

CONFLICT AND DEVELOPMENT OF OIL PRODUCING STATES: EMPIRICAL REFLECTIONS ON NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA

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Abstract: Scarcity and abundance of natural resources have been greatly acknowledged as agents capable of generating conflict, struggle for access to control and use of natural resources such as forest, water, pastures, land and mineral resources. Thus, conflict between the oil producing Niger Delta region of Nigeria and the oil companies operating in this region has significant implications on the development pattern and trends of the area. Specifically, conflict in Niger Delta which arose in the early 1990s over tension between oil companies and a number of host communities who felt exploited and cheated has damaging and devastating impact on these communities. The situation has continued in recent times and includes vandalization of oil pipe lines, high incidence of poverty in the midst of plenty, environmental, social and economic deterioration. This paper therefore serves as a report of an empirical investigation on the impact of conflict on the development of oil producing Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The methodology in this study captures three equations specified in order to test the linkage between conflict and the development of oil producing states. The result reveals a high degree of the effects of conflict on the development of Niger Delta region as basic infrastructural facilities are inadequate. The indicators of environmental, economic and political deprivations are enormous. This study therefore advocates adequate compensation and provision of basic infrastructural facilities to the host communities in line with peace

education and dialogue as preventive strategies. Where these are treated with a wave of the hands, these deplorable conditions are capable of igniting the flames of more chaos in the area.

Keywords: Conflict, Communities, Development, Education, Preventive.

INTRODUCTION

The significance of natural resources endowment in developing economies particularly oil producing states cannot be overemphasized. This is because the lives of the people in these states that are endowed with natural resources greatly revolve around the exploitation and utilization of these resources in forestry, Agriculture, mining, industry and oil exploration amongst others. Thus the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria is blessed with abundance of these mineral resources, the most significant being petroleum product. Crude oil in this region of the country is expected to be a source of development and economic growth but the activities of the oil companies operating in the region have ignited conflict between the oil companies and the host communities. The conflict in Niger Delta arose in the early 1990s over tension between the foreign oil corporations such as Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and several Niger Delta minority ethnic groups (nationalities) who felt cheated and exploited most especially the Ogonis and the Ijaws. Ethnic and political unrest have continued throughout the 1990s and beyond despite the

emergence of democracy in Nigeria. Competition for oil wealth has ignited violence between numerous ethnic nationalities thereby ushering in, the militarization of the region by ethnic militia groups as well as Nigerian military and police forces. Victims of crimes are fearful of seeking justice for crimes committed against them. This is due to growing impunity from prosecution of individuals responsible for severe human rights abuses. This has created a devastating cycle of increasing conflict and violence.

Nigeria after nearly four decades of oil production, had by the early 1980s become almost completely dependent on petroleum extraction thereby, generating 25 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This has increased to 60 per cent in 2008 and 98 per cent in 2011. Despite the vast wealth created by petroleum, the benefits derivable by the Niger Delta indigenes have been slow. They have increasingly been forced to abandon their traditional agricultural practices. Yearly production of both cash and food crops reduced significantly in the latter decades of 20th century. Cocoa production dropped by 43 per cent. Rubber production reduced to 29 per cent, while cotton reduced by 65 per cent and groundnuts by 64 per cent.

Since then, there had been government's empty promises of benefits for the Niger Delta peoples. The Ogonis therefore become increasingly dissatisfied and their environmental, social, and economic apparatus rapidly deteriorating. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was formed in 1992. MOSOP, spearheaded by Ogoni playwright and author Ken Saro-Wiwa, became the major campaigning organization representing the Ogoni people in their struggle for ethnic and environmental rights. Its primary targets, and at times adversaries, have been the Nigerian government and SPDC.

As at December 1992, the conflict between Ogonis and the oil company escalated seriously and the intensity had been exceedingly high. Both parties began carrying out acts of violence and MOSOP issued ultimatum to the oil companies (Shell, Chevron, and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation) which demanded some \$10 billion in accumulated royalties, damages and compensation, and "immediate stoppage of environmental degradation", and negotiations for mutual agreement on all future drilling. The Ogonis threatened to embark on mass action to disrupt their operation if the companies failed to comply. Thus, the Ogonis shifted the focus of their actions from government to the oil companies engaged in oil exploration. The rationale for this is not unconnected with benefits accrued to the oil companies from extracting the natural wealth of the Ogoni homeland, and neglect

