Political Economy of Ungoverned Space and Crude Oil Security Challenges in Nigeria's Niger Delta

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After the discovery of crude oil at Oloibiri in 1956, the government of Nigeria shifted concentration from agriculture. As crude oil production expanded with colossal effects on the environment in the Niger Delta, it created an ungoverned space which militants exploited to direct their agression at the multinational oil companies and the Nigerian state. Among other issues, this article investigates the interface between disenchanted ethnic inhabitants of the Niger Delta and the government of Nigeria, and how it enabled the emergence of the volatile ungoverned space in the region. The article relies on the documentary research method and qualitative descriptive techniques. Using the neo-Marxist theory of the post-colonial state, the article establishes that the challenges with crude oil security governance in the Niger Delta reflect the contending vested interests of the dominant political classes. The study argues that the manifest characters arising from the discourse of ungoverned space and crude oil security challenges in the Niger Delta relates to the survival question of ethnic inhabitants in the region. It further asserts that the exploitation of crude oil deplored the sources of livelihood of the Niger Delta people to the privileging of both powerful state and non-state entrepreneurs within and outside Nigeria. The study suggests a people-oriented and directed pragmatic approach to end the crisis in the Niger Delta.

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Introduction

Nigeria is Africa's largest and most populous country, and with the largest deposit of natural gas reserves in the continent, it is one of the biggest crude oil exporters. The Niger Delta region is Nigeria's major resource revenue base. It is located in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria along the Gulf of Guinea. The Niger Delta is the third largest and the tenth most important wetland in the world, with an estimated capacity of about 36 billion barrels of crude oil, making Nigeria one of the countries with the highest crude oil reserves in Africa.[1] Since the discovery of crude oil in Oloibiri in the early period of 1956 and the commencement of exploitation in 1958, the Niger Delta has remained one of the most contentious regions on the global map since the 1960s – the cause of it has been the deplorable nature of human living conditions of the people of the region as a result of the exploitation of crude oil by the multinational oil companies licenced by the Federal Government of Nigeria, as well as the perceived feelings of the much wealth taken out of the region in the form of crude oil and gas revenues with little invested back into the region in terms of environmental oversight and structural and human capital developments.[2]

The perception of marginalisation by the Niger Delta people suffering in the midst of plenty of revenues generated from the wealth taken out of their region motivated resentment against the Nigeria government from 1966 onward, making Nigeria one of the countries experiencing resource-based conflicts, with the Niger Delta becoming one of the volatile ungoverned spaces in the world.[3] Resources conflicts are not only peculiar to Nigeria. Almost all countries in Africa and beyond in their chequered history have had and still suffer devastating experiences of resource-related conflicts. The conflicts driven by resources have infested countries like Liberia, Libya, Angola, Sierra Leone, Chad, Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Congo Democratic Republic, Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Tunisia, and Somalia. Beyond the shores of Africa, countries like Colombia, Peru, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Chile in Latin America; Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran among others in the Arab world have had similar experiences.[4]

Resource conflicts have occurred in different magnitudes, especially in contemporary times. The struggles and conflicts over resource control in many circumstances shift in the nature and pattern of claims and counterclaims, depending on the circumstances that motivate them. In terms of crude oil, as the case is with Nigeria, given that it is a rare and profitable resource, the recurrence and seriousness of conflicts over resource control are usually incremental. Where this type of conflict prevails, it results in the government being unable to establish control over its geographical boundaries or deliberately permitting the prevalence of such manifestation. The ungoverned nature of the territories in a state has been attributed to state weakness or state fragility.[5]

However, even the so-called strong states also suffer the challenges of ungoverned space. In ungoverned spaces, non-state actors are fillers of state authorities, establishing their writ as alternative power centres, supplanting the functionality of the state. The spaces termed 'ungoverned' usually come under the control of warlords, tribal leaders and criminal gangs with established physical presence in control of carved territory within existing state boundaries and having the capacity to challenge the legitimacy, authority and sovereignty of the country.[6] There are several factors that lead to the emergence of ungoverned spaces in a country, among which include a combination of poverty among the people, weak institutional response to the demands of the people and gross level of corruption of the political system, especially among the political classes in control of power. These identified factors reflect the manifest character of the Nigerian government.[7] The Niger Delta people believed that with the discovery and exploitation of crude oil in the region their conditions would improve, as has been seen in countries such as Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Norway, Indonesia, Qatar, Kuwait, and the State of Texas and Alaska in the United States among other places around the world. Instead, the impacts have been devastating on their environment and livelihood, making crude oil a curse and not a blessing.[8]

