

Resource-Based Conflicts in Africa: The Socio-political and Economic Analysis of the Oil-bearing Region in the Nigerian Federation

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Abstract

There is no doubt that Africa is a continent riddled with conflicts. Apart from conflicts arising from the contest for political power, one major source of conflict in the continent is the struggle for resource control. In Nigeria, the contest for resource control has, very often, been bitterly fought on account of the peculiar circumstances in the country. Nigeria is a country blessed with stupendous natural endowments particularly crude oil. This crude oil is got from the Oil-Bearing Region known as the Niger-Delta area of the country. Despite the enormous amount of money derived from the exploitation of oil in the region, the Niger-Delta is still very under-developed. The people of the region have risen in arms against the Nigerian state demanding for the control of the resources derived from their area. The Nigerian state has responded to contain the rising crisis in the region but the situation has degenerated into serious conflict. This paper takes a look at this Resource Based Conflict in the Niger-Delta region with the aim of discussing the socio-political and economic analysis of the oil-bearing region and at the same time take a look in the conflict which is herein identified as environment degradation and concludes that the Nigerian state must adopt participatory strategies in the management of this resource and the thorough-going empowerment and development of the region.

Keywords: Agitation, Agriculture, Conflict, Exploitation, and Resources.

INTRODUCTION

We cannot deny the fact that one of the greatest concerns of mankind in the contemporary global society is the issue of resource control and environmental change. One of the dangers is that of insecure environment for the present and future generations while sustaining global development. When compared to the other regions of the world, Africa is said to be experiencing one of the worst forms of environmental degradation. Varied explanations have been adduced by scholars to account for the pervasive ecological problems in Africa. The empirical illustration of resource-based conflict in Africa will be drawn from the oil-rich minority ethnic groups in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. The Oil-Bearing Region inarguably is Nigeria's most-troubled zone today. Vast oil exploration and exploitation in the region has led to fundamental consequences on the zone's environment, which in turn has taken its toll on the people's means of livelihood. The cumulative effects of these factors as well as abject neglect of the area have combined to make the region a hot-bed for crisis and conflicts with far-reaching implications for the Nigerian State and the global community.

Socio-Political and Economic Analysis of the Oil-Bearing Region in the Nigerian Federation

In the recent times, scholars have increasingly recognized the importance of geography in shaping human history. As Niven (1950:1), aptly noted;

The Niger Delta, one of the world's largest wetlands with a coastline of nearly 120 largest wetlands with a coastline of nearly 120 miles, is where the main oil reserves are found and the home to the major oil and gas companies in Nigeria. The communities in the Niger Delta areas had been recognized as far back as 1880 as united entity by the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce.

In a letter to Lord Rosebury contesting the political splits of the region, it observed “that the operation of two separate and conflicting jurisdictions and fiscal systems in the Niger Delta is the more to be deplored since nature had made of the Delta, whether its political name be Niger territories or Oil Rivers protectorate (Akinyele 1998:76). Historically, the people of the Niger Delta are united but there are many tribal units among them and these units have different political organisations and institutions. They are all decentralized political systems with the notable exceptions of Bonny and Warri which are centralized state systems. Every village of the tribal groups in the Niger Delta has a political authority, which appears to be atomization. Coleman explains this phenomenon in terms of the influence of environment.

According to him, the importance of the causal connection between environment and size of socio-political organisation cannot be exaggerated, and in the forest belt of the Niger Delta political units were small and dispersed, and with few exceptions were based on the extended family or the clan (Coleman 1986:13). The use of community council chiefs and elders in the formulation and implementation of policies in the villages cannot be over-emphasized in the Niger Delta. It is the responsibility of the head chiefs and their elders to seek the will of the people before implementing any policy and it must be limited to the corporate interest of the villagers. The community council arbitrates between individuals or groups in its area of jurisdiction. The composition of the community council comprises the elders while young men's council acts as a check to determine any injustice meted on the people and also act as agent of maintenance of peace and order in the community.