from federal government. The Government responded by prohibiting public gatherings and declaring that disturbances of oil production were acts of treason. The Niger Delta conflict took different dimensions including vandalization of oil pipe lines, kidnapping of expatriates, and allied activities. It is primarily between the host communities and the oil companies. Numerous political maneuvers have also seen the oil communities in hostile and conflict relationship with each other. These conflicts have linkage with the development of Niger Delta region of Nigeria when viewed from economic, political, social and environmental vis-à-vis sustainable development perspective. Thus this paper is organized in five sections. Following section one which is the introduction is section two which focuses on theoretical underpinning and related literature in relation to SPDC and conflict situation in Niger Delta region. Analytical methodology, empirical results and related statistics form the basis of section three while section four is a discussion of findings arising from reflections on empirical data used in the study. Policy reflections, advocacy and concluding remarks terminate the paper in section five.

RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

This study is anchored on social conflict theory as popularized by Karl Marx. This theory views the society as a system which is characterized by social inequalities. Thus individuals and groups within the society have different valuable resources and, one party (the subject class), is exploited by the other (the ruling class). The ruling class exploits and oppresses the subject class and this lead to conflict of interest between the two classes. Social conflict or group conflict occurs when two or more actors oppose each other in social interaction, in an attempt to attain scarce or incompatible goals thereby preventing the opponent from attaining them. Marxist theories argue that these unequal economic relations would lead to social conflict and in as much as the oppression of the proletariat continue, there is likely-hood that conflict will persist. The conflict situation in Niger Delta moves in concert with this in that the relationship between SPDC and their host communities depict power and exploitation. Realizing the extent of exploitation of their natural resources and the economic values of these resources coupled with other challenges, the only option left in this circumstance is the execution of conflict. Thus Karl Marx's articulation is the idea of social conflict, which implies struggle among segments of the society over valued resources and exploitation of one group by the other.

In conceptualizing this therefore it is glaring that human beings have different backgrounds, interests and views. There exist differences in opinion capable of resulting in conflict of interest. Differences in opinion could culminate into aggression and violence. Conflicts have both positive and negative sides and could be progressive when not allowed to be out of hand to become destructive. Conflicts occur when people (or other parties) perceive that, as a consequence of a disagreement, there is a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. Although conflict is a normal part of organization's life, providing numerous opportunities for growth through improved understanding and insight, there is a tendency to view conflict as a negative experience caused by abnormally difficult circumstances. Disputants tend to perceive limited options and finite resources available in seeking solutions, rather than multiple possibilities that may exist 'outside the box' in which we are problem-solving. Put differently conflict is the discord that arises when the goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups are compatible and those individuals or groups block or thwart one another's attempt to achieve their objectives. (Gareth & Jones, 2006). Rahim (2002) views conflict to exist when a party is required to engage in an activity that is incongruent with his or her needs or interests or when a party wants some mutually desirable resource that is in short supply, such that the wants of all parties involved may not be satisfied fully. This implies that a party holds behavioural preferences, the situation of which is incompatible with another person's implementation of his or her preferences. This synchronises with the crisis situation in Niger Delta which has its root cause in the perceptions of marginalization suffered by the Niger Delta indigenes who now agitate for equitable resource allocation and control; fairness and justice; as well as environmental sustainability. Extraction of natural resources also foster grievances, in view of environmental damages. Onduku (2001), maintains that the environment is one of the liveliest and topical issues of today. Globally the environment is in crisis and the Niger Delta situation is such a significant one to the extent of devastation done to the area and the complexity of the crisis. Even though environmental conflicts essentially develop in a local framework, they are also frequently connected at regional, national and even international levels. Environmental conflicts manifest themselves as political, social, economic, religious or territorial conflicts or conflicts over resources or national interests, or any other type of conflict. They are traditional conflicts induced by an environmental degradation.