The consequences of the crude oil exploration and exploitation have been protests, riots and militancy in the Niger Delta directed at both the multinational oil companies and the state. The Nigerian government, in order to ensure crude oil security governance so that the multinational oil companies, representatives of the metropolitan states and their indigenous and international collaborators privilege and benefit from the surpluses of crude oil exportation, used instruments

of coercion to dispel agitations in the Niger Delta.[9] Nigeria's government actions in the region led to increased Niger Delta militancy that further contributed to the fluidity and fragility of crude oil security governance and the vulnerability of the multinational oil companies to the unpredictable violence of the Niger Delta militants operating in the Nigerian waterways and the Gulf of Guinea. In this manner, Nigeria's government lost control over its most important crude oil hub when it should have prioritised stability in order to attract foreign investments to expand the revenue base.[10]

This article addresses two key concerns which are: why Nigeria's Niger Delta became an "ungoverned space" that presented human and physical security challenges to Nigeria, and how the Nigerian government has responded to these challenges over the past twenty years. From this context, the article is divided into seven sections. The first section introduces the complex dynamics of Nigeria's Niger Delta. The second section is concerned with the methodological orientation based on documentary and descriptive methods developed for the writing. The third section conceptualises ungoverened space and security. The fourth and fifth sections discuss the political ecology of Nigeria that bred the atmosphere for the emergence of ungoverned space in the Niger Delta, as well as how ungoverned space became structured to become a serious crude oil security challenge in the region. In the last section, the study concludes that the exporiation of crude oil revenue without reinvesting back into the region account for the local resentment that poses a security threat to the Nigerian state, the inhabitants and the oil companies operating in the region for years with little or no environmental oversight.[11]

Methodology

This study adopted the documentary research method to gather data for the purpose of studying the political economy of ungoverned space and crude oil security challenges in the Niger Delta. The documentary research method is a research type that depends on the careful and systematic study and analysis of written texts, visual and pictorial sources, whether they are in the private or public domain.[12] The documents to be used in the research can be primary (experienced individual eyewitness accounts of particular events or the pattern of behaviour) or secondary (documents produced by people who have received or read eyewitness accounts of events or pattern of be-

haviour) or both.[13] The documentary research method permits the reconstruction of the implicit knowledge underlying everyday practice to give orientation to habitual actions independent of individual intentions and motives.[14]

In documentary research, sources of data may include a combination of government publications, pronouncements and proceedings, census publications, official statistics, institutional memoranda and reports, personal diaries and other related sources.[15] The sources of data gathering for this study are from official reports and government documents, published by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and National Bureau of Statistics. Other sources include the documents from non-governmental organisations, reputable journals, articles from the national dailies and papers from conferences among others.

Analysis of the documented evidence was based on the qualitative method of analysis, which is descriptive, interactive, interpretive and historical in nature and approach.[16] The use of descriptive analysis was based on the fact that it is effective in the discovery of both latent and manifest contents of the data, which is used to understand patterns or regularities of behaviour in the subject of investigation. The study is corroborated with statistical data presented to illuminate the discourse of ungoverned space and crude oil security challenges in the Niger Delta.

Ungoverned Space and Security

The concept of ungoverned space is a discourse surrounding issues of global security challenges. As an emerging and contested area of discourse, ungoverned space resonates constant global debates among scholars, policy-makers, analysts, researchers, publicists, diplomats and commentators. Ungoverned space is a conceptual construct that defines "a general condition of weak to non-existent state authority in a defined geographic area."[17] Jennifer Keister asserted that ungoverned spaces are "areas of limited or anomalous government control inside, otherwise functional states."[18] For Andrew Taylor, they are "anarchic zones outside formal state control that constituted a security threat."[19] It also describes areas linked to terrorist activities, creating safe havens and multiple security challenges. Put differently, in an ungoverned space, there is no "effective state sovereignty and control."[20]

Ungoverned space is associated with both physical and non-physical spaces where there is the semi-presence or the absence of control of the government of a state. The physical spaces that are considered to be ungoverned constitute hinterlands that are beyond the reach of the state to exercise sovereignty and control, while the non-physical spaces considered to be ungoverned are those within a state where the government is not able or willing to exercise authority or control.[21] The concept of ungoverned space has variously been referred to as "ungoverned areas,"[22] "ungoverned territories"[23] and "exploitable areas."[24] The various conceptions of ungoverned space characterize the physical ungoverned space rather than non-physical ungoverned space, sometimes viewed as alternatives to state authorities.[25]

