

Review

Nigerian State and the management of oil minority conflicts in the Niger Delta: A retrospective view

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Controversy generated by oil minority rights and agitations in the Niger Delta is as old as the Nigerian State. On the eve of Nigeria's independence, even before the exploitation of oil commenced in the Niger Delta, a colonial government commission of enquiry, the Willink Commission of 1957/1958, acknowledged its peculiar developmental needs and thus recommended a developmental board. The Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) that was consequently established by the Tafawa Balewa administration in 1961, which hardly made an impact before the chaotic political situation culminating in the 1967 to 1970 civil war which finally truncated the prospects of its success. About three decades later, on account of serious discontent over growing conditions of socio-economic and political deprivations, agitations by the Niger Delta peoples turned militant, violent and ultimately degenerated into an armed struggle that threatened the stability and progress of the country. Various Nigerian administrations responded to the challenge through an admixture of legal/constitutional, coercive, as well as pacifist strategies. However, fifty years after independence, the festering conflict in the Delta alongside its critical national consequences is just beginning to elicit signs of abating. This paper argues that the Niger Delta conflict remains intractable, largely as a result of the half-hearted and uncomprehensive nature of the conflict resolution and management initiatives of government, both at the Federal and State levels. The work seeks to examine the nature, scope and impact of the various official conflict management approaches in the region. The study concludes that only an enduring institutional approach can provide a durable panacea for the Niger Delta conflict.

Key words: Nigerian State, oil minorities, revenue allocation, derivation formula, militants.

INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta is clearly one of the knotty challenges of nationhood and development in Nigeria's half century old statehood (Adeyeri, 2010). Oil, the mainstay of the country's mono-cultural economy, has generated persistent acrimony and turmoil since the colonial era. The immediate post-independence era witnessed an attempt by Isaac Adaka Boro to form the "Republic of the Niger Delta" following the failure of the 1957 constitutional conference to effectively resolve the problem of the minorities. From this period up to the early 1990s, minority agitations over the allocation and control of oil revenue, compensation for environmental degradation arising from oil exploration, and political marginalization were characterized by peaceful demonstrations and externalization of demands.

In utter disregard for the principles of fiscal federalism, Decree 51 of 1969 gave the Federal government complete ownership of petroleum resources in Nigeria. The Offshore Oil Revenue Decree No.9 gave the Federal government total control over the entire revenue accruable from offshore oil wells in the coastal waters adjoining the oil minorities, thereby finally extricating them from direct oil revenue, and increasing their dependence on the majority groups for a share of the oil wealth. The oil – producing minorities thus became alienated from their own resources, thereby intensifying the struggle between them and the Nigerian state.

Furthermore, the Federal government abandoned derivation as the principle of revenue allocation in

favour of the principles of equality and population of states, in response to the shift of the country's source of wealth from agriculture to petroleum, and the desire of the major ethnic groups to continuously control national revenue (Obi, 2000).

Oil minority agitations assumed a very militant and violent character from the early 1990s which ushered in the emergence of ethnic militias and the attendant violent protestations against economic and political marginalization by the Federal government. In the decade that followed, the agitations became increasingly militant and radical, including calls for self-determination and outright secession, all of which have had negative socio-political and economic effects on the country's unity, stability and progress.

This paper is a critical assessment of government's response to the Niger Delta conflict since inception. The study shall examine the origin, nature and manifestation of the conflict management approaches adopted by various Nigerian administrations with a view to determining their overall impact in the search for an enduring resolution of the crisis in the region.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

The major concepts involved in this study include Niger Delta, oil minority, conflict, and conflict management.

Niger Delta / oil minority

The Niger Delta is the third largest in the world. It covers an area of 70,000 square kilometers, in addition to the 200 nautical miles which the United Nations General Assembly added in 1995. It is the richest geo-political zone of Nigeria in terms of natural endowments like oil and gas, vast forest and arable land. In spite of this, however, the area remains largely underdeveloped on account of serious environmental degradation and worsening economic conditions (Etekpe, 2009).

The Niger Delta has undergone both historical and political conceptual definitions overtime. During the period of the pre-independence Constitutional Conferences of 1957 and 1958 in London, the historical conceptualization limited the geo-political area to the defunct "Western Ijaw Division (in Western Nigeria and in Eastern Nigeria) of the Rivers Provinces but excluding Ahoada and Port Harcourt" (Etekpe, 2009).

