles.

However, one major implication of the reckless abandon with which the state and the oil companies operate across the Niger Delta with no prospect of finding and wining oil according to good oil field practices is that, it raised the consciousness of a critical mass in the region to check the excesses of the forces of state-transnational capitalism. In spite of the huge revenue that accrued to the Nigerian state from oil export and royalties, it became clearer that, the host oil-producing communities sank deeper into the abyss. The pulling out of Shell from the Oloibiri oil field when the wells became extinct constitutes a major concern for the future of the people. The politicization of Niger Delta River Basin Authority [NDRBA] by the political leadership, which resulted in the creation of 10 river basin authorities under the second republic and relative non-funding of the NDRBA further irked the people of the Niger Delta; though the entire river basin projects became a huge waste. By the 1980s, the global wave for the need for environmental security further fired the aggression of the few individuals against the Nigerian state and the oil companies.

From the 1980s, therefore, resource struggles took another dimension, with emphasis now placed on the people's control of resources found in the region not only belonging to the people, but be managed and governed by them; de-monopolize the state of its absolute power over natural resources, with some caveat on sharing such duties with the state. A few of the critical mass began to institutionalize the struggles by forming protesting groups and sensitizing the people and mobilizing for membership. Connected with the external environmental-based non-governmental organizations and governments, there was a rise in the activities of the protesting groups and their members aimed at challenging the Nigerian state to rethink its policies towards natural resources governance and its mode of surplus extraction. The insensitivity Nigerian state and the worsening trend of its irrelevance to the existential condition of the people in the oil-producing communities left the people and the agitating groups with no option than to scale up the struggles, by boycotting the state and secession from the Nigerian federation.

At the international level, the resource struggles in the Delta region were regarded in most quarters as state repression. With the continuous gas flaring across the Delta since 1956, the Nigerian state was understood not only as a pollutant, but promoting environmental insecurity globally. By its policies and actions on natural resources, the state came under heavy condemnation by some the host states of the major oil companies [USA, Holland, France] that their subsidiaries are wrecking havoc in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Some African oil producing countries like Libya noted for helping to uprooting state repression of people lent its support to some of the agitating groups. Before the donor agencies and the World Church Council, the environmental pollution in the Niger Delta further eroded the capacity of the Nigerian state to deliver development.

That is not all. Some of the Diaspora of Niger Delta extraction and governments with progressive leanings have been providing financial supports and training for the agitating groups. Asari Dokubo openly confessed of having been trained in armed agitations in Libya. The core members of the agitating groups are quite educated in various aspects of guerrilla or jungle warfare with mastery over the use of weapons and communications. There have been allegations that some of the groups illegally bunker oil to fund the purchase of arms and ammunitions. As the politicians create their own armed youth wings, they have been identified for the proliferation of light and medium-scale weapons in the region. Arms merchants are accused of fueling the armed resource struggle because it creates the market for their products.

By the 1990, resource rights struggles took a more concrete form, in which the issues became better articulated and the demands of the agitating groups well spelt out, all of which posed monumental policy challenge for the Nigerian state. The agitations were largely non-violence. Notable among the protesting groups was the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People [MOSOP], formed by then Ken Saro-Wiwa. The MOSOP launched the Ogoni Bill of Rights in 1990 and urged the Ogonis to boycott the Constitutional Conference organized by the Abacha junta. The MOSOP helped to inculcate the philosophy of resource rights of the people in the Ogonis and; the Ogonis were educated on the role of the fifth column elements in the community and therefore, understood as the primary enemies of the people. As the philosophy of the resource rights sank deep into the consciousness of the people, it became easier to discern those who are against it. Little wonder the youths who have been souled into the agitation took the laws into their hands and engaged the reactionary forces during which three elders of Ogoni were killed. The Abacha junta preferred murder charges against Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni environmental activists who were summarily hung on November 10, 1995 in Port Harcourt. The execution of the Ogoni nine was widely condemned both locally and internationally and that even fired the resource struggle across the Niger Delta.

The resource movement in Ogoniland had found accommodation in other ethnic nationalities and communities across the Niger Delta. In 1992, the Ogbias of Bayelsa State formed the Charter of Demands of the Ogbia People; the Kaiama Declaration was launched in 1998; the Resolution of the First Urhobo Economic Summit was declared in 1998; the Akalaka Declaration in 1998; the Warri Accord in 1999; the Ikwere Rescue

Charter in 1998; the First Niger Delta Indigenous Women Conference in 1999; the Oron Bill of Rights in 1999 and the Niger Delta Peoples' Compact in 2008.

