



NIGER-DELTA

**Politics of Despair, Deprivation
and Desperation**

**Akinjide Osuntokun
Dr. Victor Ukaogo**

Niger-Delta: Politics of Despair, Deprivation and Desperation

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Niger Delta and the Struggle for Resource Control: What Implication for National Integration

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Introduction

The Niger Delta of Nigeria is among the richest deltas in the world. It has huge oil and gas reserves and ranks as the world's sixth largest exporter of crude oil and second largest producer of palm oil after Malaysia, which even obtained its palm seedlings from Nigeria (Ogbuke, 2007:11). The people of the Niger Delta, are like other Nigerians highly diverse culturally. Historical differences in their political behaviour have been imposed by their peculiar riverine geography in which isolated settlements on the little available dry land, surrounded by mazes of anatomizing creeks, fostered small ancient city states and kingdoms such as, Bonny, Brass, Akassa, Kalahari, Okrika, Nembe, Ogoni, Opobo, Itsekiri and Urhobo, which were contemporaries to their much larger neighbouring old Calabar, Aro-Chukwu Trading Empire, Benin Empire and Ibadan Empire of the late 19th century (Alechenu, 2005:8). The Niger Delta is the South-South of Nigeria comprises of six states (Akwa Ibom, Cross-River, Delta, Edo, Rivers, Bayelsa) among which are rated poorly developed communities but richly blessed with oil and gas wh? le dominated by abject poverty, under-employment, exploitation, marginalization, pollution, unemployment, environmental degradation etc. The harsh physical background induced a somewhat more

republican political behaviour among the people of the Niger Delta, than among those Nigerians who were traditionally used to more centralized authority.

In this contemporary time, no phenomenon has captured vividly the imagination of democratic scholars, activists and observers of democracy in Nigeria than the crises in the Niger Delta region. These crises had brought about agitation for resource control which resulted in protest and violent demonstration that often led to the destruction of lives and properties. The Niger-Delta is a crises ridden area, because the action of the federal government and trans-national oil companies in these places, do not consider the well being and welfare of the inhabitants.

The Niger Delta region in Nigeria has been the site of a generalized ethnic and regional struggle for self-determination since 1998. The location is often characterized with violent confrontation between local ethnic communities and agents of the Nigerian state and oil companies in the extraction and exploitation of oil in the area. What began as community agitation has undoubtedly undergone several transformations. The first involved the flowering of civil society, which mobilized a popular civil struggle. The second saw the extension of the agitation from that against multinational oil companies (MNCs) to include the Nigerian state. The third transformation involved the elevation of the agitation from purely development issues to overtly political demand such as restructuring of the federal system, resource control and the resolution of the national question through a conference of ethnic nationalities. The current and fourth stage of the transformation has seen the entrance of youths, youth militancy and militias with volatile demand and ultimatums that have accentuated the scale and intensity of confrontations and violence with the multinationals and the state.

The struggle in Niger Delta is a struggle for resource control, development, marginalization and poverty eradication in the community. The continuous neglect, different conjunctural dimension by the government which involves combine forces of authoritarianism, social marginalization and exploitation of the people of Niger Delta region has stimulated the resistance to ongoing exploration of oil in the region leading to violence. The quest for resource control has been recurring demand in the history of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This could be explained partly in the light of the historical significance of

the Niger Delta to Nigeria. The area has featured as the loci of social and economic exchange between the coast and the hinterland during the pre-colonial period. It remains remarkable that, its economic significance to Nigeria now, and in the past, has derived largely from local and international trade premised on oil (Darah, 1995).

It is evident that nature has done its part by freely depositing valuable treasures in the Niger Delta. What remains missing is that the Nigeria nation-state is yet to play her role to overcome, tame and nurture the harsh environment to ensure that the overall well-being of the people of the Niger Delta region in particular and the nation in general are taken care of. The Niger Delta question revolves around the call for resource control and true federalism by the people of the region, so that the years of neglect and deprivation the people of the area have suffered under the existing arrangement whereby the power to allocate resources vested in the federal government, would be addressed. Resource control is therefore the major issue in the Niger Delta crisis, it is about equity in resources allocation, exploitation and utilization. The historic wrongs and official insensitivity to the right of the Niger Delta thrown up and sustain bloody agitation and insecurity in the region. There is no doubt in the fact that this development has some implications on national integration in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

The discovery and extraction of oil in the Niger Delta for the past 51 years have been described as a curse rather than a blessing by the people of the region. The region has turn to blood shedding zone where fun welding militants engaged the police and security agents in a duel that has resulted in the wanton destruction of lives and properties (Soni, 2007:13).