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However, Robert Lamb stated that "both physical ungoverned space and non-physical ungoverned space"[26] is manifest and latent in both weak and strong countries, and where there are areas that are "under-governed, misgoverned, contested, and exploitable,"[27] the atmosphere is created for the emergence of ungoverned spaces. In an ungoverned space, a "shadow state or territory" comes into being with warlords, gangs, local armed groups or militants influencing and taking over the control of territorial affairs,[28] usually from within the territorial space of the state. According to Robert Lamb as cited in Andrew Taylor:

> All ungoverned areas have the potential to become comprehensive safe havens, but not all do; those ungoverned areas that do become safe havens, many are exploited not by transnational illicit actors, but by groups whose activities and interests remain strictly local.[29]

From the state-centric perspective, Clionadh Raleigh and Caitriona Dowd argued that obnoxious threatening activities exist in ungoverned spaces, because the presence of the state is entirely absent or that there is the lack of any effective governance,[30] which create a vacuum of power that becomes exploitable by non-state actors. The possibility of ungoverned space existing is framed around factors such as state size, population distribution and resource wealth. To Jeffrey Julum and Daniel Evans, a combination of factors including population growth, urbanisation, globalisation, increasing the wealth of non-state actors and technological advancement are central to the emergence of ungoverned spaces.[31] Notwithstanding, Ken Menkhaus added the "cosmetic and ineffective presence of the state in its frontier zones

or the presence of large urban slums not effectively controlled by the government" as reasons for ungoverned space.[32] Jennifer Keister pointed to the inability to exercise control over territorial boundaries, but also importantly, the cost-benefit analysis as determining the factor of exercising state's control.[33]

The attitudinal contents of the state described above bring to question the sovereignty of the state over its territorial boundaries. The presence of ungoverned space is a consequence of semi-presence or absence of security governance. Security governance traditionally is associated with the state utilizing its resources to ensure its sovereignty and control of the territories within its geographical boundaries. In this context, security governance is about national security, which is about policing people using coercive apparatus to restrain and make them behave in conformity with the norms established by the state.[34]

However, security goes beyond the state-centric approach to include a people-centric approach. The people-centric approach adds to the state-centric approach by defining security to mean human security.[35] Human security connotes political, economic, social, environmental and cultural rights and choices of the people, protected from any form of threat in the state.[36] When there is a perceived threat or deprivation, there is the tendency for resentment directed at the state or displacement of aggression directed at other people, since they cannot direct their aggression toward the state.[37]

Ungoverned space as a conceptual construct has been criticized as being value-laden and inadequate to properly situate the discourse of security challenges and spaces controlled by non-state actors in the state. The reason advanced is the questioning of the existence of ungoverned space. The theoretical construct dramatically demonstrates the nature and character of the state and its capability or fragility to respond to emergencies created by the circumstances of the ungoverned spaces, and how activities in those spaces undermine the functionality of the state. The Niger Delta is an ungoverned space exploited by strictly local illicit groups whose activities are marred by crude oil bunkery, pipeline vandalism, piracy, kidnapping and a series of agitations and militancy against the government of Nigeria for the appropriation and expropriaton of crude oil resources and revenues with little to show for development of the region.

Post-Colonial State Theory in the Context of the Niger Delta

In interrogating the dynamics of the political economy of ungoverned space and crude oil security challenges in Nigeria's Niger Delta, this study adopted the neo-Marxist theory of the post-colonial state. This choice is motivated by the fact that the study of the manifest character of ungoverned spaces posing security challenges in the Niger Delta and elsewhere has largely been contingent on the perspectives of pluralism,[38] modernisation,[39] competitive control[40] and state failure, weakness or collapse.[41] Despite the efforts to situate the challenges of ungoverned space in developing countries, particularly Africa, it is worthy to note that the crises associated with ungoverned space in Africa are not as a result of multi-diversity or the crisis of modernisation, neither is it because of competitive control necessitated by urbanisation nor the failed, weak or collapsed state. Theoretically and empirically, these perspectives have relegated the process of the state formation and the role it played in the post-colonial Africa.