The demands of these protesting groups and ethnic nationalities and communities ranged from the right of the people to control the resources found in their region for the development of the people, repeal of laws that usurp the rights of the people such as the Land Use Act of 1978, Oil Pipeline Act of 1990, Petroleum Act of 2004, Nigerian Mineral Mining Act of 2004, Lands [Title Vesting, etc] Act of 2004, halting gas flaring and other forms of environmental degradation, immediate withdrawal of the military from the oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta, abolition of the OMPADEC, immortalize the souls of the victims of the Jesse oil pipeline inferno anti-people laws, democratize the governance of natural resources, passage of the pending freedom of information bill and ensuring the holistic security of the people and their resources.

By 2002, the governors of the South-South states, notably, Obong Attah of Akwa-Ibom; Diepreye Alamieseigha of Bayelsa; James Ibori of Delta; Lucky Igbinedion of Edo; Peter Odili of Rivers and; Donald Duke of Cross Rivers intervened in the resource struggle and reiterated resource control of not only oil and gas, but other natural resources found in the region. Within the broad context of resource control, the governors wanted an accurate figures of national oil output and the proceeds accruing from its export, instead of a percentage of derivation based on a unknown statistics; that the people of Niger Delta must take possession of their resources and, then would invite the federal government into partnership in the exploitation of these resources and determination of appropriate formula for sharing the proceeds; that all marginal oil wells currently not developed by the foreign oil companies return to the Niger Delta people and the state governments, in conjunction with the federal government, re-allocated them to indigenous oil companies.

The collective actions of the governors bred some form of an emerging social movement in the natural resource sector. Then governor of Akwa-Ibom State chaired the fledging movement, with massive support from his counterparts from Bayelsa, Delta and Edo, while those of Cross River and Rivers States were non-committed. The argument of then governor of Cross River State was that the state had marginal oil fields and largely agrarian, forgetting that, landlessness and scarcity confronting the people are at the roots of most agrarian revolutions across the world. The governor of Rivers State had a presidential ambition, which the resource control movement could destroy. To the central government, the remaining four states were conceived as enemies of the federal government and were accused of part-funding and arming the protesting groups that are believed to be fueling the insecurity in the Delta regions. In its response, the federal government deployed all tricks under the sun to harass and nail the chief executives of these states.

However, as the efforts of the South-South governors at resource agitation turned out, the emerging resource control movement was no less than yet another plot for the politicians to secure the second term in office by mobilizing the political support of the people. Rather than deepening the struggle, the venues for the discourses on resource control were, in most cases, limited to government houses or an affair of the state chief

executives. No secretariat was created and when the second term of the governors expired, there was no structure to sustain the struggle after May 2007.

Generally, the responses of the state to these demands resulted in the establishment of various committees with recommendations that were never implemented. In all the recommendations of the numerous committees set up by the state, none advised for the resource rights of the people, because it will amount to committing a class suicide by the political leadership. For instance, the Section 140 [1] of the 1963 Constitution, 50% of the royalty or mining rent should be paid by the Federal government to the region where such mineral resource was produced, but that was never implemented. In fact, by 1967 as the civil war raged, the clause was expunged from the Constitution by the unitary government led by the junta headed by Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon.

The Belgore Report of 1992 was focused on the need to provide infrastructure in the Delta region, with emphasis on the long awaited East-West road. Again such a recommendation would contradict the state's conception of the oil-producing areas as a minefield. The Etiebet Report revisited the already known causes of grievances in the Niger Delta. The Vision 2020 Report of 1996 envisioned where the state wanted Nigeria to be, but never redressed the obstacles inclusive of halting the degradation of the environment in the Niger Delta. The Popoola Report of 1998 also noted the worsening trend of the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta, citing administrative failures as the major cause. The Ogomudia Report of 2001 noted the increasing insecurity of the Delta region, especially vandalization of oil pipelines, disruption of oil production and taking oil workers hostage and was concerned with the need to provide security in this context. It would have been surprising if the Ogomudia report had departed from this narrow conception of security, as the insecurity in the Niger Delta is state-created and perpetuated, rooted as it is, in the path it [state] took to resource exploitation and governance.[Buzan,1983]

The rise of two major protesting groups, namely, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force [NDPVF] and, the MEND, introduced full scale armed struggles into the resource agitations in the Niger Delta. They declared to fight against all injustices meted against the Ijaws and the people of the Niger Delta. Led by Asari Dokubo, who is inspired by the Isaac Adaka Boro movement, the NDPVF condemned the Nigerian state and the foreign oil companies for the pillage of the people and the region and; he vowed to reverse the injustice by actualizing the resource rights of the people. In spite of having led the NDPVF to a Peace Accord in 2004, after which the Obasanjo-led government accorded the members of the group amnesty, Dokubo continued to publicly condemn the insensitivity of the state to the sad plight of the oil-producing areas. He regularly called for a sovereign national conference to discuss the unresolved issues, notably resource rights and the need to revisit the basis of the current Nigerian federation. His utterances were interpreted as capable of breaching national security by the state. In September 2005, he was arrested and detained for years before he was released by the Yar Adua government.