SPDC AND CONFLICT SITUATION IN NIGER DELTA REGION

Conflict in the Niger Delta has its genesis from 1990's as a result of tension between the foreign oil corporations and a number of the Niger Delta minority ethnic groups who felt exploited, particularly the Ogonis and Ijaws in the late 1990s. This conflicting situation has escalated greatly over the years. The crisis in Niger Delta is as a result of oppressive exploitative activities of oil companies and discriminative policies of government aimed at marginalizing and rendering irrelevant, the people of the Niger Delta whose land has been a source of blessing to Nigeria economy (Egwemi, 2010). Egwemi likens this to the proverbial goose that lays the golden egg, according to him, the grouse of the people of the region seems to be that the goose is treated with disdain. Nigeria's main source of revenue is derived from the Niger Delta yet the region belongs to the ranks of the most backward and politically marginalized groups in the country. Thus scarcity and abundance of natural resources have been acknowledge as generating considerable tension, conflicts, struggle for access to, control and use of natural resource such as forests, water, pastures and land and mineral resources (Stewart, 2007). The menace of environmental degradation has caused untold hardship not only for the Niger Deltans but also to Nigeria. Oil spillage and gas flaring have been a threat to the source of livelihood of Niger Delta, residents and it is a gross economic waste since as close as 90 per cent of natural gases extracted with oil are presently flared in Nigeria, this lessens the earnings from export of the sale of natural gas (Ehighelua, 2007). Nigerian industry data reveals that Nigeria's wealth burnt within the period of 1970 and 2006 as gas flares was put at about \$72 billion (an average of about \$2.5 billion per annum). Annual gas flares in Nigeria is therefore capable of generating the over 1200 Mega Watts (MW) required greatly to boast economic growth (Okwuonu, 2008). The crisis situation in the Niger Delta can be traced to three factors. First, the agitations of the host communities who historically have been excluded from full and effective participation in governance and resource allocation in Nigeria until recently with the election of the president of Nigeria from the Niger Delta region. These are mainly communities within the Niger Delta region that have suffered negative consequences from oil exploration activities. Secondly, the multinational oil companies whose activities cause environmental degradation within their environment which include Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), Mobil Producing, Chevron, Agip, Texaco and Elf. Considering all these, the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) is primarily responsible for most of the oil

exploration activities which have caused the greatest environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region. All these companies engage in the exploration and production of crude oil and its by-products like petrol, gas, kerosene, and diesel etc.

THE PLIGHT OF Ogonis UNDER SHELL PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT COMPANY (SPDC)

The genesis of the crisis that has bedeviled Niger Delta till date can be traced to this Ogoni crisis. The Ogoni people, a minority ethnic group of about half a million people who are indigenes of Ogoni in the southeast of Niger Delta basin, witnessed at a time, disruption of the peace that existed amongst them by the discovery of economically viable petroleum by Royal Dutch Shell. During this time, the government began forcing them to abandon their land to oil companies without consultation, and offering negligible compensation. This is further supported by a 1979 constitutional addition which afforded the federal government full ownership and rights to all Nigerian territory and also decided that all compensation for land would be based on the value of crops on the land at the time of its acquisition, not on the value of the land itself.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the government's empty promises of benefits for the Niger Delta peoples fall through, with the Ogonis growing increasingly dissatisfied and their environmental, social and economic apparatus rapidly deteriorating. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was formed in 1992 and they published a Bill stating that the Ogoni people had suffered the degrading effects of oil exploration and exploitation. Lands, streams, and creeks were completely polluted and the atmosphere charged with hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide with many villages experiencing the internal quaking of the wrath of gas flares.

Following decades of environmental devastation of the entire area as a result of the oil exploration and glaring lack of compensation, alternative provision for destroyed aquatic life and farms upon which the communities' livelihood depended as well as generate under-development of an area that produces 98% of the country's foreign earnings, there arose scores of activists who protested the injustices. Among the protesters, Ken Saro-Wiwa, a well-known Nigerian author, from Ogoni land and spokesperson for the Movement for Survival of the Ogoni People

(MOSOP) on November 10, 1995, and 8 others were hanged in Port Harcourt. All were involved in protest against the activities of Shell in their land. This execution internationalized the crisis. The 'Ogoni Nine' had been tried and convicted by a special tribunal appointed by the military government. The procedures of these blatantly violated international standard of due process. The international outcry was immediate, even from governments not known for an activist stance on human rights.

Ken Saro-Wiwa (1996) maintained that the environment in Ogoni land had been completely devastated by three decades of reckless oil exploitation or ecological warfare by Shell. SPDC, on the other hand, stated: "Allegations of environmental; devastation in Ogoni, and elsewhere in our operating area, are simply not true". It denied allegations of collusion with the Nigerian military. According to Manby (2010) during the height of the Ogoni crisis, MOSOP and other local activists regularly made allegations that Shell colluded with the military, even after the company ceased production in Ogoniland and later commenced operation.