The post-colonial state theory is utilised based on the legitimacy that it has the capacity of examining and comprehending the manifest characters of social structures in Nigeria's post-colonial state. The theory of the post-colonial state was initiated by Hamza Alavi[42] and was popularised by other third world scholars, such as Claude Ake, Eme Ekekwe, John Saul and Okechukwu Ibeanu among others.[43] In the post-colonial state thesis, Alavi questioned fundamentally the tenets of the classical theory of the state in the context of post-colonial societies, while reacting to Western or the liberal perspective on the concept and purpose of the state.[44] From the Marxist context, the state is seen as a product of contradictions and irreconcilable class relations.[45]

Class relations, according to Ifesinachi and Anichie, are "power relations"[46] which manifest in a character where, according to Lenin, ...group of people differ from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social relation of production."[47] From this social relation of production, the state emerges to sets in class contradictions.[48] To buttress the class contradiction in state formation, Engels conceived that:

> The state is a product of society at a certain stage of development and the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable opposites which it is powerless to exercise

and the state arises where, when, and to the extent that class contradictions objectively cannot be reconciled.[49]

Nicos Poulantzas conceived the state as "not a class construct, but rather the state of the society divided into classes, and aims precisely at the political disorganisation of the dominated classes."[50] This point to the fact that the state represents the interests of the most powerful, economically dominant class,[51] with an organised executive as a committee for managing the common interests of the whole bourgeois class.[52] Hamza Alavi pushed further the Marxist perspective of the state to reflect the certain specificity of the state in post-colonial societies. His assertions are:

> ...premised on the historical specificity of post-colonial societies, a specificity which arises from structural changes brought about by the colonial experience and alignments of classes and by the superstructures of political and administrative institutions which were established in that context, and secondly from radical realignments of class forces which have been brought about in the post-colonial situation.[53]

Reflecting on the specificity of the nature and character of the state in post-colonial societies, Alavi describes the state as "an eternal, imperialist creation whose task was to accomplish specific functions essentially among other things, the economic exploitation of the people in the post-colonial state formation."[54] The metropolitan bourgeoisie assigns the tasks to be executed in the colonies without replicating in them the superstructure of the metropolitan country itself, but to develop apparatuses through which they can exercise dominion over the indigenous social classes in the colonies.[55] Central to the post-colonial state formation was the creation of the conditions that will ensure the accumulation of capital by the metropolitan bourgeoisie in alliance with the dominant class through the exploitation of the indigenous economy. This character of the state in post-colonial societies led Claude Ake to assert that the "modern African state is a creature of the capitalist mode of production and as such is a specific modality of class domination."[56]

From the foregoing context, Ibeanu argued that the foothold of colonialism sustained in the post-colonial state was such that anti-colonial struggles in Africa altered little or nothing at all in the arbitrariness of the predecessor of the post-colonial state.[57] In the post-colonial state of Nigeria, the change was only in the personnel of the colonial state;

the structures remained unchanged. The political class in independence Africa united their interests with the metropolitan bourgeoisie for the exploitation of the indigenous social classes. The prevalence of this character in post-colonial states in Africa can be attributed to a number of factors, which included the inheritance of an overdeveloped state with weak economic base and lacking in the capacity to respond to the needs of the "subordinate indigenous social classes."[58]

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In Nigeria, to maintain a sort of patron-client relationship as a means of clinching to the control of state power, constant efforts are made to ensure the protection of interests of the multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta against the interests of the subordinated indigenous social classes. The protection of such interests yields a multilayer of positive results, which include presenting the government in power as a faithful client needed to be rewarded internationally, and the support that comes in various dimensions with latent and manifest contents sustains the trend of power relations, even when the government does not respond to the interests of the inhabitants. The protection, which the government of Nigeria grant the multinational oil companies, comes despite the destruction of the environment and impact on human health caused by oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta.[59]

This manifest behaviour relates to the character of the post-colonial state, which Ake[60] attributed to the limited autonomy of statehood in post-colonial societies, particularly in Africa. The limitation placed on the autonomy of the state created limited space for social classes, resulting in class struggles between the dominant classes, both at the national and sub-national levels in Nigeria. The state as a central power force has remained a fiercely competitive phenomenon to control among dominant classes in Nigeria. In this context, according to Ake, the state is atomised such that "the institutional mechanisms of class domination are constituted"[61] to the point that the state as "a committee for managing the affairs of the whole bourgeoisie becomes as an objective force standing alongside society."[62] The atomisation of the state makes it difficult to resolve the contradictions and crises that come with power struggles. For dominant classes to sustain a foothold onto power, they collaborate with the multinational oil companies in a manner that the state in Nigeria is incapable of mediating the cyclical conflicts triggered by crude oil dependency and ungoverned space in the Niger Delta.