The political terrain in the Niger Delta has become an issue of interest both to the Nigerian State and to the multinational oil companies as well as other home governments. The reasons are not far-fetched. The discovery and exploitation of oil have brought poverty and depression to the people and thus trigger conflicts in the region: The tension in the area became a problem to the Nigerian colonial administration, especially with the constitutional developments of 1946 to 1954 and, with them, the introduction of regionalism and federalism as mechanisms of dealing with problems and prospects of pluralism. The minority ethnic groups of the Niger Delta were not comfortable with the constitutional arrangement whereby they were placed in the same political sub-unit as the Ibo who, by reason of their numerical superiority, dominated the regional politics. This political arrangement induced the minority ethnic groups to agitate for political autonomy and self-determination. Although ill response to their fears, the British set up the Willink Commission of 1957, yet; despite the obvious nature of their demand, the Commission denied them

autonomy and instead recommended that fundamental rights clauses to safeguard the interest of the minorities be included in the independence constitution.

Moreover, the colonial masters introduced provincial administration in Nigeria between 1956 and 1959. Twelve provinces were created in Eastern Nigeria and this new development did not in any way pacify the people of the Niger Delta. Later, Nigerian government, in its ill-fated bid to thwart the secession of the East from the Nigeria federation, created twelve states in 1967, to replace the four regional structures. Rivers State was the only state for the minority groups in the Niger Delta. Between 1976 and 1993, Nigeria government created more four states within the region to pacify the people and these include Cross River, Delta, Akwa Ibom, and Bayelsa. Dike (1956:14) succinctly put that the pivot of Delta social organization was the "House System" or "House Rule". This was the direct outcome of the trade with the Europeans. This technique as used in the Delta is of European background. In its full development, the house became at once a cooperative trading unit and a local government institution. The House System, which grew out of the needs of Delta society followed, in a measure, the pattern of social organisation of the interior tribes. Among the Ibos and Ibibios each town or village is composed of a group of several groups, at the head of which is the eldest member of the group. This group among the Ibos is called "Umunna" and among the Ibibios "Ekpuk", or an extended family. It is significant that with the emergence of the House, the words "Umunna" and "Ekpuk" vanished from the vocabulary of the extratribal Ibibio and Ibo-speaking peoples in the Niger Delta, and replaced by 'Ulo' and 'Ufok', respectively.

The emergence of the oil industry in the Niger Delta underscored a new dimension of agitation of their struggles in the Region. This indeed has necessitated traditional rulers and their cabinets and moroso elites in the Niger Delta to enter into alliances with oil industries, with the hope that as the mouthpieces of the people they would "grab" what belonged to the communities and diverted them into their private purses. This romance among the elites, traditional rulers, and oil companies in the Niger Delta continued to create tension and mistrust, and thereby trigger off bitter conflicts as the oil industry and the expansion of the Nigerian federal system enter new stages of development

The Economy of the Niger Delta',

The predominant economic activities found in the Niger Delta include agriculture, trading, oil explorations, etc.

i) Agriculture

The people of the Niger Delta, at least the minorities of them are peasant farmers in which crop farming and fishing account for over 90% of all forms of economic activities in this region. The farming techniques most frequently employed by the people here is the use of land rotation or bush fallow system. This system is characterized by the use of land and labour as the primary contributors of production. An ancient technique of agriculture, it is extremely susceptible to changes that affect the soil, water and vegetation. The right of the individuals to use land can only be recorded by the families to which they belong. Usually lands are allocated to only the male members of each family especially on their attainment of adulthood and once allocated, the particular piece of land becomes that of the allottee. Also a

family that owns the lands owns the economic trees and he may not wish to take permission before disposing the portion allocated to him. (Jones 1963:17).

There is still the community land tenure system among the various groups in the region and the use of such piece of land is strictly under the regulation and supervision of the council. Fishing adventures in the Niger Delta are mostly carried out by men, while children and women reengage in minor fishing activities. Fishing involves traveling out in canoes into larger creeks which sometimes could run into months away from home. However, not all fishermen wander as some do remain at home using net and hooks for their own expedition.

ii) **Trading**

Trading is another major feature of the Niger Delta economy. The story of the Niger Delta cannot be exhausted without the history of the trading activities because a greater majority of the people who settled there early migrated as a result of the slave trade and the trade in oil with the Europeans. Niger Delta became as distributive centre where; Delta “middlemen” collected manufactured goods from European traders and exchanged them hinterland for products for exports to Europe and America. Trading in the Niger Delta has continued to remain one of the major economic activities in the region.

iii) **The Oil Industry**

Oil is today by far the most important and widely used energy resource in the modern world economy. It goes into everything, from vehicle fuels to farm fertilizers, plastics, drugs, and paints. Its production and distribution today effects the relations between nations and even the purchasing power of individual citizens.

