



Niger Delta Crisis and Security Implications for the Nation State

S. A. Ojeifo

E-Mail: Ojeifomatrix755@Yahoo.Com

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to examine the Niger Delta crisis and security implications for the Nigeria state. Its focus on the Niger Delta is because of the festering crisis in the region which is of critical importance to Nigeria. The Niger Delta is the nation's treasure base, the Niger Delta provides over 80 percent of government revenue, 95 percent of export receipts, and 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings. It is the argument of this paper that beyond the threats to human security in that region, the lingering crisis in the country's oil producing areas is a threat to the security of the Nigerian state. The ruthless exploitation and exploration causing so great harm to human life and degradation to the land and the environment pose major threats to human security not only in that region but also to the Nigerian state. The paper suggests that to resolve the crisis government policy on petroleum should be more inclusive. Peculiar problems and needs of the oil-producing areas should be taken into consideration. The government should come clean on the matter of resolving the almost intractable crisis in the Niger Delta and stop engaging in convenient inconsistencies on the Niger Delta. The government should tackle the fundamental issue of basic necessities – provision of good motorable roads, pipe borne water, electricity, good hospitals, good and functional schools – for the area.

Keywords: Niger Delta Crisis, ruthless exploitation and exploration, oil producing areas.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Federation was the handwork of the British colonialism. This was as far back as 1954 to ease colonial administration and to maximize the exploitation and expropriation of the country's vast natural resource. According to (Otobo, 2005) this came about through the imposition of the western nation-state model on the entity called Nigeria without due consideration of the autonomy and heterogeneity of the various ethnic or communal groups that constituted the Nigerian state.

The Niger Delta Region, Nigeria's oil belt has been the site of crisis and general insecurity for a very long time. The ethnic crisis, the regional

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struggle for self-determination, the violent confrontation between local ethnic communities and the agents of the Nigerian state and oil companies have been issues crisis-leaden for a long time.

What began as community agitation has no doubt undergone several transformations. This transformation have advanced to the fifth level. The first involved the civil society which mobilized for a popular civil struggle. The second extended the agitation from that against multinational oil companies (MNOC's) to include the Nigerian state. The third transformation involved the elevation of the agitation from purely developmental issues to overtly political demands such as restructuring of the federal system, resource control and the resolution of the national question through a conference of ethnic nationalities. The fourth transformation has seen the entrance of youths, youth militancy and youth militias demands that have accentuated the scale and intensity of confrontations and violence with the multinationals and the state. The current and fifth scale involved the kidnapping of expatriate staff of multinationals, relations of important personalities in the society and abduction of helpless old men and women and little children for a heavy ransom of money.

The Niger Delta conflict is presently spearheaded by the youths. The youths constitute the vanguard and also define the momentum and diction of conflicts in the area. The insurgency is on the land and in the sea. They use speed boats in the coastal areas of the region and in the rivers, estuaries, creeks and swamps. They have engaged the Nigerian military and are known to have seized oil facilities and ships. The youth militancy has become criminalized. The area is now transformed into a theatre of violence and war. They commit all sorts of economic crimes, blow out pipelines, lock the gates of the MNOC's and open the gates only when a huge ransom of money has exchanged hands. The recent and ongoing conflicts have witnessed deployments of the Nigerian Army, Navy and other security agencies in their thousands to the area. This no doubt has been the most intensive if not extensive internal military action since the Nigerian Civil War. This has an untold effect on the national economy, security and stability. A number of MNOC's have stopped production and others have closed down. It has destabilized the budget estimates of the federal government, the state governments and has a debilitating effect on global oil and gas related economic growth.

It is against this background that this paper focuses on the impact of violent struggles in the Niger Delta with particular emphasis on the security implications for the nation state. The paper is structured into related sections. This introduction previews the general argument in the article. This is followed by a section on the conceptual clarification of the terms.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this research is to examine how the environmental degradation occasioned by oil activities and the roles of the state and the oil

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multinationals has helped to precipitate the insecurity of the Niger Delta. This will help us to understand how the factors of identity, participation and legitimacy have accounted for the generation of the crisis in the Niger Delta and to give recommendations to enhance the security of state and the welfare of the people.