While Asari Dokubo was in incarceration, the MEND was created in 2005 under the leadership of Tom Polo, to continue the bloody resource struggle started by the NDPVF and; to pressurize the government for the release of Dokubo and detained Governor of Bayelsa State, Diepreye Alamieseigha, who supported the resource agitations. The declared mission of the MEND was to wage armed rebellion in order to regain the 'birthrights of our stolen heritage'. There are affiliates of the MEND, notably, the NDPVF, the Martyrs Brigade, the Outlaws, the Bush Boys, the Greenlanders and Dey Bam among others, which operate under the broad umbrella of the Joint Revolutionary Council [JRC].

In January 2006, the MEND launched its maiden attack with the kidnapping of four expatriate staff of Shell from a flow station in Bayelsa State, which introduced a new dimension into the resource struggles in the Niger Delta. Across the core oil-producing states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States, the MEND wrecked havoc on the oil installations and the rapid spate of taking oil workers hostage caused the oil companies to evacuate their workers from oil locations. The majority of the oil companies shut operations in the region. In fact, the drastic decline in national oil output in 2006 from about a million barrels per day to less than half a million barrels had dire consequences for the economy and the country's prime position as the leading oil producer in Africa and the seventh largest world producer of oil. The vandalization of oil installations continued into 2007 and 2008 with no sign of respite in sight. The Nigeria military's Joint Task Force [JTF] could not contain the surprise attacks hauled on the oil platforms by the MEND and its affiliates across the Delta region.

Realizing that continuing the military option was not expedient politically, the Yar Adua's government decided to grant amnesty to all members of the MEND and other protesting groups. This was done in the hope that, it would secure temporary cessation of armed resource struggles in order for oil to be produced. Also, the state believed that, the amnesty could facilitate the exchange of guns for the security and development of the Niger Delta, without first, rethinking its policy towards natural resources that the people have been opposed to.

Equally, it will be naïve on the part of the government, oil companies and some members of the critical public to expect that, the leaders of the state-styled 'repentant militants' would actually empty their armouries, because they are still suspicious of the government's policy towards resolving the violence in the region in which the military suffered huge losses in both men and ammunitions and would want to rid the region of all forms armed agitations. That the JTF reportedly shot at Tompolo and some of his men in a boat conveying them to the creeks after complying with the lifeline of the amnesty was an indication of the hidden agenda of the state security, though the incident was refuted by the appropriate military quarters. In fact, the post-amnesty period is still being perceived by the members of the protesting groups as an opportunity for the military to gather more intelligence on them. Tompolo and his fighting force are back to the creeks. The ill-health of the President, Umaru Yar Adua, is believed in some quarters, to have caused the failure of the post-amnesty programme, but that is mistaken. Even the approval and reported release of N9billion for the hurriedly packaged amnesty

programme anchored on the rehabilitation of the youths and their re-integration with new skills into the economies of the Niger Delta will not bring about the development of the Delta region that is borne out of the experience of the people.

5. Concluding Remarks: What Should Be Done?

What to do in order to bring the development of the Niger Delta is enshrined in my analysis that, they need no repetition. However, I will identify some key strategies and elaborate on them.

First, the Nigerian state has to be reconstructed across its institutions with emphasis on its democratic and developmental capacity. The *democratic developmental Nigerian state* calls for the re-creation of the political leadership through the resource struggles that enjoys reasonable measure of autonomy from the society, but embeds with groups, classes and institutions that will facilitate the delivery of its set development objectives. The defining characteristics of such a state include, but not limited to accountability, responsiveness and transparency and; the capacity to govern the society democratically; to promote people-centered development and; to deliver public goods effectively and actualize the resource rights of the people.

