



NIGERIA AND THE CRISIS OF RESOURCE CONTROL IN THE NIGER-DELTA REGION

Social Sciences Research

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ABSTRACT

This paper interrogated Nigerian Government Allocation of Resources to the Niger-Delta Region and the crisis associated with deprivation in the process. The paper examined how Resource Control (Revenue Allocation) of Nigeria to the Niger-Delta Region ignites a pandemic crisis from the Region despite the Nigerian Government's effort to stop them with its military apparatus; this was done using Relative Deprivation Theory. Data for the study were generated and analyzed using Documentary Instrument of data collection and Analytical Inductive Technique of data analysis respectively. In its findings, the paper revealed that, the people of the Niger-Delta Region feel deprived and maltreated as regards to Nigeria's Resource Control (Revenue Allocation), and that is the reason behind the seemingly unquenchable crisis in the Region despite the government effort to stop them using majorly its military apparatus. The paper therefore, recommends that, in Resource Allocation to the Niger-Delta Region, Nigeria should adhere to Derivative Principle of Revenue Allocation.

Key words: Niger-Delta Crisis, Resource Control, Revenue Allocation, Relative Deprivation Theory and Derivative Principle.

Introduction

The Niger-Delta is the South-South Region of Nigeria, it comprises six major states; Akwa Ibom, Cross-River, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo and Rivers. The Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria is seen to be among the list of the richest Deltas in the world. It ranks sixth largest exporter of crude oil because of its huge oil and gas reserves and second largest palm oil producer after Malaysia that even obtained firstly its palm seedlings from Nigeria (Ogbuke, 2017:11). The people of Niger-Delta like other Nigerians highly diverse

culturally. It is historical that differences in their political behaviour have been imposed by their peculiar riverine geography in which isolated settlement on the little available dry land, surrounded by mazes of an anatomized creeks, fostered small ancient city states and kingdoms such as; Urhobo, Itsekiri, Nembe, Opobo, Ogoni, Okrika, Bonny and Kalahari, which were contemporaries to their neighbouring old Calabar, Aro-chukwu trading empire, Benin Empire and Ibadan Empire of the late 19th century (Alechenu, 2005:8). More than 95% of the Nigeria's Resources are located in the Niger-Delta Region, despite this huge endowment of mineral resource in the region, the states within the region are poorly rated in terms of development, dominated by poverty, under-employment, exploitation, marginalization, pollution, unemployment environmental degradation, mass illiteracy and so on. Apparently, this harsh background induced a somewhat more republican political behaviour among the people of the Niger-Delta Region than among those other Nigerians.

In most recent time, no occurrences or phenomenon that vividly captured the imagination of democratic scholars, activists and observers of democracy in Nigeria concerning resource control and allocation in the Niger-Delta than the crisis in the Niger-Delta Region. The crisis of resource control in the region resulted to protests, agitations, violent demonstrations, that obviously led to destructions of lives and properties of government individual and groups. The Niger-Delta Region has been declared a crises area, because the efforts and actions of the federal government and that of the exploiters called Multi-National and Trans-National Companies in these areas never considered the well-being of the inhabitants.

Generally speaking, the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria has been characterized by ethnic and regional self-struggle since the year 1998. They are often characterized with violent confrontation between local ethnic communities and the Nigerian State and the foreign oil companies or extractors (which I referred to as exploiters) in the extraction and exploitation of oil in the region. Initially, it began as agitations but undoubtedly presently what began as community agitation has in no doubt underwent several transformations and changes, ranging from the flowering of civil society mobilization of popular civil struggle to the extension of the agitation against Multi-National Companies (MNCs) to include the Nigerian government to transforming and elevating the agitation from a purely developmental issues to overtly political demands such as restructure of the federal system, resource control and the resolution of national system through ethnic nationalities. The most recent and the fourth stage of the transformation is the entrance of youths into youth militancy and militias with volatile demands and ultimatums that has intensified the scale of confrontations with the state.

The crisis in the Niger-Delta Region is purely the agitation and struggle for resource control, regional development, elimination of marginalization, eradication of poverty, creation of employment and job opportunities in the community. The continuous neglect and different conjunctional dimension by the government which involves combined forces authoritarianism, humiliation, marginalization and exploitation of the people in the Niger-Delta Region has stimulated to the resistance to the ongoing of oil and gas in the region resulting to violence.

