REFLECTIONS ON RESOURCE-BASED CONFLICT AND PEACE ARCHITECTURE IN NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA REGION

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Abstract

This article analyses the trajectory of the peace process implemented to mitigate the resource-based violent conflict in the Niger Delta region. Based on secondary sources, this article examines the peaceful responses of the Nigerian state to the violent oil contestation in the Niger Delta oil-rich region and what such efforts portend for the stability and development of the region. This paper concludes that the current peace process is fragile and may inundate the whole peace architecture except efforts are tilted towards understanding the structural and precipitating causes of such conflict and the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) are sustained for the benefit of the oil-rich areas. However, the political will of the government towards achieving concrete peace architecture is fuzzy.

Keywords Resource-based conflict, crude oil, Militancy, Peace architecture, Niger Delta Region

Introduction

Natural resources are germane to the development of economies and the survival of citizens. Nevertheless, the exploitation and competition over natural resources have been associated with conflict over access to benefits that accrue from their production and sale. The United Nations rightly points out in its report that at least 40 per cent of civil wars over the last 60 years have been connected to natural resources and such conflict, most times leading to relapse within five years (UN, 2018). Natural resources have been key drivers of conflicts in Angola, the

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Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan to mention but a few. While natural resources do not cause conflict, issues surrounding them such as the exploitation of the resources in inhabited areas, the related environmental stresses, deep ethnic rivalry and contestation over access and management of resources lead to conflicts that are mostly violent (Oluwaniyi, 2022). These conflicts are specifically articulated either in the paradox of plenty or resources as a curse approach. (Oluwaniyi, 2021).

Nigeria is not an exception in the natural resource-based conflict trajectory. While the Nigerian state basks in the euphoria of being a hegemonic power in Africa as a result of its economic base, the Niger Delta region suffers environmental and economic crises due to the activities of transnational oil corporations. Years of oil exploitation and exploration have resulted in the degradation of the environment, the deprivation of livelihoods earned through farming and fishing, neglect, impoverishment, injustice, and ultimately, general environmental insecurity (Oluwaniyi, 2010). The struggles lie in the question of who should exercise control over the oil explored and exploited from the oil-rich delta. The oil-rich region has become an avenue of political alienation, and environmental neglect while they bear the environmental cost of resource injustice brought about by oil extraction and pollution, and exacerbated by the unholy alliance between the Nigerian rentier state and transnational corporations (Amadi, 2022). To further pave the way for the extraction to gain more profits, the state embarked on several peaceful agenda, which are perceived as political, amidst the militarization of the oil-rich communities. The central focus of this article, therefore, is to interrogate the various peaceful interventions of the Nigerian state in mitigating the struggles in the region, the impact of such interventions on the peace architecture, especially with the introduction and implementation of the amnesty programme, which culminated in the Disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation/reintegration that is still ongoing.

The Political Economy Theory and Nigeria's Niger Delta Region Resource-Based Conflict

The natural resource conflict over access to the profits accruing from crude oil can best be theoretically examined within the political economy approach by focusing on the economic substructure as the analytical base on which the political superstructure is erected. This perspective derives from the Marxist theory which places the economic problem at the centre of political life (Owugah, 1999). Going by the radical strand, political economy conceives broadly, how economic factors impact political outcomes or how economic conditions impact political institutions (Lane and Ersson, 1997). Claude Ake's work, 'A Political Economy of Africa', provides an understanding of both the nature of the state and the travail of the post-colonial state. He argues that the nature of the economy, the structure of the economy, the availability or unavailability of resources, the size and nature of the elites competing for it, and the level of development or its absence, have implications for the nature of a given country's politics. In this case, understanding the economy of petrodollars in the Niger Delta region helps in explaining the politics of the conflict between the residents and oil companies on one hand, and communities and the state on the other hand, the intra or inter-ethnic group conflict, and the kinds of peace process enacted to mitigate communities' frustration.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with more than 211 million people and it is blessed with abundant resources such as agroecological diversity, tin, uranium, gold, natural gas, and crude oil (World Population Review, 2023). Before the discovery of crude oil, Nigeria was an agrarian state, surviving from the exportation of its cash crops. In addition, revenue allocation was done on an equity and derivation basis. At this point, this paper emphasises that Nigeria's weak economy was directed towards providing raw material exports for the world markets and acting as a ready market for semi and fully-manufactured commodities from the West. Moreover, during this period, vicious prebendal politics reigned over the allocation and distribution of political offices, the award of contracts, positions in corporations and states, and the distribution of social and economic

benefits. This form of clientelistic system converted the Nigerian state into a market (Watts, 1987).

