

Oil and Conflict in the Niger Delta: A Reflection on the Politics of State Response to Armed Militancy in Nigeria

Celestine Oyom Bassey

*Department of Political Science
University of Calabar, Cross River State-Nigeria
Phone: +2348037625205 E-mail: Celestinebassey@yahoo.com*

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Abstract: *The Niger Delta is currently in the vortex of protracted social conflict, as crisis of regime legitimacy, "political ostracism and social marginalization" fuel armed rebellion with incalculable consequences for the stability of the Nigerian state. The root cause of this crisis has been the subject of extensive debate in the literature (Otiye, 1990; Bassey, etal, 2002). The current dimension of the crisis is arguably the systemic resultant of the multiple disorders (intense "bureaucratic politics") in the policy process under the Obasanjo administration and that of his successor, Yar' Adua –Jonathan, and the equal determination of militant youth movements (MEND, NDV, etc.) to assert their presence in the region. This melodrama is currently played out in the official circle of Nigeria's Federal Government with the unmistakable paradigm shift of policy discourse from accommodation and commitment to transformative action to the language of criminality, gangsterism, terrorism and force. While these contending tendencies characterized bureaucratic debate in the Nigerian policy circles (with the military establishment pushing for a "final solution" in line with the decisive action against Biafran secession), the military onslaught on the militant camps in the Niger Delta in May 2009 marked a watershed in the praxis of state response through force. The implication is unmistakable: with less sympathy for the struggle against "domestic colonialism in the region, the dominant mindset of the Yar' Adua- Jonathan administration (the "group think factor") is committed to the Colombian or Zaireen style solution. How this dialectics of force and resistance is played out will determine the future of Nigeria in the next decade: failed, collapsed or problem state?*

"For by our actions we have denigrated our country and jeopardized the future of our children—I predict that the scene here will be played and replayed by generations yet unborn – the riddle of the Niger Delta will soon come—The agenda is being set at this trial. Whether the peaceful ways I have favoured will prevail depends on what the oppressor decides."

Ken Saro-Wiwa

1. Preamble

The Niger Delta is currently in the vortex of protracted social conflict, as crisis of regime legitimacy, "political ostracism and social marginalization" fuel armed rebellion with incalculable consequences for the stability of the Nigerian state. The root cause of this crisis has been the subject of extensive debate in the literature (Otiye, 1990; Bassey, etal, 2002). The escalation of this tragic confrontation has transformed the Niger Delta into a volatile space exploited by Clandestine Transnational Actors (CTAs) employing "strategies of extraversion" (Bayart, 2000). The emergence of these criminal elements and their activities- "the political instrumentalisation of social disorder"—has provided the context for discrediting of genuine aspirations and agitation for change in the delta. This melodrama is currently played out in the official circle of Nigerian Federal Government with unmistakable paradigm shift of policy discourse from accommodation and commitment to transformative action which characterized the initial period after General Sani Abacha's death (General Abubakar's Administration sponsored Memorandum of Understanding) to the language of criminality, gangsterism, terrorism, and force. While these contending tendencies characterized bureaucratic debate in the Nigerian policy circle (with the military establishment pushing for a "final solution" in line with the decisive action against "Biafran" secession and a range of communal crises in the last decade), under the current Administration, the military onslaught against militant camps in May 2009, is considered a watershed in the praxis of state response through force.

Ken Saro Wiwa (1995:63) provided an incisive and tragic summary of this discourse on " man's inhumanity to man":the increasing monologue of violent encounter the Niger Delta:

The present structure reinforces indigenous colonialism- a crude, harsh, unscientific and illogical system. Twenty years after the civil war, the system of revenue allocation, the development policies of successive Federal administrations and the insensitivity of the Nigerian elite have turned the delta and environs into an ecological disaster and dehumanized its inhabitants. The notion that the oil-bearing areas can provide the

revenue of the country and yet be denied a proper share of that revenue because it is perceived that the inhabitants of the area are few in numbers is unjust, immoral, unnatural and ungodly.