From all indications, nature has done its part by freely endowing the people of Niger-Delta Region with abundant valuable treasures, what remain unachieved is that Nigerian state has not yet played its own part to overcome, tame and nurture the harsh environment to enable the overall wellbeing of the people in the Niger-Delta Region in particular and even the nation in general. The yearnings of the Niger-Delta people is revolved around the call for resource control and true federalism so that the years of deprivation, neglect, marginalization the people in the area have suffered under the arrangement whereby the power to allocate resources vested on the federal government will be properly treated. Therefore, equity in resource allocation is the major issue in the Niger-Delta crisis.

Instead of being a huge blessing, the extraction of crude oil in the Niger-Delta region for more than 50years have been described to be a huge curse by the people of the region. It has made the region to turn into a blood shedding zone where fun welding militants engaged the police and security agencies in a duel has resulted in the destruction of lives and properties (Soni, 2007:13).The region where more than 95% Nigeria's economic resource is located at has been humiliated, marginalized, deprived, tried, detained and even killed because of the crisis emanating from agitations for their rightful share and allocation of the resource which has caused them environmental degradation, pollution, diseases etc during the process of extraction and exploration. The seemingly unquenchable crisis in the Niger-Delta have not only created a very uncomfortable social environment for the people in the region but has also caused an untold hardship, hunger and starvation, diseases, land and water pollution etc, and all these have created a huge fear and tension in the citizens as they amount to threats to national development and even disintegration.

Almost all the youth of the Niger-Delta Region have virtually turned to militants thereby exposing them to dangers, criminal acts and other immoralities all for the struggle for self-defence, self-determination and against marginalization and exploitation. The youth unemployment and mass illiteracy in the Niger-Delta Region despite the huge mineral resources in the area is so alarming and problematic, combined with the fact that their environment is highly polluted in the process of extraction and exploration, their land so much adulterated that it is very hard to cultivate on it as most farm produces are highly scarce and costly and other socio-economic vices contributed to the agitation and obviously crisis in the region. All these and other hidden problems are what the study tends to address.

Conceptual Perspective

Resource Control Just like other concept within social, economic political and other spheres, the concept of resource control has been given several definitions from different scholars and interested personnel. For the purpose of this study we are going to look at some of these definitions. Etymologically, resource control is the process of controlling and allocating a system's resources in a controlled fashion. Dafinone (2001), noted that resources is a basic political theory grounded on the fact that, land, capital and entrepreneur are factors of production owned by the Individual and should be controlled

by them. In doing so the reward derived from such factor of production owned by individual should be controlled by them. Professor Itsey Sagay gives an interesting understanding of the concept of resource control. In his view, it involves three major components;

- firstly, the power and rights of a community or state to raise funds by way of tax on persons, matters, services and materials within its territory;
- *secondly' the exclusive right of the ownership and control of resources both natural and created within its territory, and;
- *thirdly, the rights to customs duties on goods destined for its territory and exercise duties on good manufactured in its territory.

In a federal system of government, just as Nigeria, resource control in certain circumstances could be referred to as Fiscal Federalism and it goes hand in hand with True Federalism. This was recognized and implemented faithfully in 1960 and 1963 Independence and republican constitution respectively. In all, resource control could be seen as a situation whereby the resources located on people's territory is managed and controlled by the people themselves or in a case whereby the central government is controlling the resource (like in the Nigeria context) a very serious consideration should be given to the people in the area in terms of how the revenue is being allocated. That is what Nigerian government is not doing (comparative advantage) and that has been the cause of the crisis in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria which has threatened to see the end of the country. Paki and Ebiefa (2011), noted that scholars have attributed this failure of federalism and revenue sharing formula in existence in Nigeria.

The Niger-Delta Crisis The Niger-Delta crisis is a conflict that first arose in the early 1990s in the South-South region of Nigeria over tensions between foreign oil corporations and a number of Niger-Delta's minority ethnic groups who feel they are exploited, particularly Ogoni and Ijaw. The crisis formally sprang up in form of agitations, peaceful demonstration and mass protest and later escalated to a deadly crisis in 2003 following the government's ignorance and neglect in terms of looking for an adequate strategy to curtail and possibly put a stop to the crisis. This conflict arose following the people's feelings of marginalization, cheat, hatred, exploitation, humiliation and so on coming from the fact that the government is not treating them well as it concerns the allocation of resources being extracted from their own land. For this reason, they decided to take full control over the resources in their region and the resultant effect is crisis as the government resisted them.