The unabated crises in the Niger Delta region, have not only dislocated the social fabric of the region, but innocent lives, private and public properties running into several billion of naira have been lost by the nation to this ugly development thereby causing panic in the polity and possible threat of ending the Nigerian state in chaos. The region has been so backward and denied of development in spite of huge contribution to national wealth. The region has been dominated by abject poverty, underdevelopment, exploitation, marginalization, pollution, unemployment and environmental degradation among other problems. All these serves as a source of crises being experienced in the

region. The region is the center of economic and resources base of Nigeria, but dearly neglected (Tokunbo, 2004:3). Oil spillage has mark the hunger syndrome where farmlands are covered with oil spillage and rendering their water undrinkable, killing the fishes and other aquatic animals without an alternative means of feeding. Oil spillage is also hazardous to the health of the people as the sulphur expose in the air during spillage and inhaled into the body which is hazardous. Besides, the oil producing companies operating in the area are not socially responsible to the communities in which they operate. While oil is a source of profit to the oil multinationals, the oil rich environment is fundamental to the survival and reproduction of the oil minorities and the local host communities. Due to the fragile ecology of the Niger Delta, oil production has the impact of upsetting the delicate balance between land, water and life. Apart from the threat to ecosystem, most of these communities lack basic infrastructure, while their local economies are ruined by pollution. The refusal of the companies to respond to these demands have provoked tension and a rash of protests in the oil minority areas of the Niger Delta (Obi, 2004:271). In the view of Fadare (2005:12), the Niger Delta has suffered colossal loss of human capital compounded by extensive environmental degradation as a result of oil exploration and quite ironically, it is one of the least developed regions of the country. The Niger Delta remains pervasively poor and underdeveloped lacking virtually all forms of social amenities and infrastructure including electricity, medical facilities, roads, shelter and so on. The region now has a regrettable legacy of hunger, high and rising rates of unemployment, communal conflict and all forms of social insecurity.

The youth presently spearhead and constitute the vanguard of Niger Delta conflict nationalists. They chart the course of methods, tactics and strategies and define the momentum, vitality, vocalization and diction of conflicts. The insurgency has involved diverse well armed and fairly trained youth militias, which using speed boats and operating fairly freely in the swamps, creeks and coastal area of the region, have engaged the Nigerian military and seized oil facilities, ships barges, workers and equipments. Increasingly, the youth militancy has become criminalized, with the region being transformed into an arena of economic crises, violence and war. While Agbo (2008:75) also argued thus:

The Niger Delta has been excluded from active participation in the oil industry. Oil wells in their backyard are awarded to people who are predominantly from non-oil producing states, who exploit the land without regard for its owner. This is perpetuated by what they believe is their near exclusion from power. The Presidency, like a Father Christmas, doles out oil licenses as it pleases. For instance, President Umaru Yar'Adua doubles until recently as Minister of Petroleum. He borrowed a leaf from former President Olusegun Obasanjo who handled the oil ministry for the eight years he was in office. Meanwhile, the owners of the oil wallow in neglect in an abused environment and the youth are driven to crime as ventilation. The future is not bright for the Niger Delta as the majority groups may not support restructuring or increase of derivation to 50 per cent as demanded. But if Nigeria wants peace, it is a challenge it must confront. If not, the agitation will continue and who knows one day, the God of justice, as Boro predicted might harkens to the voice of the Niger Delta and inference.

It was the culmination of the injustice, political frustration and suffocation that the Niger Delta people suffered in an independent Nigeria. From the foregoing, it shows that there is a link between crises in Niger Delta and the attainment of national integration. The problems created by the crises negate the achievement of national integration.