This explains the continuous use of repression, persuasion, negotiation and pacification as strategies to mitigate crude oil security challenges in the Niger Delta, which have not produced any meaningful results. Ekekwe asserted that in the post-colonial state, a positive relationship between capital and the state exists, because of the dominant role foreign capital plays in government and governance.[63] The owners of international capital determine the process of economic production and reproduction, as well as the direction of the society.[64] Those who implement their interests are indigenous to the post-colonial state. While doing so, they also appropriate surpluses from the crude oil revenue to starve indigenous social classes of the accrual surpluses from the crude oil exploitation from the Niger Delta.

The political character demonstrated by the government expanded the atmosphere for the development and consolidation of ungoverned space in the Niger Delta. In response to the challenges posed to the government of Nigeria, the Yar'adua/Jonathan administration adopted the presidential amnesty programme for the militants in the Niger Delta in 2009. Many have argued that in the actual sense, the presidential amnesty programme was not intended to address the political, economic, social and environmental problems arising from the militancy. It was rather merely palliative to keep the militants at bay in order to enable unhindered access to more crude oil and gas resources. It was also to promote the interest of the foreign capital that wants increases in the daily production of crude oil, as well as to ensure the security and safety of foreign oil workers. Though the amnesty benefitted some militants who responded by putting down their arms, it did not eliminate the atmosphere for the emergence of exploitable space in the Niger Delta. The reason was because the government failed to developed a framework for addressing the enormity of human security challenges in the Niger Delta.

Political Ecology of Nigeria and Pathology of Ungoverned Space in the Niger Delta

Nigeria is highly diverse and polarised along ethnic, religious and political identities. The social complexities of Nigeria are both manifest and latent at the national and sub-national levels, with great deleterious effects on the internal cohesion and development of the country. The complex nature of the country is necessitated by social, economic and political dynamics playing out among social forces competing for

a share of the national cake. Nigeria is one of the biggest crude oil exporters in Africa and has the largest deposit of natural gas reserves in the continent. It is also a "country where people suffer in the midst of plenty" given the enormity of natural and human resources it is endowed with. The consequence of this situation presents Nigeria as one of the "bottom billion" countries in the world.

As a Nigeria's crude oil resource base, the Niger Delta, covering about 70000 sq km,[65] consists officially of nine states, which include the Ondo, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Imo, Rivers, Abia, Akwa-Ibom and Cross-River states inhabited by about 26.7 million populations.[66] The Niger Delta is highly diverse in terms of social and cultural complexities, consisting of ethnic minority groups who share the same fate in Nigeria. Ethnic minorities in the region include, among others, the Ijaw, Itsekiri, Isoko, Ibibio, Ogoni, Urhobo, Membe, Ejangam, Ikwerre, and Edo peoples. These ethnic minorities consider themselves as the most marginalised people in Nigeria since the end of the civil war in 1970. Though the contribution of the region to the sustenance of the Nigerian economy has been considerable, ethnic inhabitants of the oil-rich region have received far less than expected in terms of the indices of structural and human developments.

Historically, the quest for crude oil exploration and exploitation in Nigeria could be traced to as far back as 1908. In the 1930s, the Niger Delta witnessed the laying of exploration pipelines, excavation and rig-drilling facilities by the multinational oil companies, among which included Royal Dutch Shell, Total, Italy's Agip, and Exxon Mobil and Chevron from the United States.[67] In January 1956, crude oil was discovered for the first time in commercial quantity at Oloibiri in the then old Rivers (now Bayelsa) state. The exploration and production of crude oil actually began with 1.68 million barrels in 1965, rising to 558.9 million barrels in 1971.[68]

Since then crude oil exploitation has expanded to steadily cover both onshore and offshore oilfields in the region. The exploitation and shipments of crude oil by the multinational oil companies have been massive in the region.[69] The contribution of the crude oil sector gradually superseded other sectors of the economy, bringing about increased export earnings of Nigeria and conferring great wealth for those in control of state power, and denying greatly the rights to survival to the ethnic groups in the Niger Delta.[70] Ethnic communities where crude oil is extracted have experienced defoliation, environmental devastations and ecological deg-

radation,[71] as a result of the activities of multinational oil companies. As much as multinational oil companies generated a lot of revenue for Nigeria through lease, it also led to oil spillage, gas flaring and other related ecological damage, which has been colossal and monumental. Aquatic and land resources have been destroyed, causing unprecedented levels of unemployment, poverty, hunger and starvation in the region.[72]

The impacts of gas flaring alone include the corrosion and destruction of rooftops of houses owing to acidic rainfall. It has also caused the spread of diseases in the region.[73] The activities of multinational oil companies underdeveloped and pauperized the ethnic inhabitants in the region. This is despite the fact that the region contributes to 40 percent of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and over 70 percent of government revenue to Nigeria.[74] The prevailing social, economic and environmental challenges in the Niger Delta led to local discontent among ethnic groups towards the government of Nigeria. Local discontent was more prevalent among the youth[75] who have received moral support from the ethnic elites to agitate and engage in militancy to starve the Nigerian state of the required legitimacy. The militancy and the demand for political autonomy and resource control in the Niger Delta was excerbated by military overstay in power, thereby changing the political and economic landscape of social relations of production in the Niger Delta.