Propositions and Methodological Consideration

Mainly, this study hypothesized that, the reason for the seemingly unquenchable crisis in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria is the people's feelings of deprivation, humiliation, maltreatment, cheat and exploitation by the MNCs and the Nigerian government in terms of how the resource generated in their region is being allocated; succinctly

speaking, what the government do give to them as their share of the allocation being extracted from their land is a peanut compared to the hazardous effect of the oil exploration and the pollution associated with the process on the people living in the region.

In achieving this, the paper relies heavily on the documentary instrument of data generation which is all about sourcing data from materials like; government gazettes, published materials, journals, legal records, media scripts, archival materials etc which can be obtained from libraries, museums, internet, media houses etc (Bierenu-Nnabugwu 2006). On data analysis, the researcher adopted the Inductive Analytical Technique in analyzing the data generated for the study. As pointed out in Bierenu-Nnabugwu (2006), Inductive Analytical Techniques “geared towards the development of explanatory model based on issues that emerge or was observed”. Equipped with these the paper made its findings.

Theoretical Framework

The people of Niger-Delta has been generally known for their self-actualization, self-determination and struggle for their rightful resource control and allocation which has been deprived of them by the Nigerian government. Embedded on this idea, the paper adopted the Relative Deprivation Theory in its explanation. The theory was for its first time used by an American Sociologist, Robert K. Marson. Relative Deprivation Theory is a view of social change and movement, according to which people take action for social change in order to acquire something (for example, opportunities, status or wealth) that others pass and which they believe they should have, too.

Relative deprivation is the lack of resources to sustain the diet, lifestyle, activities and amenities that an individual or group are accustomed to or that are widely encouraged or approved in the society to which they belong. It is a term used in social sciences to describe feelings or measures of economic, political, or social deprivation that are relative rather than absolute. The concept of relative deprivation has an important consequence for both behaviour and attitudes, including feelings of stress, political attitudes, and participation in public action. Social scientists, particularly political scientists and sociologists, have cited ‘relative deprivation’ (especially temporal relative deprivation) as a potential cause of social movements and deviance, leading in extreme situations to political violence such as rioting, terrorism, crisis, civil wars and other instances of social deviances such as crime. Some social activists believe Relative Deprivation Theory explains why people join social movement or advocate social change.

Relating the theory to Nigeria-Niger-Delta issue, the theory explains why the people of Niger-Delta Region embarked into an agitation which had resulted over the years into a crisis that has claimed uncountable lives and properties to be because of the Nigerian government’s deprivation of what they ought to have gained from the fact that the major resources of the country’s economy is located in their region. Inokoba and Idua (2008), stated that “the region has over the years been deprived of peace, progress, justice and even its resources that were expected to bring about good life in the region”. The social movement in the Niger-Delta Region joined forces to fight the Multi-National Companies

(MNCs) and later Nigerian government is because of their obvious feelings that the government is exploiting, marginalizing and humiliating them and upon these paying a deaf ear to their peaceful agitations and demonstrations so they decided to approach it with violent so as to achieve a social change (change in the statuesque) and that resulted to the crisis in the region. The theory explains that the intense amount of hunger, unemployment, untold hardship, in the region etc and how the federal government has ignored these despite the environmental degradation and pollution caused to the area during the process of exploration and extraction to be one of the major ignitions of the crisis in the Niger-Delta Region.

Resource Control, Niger-Delta Development Commission and the Amnesty Programme.

The Niger-Delta development commission (NDDC) is a federal government agency established under the leadership former President Olusegun Obasanjo in the year 2002. Its establishment followed the growing insurgency in the Niger-Delta region over the development of the region. The NDDC's role is to tackle the up surging through a conscientious improvement in the social and environmental conditions of the Niger-Delta Region, which the agency has acknowledged as 'horrific' even in its own reports. To achieve its mandate, the NDDC Board identified the following areas of focus; the development of social and physical infrastructure, technology and economic revival, ecological and environmental remediation, and stability to human capital development. What is still unclear is the government's and commission's role towards achieving these ends, whether their goals are achieved or not yet achieved and what they are doing so that they could achieve them.