Nigeria, Africa's second largest producer of oil after Libya and the eight in the world, has experienced all the vicissitudes associated with the price of oil since 1959 when the giant Anglo-Dutch Oil Company, Shell-BP, began commercial production in the country. The location of oil industry in Nigeria at the moment is largely within the Niger Delta, an area which by coincidence was also the main location of the country's much older palm oil industry. The oil industry in Nigeria is almost a Federal Government affair, as all mineral resources are exclusively in the hands of the Nigerian State as no person or company is allowed to drill or exploit petroleum deposits without licence approved by the Nigerian State. To buttress this fact, the Petroleum Decree No.5 of 1969 states that the ownership and control of all petroleum in, under or upon any land out to the 200 mile limit of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is vested in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These facts in effect plunder the wealth of Nigeria by the influx of foreign materials and personnel to control the oil industry. They are not only gradually gaining control of markets and the economic and political structures of the Nigerian State, but also engendering environmental pollution and ecological damage and surreptitiously seeking to re-introduce neo-colonial relations as successors of the old colonial regime. At the end, profits to capital, as well as compensation to labour must be repatriated to their home countries and the host communities left in abject poverty.

These are the major economic features of the political economy of the Niger Delta (agriculture, trading, and oil industry). Carving and hunting are known traditional economic activities among the people. These economic activities have helped in the survival of the

people of the Niger Delta. The enormous economic activities in the Niger Delta are as a result of their rich and diverse natural endowments. The people are blessed with natural resources and this has also influenced their way of life. However, the people are unhappy and depressed because of underdevelopment in this region.

Political Economy, Class, and Nation

We demonstrate in this paper that the minority problem of the Niger Delta emerged as an inevitable consequence of development both in the political economy and in the nationalist struggles for independence.

According to the National Population Bureau, although Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with over 200 different ethnic groups, these groups, except for the effect of migration, "are often geographically homogenous and often coincide with linguistic, cultural and religious grouping." This fact reinforces the description of these minorities as nationality groups. In the case of Nigeria, the accidental and arbitrary manner in which many internal boundaries were established in the three former regions- Northern, Eastern, and Western- greatly distorts the cultural homogeneity of the minority groups.

As regards the Niger Delta, Jones points out that the divisions of European geographers and cartographers were complicated by more recent political boundaries, which were no more than "arbitrary administration arrangement bearing little relation to the geographical, land, and cultural realities." "Geographically and ethnographically", asserts Jones, "the delta is better represented as a single whole made up of a central area, the true delta of the Niger, which has become extended eastwards and westwards Similarly the inhabitants of the delta are culturally and linguistically homogenous in the central area where they form the Ijo-speaking people."

Coleman affirms that there was no minority problem during the early period of British rule. For this there were two explanations. First was the native authority system which was specifically directed towards the development of each tribal or nationality group according to the peculiar institutions and requirements of that group. The second was the fact that minority grievances and the drive to create more states were the results of, or reactions to, modern political development. Although Coleman indicates three important aspects of that development, the three are so inextricably bound up with our analytical categories of 'national and class struggles' that we rest the issues at this stage.

The fundamental issue is, however, the division of societies into classes. While this, according to Andreski, may be related with the struggle over opelimities wealth, power, and prestige), the classical Marxist linking of classes with specific economic function in the process of production under capitalism has implications for the Nigerian political economy, namely the emergence of new classes in addition to the pre-capitalist ones - landowners, capitals, wage-earning workers, peasants in agriculture and fishing, as well as businessmen or traders, army officers, priest, civil bureaucrats, intellectuals, and professionals. While recognizing that these classes play an important role in social and political struggles, there is a tendency to regard the wage-earning workers (or the proletariat) as of central importance. **According to Seton-Watson**, "whether all the categories are 'classes' or not seems a rather obscure semantic question". The critical issue is the role of the different social classes or groups in the formation of nations or nationalist struggle and in either the leadership or

membership of the nationalist struggle. This is the essence of the relationship between class and nationality in specific historical situations. The periods 1921-1941 and 1941-1958 best exemplify two historical situations in which the relationship between class and nationality: the first, a period of *integration* in nationalist struggle, both among the leadership and among the masses, in which the minority problem seemed non-existent or nipped in the bud, the second, a period, of *disintegration* in nationalist struggle, in which the nationalist leadership was cleft into irreconcilable factions of the leadership or between the minority communities and the regional governments in which they were relocated became a permanent feature of the post-colonial Nigerian political economy.