Statement of the Problem

The Niger Delta crisis has been precipitated by the oil communities struggle for economic restitution and ecological rehabilitation on the one hand and the states violent and repressive response to contain the people's struggle on the other hand. This has caused multiples of problems in the Niger Delta region capable of threatening the peace and security of the nation. Paramount amongst these problems are:

- (i) Attempts at the stoppage of oil production
- (ii) Destruction and damage to oil pipelines
- (iii) Taking of multinational oil companies' workers as hostages and the demand for ransoms and reparations.
- (iv) Kidnapping and hostage taking of relations of well-to-do, women and children and the demand for ransom for their release.
- (v) The closure of some of these multinational oil companies.

The Niger Delta crisis has thrown some wild phenomena that have become of grave concern to both the Nigerian state and the international community. There is the psychological dimension of the crisis which has caused suspicion and speculation concerning foreign involvement. The Frustration Aggression Theory posits that as soon as a victim of frustration aggresses, the urge to aggress extenuates and finally vanishes just as the opening of a balloon valve removes some air inside the balloon so that the balloon does not explode. The reason is that the act of aggression reduces the individual's arousal and the individual in turn becomes less likely to aggress (Stephen, Joel and George: 1979). It appears the Niger Delta crisis have defiled this postulation because the more sturdy and repressive the state's responses become the more resolute and violent the resistance of the people of oil communities has become. This scenario of course presents a situation where the state being at an advantage of superpower inflicts disproportionate injury on the physical, psychological, environmental and the material existentialities of the people of the oil producing communities. The gory state of the plight of the unsalutary general conditions of the people of the oil producing communities in turn attracts international sympathy from both international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Conceptualization

Since the end of the cold war, the scope of security studies has broadened considerably. According to (Owolabi and Okwechime, 2007) "The concept of security is no longer defined in the conventional state-centric, realist

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fashion. It has assumed a more radical approach”, which, incidentally, in the context of this study, offers a more expansive understanding of the concept. Indeed, it is now widely accepted that security is not only about defending the sovereignty of a state, but also protecting the human ecosystem, from the destructive affects of economic development, for the benefit of both the present and future generations. The significance of this approach according to (Griffiths and O’Callaghan 2002) lies in the fact that it focuses attention on sources of harm other than just military threats to states and their citizens. States in the international system seek to promote economic development. This is for the well being of their population. Although economic development entails costs and benefits, the idea of sustainable development is always on the back burner of development discourse. One effect of this was that the international community took little notice of the relationship between the environment and economic development. This porous situation encouraged the multinational corporations to exploit the natural resources of Third World Countries, Nigeria include, without paying due regard to environmental protection and the need for sustainable development.

The United Nations 1992 Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), otherwise called Rio Earth Summit, championed the cause of promoting and operationalising the concept of sustainable development, thus changing the way the international system looked at the relationship between the environment and development (Chasek, 2009:378). Griffiths and O’Callaghan (2002:291) further buttressed the inter-linkage between the environment, economic development and human security when they said;

This more radical approach to the issue of human security reflects a more holistic concern with human life and dignity. The idea of human life invites us to focus on the individual’s need to be safe from hunger, disease, and regression, as well as protected against events likely to undermine the normal pattern of everyday existence. It also implies a need for significant redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor countries.

The issue of human security when subsumed under security studies offer significant insights into the ways the activities of other non-state actors in the international system can pose a threat to the security of human beings. In this regard Scott Pegg (1999: 475, 478) emphasized the role of multinational corporations as sources of direct security threats to the people. Scott Pegg further argued that security threats come from multinational corporations through their close relationships with repressive state institutions.

Nigeria is a theatre of such repressive state institutions. And the Niger Delta is the pitch where there repressive state institutions at the behest of the oil multinational corporations inflict their obscene brutalities on the helpless inhabitants of the oil communities. Ken Saro-Wiwa had a poignant

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observation regarding the human security problem generated by the operations of Shell in his community. Hear him:

The Ogoni are embattled and imperiled. Since oil was discovered in the area in 1958, they have been victims of a deadly ecological war in which no blood is spilled, no bones are broken and no one is maimed. But the people die all the time. Men, women and children are at risk, the air and water are poisoned and finally the land dies. Today Ogoni has been reduced to a waste land (1995:131).