Amnesty program was on its own part created in 2009 under the government of former president Musa Yar'adua and his deputy Dr. Goodluck Jonathan as a part of government intervention. The Amnesty program which was proposed to last for five years required that repentant militants willingly surrender their arms and ammunition in turn for an unconditional government pardon. The program recorded a total of 28, 808 militants surrendering their arms and ammunitions and were being granted amnesty, which involved co-opting or integrating them into the society as well as train them (Ajodo- Adebajoko 2016:1). While the program short lasted, there were some reprieves as militants shattered their sword. However, there has been recourse to arms in the region recently as new militant groups like; the Niger-Delta Avengers (NDA), the Red Egbesu water Lions (REWL), Joint Niger-Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF) and the Niger-Delta Red Squad (NDRS) re-emerged in 2016. These groups rose with various demands while, the newly emerged groups' names differ from the old ones, there is no doubt that it was like an old wine in a new bottle. The government in its bid to resolve this has been returning fire for fire by constituting a military operation code-named operation 'crocodile smiles' which the militants, many interested scholars and analysts feel it is not the answer to the problem of conflict in the region.

There is no gain saying the fact that many strategies have been put in place to resolve the ongoing imbroglio in the Niger-Delta region. However, these efforts have failed to have

the desired effect of ushering in the needed peace. The failure of these various strategies is probably due to the fact that they lacked sufficient element of democracy, accountability, equity and active public opinion and participation of all stakeholders (Ako, 2011), which is why Abide (2009) opined that 'peace cannot be dictated; it has to be a natural born child of a just and humane environment.

Crisis in the Niger-Delta Region over Resource Control: Any Basis for Justification?

It is obvious that resource control has been among the list of the biggest problem in Nigerian Federalism and it is evident that it is the cause of the Niger-Delta Crisis. Nigeria is a federation and you cannot separate resource control from true federalism. You cannot let the state or region generate their own electricity and yet deny them access to the gas beneath their land for gas plants and water from their dams. The state cannot be carrying more fiscal responsibilities and yet access to maximize their comparative advantage is being denied of them. Whatever their comparative advantage is be it human made or natural made they must be controlled by the government closer to the people. This is why you cannot separate resource control from true federalism. Now that we know this and who are in opposition to it, we now have a duty to solve it. Because of the contentious feature of federalism some parts of Nigeria most especially the North itself is against true federalism. Their fears is losing oil allocation with a question of how can we survive with no or less monthly allocation? Since it is seen to be impossible for the country to fully give up oil control to the Niger-Delta Region, why not think for a better way out than forcefully trying to stop the people who are obviously seen to be fighting for what rightfully belong to them?

The destructions of farmlands, fish ponds and rivers radically uttered the economic life of the once self reliant and productive region for the worst (Okonta and Oronto, 2001). The former governor of Rivers State, Rotimi Amaechi stated that "one cannot just talk about violence without considering what created the violence", he further stated that, the issue of violence did not just erupt; it was due to the long term neglect of the Niger-Delta Region beyond the level of human tolerance, the people had to fight back..."

The Independence and Republican Constitutions of 1960 and 1963 respectively recognizes that resource control in certain circumstances can be referred to as Fiscal Federalism and goes hand in hand with True Federalism. This was faithfully implemented in the Independence and Republican Constitutions of 1960 and 1963 respectively. The constitutions (1960and1963) described each region as "a self governing region of the federal republic of Nigeria". Moreover, in consistent with the federal character of the country, in the country of many nations, the basis of revenue allocation was strictly "Derivative".

Section 140 made provision for the sharing of the proceed of minerals, including mineral oil stating that; "there shall be paid by the federal government to a region a sum equal to 50% of the proceed of any loyalty received by the federation in respect of any minerals extracted in the region and any mining rents derived by the federal government from within any region" this is totally consistent with international law which characterized the continental shelf as a seaward extension of the land of the costal state.

By section 136(1) 30% of general import duties were paid into a distributable pool for the benefit of the region. The derivative base of the allocation of revenue and the proportionate share of such proceeds that went to the region it originated from clearly buttress the operating base as noted above.

Okigbo commission recommended 45% to the federal, 35% to the states and 10% to the local governments. In 1992 recommendation was 48%, 24% to state and 20% to local with 7% for special funds. Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) made its first proposal under the 1999 constitution as 41.3%, 31% and 16% to the federal, state and local governments respectively and a special fund of 11.7% which was later held to be unconstitutional under the 1999 constitution.