The genesis of the crisis in the Niger Delta, like the ones in other minority ethnic groups on Nigeria, is traceable to the period shortly before Nigeria's political independence. At that period, the faction of the ruling class in Nigeria located among the minority ethnic groups feared that without adequate guarantee in the post-colonial political arrangement, they stood to be subsumed by their counterparts of the major ethnic groups. This was as a result of the fact that the factional struggle among the ruling class shortly before independence has taken the dimension of the utilization of ethnic sentiment as an instrument for ensuring victory.

Thus, naturally the faction of this class from the minority ethnic groups had every cause to fear their loss of relevance and subsequent subjugation in the post-independence era. They generally expressed that it will tantamount to leaving British colonialism to enter the colonialism by the faction of the ruling class among the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Therefore they quickly galvanized their People to agitate against the Nigerian independence on the ground that the major ethnic groups will lord it over the minority ethnic group after independence. But this seemingly altruistic agitation was a disguise for ensuring that an enclave in the form of a region was carved out for them to control (Onyishi, 1995:82).

It was this agitation that necessitated the setting up of the Willink Minority Commission in 1958. The Commission was appointed basically to look into alleged fears of the minorities and suggest the means of allaying them (Okoli, 1980:34). However, the Commission felt that *in considering the problem within each region, we were impressed that it is seldom possible to draw a clear boundary, which does not create fresh minority* (Willink Report, 1958). The Commission submitted its report recommending the creation of new regions for these minority ethnic groups but rather that fundamental human rights should be entrenched in the independence constitution. Since then, the minority ethnic groups inspired by the faction or the ruling class amongst them, have always been restive, using any available means to project their views. But the whole problem or minority agitation for the creation of their own region or state in Nigeria is usually generated by the faction or the ruling class, which starts by disguising its class interest in the ethnic minority rationalization

Thus, as Nnoli (1978) rightly notes:

The analysis of ethnic politics suggests that the relevant explanation lies in the class character of the Nigerian ethnicity, particularly the desire of the, various regional factions of the privileged classes to carve out their own sphere of economic domination.

The class interest according to him is rationalized and mystified by claims of ethnic domination of the minorities. The discovery of oil in commercial quantity in Nigeria in 1958-1962, no doubt enhanced the imperativeness of the state power thereby increasing the intensity of the intra-class struggle among the ruling class for its control (Tanzer, 1969). Coincidentally, majority of these oil-producing communities are located within the minority ethnic areas. Therefore, the faction of the ruling class located among these minority's ethnic groups had hoped to use their advantage of relevance in the oil-bearing region to improve their position in the geo-politics of the economy. This is because oil has become the economic live wire of the Nigerian state. It rose from a position of relative obscurity in the late 1950s, when it contributed less than one percent of the total government revenue to 1970s when it shot up to about 90 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange and 80 percent of the total government revenue (Shell, 1995).

Apart from totally replacing agriculture as the foreign exchange earner, it also drastically affected government economic policies. The government relied on the revenue from oil for promoting economic development and political stability. For this reason, the state began to transform its involvement in the oil industry from a position of receiving oil rent to that of a participant-regular (Obi & Somerekun, 1993:11-12). This was to respond to both internal and external development, which made oil so central to the economic and political process of the state and also the survival of the ruling class. Thus, according to Pearson (1970:10):

Though speculation about oil occurred before 1964, it was only about this time that rumours of the political importance of petroleum began to enter importantly into political discussions. Any relative disinterest in petroleum that remained in 1965 came to an abrupt halt when the federal minister of finance in his annual budget speech spoke optimistically about the balance of payment impacts that oil production would have in Nigeria.

As political feelings about oil grew high so also was the interest in controlling the newly recognized benefits from oil (Turner, 1980). Thus, the struggle on who will control the new wealth began as strategies for control were clearly mapped out and perfected. Commenting on the class implication of oil at the time, Obi (1999: 10) argues that *oil therefore became strategically important in the calculations of the domestic ruling class, as a new basis of accumulation over which control must be sought and established*. It should be observed that the rising profile of oil on official Nigerian circles was closely related to the class character of the Nigerian state in which the emergent domestic ruling class used their position in state institutions to capture economic resources. This was, largely due to the fact that in the colonial era, Nigerians were excluded from actively participating in the colonial economy (Ekekwe, 1986:103). Therefore, lacking the economic base at independence, they relied on political office to promote policies that would promote indigenous primitive accumulation of capital.