Conceptual and Theoretical Perspective

The concept of resource control has travelled a very long and languid road to its present connotation. In the area of aggressive British imperialism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, it was seen as agitation by indigenous people of the Niger Delta to partake in the vibrant oil trade and in the politics of self-determination in the area (Ashton, 1998). Dafinone (2001) noted that resources is a basic political theory grounded on the fact that land, capital and entrepreneur are factors of production owned by individual and should be controlled by them. In doing so, the reward derived from such factors of production

owned by individual and should be controlled by them. He further asserted that whoever own land for example, expect some form of compensation from those hiring this very important factor of production (Guardian, 2001:30). The economic theory has also shown that property rights provide the foundation for efficient use of resources, rapid economic growth and sustainable development, since it provides sufficient incentives to minimize the environmental impact of resource exploitation under proper cost accounting (Edevbie, 2001).

A private property right encourages wider stewardship because private owners have strong incentives to undertake cost effective property management (Aghalino, 2006:308). It will also make people accountable for their activities and thereby promotes the general welfare.

The Southern Governors at their meeting in Benin, on 27th March 2001 defined resource control as "the practice of true federalism and natural law in which the federating units express their right to primarily control the natural resources within their borders and make agreed contribution towards the maintenance of common services of the government at the centre (Buchanan, 1960: 174, quoted in Oladeji 2006:288 - 289). From all practical and political realities, the agitators are actually demanding for an adequate share of the revenue deriving from their areas.

The word "integration" implies merging together, uniting, fusion, joining together. Impliedly, two or more components should exist before the fusion or unity (Okafor and Okeke, 2008:107). Integration is the process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based upon an order its members regarded as equitably harmonious (Ojo, 2006:51). Integration is a relationship of community among people within the same political entity in a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, to be committed to mutual programmes (Philip and Henry 1964:9).

In the view of Ake (1967:3), integration is defined as the extent that the minimal units develop in the course of political interaction a pool of commonly accepted norms regarding political behaviour patterns legitimized by these norms. While Coleman and Rosberg (1964:9) see it as the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community. Thus, in having an integrative nation, they also believe that individuals and groups must subordinate their ethno-regional and

linguistic background for an organic entity despite the diversities in such a political system. Deutch, et al (1996:2) offer a better definition of integration as the attainment, within a territory of a "sense of community" and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a long time, dependable expectations of peaceful community. In another way, a security community is a group of people who are integrated. A "sense of community" is a belief on the part of individuals in a group that they have come to agreement on at least one point, that common social problems must and can be resolved through process of peaceful change (Deutsch, et al 1996). This means the resolution of social problems without resort to large-scale physical force. The obvious disparities among definitions of integration illustrate the state of conceptual confusion in the field (Ojo, 2005:52).

As noted by scholars, the term "national integration" may be defined in an endless number of ways without violating the standards for scientific investigation, but failure to agree on the common concept of what integration connotes makes useful comparison and theory building difficult. The word national integration is a multifaceted and multi dimensional concept. This thinking arises from the plurality that seems to attend attempts at conceptual explication of the term. Bamisaye (1988:35) opined that there is a great dissensus among scholars over even a nominal definition of the concept. He further asserted that national integration would refer to means of uniting all component parts of a country into one. He also sees national integration as the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unity and the establishment of a national identity.

Iwokwagh (2008:155) noted that two things stand out from the conceptions of national integration. The first has to do with the geographical or territorial mass of a country. In the light of this thinking, national integration could be achieved if the different parts that make a country are lumped together as a monolithic whole. Okafor and Okeke (2008:108) also contended that national integration implies the unification of different parts of a state which will serve as a forum for cooperation and inter-dependence. The second perspectives according to Iwokwagh (2008) sees national integration as a process of bringing together the various interest groups (social, cultural, political etc) in a territorial entity to the pursuit of common goals or objectives. Ibodje and Dode (2007) posits that for there to be national integration, there must be a common central authority to serve as a rallying point. He cites United

States of America as a practical example.

It is important to state that the first perspective seems more accurate and more relevant to the paper. Thus, national integration is operationalized here as the process whereby several disparate groups within a given territorial entity are united together or cooperate under conditions which do not appear to permit satisfaction of their system needs in any other way.