The Niger Delta Context

The Niger Delta is a heterogeneous, multiculturally diverse region which comprises of nine states: Cross River, Delta, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Rivers, Abia, Imo and Ondo state. All nine states in the region are oil producing. It has 185 local government areas and an estimated population of 26,700 million people. (Ojeifo, 2008)

The area is extremely diverse comprising about 50 ethnic groups spread across well over five thousand (5000) communities speaking not less than 260 dialects (Omonweh, 2001:10). The major ethnic groups are the Ijaws, the Ibos, Yorubas, Urhobos, Isokos, Itsekiris, Ibibios, Annangs, Kalabaris, Ogbias, Efiks, Ogbas, Ishans, Edos, Etsakos, Ogonis, Indonis, Andonis, and Ekpeiyes. All but Igbos and Yorubas are minorities. This phenomenon gave rise to majority-minority ethnic relations with the concomitants phenomenon of political marginalization and economic exploitation, which has been described as “co-operative, competitive, conflictual and accommodative” (Osaghae, 1984:175).

The area extends from the Marshy Greeks to the Bright of Benin and from Apoi to Bakassi. It covers five hundred and sixty kilometers, representing about 75% of the entire coastline of Nigeria with the Atlantic Ocean. It covers an area of about 70,000 square kilometers with over half of the regions topography criss-crossed with creeks and dotted with small islands and the rest is uplands. Located in the third course of the Niger River, the delta drains the water into the Atlantic Ocean. It’s “deltaii soil” accounts largely for the huge deposits of oil and gas found in the region. And as per largeness, the Delta region is the third largest wetland in the world (Omoweh 2001:10) and Africans largest Delta (Humphrey 1996:27).

Conflictual Issues in the Niger Delta

Opinions do not greatly differ about the factors behind the surge of violent civil conflicts in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria.

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(i) Conflicts Arising from Land and Marginalization

Land to the African generally and the natives of Nigeria in particular are of paramount importance in their economic and political life. It is an emblem of both membership of a community and socio-economic status (Ojeifo 2008:84). Therefore any attempt to sequester the land rights of Africans is usually resisted. Allan McPhee (1971:130) has apply described the salvation. In his words:

African people will remain perseve while their most cherished institution are effected but if their land is interfered with, they will blaze up in rebellion. Land in a simple state of society is the source of livelihood; land is their mother goddess.

In view of the immeasurable importance of land to Africans, alienation of land in so far as it is thinkable to the native mind is a crime (McPhee, 1971:130). In view of this, the issue of land in the Niger Delta Area is a critical one because of the geography of the area. Land in the Niger Delta area is in short supply because a large part of the area is covered by rivers, lakes, estuaries and swamps. Even at that, available land is further depleted by the activities of the Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs) through laying of oil pipeline that create a right of path of way. The issue of land was further exasperated when the Federal Government (FG) enacted the Land Use Act in 1978. By this act, land was sequestered from the owners and vested on the government. Table 1 shows some land related conflicts between some selected communities in the Niger Delta area between 1993 and 2000.

(ii) Conflicts Arising from Water

Oil spillages in the Niger Delta region have rendered all available source of water polluted, whether surface or underground. It is very painfully frustrating to have water in abundance everywhere but not fit for human consumption. This situation is aggravated when the people see within an observable distance the sources of their water pollution. On the contrary, the people also see within observable distance the multinationals and their staff in their estates-drinking clean water from taps and boreholes, made available from revenue generated from oil exploited from their land and the surrounding seas and rivers. This causes disaffection and hatred for the state and the MNOCs.

(iii) Conflicts Arising from Oil Spills

The main occupation of the people of the Niger Delta region is farming: Land farming and fish farming. Fish farming is actually the occupation of the Ijaw speaking area of the Niger Delta. Oil exploration and production had adversely affected this occupation. This is because oil spillage has

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successfully affected marine life and cause a reduction in biodiversity of the marine ecology.

Table 1: Some land-related conflicts between some selected communities in the Niger Delta Area between 1993- 2000.