The division and provinces have since transformed into the present Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa states. After Independence the Nigerian state

redefined the region to include Cross River, Akwa-Ibom and Edo states in 1993, and also Abia, Imo and Ondo states in 2000. By the subsisting political definition, the Niger Delta connotes the oil-producing states of Delta, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Rivers, Ondo, Imo, Abia, Edo and Cross River (Etekpe, 2009).

However, in terms of the quantum of oil production, the core Niger Delta consists of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers states. On the whole, the Niger Delta is home to about 140 ethnic groups. This ethnic diversity has often caused stiff competition for resources such as land, socio-economic benefits, and political power (Asuni, 2009).

Based on both the historical and political definitions of the Niger Delta, this study seeks to examine the efforts of the Nigerian State to resolve the lingering conflict(s) generated in the area by the previous scenario.

Conflict and conflict management

Conflict, ordinarily, is part and parcel of human existence. However, violent conflict is not inevitable and therefore is an aberration. According to D. J Francis, conflict in the general sense is the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups, while armed conflict is the adoption of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals (Francis, 2009). Thus, scholars contend that conflict has an ontological basis in human needs, the denial of which breeds violent conflicts or makes resolvable difference to degenerate into armed violence or armed conflict.

Another proposition is that inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts are to be expected in plural societies, like Nigeria. This is based on the belief that conflicts in such societies arise from the elite competition for power and authority. As Dahrendorf opines, conflict is intrinsic to all societies and associations due to the unending competition for authority within such groups (Fayeye, 2006). It has also been established that the Nigerian elite manipulated ethnic loyalties in order to achieve political and other ambitions (Fayeye, 2006).

The "Power Politics theory" of conflict is anchored upon the notion that human beings and groups everywhere struggle for domination. The need to dominate or fight is seen as an intrinsic part of human nature and the term "Balance of Power" is used when force is held at a minimum, so that a co-existence may subsist (Academic Associates Peaceworks, 2000).

The "Structuralism" or Neo-Marxist school focuses more on the outside forms, such as institutions, living conditions, manipulations of money and material goods to understand how exploitation and

conflict happen. The “Liberal–Pluralist” school on its part argues that many levels of the human being are involved in any conflict. Thus, the ideas of “human needs”, communication and perception are important laws, and attempts at cooperation may promote or hinder situations (Academic Associates Peaceworks, 2000).

On the whole, we can affirm that conflict involves social interactions, actions and counteractions such as competition, disputes and clashes between social forces as a result of incompatibility of goals and aspirations.

The conception of conflict, its management and resolution have given rise to terms like peacemaking, conflict prevention, preventive diplomacy, peace keeping, peace-enforcement and peace building. Conflict analysis which is a critical enquiry into the remote and immediate causes of conflict, highlighting the parties, structures and dynamics in conflict situations, is crucial in determining the intervention frameworks, and the management and resolution of conflicts.

Conflict prevention connotes the whole range of crisis intervention efforts to reconcile parties and groups with conflicting interests and to prevent the pursuit of opposing goals from degeneration into armed conflict.

Furthermore, conflict prevention also involves all the initiatives and intervention methods geared towards preventing relapse into further violence where irreconcilable differences and interests have already escalated into armed conflict (Francis, 2009). Growing from the definition in the foregoing, the concept of peace building describes the efforts and interventions aimed at surmounting the underlying causes of conflict. Peace building involves the measures to surmount the structural, relational and cultural contradictions which form the foundation of conflict in order to anchor the processes of peace making and peace keeping (Francis, 2009).

Conflict management, on its part covers efforts and interventions to reduce, contain or regulate conflict (Francis, 2009). It has also been conceptualized as the process of limiting the negative and damaging capacity of conflict through certain measures and by working with and through the parties to the conflict. It involves the entire sphere of handling conflicts positively at different stages, including those proactive measures instituted to prevent conflict. In short, it includes conflict limitation, containment and mitigation (Best, 2009). As John Burton puts it, this may include “conflict prevention” which he used to describe containment of conflict through actions taken to enhance conditions in which collaborative and valued relationships control the behaviour of parties

to a conflict (Best, 2009).