The struggle for resource control in the region is not a recent phenomenon. Some writings trace the roots of the struggle in the NDR to the 16th Century transatlantic slave trade period (Obi, 2006: 12; Okonta and Douglas, 2001: 17). To other scholars, the British' interest in the palm oil trade and their preference direct access to the palm oil trade in the hinterland against the interest of the Niger Delta traders whose livelihood depended on the resource (CASS, 2005). The result was the introduction of gunboat diplomacy, a form of deception where rulers and influential people were made to sign dubious political treaties that culminated in their exile or defeat from their kingdoms and consequently, direct unlimited access to British traders in the form of Taubman Goldie's Royal Niger Company, to expropriate and extort the indigenes of their resources.

Recent studies reveal that the history of resource struggle could be divided into two phases, which include the 1950s to 1990s, and from 1990 till date (PEFs, 2004). Owugah (1999) in his study, traces the first phase of the history of resource control from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. This period was characterised by legal actions by oil-producing Niger Deltans against oil companies for adequate compensation over degradation, pollution and usage of land; the second phase from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s witnessed peaceful demonstrations and occupation of flow stations in demand for adequate compensation and provision of basic amenities. While the third and fourth phases represent the radical and violent periods in the region, starting from the mid-1990s up till now and characterised by the shutting down of flow stations, destruction of equipment, seizure of vessels and vehicles, kidnappings, killings and taking of ransoms.

Even though most scholars differ on the historical basis of the conflict in the oil-producing area, there is an acceptance and justification of the 1990s as the era of violence and extra-legal means to correcting the negligence and marginalisation of the 'chicken that lays the golden eggs' of socio-economic opportunities and active participation in

national/political processes, which are simultaneously undermined (Ukeje, 2002).

Resource-Based Conflict In The Oil-Producing Niger Delta Region

Since the discovery of crude oil in large quantities in Oloibiri, now Bayelsa State, Nigeria by Shell D'Archy (now Shell Process in Development Company (SPDC)), oil has been the mainstay of Nigeria's economy and the region has been critical to the politics and economic development of the Nigerian state (Oluwaniyi, 2018). In 1960, crude oil was very much insignificant in Nigeria going by the production of merely 20,000 barrels per day and Nigeria's access to other mineral and agricultural resources. However, oil which was discovered in 1958 became the basis of mono-economic growth.

The civil war of 1967 to 1970 reduced the production of crude oil, but this gap was filled immediately after the war as output rose rapidly from 1970, and by 1974 oil revenues constituted over 80 per cent of total federal revenues and 90 per cent of export earnings (Human Rights Watch, 1999). Between 1969 and 1971, its production rose sharply from 540,000 barrels per day to 1,530,000 barrels per day (Frynas, 2001). By 1973, production rose to 2.3 million barrels per day and government revenue increased from N200,000 to N3.7 billion. By this time, other transnational oil companies such as Mobil and Agip had joined the extraction of crude oil for their stake. Nigeria's profits increased by 50 per cent to an all-time high of N5.3 billion in 1976. In 1980, when oil export revenues peaked at $US 24.9 billion, external indebtedness had reached $US9 billion, but oil accounted for 27 per cent of GDP, about 80 per cent of government revenues and expenditures, and 96 per cent of total export receipts. Today, the petroleum sector comprises more than 40 per cent of the GDP, providing more than 95 per cent of foreign exchange earnings (Khan, 1994; Forrest, 1995). Moreover, the region's position on the Atlantic has assumed a critical maritime role in moving crude oil to other countries globally and vice versa (Onuoha, 2016). Nigeria is also an important supplier in the global liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) market with an estimated 124 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of natural

gas reserves and its gas reserve is estimated to be the 9th in the world (Simmons, 2004).

Within this context, it would be observed that the Niger Delta region is of immense strategic importance both to the Nigerian state as well as the international economy. Despite the oil revenues from the region, a significant proportion of the inhabitants live in rural areas where the ecology is unfavourable, and where daily subsistence economic activities such as farming and fishing must compete unfavourably with the intensive and extensive use of available land for gigantic oil installations (Ukeje, 2002). The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), further worsened the economic downturn of residents and fed into the existing economic suffocation of the oil-producing communities. These conditions brought about high cost of production and low output for the fishermen and farmers on one hand, and increased impoverishment for them on the other hand.