On resource control, section 162(2) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for the principle of derivation and states that not less than 13% of the revenue accruing to the federation directly from any natural resources in a state must be remitted to such state. Important point to note is that the 13% derivation is not cap but the minimum that must be remitted to an entitled state, in essence, it could be increased to 15%, 20%, 30% or more than. In May 2002 President Obasanjo invoked an executive order and held the formula as 56%, 24% and 20% this was later adjusted in July after serious discount to 54.68%, 24.72% and 20.60%. In March 2004, Dr. Okonjo Iweala adjusted the second executive order to 52.68%, 26.72% and 20.60% this being the current formula.

From all these, we can see that the policy of the country as it concerns resource allocation always changes from better to the worst relatively following its back-out from the original stipulations of 1963 republican constitution, this has made Nigeria to lose its test of True Federalism. Now we can ask and answer ourselves this question; is the agitation of the Niger-Delta Region in any means justifiable, and how?

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has interrogated Nigeria and the crisis of resource control in the Niger-Delta Region. After rigorous and critical investigations, the researcher came up with the following conclusion: The study established that resource control has been the principal cause of the crisis in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, stating that because of the deprivation, neglect, exploitation, marginalization, humiliation the people get from the Nigerian government in terms of resource control and allocation the crisis in the region is on the increase as the emergence of new insurgent groups continues. The study also established that poverty, high degree of unemployment, an untold hardship, has engulfed the area; pollution (water, air and land), environmental degradation and diseases arising from the process of oil extraction and exploration also threaten the wellbeing of the people in the region. The study further exposed that the Nigerian government have failed in its part of the constitution to distribute and allocate resources based on the derivative principle of resource allocation. Following the people's effort in the area to resist the marginalization, humiliation, and exploitation by the government and MNCs and attacks from the Nigerian military, the people in the area have been exposed to some forms of immoralities as youth militancy and insurgent groups are on

the increase. Killings of innocent citizens, destroying of properties; both private and public, kidnapping, robbery, rapping and other immoral acts are seen in the region with the youths exposure to dangerous arms and ammunitions. Finally, the study also found out that many strategies adopted to tackle the crisis in the region failed because they lack substantial ingredients as they are basically force approaches.

Since it is impossible for the Nigerian government to sort the contentious fact of true federalism and totally submit the resource control to the Niger-Delta region, the researcher therefore provides some recommendations to help and eliminate the crisis in the Niger-Delta Region and to also save the country from future resource control (revenue allocation) related problems. These recommendations are as thus;

Firstly, strict Adherence to Derivative Principle of Resource Allocation. The Nigerian government should give a serious consideration and re-consideration to derivative principle of resource allocation. This principle holds that a region or state from which the major resource is generated from should be given a major allocation or share of the resources. This will ensure a comparative advantage, and will make the people in the region to feel remembered as they will have enough resources to tackle their social needs.

Secondly, the government should make a concrete provisions for educational facilities to enable the citizen acquire quality and sound education and also equip them well in form of training for them to be qualified for employment in most of the oil companies within the states in the region. This is very important as it will make them feel among, in and important as there is one saying that goes, 'if you want the cooperation of the people around you, you ought to make them feel important'.

Thirdly, the government should provide active equipments and instrument for the management and control of pollution, irrigation, and degradation which occur following the process of exploration and extraction of oil in the region. The essence of this is to enable the people have a conducive environment, good health, good water and breath of fresh air.

Fourthly, the government should be organizing continuous seminars and workshops to sensitize and educate the people on the value and worth of life and expose the people on the effect of militancy which leads them to some immoral acts like stealing, kidnapping, vandalization of oil pipe lines, piracy etc. and also educate them on the need to allow them extract the oil in their area as it is the major source of Nigeria's economy without which the country is economically handicapped and dependent.

Fifthly and finally, the Nigerian government should review its approaches towards the fight against Niger-Delta crisis and possibly change them. Apparently, government's approach to stop the Niger-Delta crisis is basically the use of force and this is not in any way helping issues as it leads to more killings and destroying of lives and properties and also make the militants more stronger as they escalate into other different insurgency groups with different demands; as was seen in 2016. What the government need to do now in effect is to engage the stakeholders in the crisis in a rigorous dialogue, debate, face to face discussions, lobby and possibly influence them with pet, recognitions, priorities, respect, etc. With the above recommendations, I have a strong feeling that the issue of Niger-Delta crisis will be a thing of the past if the federal government will adhere

to them and treat them as a matter of utmost importance and the peace, unity, security and development of Nigeria will be ensured.

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