Anatomy of Ungoverned Space and the Crude Oil Security Challenges in the Niger Delta

The protest in the Niger Delta against imperial and colonial domination started with King Jaja of Opobo. Notwithstanding, the restiveness in the Niger Delta gained momentum in the post-colonial era rendering the Niger Delta an ungoverned space and posing serious security threats to crude oil security governance in the region. The fierce agitation for autonomy and resource control in the Niger Delta started with the Ijaw group formation called the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF). The group was led by Major Adaka Boro and had its camp at Tarloy Creek in 1966. In March 1966, Boro proclaimed an Independent Niger Delta Peoples' Republic, which led to a 12 days liberation movement against the government of Nigeria.[76]

The feeling of neglect and underdevelopment, deprivation and exploitation of the region by the government of Nigeria and its local and international collaborators was attributed to be the cause of the agita-

tion.[77] The civil rebellion led to pipeline vandalism and the detonation of pipeline installations. Adaka Boro and his followers Samuel Timipre Owonaru and Nottingham Dick were arrested, tried and found guilty of committing treason against the Nigerian state.[78] They were sentenced to death, but were later pardoned by the military government of General Yakubu Gowon through some sort of an amnesty. Boro was employed by the government and several of his demands were actualised.[79]

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The government instituted the Land Use Act of 1978, dispossessing the people of the rights to ownership of their traditional lands and arrogating all land rights and ownership to the government of Nigeria due to the agitations for political autonomy and resource control coming from the Niger Delta people. The scramble for crude oil revenue among other issues, accounted for the several coups and counter-coups in Nigeria.[80] Of the several coup d'états, three heads of states were assassinated, six coups were successfully staged and several other coups were aborted.[81] Under the military, several crude oil fields were distributed to friends and cronies of the regimes. The majority of the military and political classes that benefited from such titles were from the Northern Nigeria. The elites control over 70 percent of the crude oil wells in the Niger Delta.[82] The Northern-controlled government further promulgated the Oil Pipeline Acts of 1990, the Petroleum Acts of 1991, the Lands (Title Vesting) Act of 1993 and the National Inland Water Ways Authority Act of 1996 in order to sustain its foothold on the Niger Delta crude oil resources.[83]

The action of the government created the feeling of marginalisation among the various ethnic minorities and generated resentments against the Nigerian state in the Niger Delta.[84] They demonstrated their grievances through pipeline bombing, vandalism, kidnapping, bunkering as well as through the direct confrontation of the military regimes. The situation clearly demonstrated that the Niger Delta had become an ungoverned space exploited due to the absence of effective security governance by the Nigerian state in the region.[85]

In 1992, Ken Saro-Wiwa and his kinsmen used the non-violent approach to lead the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) to engage with the government of Nigeria over the human security challenges in the Niger Delta. Three years later, he and his kinsmen were killed by the late General Sani Abacha. The killing of Saro-Wiwa intensified ethnic consciousness and led to the Aleibiri Demonstration

(AD) in 1997 and the Kaiama Declaration (KD) in 1998. Since then the Ogoni people have continued to protest the presence of multinational oil companies and the carting away of rent from the crude oil exploitation in the region.

In 1999, on the orders of the President Olusegun Obasanjo administration (1999-2007), the miitary led a widespread killing of ethnic inhabitants in Odi. This motivated the resurgence of militant groups who recruited as many as possible, especially the youth with camps in the several ungoverned spaces in the region.[86] Some of the prominent militant groups are the Asari-Dokubo-led the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) formed in 2004, the Tom Ateke-led Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) formed in 2005, and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) among others.[87]