Beyond the economic downturn, the extent of extraction of crude oil has resulted in oil spillages and gas flaring. This has culminated in excessive negative consequences on natural resources. Oil spills have wrecked almost completely communities' means of economic livelihood. Between 1976 and 1999, about 3,000 oil spill incidents were reported by the oil companies operating in Nigeria, translating into over 2 million barrels of oil spilt into the country's terrestrial, coastal and offshore marine environment, poisoning the fauna in the rivers as well as people who feed on the fauna and drink water directly from the rivers (Agbu, 2005). Between 2015 and 2021, 4,919 spills were recorded (Premium Times, 2021). Moreover, gas flaring has remained a recurrent problem engendering devastating consequences on the flora and fauna and most importantly on the oil-rich residents. However, Shell Producing Development Corporation (SPDC) continues to deny that their oil exploration and production activities impose grave ecological disasters on the host communities. Moreover, they argue that since they pay their taxes to the government, it is the duty of the government, and not the oil companies to develop their communities (Oluwaniyi, 2010). Rather than defend the oil-rich communities, the state, owing to its rentier status, colludes with the TNOCs to deploy state security forces

to use the instrument of force on poor innocent protesters who protest injustice, environmental degradation, marginalisation, and massive neglect (Jike, 2004). The political economy of development shows the selfish interest of oil companies that capitalise on the romances with the government., and the State on the other hand, has turned itself into a rentier state, to satisfy its interest via the reaping of natural resource rents and expansion of the frontiers of corrupt enrichments and misappropriation of public resources to the chagrin of the residents who bear the burden of the extraction and exploitation of the resources (Omeje, 2006).

Government's Positive Response in Ameliorating Resource Struggles

To further consolidate its oil wealth, the Nigerian state initiated and executed militaristic options to combat residents' peaceful riots and protests. Some of the militant state options include the 1990 Umuechem massacre, the 1995 execution of the Ogoni activists, the 1998 Kaiama Killings, the 1999 Odi massacre, and the Odidioma crisis in 2005 against residents in the oil-rich region. The negative activities of the state military forces pushed communities to embrace militant means to express their displeasure and contest the excessive extraction and pollution of the region (Oluwaniyi, 2010). More radical social movements were formed to face the state and its MNOC's cronies headlong. Some of the movements include the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) formed by Alhaji Asari Dokubo, Egbesu Group (a more traditional militant group), and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) led by Ateke Tom to mention but a few.

According to Onuoha (2016), the tensions created by the militarisation of the region, grew into violence in 2006 when militants from various social movements, emerged with more volatile means such as bombing, kidnapping and generally making the region ungovernable. Despite its militaristic stance in quelling protests and some cases, violent reactions of militants, successive governments, both military and civilian, put in efforts to mitigate violence and engender peace. The trajectory of peace architecture implemented to mitigate the

crises as well as provide opportunities for continued extraction in the region includes:

I. Development of Institutional Framework: Creation of Development Agencies

The challenges faced by the Niger Delta region were recognised before the discovery of oil in particular and Nigeria's political independence in general. In other words, development agencies have their roots in the colonial state. The challenges in the region coupled with the minority question impelled the setting up of the Willinks Commission in 1958. The essence was to ascertain the fears of minorities in any part of Nigeria and to propose means of allaying those fears whether well or ill-founded and advise what safeguards should be included for the purpose in the constitution of Nigeria (Darah, 2001). According to the report of the Commission, the Niger Delta is '…. poor, backward and neglected, the whole of Nigeria is concerned (about the region), we suggest that there should be a federal Board appointed to consider the problems of the Niger Delta…' to this extent, a lot of recommendations were made, one of which was the formation of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB). it was established by Section 14 of the 1960 Constitution and was enforced in 1961.