In the management of minority conflict such as that of the Niger Delta, which is the focus of this work, Rotchild and Olorunisola have noted that the state may adopt the approach of coercion of minority or sectional claimants into agreeing to exploitation, or avoidance in which the agitators and their claims are simply ignored (Isumonah, 2003).

The state could also adopt the strategy of bargaining whereby there is a redistribution of opportunities and benefits in favour of the minority claimants or an adoption of a framework that would facilitate the participation of the minority claimants in the decision making process (Isumonah, 2003). It must be noted that the response of the Nigerian State to oil minority conflict in the Niger Delta overtime has been an admixture of the bargaining / pacifist and coercive strategies.

CONTENDING ISSUES IN THE NIGER DELTA CONFLICT

Ethnic militancy in the Niger Delta is continually fuelled by various issues and grievances against the government and oil companies. Perhaps the strongest grouse of the oil minorities is that the Federal government, dominated by the majority ethnic groups is using Nigeria’s oil wealth to develop other areas at the expense of the oil-producing minorities. The huge oil revenue from the oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta has continuously being deployed by the Federal government towards the development of states, towns and villages of the Hausa – Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo majority ethnic groups to the neglect and consternation of the oil communities. This lopsided developmental approach is evidenced by huge Federal funding of extensive dam and irrigation projects, as well as heavily subsidized agricultural and social development programs in northern Nigeria. In addition to these are the geo-politically motivated state-owned socio-economic projects like the Kaduna Refinery and many educational, administrative and military institutions with their headquarters in the territories of the major ethnic groups (Ovwasa, 1999).

Consequently, the oil minorities continue to live in abysmal poverty amidst abundant oil wealth. As an illustration, Ogoniland, considered to be the “luckiest” of the oil-producing communities in Rivers State, is reported to have provided Nigeria with total oil revenue of about 40 billion dollars between 1958 and 1992 (Ogoni Bill of Rights, 1992). In addition, between 1999 and 2004, Nigeria made a whopping ninety six billion dollars from oil (The Guardian, 18 April, 2006). Despite this massive contribution to the country’s revenue base, Ogoniland, presently can only boast of seven oil fields, a large petrochemical plant, several oil servicing companies that are closely located, Nigeria’s only major fertilizer plant

and fourth largest ocean port (Naanen, 1995). The case of Urhoboland in Delta State is even worse.

In forty-one years of the petroleum industry in Nigeria, Shell, Pan-Ocean and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) have gained up to 2.2 trillion naira, an average of 56 billion Naira yearly (Ovwasa, 1999). The whole budget of Delta State is about Four Billion Naira per annum, whereas the state accounts for at least, 36% of Gross National Product (GNP).

Moreover, everyday of the year, Urhobo natural gas worth about 68 million Naira is wasted through wanton flaring (The Guardian, 19 August, 1998). Yet, Urhoboland does not have any significant Federal industry apart from the epileptic Warri Refinery and the inactive Aladja Steel Complex. In addition, Delta State as a whole has no federal higher institution except the Petroleum Training Institute (PTI) established to train skilled man power for effective oil extraction, whereas almost all the ethnic majority states have one form of Federal institution or the other (Ovwasa, 1999).

The Niger Delta people are also aggrieved by environmental degradation and the attendant disruption of farming and fishing which are their major occupations. Due to oil exploration, oil spillages onto land, swamps and offshore areas over the decades have had serious adverse effects on the economic welfare and health of the inhabitants. Oil exploration activities often results in the destruction of the environment, erosion, destruction of aquatic life, extermination of some important soil organisms, promotion of malaria infestation due to the accumulation of water in the pits which serve as breeding grounds, and lastly, general ecological disturbances (Jimoh, 2008).

The Jesse, Delta State, tragedy of 1998 in which about 1,200 persons were burnt to death by petrol explosion while attempting to glean a living from the gushing and wasting petrol is an illustration of the horrible situation faced by the oil minorities in their daily lives.