Second, is the urgent need to democratize the governance of natural resources, with emphasis on the complete repeal of the Land Acts of 2004, Mineral Mining Act of 2004, the Petroleum Act of 2004 and the Oil Pipeline Act of 1990 and new bases created on the grounds of genuine resource agitations to formulate legislations on natural resources that are pro-people. Inevitably, democratizing the governance of natural resources entails resource agitations, which empowers the people to exercise their natural rights to resources and development. It does not necessarily disempower the state as misconstrued by the majority of the political elites; rather it democratically empowers both the state and the people to participate meaningfully in the choice of the kind of development appropriate for the Delta region and Nigeria generally. It promotes the democratization of the polity as the people now have a stake in the sought political and economic development.

In fact, the hostilities in the Niger Delta would have scaled down if the democratization of the governance of land is part of the government's Land Reform Agenda, but it is not. For, the majority of Nigerians, especially the rural dwellers who subsist on land and bear the brunt of the state absolute monopoly of land and its content are worried about losing more of their farmlands should more oil wells be sunk, or to face the extinction of the continental shelf should more oil wells be discovered in the deep waters.

Third, there is the need for a Community Investment Code in Oil and Gas. As its primary aim, the proposed investment code will have to undertake periodic environmental audit by appointed and appropriate stakeholders from the oil-producing communities, representatives of the agitating groups, the state and foreign oil companies in the hope of ascertaining the current status of the security of the environment of the Niger Delta region. The outcome of this will constitute the basis for continuous updates on the status

of the eco-system of the Delta region. As part the strategy for implementation, the appropriate elected committees from the oil-producing areas, together with the state, must insist and scrutinize the documents on the histories of the operations of any foreign oil companies in other parts of the world that already in operation in Nigeria or new ones seeking to find and produce oil in the Delta region. That will become a major condition for the approval of prospecting and mining licenses by the Code, instead of condoning the monopoly of the state to take such decisions.

Fourth, there is the urgent need to create a Common Oil Intelligence Agency to be manned by elected representatives of the people in the Delta region, elected members from the agitating groups, the representatives of the state and oil companies where the state will periodically publish and defend the national oil output and its earnings from export and royalties and as well; the oil companies will make public what they produce and their share of the total oil output. For, the NNPC does not know the real figures of oil production and the accruals. The Nigerian Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative [NEITI] is willfully sidetracked by the state and its relevant agencies in the oil and gas sector.

Fifth, there is the need create an alternative framework for engaging the youths in the Niger Delta, not least because, the majority of them do not really understand the root cause and nature of the resource agitations in which they are engaged. A critical aspect of such engagement should be the conceptualization of an appropriate framework for redressing the resource rights, which should be national in scope, but not limited to the Delta region, because it is a national crisis. For, resource rights cannot be dealt with from a narrow perception of the government, nor should it be compartmentalized along state boundaries, as if the crisis is for Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States. Nor is it about the government handpicking some ‘repentant leaders’ and asking them what they need, or compromising them, because such an approach will not offer the youths any enduring opportunities.

Further, the rising unemployment of the youths is a national crisis, but not limited to the Niger Delta. The government’s plan to pay the repentant militants monthly stipend is obviously not the way to redress the unemployment situation in the region. Employment opportunities that are promised the youths cannot continue to be created on paper. Rather, it requires the joint efforts of the federal, state and council levels and the private sector to diversify the country’s economy create wealth and provide employments for the youths among others. For, of what use is skill acquisition for the youths in the Delta region like their counterparts in other regions of the country that have been repeatedly proposed jobs by previous governments without implementation?

Sixth, there is the need to adopt community-based budgeting for dealing with the huge infrastructural underdevelopment of the Delta region. In doing so, it is crucial to redefine the status of the oil-producing from being a minefield to actual communities in the regions with rights to development. The problem, however, is not much with the provision of infrastructural development, as its governance. For instance, the majority of the political elites and contractors who wrecked the OMPADEC were not from the Niger

Delta, but from the Western, South Eastern and Northern regions of Nigeria. This is because the Commission became an instrument in the hands of few and powerful state managers to further the state largesse rent seeking and mediate its surplus extraction. At the moment, the newly created Ministry of Niger Delta and the NDDC, as state bureaucracies, could not really depart from the path of then failed OMPADEC.

On account of the current structure of the Nigerian state, its policy, politics mode of extracting from the natural resource sector, the tiny hegemonic class controlling the instruments of the state and benefitting tremendously from the existing governance of resources will continue to resist the actualization of the resource rights of the people. But if the Yar' Adua's administration like its predecessor, could revisit and declare amnesty for the agitating groups; then, there is hope that, the struggle will yield some positive results. In fact, that some communities in Benue State could contemplate on resources rights, following the blocking of the Benue trough is an indication that, the struggle is spreading nationally.

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