The major goals of the Board were to initiate physical development schemes and agricultural development projects. Financially, the federal government was expected to contribute one-third of the capital cost and one-third of the recurrent cost. The operational area of the Board covered only parts of the Niger Delta such as the former Yenagoa and Degema Provinces, Ogoni Division of Port Harcourt Provinces and Western Ijaw Division of Delta Province (Ikproukpo, 1998: 16). The Board realised that development would not be possible except the major factors responsible for underdevelopment were known. However, after a series of brainstorming, it was realised that the transportation system could be improved through the extension of road spearheads into the Delta, the development of inland waterways and ports, and airports. But due to financial hazards, the goals could not be fulfilled and as a result, the focus was limited to

clearing the creeks, and the development of the inland waterways (Frynas, 2001: 36). In the long run, the NDDB was seen as little more than a public relations exercise and this limited the Board's effectiveness in implementing development projects in the Niger Delta.

In 1976, the military government of General Gowon made efforts to develop the Niger Delta with the establishment of the Niger Delta Basin and Rural Development Authority. The Decree 37 that enacted the Board enunciated: 1) the undertaking of schemes to develop the land water and forestry resources; 2) the improvement of the navigation of inland waterways and; 3) the control of flood and erosion. However, it failed to make any positive impact due to a lack of robust funding. Out of N214 billion meant for all River Basin Development Authorities, only N227.2 million went to the six River Basin Development Authorities in the Niger Delta (Village Square, 2007). But one would have thought the inauguration of a civilian administration would engender more sustainable development in the Delta. Unfortunately, the 1979-1983 civilian administration stands in the history of Nigeria as the most unconcerned, non-committal regime to the plight of the region. Little wonder, the period marked the beginning of corruption in Nigeria.

In 1992, the Federal Military Government of General Ibrahim Babangida promulgated the Oil and Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) Decree no. 23 to address years of neglect of the region. According to the Statute setting up the body, one of its objectives was 'to execute other works and perform such other functions, which in the opinion of the Commission are necessary for the development of the area.' (Ikporukpo, 2000). According to Section 2 (i) of the Decree, the Commission was expected to rehabilitate and develop all mineral areas, take ecological problems that have arisen from the exploration of oil minerals and advise federal and state government authorities on the control; to administer the new 3 per cent Oil Derivation Fund; and effective methods of tackling the problems of oil pollution and spillages as well as liaise with various oil companies on the issues Section 4a (2) of the Allocation of Revenue (Federation Account) Amendment Act No 106 of 1992 provides that 3 per cent of the

federation account derived from mineral revenue be paid into a fund to be administered by MOPADEC, an increase from 1.5 per cent.

Once set up, it could not make any noticeable impact until it was scrapped in 1998. it was caught in the web of the politics of oil at the local level, especially, leading to intra-elite, inter-communal, inter-ethnic, and personality conflicts (Obi, 1997). Though it received N23.2 billion, it failed to bring about expected changes. The dependence of OMPADEC on the oil companies and the state inhibited its ability to advise them, therefore, undermining its legitimacy and relevance. OMPADEC Chairman, Albert K. Horsefall was required to report directly to the Head of State and its commissioners were empowered to undertake projects as desired by them without necessarily consulting the local people. Nevertheless, OMPADEC embarked on white elephant projects that could not be accounted for, allowing staff of the Commission to misappropriate oil funds under the pretence of executing such projects. The prevalence of corrupt practices in the Commission and the underdevelopment of the oil-producing communities necessitated the federal government to launch an investigation into the running of OMPADEC in 1996.

The investigation culminated in the dismissal of the Chairman in December 1996 who was replaced by Prof Eric Opia, but inefficiency continued as the latter was unable to account for N6.7 billion received on behalf of OMPADEC (Okonta and Douglas, 2001). The problems OMPADEC entangled itself in, made President Obasanjo scrap the Commission in 2000 and replaced it with the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The Commission was established by the NDDC Act of 2000 and passed by the National Assembly. Its mandate was to 'conceive, plan and implement projects and programmes for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta Area,', which include projects and programmes for sustainable transportation, agriculture and fisheries, housing and urban development, water supply, electricity and telecommunication; prepare master plans and schemes designed to promote the physical development of the Niger Delta and estimates of the implementing cost; implement all the measures approved for the development of the Niger Delta are by the federal government;

efficiently manage the resources of the Niger Delta region; tackle ecological disasters and environmental problems, liaise with various oil companies and governments on all matters of pollution prevention and control among others.