Leaders of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) are declared criminal sponsors of terrorism as the deportation from Angola and the detention of MEND operative, Okah, indicates. The 2008 Appropriation Bill of the Federal Government entrenches Four hundred and fifty billion naira for "security" in the Niger Delta while only sixty billion naira was allocated for infrastructure and social programmes intervention through the Niger Delta Development Commission. This gross disparity, it could be argued, is symptomatic of the mindset of the dominant bureaucratic fraction of the Federal Establishment whose perception of security in the Niger Delta borders only on the protection of the "oil and gas" megastructure that contributes "95% of export revenues, 76% of government revenues and about a third of gross domestic product" (Today, 2007:31).

The implications of this development is unmistakable: with less sympathy for the struggle against "domestic colonialism" in the Niger Delta, the majority ethnic- dominated federal bureaucracy of the Yar "Adua Administration is sliding towards the "Colombian"/ "Zairian" style solution. It will be argued below that how this dialectic is played out will determine the future of Nigeria in the next decade: failed, collapsed or problem state?

2. Context

The armed revolt in the oil rich region of Nigeria (the Niger Delta) which surfaced with elemental fury during the regime of General Sani Abacha (1993-1998) reached a crisis proportion in 2007 with the spate of attacks on strategic installations (oil and gas facilities) and the abduction of expatriate workers with the oil companies. Thus, the crisis of underdevelopment has combined with mass concientization and mobilization of youths to engender accelerated pattern of revolutionary insurgency and state repression with inevitable consequences for the stability of the country.

The root causes of this crisis has been much debated (The "product of structural deficiencies inherent in the Nigerian state, and systemic anomalies within its society"), however, the current level of escalation, if allowed to continue, may threaten the very ability of the Federal and State Governments to carry out their statutory functions: provide for health, education, foreign policy, defense and energy infrastructure. The consequences could be incalculable and may threaten the very survival of the Nigeria state as a corporate entity similar to the collateral fallout of the protracted conflict in the Katanga (Shaba) region of Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Columbia.

The reason is obvious. The oil and gas industry is the most important private and public sector business in the Nigerian economy. According to one of the latest survey (TELL, February 18, 2008:26), the total oil production in 2006 including condensates, natural gas liquids and crude oil "averaged 2.45 million barrels per day, with oil accounting for 2.28 million bpd" as a consequence. As Thomas Imobighe (2004) notes:

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is very strategic to the country's economic survival. This is because Nigeria's main strategic minerals – oil and gas – are concentrated in the region. The Delta accounts for almost all of Nigeria's gas and oil production, which in turn represents 80% of governments' revenue, 95% of export receipts and 90% of foreign exchange earnings.

In the light of the strategic importance of the oil and gas industry to the Nigerian economy, a major disruption of production activities of the "Petroleum Complexes" in the Niger Delta could certainly have devastating consequences for the monocultural economy of Nigeria. Events over the past decade certainly justify this conclusion. The violent eruption of youth militancy between 1993 and 2007 threatened to close down the oil industry. Several attacks and occupation of oil platforms, flow stations, operating rig terminals, pipelines, refineries and power installations incapacitated the petro businesses in the region. (Goldwyn, 2005)

Shell was forced to shut down operations in many parts of Delta costing the company and government an estimated one million dollars daily. Shell apparently suffered 180 disruptions of oil production between 1993 and 1998: "an estimated loss of 315 million dollars (about N25.5 billion) due in the main to shut downs, occasioned by sabotage of its operations in Ogoniland only." (Nwabueze, 1999) Between January and August, 1998, Shell installation in the eastern division alone were blocked 117 times leading to a loss of about 11 million barrels of Crude oil estimated at 1.32 billion dollars.

In Rivers, Bayelssa and Delta States, more than 15 of Shell's flow stations were shut down in October alone, leading to disruptions in the schedules of oil lifting both at the Forcados and Bonny terminals. Within this period, the NNPC/Shell venture incurred the a loss of over 25.12 billion dollars forcing the company to declare a force majeure, an

"exculpation clause that shields the company from bearing liability for non fulfillment of its contractual obligation of prospecting, mining and exporting crude oil" (Zandvriet and Pedro, 2002).