For the purpose of our analysis, in this paper, theories of integration are considered relevant. The functionalists were the first to develop the theory of integration. They were motivated by the devastating effects of the First World War. The best known proponent of this school is David Mitrany. Okafor and Okeke (2008) observes that the emphasis of this school was on common needs of nation states or units of a state, the universally accepted criteria that stemmed from scientific rationality as opposed to power. The state system with its sovereign character has been the bane of wars and conflicts in the world. In their view, the state therefore builds insecurity, irrationality and alienation. To solve the problem, a structure would have to be built which would integrate the states to pursue collective goals rather than individual goals.

The Neo-functionalist school on the other hand was pioneered by Ernest B. Haas. This school contended that politics could not be separated from technical welfare. Put differently, politics should be an integral part of national integration. The functionalists claimed that no sector was independent of its activities. Thus, there must be an existence of interrelationship among the various sectors ranging from politics to technical expertise (Okafor and Okeke, 2008:110). Haas (1958) noted that once integration began in one sector, it would spill over to other sectors, thus resulting in an interdependent web. In the process of integration, there would be a tendency of withdrawal. Haas (1958) therefore observed that the logic of governments is to move forward because if they do not do so, it may lead to unintended consequences. As integration takes place, automatic politicization of other sectors will occur. Under this type of situation, various groups will begin to seek relevance in the scheme of events. The events or activities taking place among various groups and interest sectors according to Okafor and Okeke (2008) will gradually subsume all the sectors either proposing or opposing integration.

The federalist theory of integration lay emphasis on the enactment of

laws and establishment of institutions. Their proposition is based on the assumption that when the legal framework and the institutional capacity are present and functioning, this will naturally engender integration. It is instructive to note that an early generation of students of inter-group relations in plural societies considered federalism as an effective way of achieving both integration and stability in deeply divided societies. (Ojo, 2005:52), asserted that whenever events seemed to demand that a compromise be struck between the necessity for unity and co-operation on a wide territorial basis, on the one hand, and the need to accommodate the legitimate claims of sub-national groups for self rule on the other hand, "the temptation in the words of Osaghae (1998:1) is to proffer a catch-all management formula such as federalism

The Niger-Delta Region and the Politics of Resource Control

No issue in recent times, in Nigerian governmental and political circles has generated as much controversy as the demand by Niger Delta region to control resources in their domain. The Governors have been so passionate about the clamour that as the day passed by, so also was their resolve to see to the end of it. The need for resource control, they argued, is neither borne out of selfishness nor a desire to destabilize or destroy Nigeria's unity and prosperity. Rather, they maintained, it is borne out of a sincere and natural desire to see Nigeria governed on the principle of justice and equity, so that every group can develop a sense of belonging, unity prosperity and faith in the country (Abia, 2008:291).

Resource control is about equity in resource allocation, exploitation and utilization. It has always been a bone of contention in the Nigerian polity. Obviously, the issue of resource control means different things to different people in Nigeria. To the Niger-Delta region, it is a noble cause worth dying for. To other far away communities, it evokes negative images that should at best be suppressed. The responses of some Niger Delta people indicate three contending perspectives. First is resource control as control and management of resources for self development. This is phrased by several people as "to control our natural resources", "manage our own property, the way we want it", "to control our God given resource to better the lot of the down trodden people" and controlling the resources found in under and on the land and waters of the people of the Niger Delta by the people themselves (Fadare, 2005:12). He stated further that the second perspective posit resource control in terms of claims to ownership. As

some put it, "it is to be in charge of what belong to us". The third perspective sees it in terms of greater participation and greater portion of the shared benefits from oil resources. While Professor, Anualu Yakubu, former constitutional Adviser to late Gen. Sanni Abacha, argued that the agitation for resource control was grossly "unreasonable and inequitable". He argued further that the people of South-South should not forget that the initial investments in the oil and gas exploration activities were raked from the resources generated by the other region during the boom of agricultural proceeds, and that the position of the North has been that "we don't find it reasonable, for any one to claim that he owns the mineral resources. There is no support for that in law or in the constitution" (Aha, 2005:8; Osaghae, 2007:13). Emmanuel Uduaghan (Governor of Delta State) while advocating for resource control in an interview with Tell Magazine has this to say:

There is no doubt that oil has improved the economy of Nigeria and it is because of oil earnings that we are considered a rich country. On the other side, it has also had a negative effect, especially in two areas. First is the area of development of the non-oil sector, especially in the area of agriculture. With the advent of oil farming was relegated. Second is the area of security. It has worsened national security, especially in the Niger Delta. It has caused a lot of restiveness on the Niger Delta area. It has caused a lot of crises with a lot of deaths. And then thirdly, it had led to very serious damage to our ecosystem with a lot of environmental damage and pollution. So, basically, that is how far we have fared in the last 50 years. (Ero, 2008:62)

In the view of Aghalino (206:307), it took time before the concept of resource control was fine-tuned to reflect the aspirations of most Governors in the South. Nevertheless, opinion is divided among the Governors. There is therefore a crack in the interpretation of the issue. For instance, at the third summit of Southern Governors held in Benin city, 26-27 March 2001, dissention centred around resource control and the participants were divided on the onshore-offshore dichotomy. Thus, there were frayed nerves between the Governors of the littoral states and others. The position of the Governors of the littoral states in the view of Sagah (2001:8) seems to suggest that the quest for resource control go

beyond increased revenue allocation. It means the right of states and communities most directly concerned to have a direct and decisive role in the exploration, exploitation and disposal of, including sales of "harvested" resources of the Niger Delta.

The position of the Niger Delta Governors enunciated principally by the former Delta State Governor Chief James Ibori, on resource control and federalism, is that, the states which demand resource control seek to exercise their freedom to develop their natural resources in the best way they deem without undue federal interference. The Niger-Delta people posited that central to the struggle for resource control is the right of the states and communities most directly concerned to have a direct and decisive role in the exploration and disposal of including sales of harvested resources. Mere increase in resource without control and management is short sighted and deadly. They argued that it condemns the peoples of the Niger Delta to a present without a future.

Furthermore, the Niger-Delta delegates to the National Political Reforms Conference (NPRC) were specific that the principle of ownership and control of resources by the states is a fundamental demand of fiscal federalism. They stated that each state government should identify, collect and be directly responsible for all the revenues from its resources. An appropriate tax of 20 percent shall be paid by each state to the federal government for its own use, 15 percent to a distributive pool and 5 percent shall be paid to the zones. Each will retain a balance of 50 percent of the proceeds of the resources. This will also help to make the centre less powerful and less attractive than it is today (Etaghere, 2005:33). These diverse interpretations of resource control invariably made it controversial to the extent that the federal government paid more than positive interest to it.

The issue discussed above, in the view of Agbodike (2004:181) sought to lay a solid foundation in terms of who gets what and to eliminate the tendencies and circumstances which give to mutual suspicion and unhealthy rivalries and which generate inter-group frictions and so exacerbate the disintegration rather than promoting the unity of the country. In the process, too, it strengthens the parochial, particularist orientations and parochial primordial ethnic attachments of Nigerians. These tendencies form the basis of disaffection among various groups in the nation. What is therefore necessary is to seek ways and means to make resource control less rancorous and problematic,

and to channel it in such a way as to ensure the overall unity and progress of the country.

State Intervention in Niger-Delta Development

The development of the Niger Delta has remained a major challenge for the Nigerian state with local communities increasing their expression of dissatisfaction with government's efforts. As far back in 1957, the colonial government had recognized the peculiar problem of the Niger Delta. Consequently upon this, the British colonial government set up the Willinks Commission on September 26, 1957 to recommend the best strategies for developing the area. But the report of the commission submitted in August 18, 1958 failed to meet the expectation of the minority ethnic groups as it is noted that the dismantling of the tripartite federal structure through states creation would "create more problems than it sought to cure". However, the commission in its Report recommended that the Niger Delta area should be treated as special because of its "special problems" and peculiar developmental needs (Ubhenin, 2006: 76). Osuoka (2007:4) observes that the independence constitution of 1960 recognised the right of the oil producing region to 50% of royalties deriving from oil and gas exploitation. This arrangement was cancelled by soldiers with the introduction of military rule in 1966.