S/No	Date	Cause	Communities	State
1.	5 th August 1993	Conflict between the Ogonis and Andonis over land and fishing rights	Ogoni and Angoni neighbouring ethnic groups	Rivers state
2.	14 th April, 1994	Conflicts between Ogonis and Ndokis over land	Ogoni and Ndoki	Rivers state
3.	September 1996	Violent communal conflict over farm land Kameta	Aladja, Diebri and Aladja Ogbe-Ijaw	Delta
4.	August 1996	Conflict between Ijaw and Ilaje over oil rich Akpata land	Ijaws and Ilajes	Ondo state
5.	October 1999	Violent conflict between Eleme and Okirika communities over a piece of land on which the Port-Harcourt refinery is located.	Eleme and Okirika	Rivers state
6.	16 th November, 1999	Renewed hostilities between Eleme and Okirika over land that claimed several lives	Eleme and Okirika	Rivers state
7.	8 th March, 2000	Violent communal hostility between Eleme and Okirika over land.	Eleme and Okirika	Rivers state
8.	12 th April, 2000	Bloody conflict involving six communities in Gokona L.G.A.	Six communities in Gokona L.G.A.	Rivers state
9.	16 th May, 2000	Violent conflicts between the Akaasa and Igwama communities over land.	Akaasa and Igwama	Bayelsa state

Sources: Sam Okotie. "18 killed in Bloody communal clash". The Nigerian Vanguard September 4, 1996 p.5. Julius Alabi, Niger Bello (1999) "Killing persist in Ijaw-Ilaje hostilities". The Nigerian Guardian, August 11, 1998. 58 Audu Ganbo (2003). Implications of conflicts in the Niger Delta for National Security in Nigeria, A position paper March 2002, p.11.

On the other hand, oil spillage has equally affected the fertility of the soil which has reduced the agricultural productivity and yield. Because of lack of funds and technical-know-how, the people are not able to protect their environment therefore the resources therein suffer ecological marginalization. This has resulted in object poverty, frustration and alienation. Oil spillage is a regular occurrence in the Niger Delta region. According to John Iwori (2001:3) for a period of 20 years (1976 – 1996), the Niger Delta area recorded 4,835 oil spills resulting in the loss of 24 million barrels of crude oil to the environment. Shell reported that in 1995, some 36,000 barrels of crude oil were spilled in the course of operations. In January 1998, Mobil Producing Limited stated that 40,000 barrels of high oil spilled from the pipeline at Eket, Akwa-Ibom State (Robert, 1999:29). Oil spills have been known to have caused damage to land, pollute water, destroy vegetation and killing organisms as evidenced by various "post – impact" studies (Frynas, 2000:165). Selected cases of oil spills and impacts on the communities from 1994 – 2000 is shown in table 2.

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Table 2: Selected cases of oil spills, showing the state location, the oil company involved and their impact from 1994 – 2000.

S/N	Date	Nature of Spill	Oil Company	Country	State Location	Impact
1	August 1994	Oil spill of Birongha village, Burutu LGA	SPDC (shell)	Five communities in Bikorogha village	Delta	Destroyed fish ponds, economic trees, fishing charnels and
2	August 1994	Oil Spill	SPDC (spell)	Uzanu community	Edo	Spilled into River Obu, polluted source of drinking water and 5,000 peasants lost their means of livelihood
3	October	Oil well explosion	SPDC (spell)	Iko community	Akwa-Ibom	Spilled to creeks and river killing organisms, fish shrimps and molluses and adversely affected socio-economic activities.
4	January 1998	Mobil oil slick	Mobil	Eket	Akwa-Ibom	Destroyed aquatic lives
5	June 1998	Oil spills from burst 800,000 barrels of oil spills	SPDC (Shell)	Otuegwe	Rivers	Polluted creeks and other water ways and farmlands.
6	August 1998	Oil spill occurred off-shore 40,000 barrels of crude oil spill	Mobil	Idoho, Igbokoda, Ilaje and Ekpeye Communities	Akwa-Ibom, Ondo and Rivers	Affected aquatic lives
7	April 1999	Oil spillage from rupture of 28 which Urhapele-Forcados trunk line-5,000 barrels of oil spill	SPDC (Shell)	Urapele and Forcados Communities	Delta	Destroyed trees, plants and farmlands
8	July 1999	Ogoda Brass pipeline ruptured and spilled 8,000 barrels of sludge wastes crude oil and chemicals	Agip	Okogbe, Oyakama, Obochi and Ogochi Communities	Rivers	Destroyed fish farmlands and sources of domestic and agricultural water supply and fishponds
9	Sept. 1999	Oil spill from Ughelli Quality Control Centre (UQCC) 20,000 barrels of crude oil spill	SPDC (Shell)	Ekakpemre, Inhreketa, Ughevughe Ekiejegbe and Otor Edo	Delta	Destroyed aquatic lives fishing and fishponds
10	October 1999	Oil spillage at Ekpe	SPDC (Shell)	12 Ijaw and 18 Itsekiri Communities	Edo and Delta	Spilled into creeks and rivers and farmlands killed fishes and economic crops.
11	July 2000	Oil spill from 24 timeline supplying crude oil to Forcados terminal	SPDC (Shell)	Iteregbe community in Uvwie L.G.A	Delta	Destroyed farmlands, farm produce and loss of means of livelihood.