The situation has since assumed a frightening dimension for the petroleum industry both in terms of scale and geographical reach with the mayhem in Port Harcourt and attack on the Aluminum Industry at Ikot Abasi, Akwa Ibom State. As Traub-Merz and Yates (2004) observes, "Nigeria has indeed become the very symbol of oil—related violence. The Niger Delta where most of the oil produced is literally aflame. Forceful occupation of flow states, vandalization of pipelines, kidnapping of oil managers, bunkering (stealing of oil), clashes between heavily armed militias, retaliation by the armed forces." This volatile condition in the Niger Delta has constituted the gravest affront to the security of the Nigerian state (as it affects the entire spectrum of the oil and gas industry) prompting equally forceful response by the Federal Government. According to Afolabi Akindolire (Nigeria Today, 2007:25):

Between January and October 2006, at least 20 militants' attacks were inflicted on oilfield installations and operations. The Nigerian Natural Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) estimates that from 1994 to 2002, pipeline vandalization incidents increased exponentially, leapfrogging from 18 in 1994-1999, to 578 by 2000. NNPC estimates that from January to December, 2002, the loss of revenue through vandalization of pipelines was more than 7.7 billion. The hostilities leaped into catastrophic proportions early last year with the blast of a gas line reapplying the 1000 MW Egbin Station, the country's largest thermal generating plant.

This current dimension of the crisis is arguably a systemic consequence of the multiple disorder arising from intense bureaucratic politics in the policy process under the Olusegun Obasanjo and his successor Umaru Yar' Adua administrations. The difference with Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha era is that in the prevailing circumstances, bureaucratic resistance to change is confronted with equally determined and organized Youth resistance movements (MEND, NDVF, NDV, etc.) The judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni nine by the brutal regime of Sani Abacha transformed the non-violent agitation into a vortex of conflict and insurgency driven by mass conscientization and mobilization. Thus, "what began as an idealistic struggle by Niger Delta youths to protest unemployment, pollution and inadequate political compensations has degenerated into exploitative abductions..." (Newswatch, September, 2007:19) At issue is the conjunctural crisis of:

Diametrically opposed views of security in the Niger Delta between the local communities, the state (FGN) and the oil multinationals. As Okechukwu Ibeanu (2000:25) has put it, "for oil-bearing communities, security means the maintenance of the carrying capacity of the fragile Niger Delta environment—state officials and petro business, on the other hand, see security in terms of uninterrupted production of petroleum irrespective of environmental and social impacts."

The role of military force in the resolution of the escalating crisis in the context of the accelerating militarization of the region. MEND has for instance, given as a reason for the recent attack on the Bonga oilfield the "leaked Joint Task Force secret brief to the chief of army staff, which authored military line of operation to stem military in the region, the appointment of Prof Ibrahim Gambari to Chair the Niger Delta Summit, the over 400 billion budget for security in the Niger Delta, have provided the impetus for the recent spate of attacks." (Buardian, Friday, 27, 2008:31)

The pressure towards decisive action against the militants has been a constant theme in defense planning. Under the current administration, the reorganization of the Joint Task Force and the infusion of logistical resources and raising of troop levels to divisional status became a policy objective. This position is reflected in several policy statements and press briefs from the Defence Headquarters. Following President Umaru Yar' Adua directive to the military to "fish out those behind the attack on Bonga oil facility, the Chief of Army Staff declared that "anyone who thought that it lacked the capacity to root out militancy in the Niger Delta or insurgency in any part of the country not to dare it." (Sunday Punch, July 6:8). In a propaganda pamphlet obviously sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Information, captioned "Militants: The Enemy Within" (2009) by the "Niger Delta Peace and Development Partners", the Niger Delta insurgents are portrayed as extortionist and criminal elements – Cultists political thugs, armed bandits – out to perpetrate destructive acts of social banditry for selfish ends. According to the publication:

Militancy as a word has been misused and abused in the Niger Delta situation. Armed robbers, kidnapers, assassins, pirates etc. now claim to be militants because their activities in our communities are similar in nature. So to be called a militant is one of the most shameful and dreaded name because it means you could be robbers, pirates, assassins...in short a criminal (NDPDP, 2009)

This piece of propaganda double lie is clearly indicative of the direction and dominant mindset of the bureaucratic complex that control policy decisions under the current administration of President Umaru Yar' Adua. It is not surprising, therefore, that a member of the northern establishment in the House of Representatives proposed as a "final solution" to the Niger Delta problem "Sacrificing 20 millions out of 150 million Nigerians to bring the boiling Niger Delta to heel and give the rest of the country some respite"! Such a callous disregard for human life is fast defining the cultural boundaries (ethnic vortex) that characterize the "fault lines" of Nigeria racial landscape. It also explains the scorch earth military operations in Odi and Gbaramater Kingdom of Warri. In response to the above legislative rascality, Juriad Mohammed, a Second Republic Senator, has noted rightly that "eliminating 20 million people so that the remaining 150 million can have an easy peace is a delusion, and clearly that illiterate scoundrel does not even know his history. Wherever that kind of drastic thing was adopted it never led to permanent peace or to permanent democratization" (The Nation, Friday, July 10, 2009:13)

Nevertheless, his own solution of eliminating the elite in the Niger Delta and the rest of the country (the Rawling style) is equally oblivious of the lesson of the January 1966 military coup d' etat: that is, how in the murky vortex of Nigeria's ethnic cauldron, revolutionary action easily triggers genocidal retaliatory impulses. Thinking in terms of absolutes – "militants as criminals" or "eliminating elites" to save Nigeria – only suggests failure of circumspective contextualization of social discourse and, therefore, preempting effective policy response. It is in this regard that Wole Soyinka has noted that:

The attempt in some quarters to confuse issues by refusing to separate the principled militants, such as members of MEND and its affiliates, from the opportunistic mercenaries and criminals, has always struck me so dishonest and diversionary. Separating the wheat from the chaff is a simple enough process. (The Nation, June 26, 2009:3)

The first step to deconstructing the banal premises (that equates legitimate militants with banditry) as the rationale for military action is, as Soyinks put it, to recognize that the "Delta contestation is a product of the desperate sustenance of the very immorality of the Nigerian State – and the continuing, corrupt desperation of power." On this view any policy decision that glosses over the sordid condition that precipitated the armed revolt in the region in the first place cannot provide sustainable basis for peace. Thus, the former Minister of Petroleum Resources, Tam David-West recently admonished that "it would be rash to assume that the last minute mass surrender by leaders of Niger Delta militia at the weekend has ended militancy and restiveness in the oil – bearing region". According to him, the "amnesty programme would fail, unless government addressed the fundamental issues that led to the insurgency." (The Daily Sun, 28 October, 2009)

3. Military Option

The case for force is invariably based on the consideration that it is the primary responsibility of the armed forces of any country to defend its core and context specific values (the survival of the state and the life and properties of its citizens) against external aggression and domestic insurrections. Thus, whether conceived in terms of its direct or indirect employment, the military has become in the modern era the legally sanctioned instrument of violence which states use in their relations with each other, and, where necessary, in an internal security. To paraphrase, William Kaufman (1956:234) it is not easy to see how domestic and international order can be maintained, if military power were totally absent.

The sheer imperative of preserving physical security—territorial integrity and resources—from violent threat has inevitability entailed the deployment of national "power of resistance" as a counter to such developments. In this regard, the development of an effective military institution (armed forces with the requisite combat power) has been considered a sine qua non by most governments – an indispensable instrument of national preservation and survival in the face of unpredictable and capricious circumstances (Basseyy 2005). As a consequence, the security policy of a state may be seen as "that set of decisions and actions taken by a government to preserve or create an internal and external order congenial to its interest and values primarily (although not exclusively) through the threat of use of force" (Kolodziej, 1982).