Furthermore, in 1976, another attempt at developing the Niger Delta has the establishment of River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs); with the setting up of the Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority (NDRBA). Though the NDRBA was designed to develop the Niger Delta, some sectors have described it as a fraud on the part of the federal government (Williams, 2003: 12). It was partly in response to the demands of the oil minorities, and to mediate the contradictions spawned by oil that the Babangida junta raised the statutory allocation to mineral-producing areas to 13 percent, and set up the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Council (OMPADEC) in 1992 to administer the fund (Obi, 2004: 269-270). While OMPADEC failed to meet the yearnings and aspirations of the oil producing states as a result of indiscriminate award of contracts with very little regard for transparency and accountability. In 2000, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was established to replace the OMPADEC to offer a lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta region by offering rapid, even and sustainable development of the Niger

Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful. Though the NDDC has focused on the development of social and physical infrastructures, environmental degradation and human development, the commission have not been able to achieve the lofty goals as the commission is entangled in the same legitimacy and corruption crises as previous initiatives. Hence the establishment of Niger Delta Ministry in 2008 by President Yar'Adua administration to supervise the activities of NDDC and bring succor to Niger Delta region. Yishau (2008: 78) therefore conclude that from the Niger Delta Development Board to the 1.5 percent committee to Oil Minerals Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC), government's efforts at alleviating the sufferings of the people in the Niger Delta remain largely insufficient.

Resource Control and National Integration: What Nexus

The conception of the national integration adopted in this study is that it is best posed as a challenge in terms of the need to work out modalities and to reach a consensus for the evolution of a just and equitable basis through which the diverse nationalities in Nigeria can unite and pursue a common destiny of National development as Nigerians (Soremekun and Obi, 1993:213). The relevant question that should be asked at this juncture is how does resource control then affects national integration. The simple answer is that oil is an object of the struggles between classes, factions of classes acting either through state structures, or ethnic identity groups. Since oil is power, and power is oil in the context of Nigeria's political economy, the struggle for oil power became a primary object of politics, and the inequitable distribution of oil highlights existing inequalities, competing claims, grievances and even conflicts, which conspire to threaten the federal foundation of the Nigerian State (Obi, 2005:195).

To the federal government, the call for the resource control is seen as a call for the break-up of Nigeria as it smacks of separatist tendency. The evidence available suggests that the federal government does not favour dialogue in this matter although government agents feign preference for dialogue and peaceful resolution of the impasse (Aghalino, 2006:310). He observes further that the stick approach of the government to the resolution of the resource control question has merely escalated the issue. It is expected that the federal government should follow due process in bringing truculent youths to book. Rather,

the government more often than not sends in troops to pacify the youths – a strategy that has never pay off. Apart from the fact that this is a continuation of *Pax Britannica* in the area, it is meant to harass and intimidate the people to submission by possibly wiping out communities as epitomized by the Odi massacre (Aghalino, 2006:311).

The struggle for resource control, in which the competing factions of the Nigerian elite, identified in class, ethnic, regional, and even religious, that seeks to defend or break the monopoly of federal control over oil, has far reaching implications on national integration. Passions linked to the control of oil undermine the possibilities for dialogue and compromise, while the deployment of ethnicity in staking claims and seeking entitlements and restitution through a clearly masked factional elite agenda greatly weakens the bond that holds Nigeria together. In essence, Nigerians should in the spirit of give and take and the overall interest of national integration revive the spirit of debate, dialogue, consensus, trust and compromise so necessary for national reconciliation and reconstruction (Obi, 2005: 2002).

National integration therefore, is a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalty toward a central political authority and institutions by individuals belonging to different social groups or political units (Ogunojemite, 1987:224). To Coleman and Roseberg, territorial integration is the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating as homogeneous territorial political community (quoted in Ayoade, 2004:11) while Oyeleye (1987:81), quoting Ernest Haas described national integration as “a process whereby political actors in distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing nation-state. While these views emphasize the development of a homogeneous community resource control is based on the recognition of ethnic differences. From the foregoing, it could be argued that the fate of resource control and national integration are inextricably inter-twined. No wonder Aghalino (2006:313) stated that:

More than anything else, the politics of resource control merely reinforced the need to look critically at the constitution and recreate it. As of now, the federal government is too big, too cumbersome and too rich and influential for the good of the

commonwealth. Its awesome powers are too dangerous for the health of the nation. As far as the federal government continues to disburse largesse to the states, the future of democracy is bleak. This is particular so because there is an inherent tendency and tilt towards dictatorship.