The various restive groups in the Niger Delta occupied areas, to say the least, that are ungoverned within the territorial boundaries of Nigeria. Some of the camps which the militants established informal governance included the Olugbobiri, Okiegbene/Ebirigbene (Ikebiri 1 & 2), Azuzuama, Gbekenegbene, Ezetu, Agge, Kurutiye, Forupa and Okubie and Korokorosei camps in Southern Ijaw; the Robert Creek and Cawthorne Channel in Nembe, as well as the Ken's Camp in Odi, all in Bayelsa State. There are Camp 5, Okerenkoko and Opuraza camps located in Warri South as well as the Egbema, Ubefem and Berger Camps in Warri, Delta State, and there are also the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteers Forces in Akuku–Tori, the Niger Delta Vigilante in Okirika, Icelanders/Outlaw in Borokiri, Port Harcourt, Okirika and the Yeghe camps in Bori, Ogoni in Rivers State.[88]

These camps are located in difficult terrain rendering it difficult for the military to effectively bring the area back under the control of the government and to effectively prevent piracy and militancy in the region. To ensure security governance in the oil fields in the Niger Delta, the state increased its security budget and reinforced military presence to mitigate the activities of militant groups in the region. The people's concern which was given less or no attention by the government provided the avenue for the recruitments of new members who believed that joining militant groups pays more than getting involved in other ventures. This also informs the reason for the support and donations militant groups receives from the local communities in the region.

Niger Delta Ungoverned Space and Dialectics of Nigeria Political Economy

The Nigerian political economy is enmeshed in a contradiction caused by the Niger Delta militancy. The non-responsiveness of the government to the needs of the region informed the ungoverned space of the region in Nigeria.[89] As a response to stabilise the waves of violence, the government of Nigeria established the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDC) in 1961, Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992 and the Niger Delta Ministry (NDM) in 2008, and have taken several measures such as the Federal Government Amnesty Programme (FGAP) in 2009 among others.[90] The people of the Niger Delta sees these institutional frameworks as palliative to pacify them from challenging the presence of the multinational oil companies in order to enable the oil companies to produce more crude oil, which is a major source of Nigeria's foreign earnings.[91]

The return to democracy in 1999 rekindled the hope of the people. Unfortunately, the condition of the people did not improve remarkably. Rather, it worsened under the President Olusegun Obasanjo administration, due to his pro-military strategy in the Niger Delta. The era marked a major period of fierce agitations and militancy with numerous consequences on the government, multinational oil companies and the militants.[92] Between 1999 and 2004, the Niger Delta militancy led to the killing of more than one thousand people.[93] During this period, many national and foreign oil workers were kidnapped. Crude oil pipelines were vandalised, and theft and bunkering became business as usual. The agitations by the communities and the activities of militants in the ungoverned space of the Niger Delta undermined the revenue from crude oil exploitation of Nigeria.

In the Ogoni land, the people revolted violently to prevent crude oil exploration and exploitation. Other communities in the region also followed the trend, and by extension, supported the militants.[94] The implications of militancy have been unspeakable in the region, particularly in terms of the quantum of crude oil production deferred, as well as the losses incurred. In 1999, over 300,000 barrels of crude oil production per day was deferred. It continued to fluctuate and reached its peak in 2006 when over 600,000 crude oil production per day were also deferred.[95] Also in 2006 and 2007, the government of Nigeria lost 17.1 billion and 18.8 billion US dollars' worth of crude oil barrels, and between January and September 2008, Nigeria lost 20.7 billion US dollars' worth of crude

oil, due to militancy in the Niger Delta ungoverned space. In the same vein, the quantity of oil loss to oil bunkering and the amount in 2006 stood at just under 2 billion (1,978,191,600) US dollars, while NNPC shut down production in 2008 and between January and February 2009, it incurred loses of about 399,794,633 and 71,482,363 in barrels respectively.

The use of the military to mitigate militancy was never a solution to the security threats in the region. The solution to the threats is found to be in the adoption of pragmatic approach. In 2007, when the late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua was elected, the first policy he implemented was to establish the Ministry of Niger Delta, and in 2008, he created an amnesty programme for the militant groups in the region.[96] The militant groups that surrendered benefitted from the programme. Some of the militant groups that benefitted were the Solomon Ndigbara alias Osama Bin Laden, Henry Okah (the supposed leader of MEND), Victor Ben Ebika-Bowei, alias General Boy Loaf, Soboma George of outlaw cult group, Kile Selky Tomghedi (Young Shall Grow), Ateke Tom of NDV, Matimisebi Othello and the Gwama boys of Ilaje, Biibe Ajube, the second in command to Tompolo, Fara Dagogo of NDPVF, Eric Paul (Oguboss), Pastor Reuben, and General African, and Government Ekpemupolo (aka Tompolo or GOC) a key militant of MEND with their respective groups.[97] The implementation of the amnesty programme by the government was not without using the military to stabilise the region as a way of asserting state sovereignty and to mobilise militant groups from weakening and eroding the legitimacy of the state.[98] Nevertheless, many of the people in the region are of the view that the amnesty programme was marred by corruption.[99]