The funding of the Commission is a collaboration of the federal government and oil. While the federal government gives the Commission 15 per cent of the 13 per cent oil revenue allocation, given to the nine states, oil companies are expected to contribute 3 per cent of their annual budget to the NDDC fund including gas processing companies, and 50 per cent of funds due to member states from the ecological fund is also allocated to the NDDC (ANEEJ, 2004), but this allocation was further reduced to 13 per cent and 3 per cent by the federal government and oil companies respectively. Unlike other bodies, NDDC has supervisory organs such as the management committee, governing council, advisory committee, and monitoring committee. NDDC projects. Though NDDC has its challenges, it stands out as the most comprehensive response to the development process in the region meant to work closely with the civil society and state governments in achieving its goals.[2]

The latest development in the development of the Niger Delta region done to reduce violence and protests by the Niger Delta youth and militants is the institutionalisation of the Ministry of the Niger Delta. The Ministry of Niger Affairs was created on 10 September 2008 to promote and coordinate policies for the development, peace and security of the Niger Delta region. The ministry is expected to serve as the vehicle for the execution of the Government's plans and programmes for rapid socio-economic development of the region. Though it is still existing, it has been involved in various fraudulent issues with the leadership. Efforts were characterised by corruption and bribery of government officials and resulted in the non-development of the region (Abe, 2022). The extent to which the current leadership can transform the ministry into a more positively functional one is still dicey.

[2] This statement is based on author's field work in some Niger Delta states

ii. Revenue Allocation to the Niger Delta Region

The debate on resource control revolves around the issue of citizenship and the question of revenue allocation. When the Richards Constitution came into effect in 1947, it created the forcefulness with which the latter became a struggle for power and resources. The Philipson Commission recommended in 1946, the principle of derivation for revenue allocation through which a region would benefit from the proportion of its contribution to the central revenue. However, during the constitutional conference held in Ibadan in 1950, the Northern delegates vehemently opposed the idea because of its poor revenue base. After independence and especially with the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities, revenue allocation became a contentious issue of struggle, and conflict as well as a determinant of the fiscal relations between the tiers of government.

The derivation principle was adopted after independence in 1963 (Forrest, 1995). The principle allowed each region to receive revenue from the central government in proportion to its contribution to the centrally collected revenue and this principle accounted for rapid development and healthy competition among the region till 1966 (Agbaje and Suberu, 1998; World Bank, 2003). The civil war of 1967 and subsequently, the 1969 Petroleum Decree changed the principle as state revenues were centralised in the federal government. As a result of the centralization, the 50 per cent derivation by former regions disappeared. With this enactment, the Niger Delta indigenes only have surface rights to the planting of some agricultural products on the land and compensation is based on the surface resources while the resources underneath the ground are not recognised nor compensated. At the same time, the promulgation made it possible for multinational oil investors to have unrestricted access to explore oil. Subsequent military administrations reduced derivation payments to 45 per cent in 1970, 20 per cent in 1975 and by 1979, the civilian government under President Shehu Shagari, the derivation principle was abolished.

Since 1980, the issue of the revenue allocation formula has come under increasing attacks because its logic seemed to have over-centralised the federal system of government, and weakened further the

control of state power by the dominant ethnic groups. In 1982, still under the Shagari administration, 1.5 per cent was allocated directly to oil-producing states, and 1 per cent was to be spent on compensation and rehabilitation. Also in 1982, revenue sharing for states in Nigeria was raised to 30.5 per cent. In the final part of the military administration in 1992, the share of revenues specifically allocated to oil-producing states was doubled to 3 per cent The centralisation of revenues in Nigeria is due to the politics of allocation, which is heavily dominated by the rentier nature of oil revenues what has been observed is that the capacity to allocate is divorced from control over production but inheres the location within or access to state power (Suberu, 2001). This further led to the increased struggles for access to federal power but abandoning the minority ethnic states that contribute the most significant part of the revenues through oil, while the majority ethnic groups intensified struggles over federal power to access oil revenues, the minority ethnic groups intensified struggles over marginalisation, neglect and frustration, and called for self-determination (Osaghae, 1995). With the enthronement of President Obasanjo as a civilian president in 1999, efforts were made to increase the revenue allocation to the region to bring about peace and justice. The derivation formula changed to 13 per cent, which is shared based on the volume of oil produced in each state. Mention the allocation base of the Niger Delta region from 1999 to 2021.

Nevertheless, despite the increase in the derivation formula from 3 per cent to 13 per cent, it has not guaranteed the development and alleviation of mass poverty. Rather, pollution, violence and squalor have become a common sight in the region. This trend shows that apart from the neglect on the part of oil companies and federal governments, the state governors as well as the local government administrators are to be blamed for underdevelopment in the region. This raises questions about the quality of leadership in Nigeria's democratic polity.