The Nigerian State is not an exception to this rule, as the imperative of sheer physical survival has in the past and recent occasions compelled the activation of the armed forces as an instrument of pacification and crisis in the country since the end of the civil war in 1970. Specifically, in the Niger Delta case, as one writer has noted: "As a sovereign power, Nigeria has the obligation to secure its territory, natural resources and, if necessary, to enter into agreements to achieve these objectives" (Lubeck, 2007:20). The graveness of the growing insurgency against oil facilities in the region

in terms of the overall liquidity of the Nigerian state was not lost to the Federal Government since the Administration of General Babangida. (1984-1993)

From the standpoint of the Federal Government, the organized assaults of Delta youths, especially under the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) amounted to acts of subversion that called for decisive action. The Government response was characteristically, therefore, forceful and unequivocal: the youth militancy under whatever guise constitutes a mortal threat to the security of the Nigerian state and must be contained by whatever means available. Hence, the Federal Government charge that the "seemingly unending violence in the Niger Delta area was being championed by a dangerous band of psychopathic, merciless mercenaries who exploit their sophistry to kill, rape, kidnap, destroy and extort money from anybody available" (Ofuoka, 1999:8).

The directive to the Joint Task Force Commander was equally "specific" and "unambiguous": "to dislodge perpetrators of violence, restore Law and order and apprehend murderers". To provide legal backing to this directive, General Babandiga Administration promulgated a Decree (3rd May 1993) making youth activism in the Niger Delta a treasonable felony. This directive initiated the first major deployment of army troopers, naval contingents and frigates in the flashpoints of the Niger Delta. The army operations was initiated under the River State Internal Security Task Force commanded by Major Paul Okuntimo and subsequently, Operation Hakuri II, under Lt. Col. Agbabiaka, in the wake of the murder of 12 police officers at Odi, Bayelsa State. According to the Defense Minister, General Theophilus Danjuma, Operation Hakuri II was initiated, among other things, to protect pipelines, refineries and power installations in the Niger Delta. In a broader context, the army search and destroy operation was specifically targeted at the organization network and infrastructure that support militant movements in the Niger Delta. The resulting mayhem has been described as "Oil, Blood and Fire" (Okonta and Douglas, 2003).

Similarly, the Navy has the broader operational task of (i) maritime surveillance and interdiction of vast quantity of sophisticated weaponry coming into the Niger Delta (ii) the protection of offshore oil platforms from attack and occupation by the militant and angry youths (iii) protection of flow stations, operating terminal and lives and property of nationals and expatriates in the petroleum industry. The roles of the Navy became even more critical in the operational context of the geography of the Niger Delta: the 36,000 square Kilometers of marshland, creeks, tributaries and lagoons which drain the Niger River into the Atlantic at the Bight of Biafra. With several of the flashpoints almost completely surrounded by water, the containment of youth militancy became the provenance of the Navy. These series of military activities were followed by:

Operation Restore Hope launched in August 2003, with the purpose of containing the "destructive actions of militant youths in the Niger Delta by arresting the degenerating security situation" and preventing the crisis from spreading to other parts of the region and

Operation Flush out III, launched in September 2004, to curtail gangsterism and banditry in Buguma and Okrika towns of the River State. With the escalation of insurgency since 2007 and the spectacular attack by militants on pipelines and the largest offshore oil facility, Bonga oilfield, the situation is fast deteriorating into a full scale war with the current Federal Government orders to the JTF to crush the militants.