Political marginalization is another source of anger among the oil minorities. This marginalization depicted in their inadequate representation in government is most acute and evident in the appointments into oil related Federal government parastatals. Ordinarily, preference ought to be accorded indigenes of the oil communities in such appointments, but in utter disregard of the Federal principle that requires a Federal government to serve as a device by which the Federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected, major appointments are often monopolised by the three ethnic groups with the Hausa-Fulani claiming the lion share (Ovwasa, 1999).

It is important to recall that the replacement of Professor Eric Opia of Delta State, with AIG of Police Alhaji Bukar Ali, a Northerner as head of the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1988 was greeted by massive protestations from the Niger Delta region. That the Abubakar regime later rescinded the decision by replacing Bukar Ali with Rear

Admiral Preston Omatsola of Delta State, is an eloquent testimony to the painful fact that the oil minorities cannot receive fair treatment from the Nigerian State without intense agitations.

Agitations over resource control and revenue allocation by the poor and underdeveloped oil producing communities of the Niger Delta now appear end to have reached its peak, lately due to age long grievances. Decades of peaceful protests gave way to violent militancy.

In recent years, the agitations have become more militant and radical, including calls for self-determination and outright secession.

On 8 November, 1999, the Egbesu killed a Policeman in Odi, Bayelsa State, following the kidnap and killing of policemen by Egbesu youths in retaliation for the killing of their members. The government deployed soldiers who consequently, liquidated the town.

On 25 April 2003, Ijaw militiamen attacked the Army and Navy in Warri, Delta State leaving ten persons dead. The militants also intercepted the radio communication of the army and navy. Five days later, women were killed in crossfire between Ijaw militants and the Nigerian security forces. The security forces intervened when the Ijaw militia attacked an Itshekiri town, killing five women. On 1st May, 2003, Ijaw militiamen attacked government forces and oil installations in Opumani, Tanke farm, Okerenkoko, Delta State while similar action was replicated in Effurun the next day.

In early 2004, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force under Mujahid Dokubo Asari threatened dissolution of the Nigerian State and outright war against the oil companies, and the Federal and State governments (Crisis Group Africa Report, 2006). The list is indeed endless.

Nigerian State and the management of oil minority conflicts

Historically, government's response to oil minorities demands on revenue allocation and resource control and redress for environmental degradation has been an admixture of coercive and bargaining strategies. The Willinks Commission of 1957/1958, commissioned by the Colonial government in recognition of the peculiar developmental needs of the Niger Delta region recommended a development board for the area.

The Tafawa Balewa government subsequently established the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) via an Act of Parliament in 1961, but this board made little or no impact due to funding and administrative problems. In 1969, as noted earlier, the Federal government promulgated the Petroleum Decree which vested it with control of oil exploitation and laid the foundation for the relegation of derivation as the principle of distribution for Federal revenue. During General Olusegun Obasanjo's tenure as the Military Head of

State, he, rather than revive the NDDB decided to establish ten more river basin development authorities (RBDAs) via Decree 87 of 1979 in all parts of the country, even where no river existed.

It is noteworthy that the regime proceeded to fund the additional RBDAs much more than the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA), thereby igniting another round of protests particularly as the Niger Delta had by that time become the economic nerve center of Nigeria.

President Shehu Shagari's administration responded to the emergent youth restiveness in the region by reinstating the principle of derivation with the payment of 1.5% derivation to the oil-producing areas. In addition, the government formed a Presidential Task Force to manage the fund. However, dissatisfaction with this amount that was considered inadequate heightened the tempo of restiveness in the area (Etekepe, 2009).

Due to increasing agitations and political mobilization of the Niger Delta nationalities, the Babangida government increased the derivation formula to 3% and created the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992 for infrastructural development of the region. But the Babangida regime also adopted arm-twisting tactics.

In 1990, government repression of popular protests in Umuechem resulted in massive destruction of lives and property. In July 1993 and April 1994, government and oil companies orchestrated violence against the Ogoni, while military occupation of agitating oil communities and harassment of those protesting injustice in the areas became common from 1994 (Isumona, 2003). Other instances of violent repression by government include the Egbena crisis (1989 to 1991), Oburu violence (1989), Bonny Ijugba Square tragedy (1992), Egi-Obaji Mayhem (1994), Tai-Biara massacre reportedly sponsored by Wilbrose, a servicing company to Shell (1994) and the Ubima tragedy of 1995 (Ovwasa, 1999).