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(iv) Conflicts Arising from Unemployment and Manpower Development

The state and the MNOC's combined to deprive the Niger Delta of their land. Oil exploratory activities as seen, above have caused multiple and environmental damages to the topography of the area and the quality of the

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soil fertility. This is particularly so because there is no known technology yet to renew the environmental loss suffered. There are also no social institutions and organizations set up to re-orient the people and equip them with necessary alternative skills to adapt to the social and economic changes that has been forced on them. Most of them sit at home throughout the day and even for days without knowing what to do. This has resulted in frustration, anger and disgruntledness. The people therefore see the state and the MNOC's as enemies and treat them as such. It is the cumulative effects over the years that has generated resentment of the people of the Niger Delta. This is so because the activities have "threatened the ability of the ordinary citizen in the Niger Delta area to realize his self actualization, that is, his ability to liberate himself from poverty, ignorance and disease ... (Imobighe, 1999). As appositely asserted by Ojo (2005:6) "nothing can be of great threat to security than being excluded from life-supporting economic realities". Resistance is often met with the most brutal force. Table 3 shows some communities action against oil companies as a result of unemployment presence.

Table 3: Actions of some selected communities, against oil companies due to unemployment (1992 – 1998).

S/N	Date	Oil Community/State	Oil Company	Demand	Community Action
1.	October 5, 1992	Umuechem community, River State	SPDC (Shell)	Protesting discrimination in the employment of unskilled workers and basic amenities	Protested at company's operational base.
2.	March 5, 1997	Warri, Delta State	Chevron	Employment	Seizure of company's barge by youths.
3.	October 6, 1997	Odeama, Bayelsa State	SPDC (Shell)	Employment	Closure of Odeanma flow station
4.	March 10 – 20 1998	Koluama, Bayelsa State	Texaco	Employment	Protest/Youth occupation of oil platform
5.	April 28, 1998	Odidi/Egwu, Delta State	Texaco	Employment	Youth protest
6.	May 5, 1998	Ondo State	Texaco	Employment	Youth occupation of flow station
7.	August 11, 1998	Nembe, Rivers State	SPDC (Shell)	Employment for indigenes	Siege on company's flow station
8.	October 10, 1998	Abileye/Alero, Delta State	Chevron	Employment	Youth protest, seizure of flow station and hostage taking
9.	January 25, 1999	Obama community, Bayelsa state	Agip	Employment	Peaceful protest over amenities provision and employment
10.	January 28, 1999	Ogulagha community, Delta State	SPDC (Shell)	Employment	Youth protest and demand for the close down of its operations
11.	Sept. 6-7, 1999	Opobo community, Rivers state	Westminister dredging company	Employment, environmental impact assessment and compensation	Kidnapped all 27 workers comprising 12 expatriates and 15 Nigerians.