Iii. Creation of States

The creation of states and local governments was a calculated attempt by the federal government as a means of administrative empowerment

of the Niger Delta people, even though the exercise was a general one. In addition, the creation of a state brings to the fore, Isaac Boro's revolt of 1966 over the failure of the Nigerian state to grant the Niger Delta Delta a separate state. Under the 1966 military regime, the hitherto four regions were increased to 12 states in 1967. the states were created, basically, to separate the oil-producing areas from the Eastern part and more importantly, to create opportunities for development in the Niger Delta region. Under the dispensation of Murtala's military regime of Babangida and in 1996, Abacha's regime increased the number of states to 36, thereby, separating Delta from former Bendel (now Edo State) State, and Bayelsa State under the former Rivers State. Concerning local governments, the number of local governments increased from 301 in 1979 to 774 in 1999. But similarly, the strategy and other strategies failed to impact positively the lives of the oil-producing communities. Rather, the states functioned as administrative agencies for the federal government and an avenue to misappropriate citizens' taxpayers' funds.

Iv. Stakeholders Conference

Another way of palliating the oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta region has been through the initiation of stakeholder meetings and conferences. However, they have not been successful either because there was a stalemate or because such conferences have been postponed indefinitely. For example, at the inception of Yar'Adua's administration, he promised to hold a stakeholder summit meeting in 2007, known as All Niger Delta People's Congress with Jonathan Goodluck as government representative but it was later postponed to 2008. the meeting aimed to bring together all stakeholders in the Niger Delta; to dialogue over problems of the region, assess their implications for global peace and security; resolve such problems according to the tenets of democracy and federalism and develop strategic approaches for sustainable development in the region. In 1999, President Obasanjo also initiated a similar meeting with stakeholders in the Niger Delta but there was no positive outcome. In addition, Obasanjo convened the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) between March and August 2005 to address the national question in Nigeria. Unfortunately,

the NPRC could not reach a consensus on the Niger Delta question. The Niger Delta delegates pressed for 50 per cent derivation, subject to annual upward review after five years, but their counterparts from the North vehemently objected. Delegates from the Niger Delta staged a walk-out at the conference and in the end; the inability to reconcile differences stalemated the conference (Inuwa, 2010).

V. Amnesty and Local-based Conflict Peacebuilding

After several efforts, which failed to produce sustainable peace and development in the region, coupled with increasing militancy, President Yar'Adua introduced Amnesty as a Programme to stop the lingering crisis in the region. He granted amnesty to the militants through a 60-day window within which the militants were expected to renounce violence (Oluwaniyi, 2018). Before the announcement, the Yar'Adua administration established the Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC) on 8 September 2008. the committee is composed of forty-four members, mostly originating from the Niger Delta region with Ledum Mitee as the chairperson of the committee (Oluwaniyi, 2011). Their terms of reference were threefold, one of which was to give a summary of eleven recommendations necessary for government action.

Some of the recommendations were to establish a DDR commission to address the Niger Delta militants, strengthen independent regulation of oil pollution and an effective EIA process; ending gas flares by December 2008; and negotiate an amnesty for those Niger Delta militants willing to participate in the DDR programme (TCND, 2008). The disarmament and demobilisation were successfully carried out amidst crises and conflicts that almost marred the process (Oluwaniyi, 2018). While the post-amnesty programme has yielded considerable progress, it poses challenges that may worsen the crisis shortly. Studies on its implementation show that the programme is bedevilled with all forms of inconsistencies, corruption among agencies responsible for reintegrating ex-militants, greed among warlords, and deprivation of the foot soldiers (Oluwaniyi, 2011).

According to a panel set up in January 2010 to review the rehabilitation aspect of the DDR, about 80 per cent of the budget had gone on payments to consultants and contractors, leaving just 20 per cent for the rehabilitation of the ex-militants. This has resulted in the haphazard nature of the programme's implementation with the majority of the core militants still waiting to be invited for the reintegration programme, either vocational training or formal education. The weaknesses of the DDR have impacted negatively on the peace architecture in the region.