The Abacha government was outstanding for its ruthless repression of resource control agitations. The regime responded to the Niger Delta crisis by stationing an 'army of occupation' in the oil-producing communities to suppress protesting youths, individuals and groups through brutal force in order to maintain the free flow of oil for the Nigerian State. Environmental, minority and human rights activists in the area were often harassed, arrested and incarcerated indefinitely without trial, or even murdered by government (Adejumobi, 2005).

The Ogoni revolt that followed the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other Ogoni nationalists in 1995 compelled the oil companies in the Niger Delta to establish the Niger Delta Environmental Survey (NDES) in that year to assess the environmental conditions in the region and make suggestions for ameliorating the hardship of the oil communities. However, violent agitations continued because the issues that gave rise to them originally still remained, despite state repression

and palliative measures like the OMPADEC and NDES.

The Obasanjo civilian government responded to the Niger Delta crisis through developmental and military measures. In December 2000, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was created to achieve what government described as a lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the region and facilitate the rapid, even and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful.

The NDDC claimed that it had initiated over two thousand development projects, including roads, bridges, hospitals, classroom blocks, university hostels, jetties, canals and shore protection facilities. It also announced the commencement of over three hundred electrification projects to support local small businesses, an agricultural programme geared towards large scale production and processing of cassava and rice, and a training program for over six thousand youths (Crisis Group Africa Report, 2006). Despite its positive changes in the region, the achievements of the NDDC have greatly fallen short of the needs and expectations of the oil communities.

In 2001, the Federal government initiated the Special Security Committee on Oil Producing Areas which seemingly went beyond its terms of reference (security matters) and subsequently reported to government that the Niger Delta problem was primarily political and thus required political solutions that would ultimately mean greater oil security. The committee recommended a review of policies and laws that have fuelled discontent and agitations in the region such as the Petroleum Act and the land Use Act. It also suggested to government to increase the derivation principle to 50% (Crisis Group Africa Report, 2006).

However, the Federal government did not implement these recommendations, possibly as a result of objections from political forces within the territories of the majority ethnic groups that have always rebuffed the idea that oil and gas located in the Niger Delta belong solely to its people or that the region deserves special compensation.

The oil minorities thus perceived the non-implementation of the recommendations as a continuation of the policy trend by which previous administrations systematically rejected their demands. As violent agitations increased in the region, President Obasanjo inaugurated the Consolidated Council on Social and Economic Development of Coastal States of the Niger Delta (CSEDND) on 18 April, 2006 to undertake what he described as a "Marshall Plan" that would create new jobs in the military and police forces, and initiate a 1.8 billion dollar road project. However, this council from inception suffered serious legitimacy problems.

It is instructive that the council consisted of the governors of the oil producing states and other local elites whom the communities have always accused of

betraying them by wasting and embezzling Federal allocation and money meant for infrastructural development. That leaders and representatives of credible civil society groups in the Niger Delta were not appointed to the council cast great doubts about government's sincerity of purpose. Again, militant groups and citizens in the region felt insulted and angered by Obasanjo's offer of employment in the same military and police force which had overtime killed Niger Delta civilians and razed down their villages (Crisis Group Africa Report, 2006).

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) particularly rejected the initiative for its failure to address the clamour for resource control, and went ahead to denounce some local Ijaw leaders whom they accused of complicity in the injustices against the oil minorities (The Guardian, 20 April, 2006).

Similarly, the plan received sharp criticism, from the Abia and Imo States governments, which the NDDC Act recognizes as part of the Niger Delta but are excluded from the CSEDND. The two state governments view the initiative as a design to erode solidarity among oil producing states. As government was still grappling with the widespread pessimism that greeted the plan, MEND launched its first car bomb in Port Harcourt, just a day after Obasanjo's inauguration of the council in Abuja. On 29 April, MEND announced that it was responsible for another bomb explosion that had destroyed petrol tankers and buildings in the outskirts of Warri, Delta State, and on that same day it issued a warning to China, which had secured oil contracts in Nigeria during President Hu Jintao's State visit earlier in the month.