Sources:

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(v) **Conflicts Arising from the Psychological Impact of Oil Exploration and Exploitation in the Niger Delta Area on the People of the Niger Delta Region:**

Bourne and Ekstrand, (1979:255) posited that deprivation leads to “drive” which leads to arousal or energy mobilization which pushes our behaviour until we have found the goal, attaining the goal satisfies the drive. It is this drive that Sigmund Freud called the “death instinct” which is innate. This in-born drive creates a destructive intent that are affected and propelled into aggressive behaviour that serves to satisfy and temporarily eliminate the uncomfortable drive state (Smith 1998: 651 – 652). Frustration – Aggression Theorists believe that whenever the frustrated person or group expresses that “drive” or “death instinct” is reduced and future instinct to aggression is extenuated. Ootobo (2005:154) believes that “the phenomenon where aggression reduces future drive or instigation is called ‘catharsis’. The continuous ecological damage wrought on the Niger Delta, collectively caused it to be “so mangled, raped and denuded that the area has been labeled the most endangered Delta in the world (Okonta and Douglas, 2001:88). The evidence of non-preparedness posture of the state and the MNOC’s to embark on environmental protection strategy is underscored by the ineffectiveness of legal provisions in Nigeria to minimize the adverse impact of the operations on the environment. This sordid state of affairs is made worse by the fact that “too many unkept or failed promises and disappointment in the past have exhausted the patience and confidence of the people and the carrying capacity of the Niger Delta ecosystem” (Okonta and Douglas, 2001:260). In the state of despondency and hopelessness, the people of the oil producing communities (OPC) become psychologically disturbed. The psychological impact on the people has been aptly stated by Okonta and Douglass (2001:262) thus;

all members of the society appears to suffer from frustration for themselves and for their children as a result of poor agricultural yields, the lack of health, water and education services, their apparent abandonment by the government, but above all by the manifestation of the oil industry in their midst that seems to represent huge wealth and yet has given nothing to them except for the impoverishment of their land.

In this case of all “all pervasive gloom and anomie” going by the postulation of the Frustration – Aggression Theorists, the people’s arousal to aggression is established. The peoples psychological disposition has been oppositely expressed by Felix Tudolo, President of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC):

Our people have long parsed the stage of niceties and empty words... but we are

tired of waiting. Our land has been plundered and ravaged. Our rivers and creeks are dying. It would be criminal to expect us to fold our arms and wait for the oil companies and their allies in government to deliver the last death blow. We won't.

The panacea for the violent conflict is evident. The current insecurity arising from Kidnappings and Hostage Takings in the Niger Delta area will continue to be until proper solutions and aggression cues are remedied. According to Otobo, 1998:166, the people of the Niger Delta area are resilient; they will continue to resist their humiliation and deprivation irrespective of the factor of time and states repression until their lot is improved. Table 4 shows major kidnappings and hostage takings in the Niger Delta region in 2006 and 2007.

Table 4: Major Kidnappings/Hostage Takings in the Niger Delta Region in 2006 – 2007.

S/No	Date	Actions	Oil Companies/Oil Servicing Companies Involved	Outcome
1.	January 10, 2006	- Kidnapping of four (4) staff. - Blow up of crude oil pipelines.	Shell offshore Oil field	Militants free hostages on January 30 but threaten new wave of attacks.
2.	February 13, 2006	- Militants attach a barge operated by US oil services company and abduct 9 oil workers. - Blow up of crude oil pipeline and a gas pipeline - Bombing of Forcados loading platform.	Willbros	Suspension of export from the 380,000 bdp facility shell shut 115,000 bdp E. A. platform as precaution. March 1, 2006 militants release 6 of the hostages kidnapped February 18; 1 American, 2 Egyptians, 2 Thais, 1 Filipino, Americans and 1 Briton also released.
3.	June 2, 2006	Abduction of 6 Britons 1 Canadian and an American from Bullford Dolphin oil rig.	Norwegian oil services group Fred Olsen Energy.	Hostages are released two day later.
4.	June 7, 2006	- Militants attack a natural gas facility in the Niger Delta - Kill 6 soldiers	Shell	-
5.	June 20, 2006	- Kidnap 5 South Korean contractors Kidnap of 2 Filipinos in Port Harcourt	Beaufort international	Freed 5 days later
6.	July 6, 2006	Gunmen kidnap Michael Los, a Dutch oil worker in Bayelsa State.	-	Released 4 days later
7.	July 25, 2006	Attack of flow station and 24 workers taken hostage.	Agip	Hostages released and flow station abandoned July 31 after pay off by Nigerian government.
8.	August 3, 2006	German oil worker Guido Schiffarth, a 62 year old, snatched from his car in Port Harcourt by men dressed as soldiers.	Billfinger and Berger	Released on August 19, 2006
9.	August 4, 2006	Gunmen abduct 3 Filipina oil workers from a bus near Port Harcourt	-	They are released 10 days later.
10.	August 7, 2006	2 Norwegian and 2 Ukrainian oil workers kidnapped	-	Freed on August 15 th 2006
11.	August 24, 2006	An Italian oil worker is kidnapped by gunmen in Port Harcourt	Saipem	He is freed 5 days later.
12.	October 2, 2006	25 Nigerian oil employees seized after an ambush of boats carrying	Royal Dutch Shell contractor	They are released two days later.