Implications of Peace Architecture for Development in the Region

From the foregoing, it can be observed that the peace efforts, including the institutional framework, monetary policies, stakeholders' conferences and even the creation of states, did little or nothing to improve the impoverished state of the Niger Delta region whereas the profits accruing to oil companies and the state increased rapidly. Though they embarked on peaceful street protests and demonstrations, media and publicity and litigation to express their frustration and failure of the state projects, the inability of these forms of protests to yield expected outcomes, precipitated by the seeming indifference of and violence exerted by the oil companies and the Nigerian state that characterised the decades of the 70s, 80s and 90s, informed a change of tactics.

Even when oil companies respond, such responses have been termed by Roberts as 'token pacifism' they were in the form of payment of compensation in a divide-and-rule form, initiation of community development projects meant to act as a veil, and provision of other basic amenities after several requests had been made by communities. Omotola (2007) argues that the politics of compensation and community development projects serve in most cases to ambush and neutralise their potential benefits. Though this statement was made in 2007, this crisis persists in contemporary times. The reasons given by him include: first, compensation given is far less than internationally accepted standards; most times, they attempt to avoid payment of compensation under the pretence of sabotage on oil spillages; they embark on Community Development Projects to facilitate globalist

capitalism or as a form of public relations. For example, they construct roads when it will facilitate the companies' extraction and transfers; lastly, at times, they only pay compensation after protracted court cases.

One would think that the amnesty era that embodies post-conflict peacebuilding measures such as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) would usher in the expected development and would correct the anomalies of the oil companies and the state, but implementation is far less than expected. Pollution is still a very common sight in the region and gas flares have not been eradicated. Generally, in the Delta region, environmental abuse is still a major cause of concern. According to Radcliffe (2019), an estimated 40 million litres of crude oil are spilt annually. Air, land and water have all been contaminated with devastating effects on residents' health and livelihoods. Farmlands are soaked in oil, contaminating crops and exposing people to high levels of heavy metals such as chromium, lead and mercury. This has resulted in financial poverty in the region and has pushed people, particularly young men to become involved in criminal activities to support themselves and their families and the women, especially young girls are involved in prostitution. These activities weaken security in the community where those youths reside as well as undermine legitimate activities that exist (SDN, 2020). Gas flares, on the other hand, have created acid rain, affecting thousands of residents in the region who depend on farming and fishing to survive. Children are also affected by different types of diseases. The disappointment resulting from the Nigerian government's failure to right its wrongs led to a resurgence of minor conflict and a return to illegal bunkering in the region (Amaize and Perez, 2016). According to Welch (1980), rebellions are most likely to occur at the intersections of geography, history and social realities. The more negative consequences of natural events are ascribed to the government than God, the greater their potential political effects. By interpretation, constrained by conditions of geographical marginality, oil communities in Nigeria's Niger Delta attract less government presence and attention than any other region, metamorphosing into ripe territories not only for contrasting political space and access to resources but for resisting

authoritarian forms of state rule and accumulation. In recent times, some state governors in the Niger Delta region such as Nyesom Wike, are executing infrastructure development with their monthly allocations, but communities still lack inclusivity in the development that directly affects them.

Way Out of Doldrums

This article critically analyses the oil conflict in the Niger Delta region, the role that the political economy theory has played in precipitating and triggering conflict over oil as well as driving the peace architecture in mitigating the conflict. The article concludes that the state, either through its institutional, fiscal, or political approach (through state creation and amnesty declaration), has failed to show political will and commitment to address the economic crises in the region. Rather it is driven by its interest in increasing its rent from its collaboration with Transnational Oil Corporations (TNOCs). This is not surprising as the current crises in the gold mining states have shown. For instance, Zamfara state and its environs have been the fulcrum of banditry in the Northern part of Nigeria, whereas Osun state is bewildered with killings over access to the mineral resources and the failure of the state in curtailing the crises. Natural resources should offer the Niger Delta the major opportunity in the amnesty period to help rebuild and revive households and transform economic activities.

Beyond palliatives that have not worked for the communities but have benefited the political class, much needs to be done in the region to make the peace architecture meaningful to the communities. The government needs to manage its environment equitably to ensure the provision of a sustainable pathway to a sense of lasting peace. Such solutions lie in the ability of the state to develop strong institutions that will transform the oil-rich region into a sustainable economy. Moreover, the Nigerian state should engender stricter laws that transnational oil companies must conform to a greener environmental approach in the extraction of crude oil in the region. Lastly, civil society needs to be encouraged to raise issues that intersect the state, transnational oil

companies and the local communities in developing a holistic peace architecture that is lasting.

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