The government of Nigeria under President Goodluck Jonathan contracted the security governance of the crude oil to the repentant militants in the region. The efforts of the government were seen as only towards disarming and disengaging the militants and to enable uninterrupted exploitation of crude oil by the multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta.[100] During the period, crude oil production and export capacity of Nigeria increased steadily with positive multipliers on the management of the Nigerian economy. The defeat of President Goodluck Jonathan in the 2015 presidential election by the former military Head of State, General Mohammadu Buhari, angered the people, particularly the youth in the Niger Delta. It led to the resurgence of militancy in the region.

In February 2016, the Niger Delta Avengers announced their presence by carrying out coordinated attacks on the strategic crude oil and gas installations in the region. Other militant groups that also announced their presence included the Isoko Liberation Movement (ILM), Red Egbesu Water Lions (REWL), Suicide Squad (SS), Egbesu Mightier Confraternity (EMC), Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF) and the Ultimate Warriors of Niger Delta (UWND). Although the militant groups differ in complexity, they all make claims to the emancipation of the people of the Niger Delta. The reason for the struggles is motivated by government irresponsibility regarding the challenges of the Niger Delta people.

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The resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta has had devastating effects on the crude oil production capacity of Nigeria. It has led to the depletion of revenue generated from the rent of crude oil production. The activities of the Niger Delta Avengers has led to Nigeria losing over 800,000 barrels per day since February 2016. Nigeria's crude oil production has depleted to 1.4 million barrels per day, which is the lowest in 22 years.[101] In response to the challenges created by the resurgence of insecurity in the Niger Delta, the government of Nigeria resorted to the use of instruments of violence, instead of creating the environment for reaching consensus based on collective bargaining that will present a win-win situation for both the government and the people of the Niger Delta, whose environment has been exploited by multinational oil companies, with much wealth taken out of the region in the form of crude oil and gas revenues.[102] Notwithstanding, there is still a great opportunity for the government to utilize to return the region to stability.

Conclusion

The imperative of understanding why the Niger Delta became an "ungoverned space," posing human and physical security threats to the Nigerian government and how the government of Nigeria responded to the threats posed to crude oil security governance in the region, constituted the crux of this article. The Niger Delta question has remained topical on the global political economy landscape because of the position of the region to the Nigerian economy. The human and physical security threat to crude oil security governance in the Niger Delta and the Nigerian state is a consequence of governance failure on the part of the government of Nigeria to reinvest enough of the

surpluses of crude oil rent into the region to prevent local discontent. The nature and character of the post-colonial state in Nigeria promoted the patron-client relationship between the government and foreign companies, which allowed the multinational oil companies to operate without environmental oversight, and further fuelled local resentment in the Niger Delta to demand autonomy and resource control.

In order to prevent local discontent from the people of the Niger Delta, the government of Nigeria resorted to using coercive apparatus of the state to enable the multinational oil companies owned by the countries in the metropolis operate without effective control. The essence was to maintain and sustain the relationship with the metropolis, even when such relationship is at best unequal in terms of benefits. The reason for attributing to the patron-client relationship is to generate unflinging support of the metropolis for their continuous hold onto power. The political class continues to employ coercive instruments, which renders the region ungovernable. The ungovernability of the region was a result of the government failing to exercise effective control in the crude oil-rich region, which must not be through the use of coercion, and it is indeed what explain how the Niger Delta became an ungoverned space.

However, the inability of Nigerian state to prevent resentment using repression swung to conciliation that led to the adoption of some measures which for the people of the Niger Delta was only palliative in nature. The consequence of the failure of the government of Nigeria to address headlong the root cause of the return of agitations and resentments in the Niger Delta since 2015 starve the state of the required revenue generated from crude oil extraction and expropriation in the region. To mitigate the human and physical security challenges arising from the failure to mediate the cyclical conflicts triggered by crude oil dependency and ungoverned space in the Niger Delta, the government must make efforts to engage the local population and ensure that they directly benefit economically from the crude oil extraction, while also holding the multinational oil companies operating in the region accountable for the deploration of their environment. These prospects require strong and stable democratic institutions and institutional governance that is committed toward minimising corruption in Nigeria. To bring the aforementioned to reality, though it will take time, the government of Nigeria must have the political will and demonstrate serious commitment toward resolving the challenges arising from

the ungoverned space and crude oil security governance in the Niger Delta.

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