METHODOLOGY

Source of Data

This study covers a period of 22 years. Data used were derivable from secondary sources such as the Central Bank of Nigeria statistical bulletin and Bullion, Bureau of statistics, official publications of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and allied official publications of SPDC, and official publications from sister oil companies in Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

ESTIMATION FRAMEWORK

In order to execute this study, the objective is simply to examine the effect of conflicts on the development of oil producing states with particular reference to Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The ordinary least square technique (OLS) is adopted to determine the equation. The study captures four equations specified in order to test the linkages between conflict and the development of oil producing states. The impact of conflict on manufacturing (manu), industrial production (indp), Workstopages (wkstp), manhours lost (mhrl), Capacity Utilization (cpu) Education (edu), Health facilities (helth), Gross Domestic Product (gdp) vis-à-vis the linkages thereat are measured.

variable	Estimated coefficient	Standard error	t-statistic	p-value
Const	204444	35037.6	5.835	5.83e-05
Δ manu	-0.0941769	0.0118861	-7.923	2.48e-06
Δ indp	0.0881113	0.0173194	-5.087	0.0002
Δ wkstp	123.110	19.2946	-6.381	2.42e-05
Δ mhrl	9.23124e-05	3.07866e-05	-2.998	0.0103
Δ pov	0.000118145	0.000559618	2.2111	0.8361
Δ edu	15892.5	891.196	17.83	1.61e-010
Δ helth	1788.92	881.462	2.029	0.0634
Δ gdp	0.00189658	0.00284585	0.6664	0.5168
Δ unem	-0.00260285	0.00416695	-0.6246	0.5430

R2 = 0.990443, f- statistics = 168.4144

DISCUSSION OF RESULT

An examination of the result presented above reveals salient facts regarding the impact of conflict on the development of oil producing states particularly Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Conflict is regressed on manufacturing, industrial production, workstoppages, manhours lost, poverty, education, health, economic growth and unemployment. The coefficient of the constant term is positive and is statistically significant at 6 per cent level of significance. This signifies that at zero performance of all the independent variables conflict in the oil producing area of Niger Delta Region will increase by 204444. The regression coefficient of manufacturing assumes a negative sign indicating that as conflict increases, manufacturing and production activities reduce ceteris paribus at 3 per cent level of significance. This moves in concert with apriori expectation. Associated t-value is statistically significant at 3 per cent level. The coefficient of industrial production is positively signed and the associated t-value is statistically not significant implying an inverse relationship between conflict and industrial production. The coefficient of workstoppages carry a positive sign and is statistically significant at 2 per cent level of significance. This implies that an increase in conflict leads to severe increase in workstoppages. The situation in manhours lost as a result of conflict in the Niger Delta region is applicable to the above as workstoppages result in lost of manhour equally. The situation of conflict and poverty, health facilities, education is unique. The coefficient of poverty is positively signed and is statistically significant at 0.8

per cent level. This means that increase in conflict between the oil communities in the Niger Delta region is severe. This is as a result of inadequate educational and health facilities. Though the coefficient of education is fairly significant, effect is that conflict reduces the provision for basic facilities by SPDC. The coefficient of economic development is positive and is statistically significant. Conflict retards economic development of nations. This is the case with Niger Delta which also suffers from lack of unemployment vis-à-vis wealth and job creation.

POLICY REFLECTION, ADVOCACY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

A careful reflection on this study reveals that there is severe relationship between conflict and economic developments of the Niger Delta region in relation to manufacturing, industrial production, workstoppages, manhours losts, poverty, unemployment, educational and health facilities. The linkage is important as it reveals further the extent of exploitation of the host communities of Niger Delta. Provision of the basic facilities at the Niger Delta region and adequate compensation for the damages done to the area is important and urgent. This is in view of the astronomical incidence poverty and underdevelopment of the areas despite the abundance of natural resources and endowment. The model has revealed a good fit as the level of impact of conflict on development is about 99 per cent. This paper therefore advocates that machinery be put in place for peace education in relation to a harmonious relationship between the SPDC and host communities of the Niger Delta. The study also advocates reasonable compensation from oil companies

operating in the Niger Delta region to the host communities in order to term the tide of conflict in the area. Where these are neglected, this study argues that the conflicting situation is capable of remaining continuous and relapsing from time to time thereby aggravating the already underdeveloped situation in the Niger Delta region.

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