The Federal government responded to violent attacks by MEND and other militias by launching Operation Restore Hope, which essentially is a deployment of a joint military task force (JTF) involving the army, navy and personnel of other security forces and agencies. The JTF has reduced inter – ethnic conflicts and oil bunkering in the Niger Delta.

However, its operations and tactics in some instances have resulted in destruction and deaths in various villages such as the incident of 20 August, 2006, during which either as a result of overzealousness or mistaken identity, JTF troops patrolling the creeks killed nine Ijaw youths and a Shell Community Liaison Officer who had just helped the Bayelsa state government to secure the release of a kidnapped oil worker (Crisis Group Africa Report, 2006).

The Yar' Adua administration in December 2007 instituted the Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee which brokered peace agreements with militants in the core Niger Delta States. The release of Asari Dokubo, the leader of the Niger Delta Volunteers Force (NDVF), the "Governor-General" of the Ijaw, the then governor of Bayelsa State, Dipreye Alamiyesegha and Henry Okah, the ostensible leader of MEND were effected to address some of the laid-down conditions of the militants (Aghalino, 2010).

Furthermore, the administration gave out 10 speed boats to some militant groups that were part of the peace pact initiated by the Bayelsa chapter of the Niger Delta Conflict Resolution Committee earlier in December 2007. The boats were to be deployed for surveillance and monitoring of activities of criminals along the waterways. Due to their understanding of the terrain, it is believed that incorporating the militants into the measures to secure the Niger Delta waterways would ensure effectiveness.

In order to tackle the restiveness in the region, the administration also made efforts to engage the militants constructively. In this regard, government sought to persuade the militants to establish and register private companies for hire to provide security for pipelines and other oil industry installations (Aghalino, 2010).

In late 2008, the government convened a technical committee to study all previous reports of the Niger Delta and subsequently developed strategies for the resolution of the region's crisis. Its findings were later passed on to another committee for further consideration. Yar'Adua also created a ministry of the Niger Delta in December 2008 and appointed two ministers to specifically address the problems of the region.

In June 2009, Yar' Adua announced an offer of unconditional amnesty to all militants in the Delta. In addition, the Presidential Committee on Amnesty and Disarmament for Militants under the Minister of the Interior, Major General (rtd) Godwin Abbe, was established to execute a post-amnesty programme of socio-economic development in the Niger Delta worth about 50 billion Naira (The Punch, 1 July, 2009).

By the Amnesty programme, the militants were to give up their arms and in return get a Presidential pardon, opportunities in education, training and general rehabilitation. At the expiration of the October 4, 2009 deadline set by the Federal government for the agitators to disarm, virtually all the key militants had yielded to the amnesty deal. Available records indicate that a total of 8, 299 militants registered with the Presidential Implementation Committee from seven states of the nine Niger Delta States with most weapons coming from Bayelsa which had 130, 877, Rivers 82, 406 and Delta 52, 958 (Aghalino, 2010).

Clearly, the policy outline and implementation of this program and others relating to the general development of the Niger Delta under the Yar'Adua/Jonathan government represents the most pragmatic and committed approach to the resolution of oil minority conflict in the region by any administration since independence.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, there is a balance of evidence to suggest that previous efforts by various Nigerian administrations to resolve oil minority conflicts in the

Niger Delta have been largely ineffectual due to their tentative nature characterized by half measures and doubtful sincerity of purpose.

The peace and conflict management, and socio-economic development initiatives of late President Umar Yar'Adua, currently being sustained by the Jonathan administration is a step in the right direction.

However, the best mechanism for peace, stability and progress in the Niger Delta, and indeed throughout Nigeria can be located in sincere, comprehensive and effective institutional measures of poverty alleviation, and in policies that would ensure a level playing ground for all Nigerians to be able to achieve progress and happiness irrespective of their ethnic origin, religion or creed.

There is an urgent need to revisit the nature and composition of Nigeria's federal system, especially the aspects concerning fiscal federalism with a view to finding an effective solution to the twin debacle of revenue sharing and resource control which is the underlying factor in oil minority conflicts in the country.

Finally, the power elite, particularly among the major ethnic groups, the Hausa – Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo, must immediately jettison their age-old hegemonic tendencies for discouraging the enthronement of a just and equitable revenue allocation system that would accord the oil minorities their fair share of national wealth.

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