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13.	October 3, 2006	supplies to Shell facilities in the Caw Thorne channel. 7 foreign oil worker (four Britons, one Indonesian, one Malaysian and a Romanian) kidnapped in a raid on a compound for expatriate contractors	Exxon, Mobil		All of them released on October 21.
14.	November 2, 2006	Two employees, one British and one American are kidnapped from a survey ship off the coast of Bayelsa	Petroleum services (PGS)	Geo-	Freed on November 7, 2006
15.	January 5, 2007	Gunmen kidnap 5 Chinese telecom workers. Militants plant a car bomb in an oil company residential compound in Port Harcourt	Shell		Shell evacuates some staff from compounds in port Harcourt, Bonny Island and Warri. Gunmen, free 5 Chinese telecom workers on January 18, 2007.
16.	January 10, 2007	Gunmen attacked a base in Bayelsa state kidnapping a South Korean and one Nigerian oil worker.	South Korea's Daewoo Engineering and construction.		Freed on January 12, 2007.
17.	January 20, 2007	Militants sieze Cargo ship on its way to Warri Port taking all 24 Filipini crew members hostage.	German shipping line Bacoliner		Released on February 13, 2007.
18.	January 25, 2007	9 employees of Chinese National Petroleum Company under contract with an oil company were kidnapped.	Shell		They were released on February 4, 2007.

Source: Prof. Eghosa Osaghae, Dr. Augustine Ikelegbe, Dr. Omobolaji Olarinmoye, Mr. Steven Okhonmina (2007) "Youths Militias, Self Determination and Resource Control Struggles in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria", p.18 – 21.

CONCLUSION

The agitations in the Niger Delta is not something that happened overnight. It has been accumulating for a very long time ago. Despite the government's awareness of the problems in this region, regrettably the government seemed to have taken a definite stand in finding controvertible solutions to the problems. This has prompted criticism of the state as being itself an instigator of violent conflict in the oil region. According to Moson and Dale (1989:177), the state is prepared to have recourse to repressive violence, not because it has much chance of succeeding, but because its own inherent weaknesses prevent recourse to less violent alternatives. In other words, the state turns to a repressive mode, because the "authorization flow of rule results not from high level of power and legitimacy, but from the tenuousness of authority and the search for it" (Callaghy 1989:97).

The use and perhaps the insistence on the continuous use of military to maintain security in the Niger Delta rather than employing innovative non-military options, turned the Niger Delta region into perhaps the most heavily militarized part of Nigeria in this recent past.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government must address and remedy the socio-economic and environmental degradation that breed underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. Government should therefore purge itself of the garrison mentality towards the Niger Delta, which is, that oil must be extracted at all costs, even if it means wiping out lives and communities.

The oil producing communities are always at loggerheads with the oil multinationals over a myriad of social, economic and environmental issues because it is believed that the oil companies ignore genuine complaints. The multinational oil companies must aim to achieve the good 'oilfield practices' and standards similar to those prevailing in Europe and North America. The MNOCs should see themselves as partners-in-progress with host communities with genuine interest and concern to solve problems arising from oil production.

The present olive branch of amnesty extended to the militants in the Niger Delta region by the Yar' Adua administration is a very welcome development. But it should not merely end at withdrawing guns from the hands of the youths. The total package should include putting jobs on their hands because an idle brain they say "is the devil's workshop".

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