In relation to the oil nexus, there is no doubt that the structural roots of the contradictions geared by its production and distribution can only be resolved through the “deconstruction” of the rentier political economy. Also, the demand of the oil minorities for restitution and access cannot be ignored. As it is known, the costs of denial have been heavy locally and even globally, and tug at the very life-chords of the Nigerian state (Obi, 2004:272).

It is clear that the quest for a hegemonic elite to retain its monopoly of oil and by extension federal power in the name of national unity and development, and the determination of those excluded to resist their hegemony, will continue to buffet the sails of the nation-state project in Nigeria.

Concluding Remarks

The crises and clamour for resource control and its attendant demonstrations in the Niger Delta have their roots in our colonial legacy. The history of current difficulties in the region dates at least to the early seventies with the oil boom in Nigeria, which brought about the exploitation of the communities in the Niger Delta for the liquid gold that made Nigeria a country to be reckoned with as one of the major oil producers in the world. While a large percentage of the inhabitants are rendered unemployed. The communities watched people becoming wealthy from the resources generated from their environment with no benefits accruing to them as the people whose source of livelihood had been laid waste through the processes of exploring for and exploiting petroleum. This realization spurred various groups to begin agitating for a change in the situation. The situation reached a climax with the Ogoni demand for an autonomous entity as the Ogoni nation in order to harness their resources, develop their area, and alleviate the problem in their communities. These Ogoni agitation was interrupted by the murder of four leader of MOSOP, in the aftermath of which Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed for alleged complicity in the murder. They were executed despite public intervention on their behalf for clemency, after a

manifestly unfair trial and the absence of evidence linking them to the killing for which they were charged.

The problems in the Niger Delta area soon took a new dimension in the late 90s with the current foray into elected governance in Nigeria. There are indications that the states as well as the local pressure groups all seem to assume that an increase in financial contributions to the oil producing areas will indeed solve the Niger Delta crisis. There has also been increase in the governments and the oil companies' financial contributions to the areas, and the Yar'Adua administration decided to set up Ministry of Niger Delta to look into the problems in the region and proffer solutions to them.

In the area of transparency, the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative Bill was enacted by the National Assembly and signed into law by the Obasanjo's administration. This legislation will be a useful tool for government and citizens in the quest for better transparency and responsibility in the management of revenues from mining, oil and gas. Also, autonomy should be given to states and/or regions to enjoy generating and husbanding revenue, and should be remitting to the centre the royalty necessary for operating the federal exclusive list.

There is also a need to revive the social contract in ways that are acceptable to the federating units. It is in this way that the prospect of Nigeria's oil buoyed federalism can thrive in the competitive and volatile world in the twenty-first century.

Sustainable development of the Niger Delta must therefore be hinged on massive industrialization of the region based on its cheap supply of energy. More heavy industries are needed than the existing skeletal, epileptic or moribund refineries, petro-chemical plants, aluminium smelter, fertilizer plant, newsprint and power plants found in the Niger Delta. The regional skyline of the region must change from gas flares to the chimneys of manufacturing industries. Such development will persuade the Niger Delta people to beat their ancient sword into plough shares. If all the aforementioned can be executed and implemented, it is only then that the Niger Delta can be fully integrated into the Nigerian state, thereby leading to the attainment of national integration in the Nigerian polity. Also, we can agree with Agbodike (2004:187) that, in order to achieve national integration, efforts should be made through appropriate legislation to remove the indigene syndrome engendered by the federal character principle and the discriminatory

policies, laws and regulations which legalize its operation. This calls for the emergence of an enlightened leadership imbued with the requisite statesmanship to direct the affairs of the country and ensure the continued survival of the peace, unity, stability and national integration of the country.

For the survival of Nigerian nation and the integration of its diverse and sophisticated people, the practice of true federalism that gives autonomy to different states and a reduction in the powers of the central government become imperatives.

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