Thus, in November 1969, Decree No. 51 was promulgated which resulted in a very significant transfer of the control of resources from the regions of origin of the federal government (Etikerentse, 1985:6). As oil production grew, state revenue increased as well. The very existence, therefore, of these large sums of money from oil revenue gave impetus of

further class factional struggle to control the state and preside over the spending of oil revenue. At the intra-class level, Decree No 51 of November, 1969 (transferring the control of resources from the regions to the federal government) was a major upset in the pre-civil war calculation of the ruling class faction of the producing states/areas who saw the creation of 12 states by the Gowon administration (three for the southern minority that satisfied their age long quest for autonomy) as an end to any form of majority ethnic domination (Obi & Somerekun, 1993: 12). They therefore, believed that they would have direct access and control over the oil that is being produced in the ancestral land. This was not to be. It therefore, caused a great deal of further disaffection between the ruling class of the oil producing areas and those of the non-oil producing sub-nationalities.

Oil in the post-civil war period, has come to constitute a strategic commodity. It became a source of conflict between the faction of the Nigerian ruling class who sometimes resort to the pursuit of their factional interests by mobilizing the people along the line of factional nationalistic ideology or even patriotism as a means of enlisting support to get a larger chunk of the national (oil) cake. The struggle became more intense and pronounced in the early 1980s. This was as a result of the diminishing revenue base of the federal government, and therefore, of the other tiers of government following the collapse of the world oil market and of the depression which ensued in the early 1980s (Olusanya, 1984:55). This immediately engendered pressure for a drastic revision of the country's revenue allocation formula in order to ensure that those states/communities that contributed the most to the centrally collectible revenue (in this case, the oil producing states) get a greater share of the revenue than those that were regarded as contributing little or nothing (Olukoshi & Agbu, 1995: 8). This position was further justified by the fact that the process of oil exploration and production were wrecking environmental havoc in the oil producing areas and destroying all forms of economic activities. The oil Bearing communities, therefore, became more restive, pressing the federal government for a greater share of the country's diminishing oil revenue, a halt to their marginalization from the federal political power structure, compensation for increasing environmental damage, and halt to all forms of exploration and production activities with potentials for causing damages (Olukoshi & Agbu, 1995). All these are geared towards justifying the demand for greater share of the oil revenue by the faction of the ruling class in the oil producing areas.

The move made by the federal government to assuage the feelings of the people of the oil producing areas, were seen not to be enough as they continued in their agitation for a greater control of the oil revenue. They have used pressure groups, national and international fora to pursue their course within the common interest they share with other factions of the domestic ruling class. They (the ruling class faction of the minorities) are demanding that royalties and rent (hitherto paid to the federal government) be returned to them. They are also asking for a return to the principle of derivation, which obtained in the 1960s when the dominant ethnic groups of the East, West and North were producing palm oil, cocoa and groundnuts, respectively.

However, it is expedient at this juncture that we understand the source of the conflict between the ruling class of the oil producing areas and the other members of the domestic ruling class in Nigeria. While the ruling class faction of the producing areas are determined in their struggle to change the status quo of allocation of revenue which is not in their favour

and interest, the other members of the domestic ruling class of the non-oil producing nationalities are determined to maintain the status quo which had invariably given them access to the resources they do not produce (Asogwa, 2005). These contradictory interests held by both factions of the Nigerian ruling class, in the oil industry, therefore, became a major source of conflict that has persisted in the Niger Delta region. It is also expedient to note that because the ruling class faction of the non-oil producing nationalities are bent on maintaining the status quo, they tend to marginalize and alienate other members of the ruling class of the oil producing areas, thereby exacerbating the crisis there.

The ruling class faction of the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta region, having used pressure groups, national and international forums to put across their case for greater share and control of oil revenue within the common interest they share with other members of the domestic ruling class, now resort to the mobilization of the people to fight and achieve their aim. Ken Saro Wiwa (1995:5-6), addressing a cross-section of the Ogoni elite as part of the Niger Delta ruling class said:

We have taken a very important step in clearing our minds; in achieving unity in leadership, in projecting our case before Nigeria. The next is to mobilize every Ogoni man, woman and child on the value and necessity of our movement so that everyone knows and believes in the movements and holds it as a religion, refusing to be bullied or bribed therefore. And finally, we must begin to build up action to transform our current political advantages into political score.

This is the situation that the peasants and youths in the Niger Delta found themselves. The elite therefore cashed in on this situation. Thus, the state or their deplorable condition is brought to bear on them and they are made to believe that the causes of their woes are the exploiters of the community resources who dispossessed them of a good means of livelihood. This mobilization process is made easy as a result of unemployment of the youths, the intensity of exploitation, the ecological degradation and the intransigent neglect by the oil companies.

To motivate them, they are promised “better life” as “spoils of war”. They are also promised a future and participation in the reparation or compensation that would follow their agitation and struggle. The mobilization is done along communal or sub-national consciousness and solidarity against the “exploiters” (even when the exploiters could be defined as the oil companies: the non-oil producing majority ethnic nationalities, or states, the government, neighbouring villages, and towns, or even some people within the community who appear to be compromising the struggle). Thus, the environmental change in the form of environmental degradation only provided the catalyst for the fostering crisis in the Niger Delta region. Therefore, as Olaninyan (2008), rightly noted while explaining the rampant incidence of gangsterism in the area “Individuals and unmandated tiny cabals use the inhabitants of the Niger-Delta to make money, while the conditions of the various poor communities have deteriorated”.

Finally, the involvements of the Nigerian state in the Niger Delta crisis shows a gross manifestation of the factional interest, which it promotes and protects. In an attempt to resolve the crisis, which no doubt impinges on the interest of the ruling class in Nigeria as it

affects the level of oil production, thereby reducing the resources available for their primitive accumulation, the federal government of Nigeria, has employed various strategies and tactics. For instance, the federal government has created various institutional mechanisms to ameliorate the impact of environmental degradation. But most of these institutions have ended up as pipelines for siphoning funds by the members of the ruling class. In addition to the various seemingly peaceful means of resolving the crisis, the federal government has equally employed repressive mechanisms through the coercive instrument of the state such as the police, and the military. This repressive measure has rather become counterproductive as it has elicited the formation of formidable ethnic militia groups in the region who engage in all forms of intrigue to extort money from both the expatriates and perceived “collaborators”.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we can understand that the crisis in the Niger Delta region is as a result of the contradictory nature of the interests between the ruling class of the oil producing areas and the other members of the domestic ruling class in Nigeria. This contradiction finds expression on who is to appropriate the surplus of the oil revenue, to capture power and preside over the revenue. These struggles are waged around the issues of the fairness and equity of the revenue allocation system, federal hegemony in the federal/state relations, access to federal power, oil producing minorities' rights, uneven development, etc. With oil, ever so strategic as the fiscal basis of the Nigerian state, and, source of capital accumulation and class formation, the struggles are much broadened, intense and complex.

Apart from the struggle for power, the cleavages within the domestic ruling class have been driven further apart, with the people of the oil producing areas openly calling for a redistribution of oil resources in their favour, and a reform of the present arrangement perceived as being unfair and unfavourable to them. They have used pressure groups, national and international fora, to press their case within the ambience of the common interests they share with other factions of the domestic ruling class.

The conflict however, was made manifest by the strategy of mobilizing the middle class, the youths and peasantry along the lines of communal and sub-national consciousness and solidarity against the arch enemies; the other factions of the domestic ruling class and the oil companies. This is however, done in the understanding that a disruption in oil activities will not only draw the attention of the oil companies but also that of the other members of the domestic ruling class who preside over the oil revenue and depend on it for class formation and power consolidation.

We saw the role of the state in the conflict. The government, on its part, tends to promote the interest of one party to the conflict against the other. The extent to which one group was able to control or influence the government determined whether its interest would be paramount or not. We observed a symbiotic relationship between the states and oil on the one hand and oil and the multinational oil companies who produce the oil.

Recommendations

To resolve this crisis requires addressing the issue of equity of allocation of revenues to the constituent units of the Nigerian federation and its sub-national entities. This should

not be viewed outside the political and economic inequalities embedded in the Nigerian state during the colonial rule and reinforced after independence.

Thus, equity cannot be achieved outside the transformation of the Nigerian state. There is the need to draw up a comprehensive legislation for the protection of the oil-producing environment and the need to devise a people-centered environmental policy for the oil producing communities whose basis or livelihood has been polluted and rendered useless.

This process should be democratized to ensure full and maximum participation of all interested parties in arriving at an environmentally sustainable exploitation of oil and the recognition of the rights of the people to food, shelter, clean water, clothes and a safe ecosystem and rights of future generations to the resources of their land.

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