In May this year (2009), the Joint Task Force (JTF) finally unleashed the long planned offensive in the Niger Delta involving Land, Sea and Air contingents of the Nigerian armed forces. The operation was planned to annihilate the network of militant camps and paralyze the ability of the armed youths to organize and carry out operations on the vast network of petroleum complexes in the Niger Delta. It was, as Sunny Awhefeada noted, the "most horrendous and fratricidal onslaught, the ongoing military blitzkrieg has been conceived to brutally subjugate, and if need be annihilate, a target group that has championed the Niger Delta struggle for a decade now. The commando – like pounding of Niger – Delta communities and Creeks is nothing but war". The civilian casualties were equally appalling: "thousands of innocent citizens died, hundred of thousands displaced, hunger and hardship now stalk the living" (Guardian, May 25, 2009:67)

The assault only succeeded in aggravating the situation in the petroleum industry as the militants responded with a devastating string of attacks on the pipelines, flow stations and depot: Escarvos – Warri petroleum products marketing company pipeline; utoma flow station; Makarabo – Abiteye pipeline; shell pipeline conveying crude oil from Billekrama to Bonny Export Terminal; Shell's Forcados offshore platform; Chevron's Okomanifold; and Atlas Cove terminal in Lagos. The assault of the Joint Task Force may have been orchestrated to justify the disproportionate budgetary allocation in the 2009 fiscal allocation; however, in terms of its strategic objective of destroying the resistance of MEND and its affiliates, it was unmitigated failure. The insurgents simply melted into the vast mangrove swamps of the Delta, reorganized and struck back with unprecedented ferocity at the oil and gas infrastructure. Among the obvious consequences was the precipitate decline in power generation and the mayhem of darkness in Nigerian cities.

Clearly embarrassed by this development the Federal Government moved to diffuse the escalation of military operation and insurgency response through conditional offer of amnesty. (The Nation, June 26, 2009:1-2). Providing a justification for these developments, President Umaru Yar' Adua declared that:

Developments in the nation's Niger Delta region over the past few weeks have necessitated the Federal Government decisive action against armed criminal elements who have hijacked genuine agitation in the region and constituted themselves into very real threats to Nigeria's national security and economic revival. (The Nation, 5 July, 2009: 13)

There is doubt, however, that the "military onslaught has been counterproductive and has proved to be futile in addressing the fundamentals", as one representative of the civil society organization has noted. Similarly, the offer of 60 days amnesty amounted only to dictating rather than negotiating peace in the region. Hence the current Defence Minister, General Godwin Abbe's ultimatum that, the Federal Government does not recognize the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and will after 4th October, 2009, take "whatever action necessary to restore normalcy to the Niger Delta" (Sun, Wednesday, 30 September, 2009)

4. Contestation

The pertinent question that has arisen from these series of military operations is of course how effective have they been in containing the explosive situation which threatens the petroleum infrastructure in the region. In terms of operational balance sheet, the honest answer would be minimal. This is hardly surprising given the geographical and political context of the escalating insurgency in the region.

First, some analysts have argued that the situation would have been worse than it is today if the armed forces had not been deployed in strength to contain the rising tide of youth militancy in the region. In other words, if left unchallenged, following the Kaima Declaration by the Ijaw Youth Council on 2nd December, 1998, the militant youths under such organizations as Egbesu Youths, Arogo Freedom Fighters (AFF) and Movement for the survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationalities in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND) could have isolated the region and dictate oil production and export policy through acquisition. This is so because despite the multiplicity of the ethnic based youth protest movements, they share similar fundamental policy goals: self determination, land and resource control and environmental security. Military operations in this respect were meant to:

Effectively curtail and deter attacks on oil and gas facilities,
Check and paralyze the growing profitable business of oil bunkering (stealing) that fuels the informal economy of Niger Delta,
Stem social banditry, trade in arms, drugs and kidnapping that has created an atmosphere of fear and unsettled condition in major cities such as Port Harcourt and Warri, and
Through the deployment of the Navy ensure the protection of oil Riggs and oil supply route in and out of the Gul of Guinea (Metogo 2006).

Thus, the military option, as one contributor to a recent forum on the Niger Delta put it, "has its short-term benefits of checking elements that are masquerading as fighters for the rights of the area, but they would be short term". It is perhaps on this ground that there is a widespread view in the Nigerian Defense Establishment that if certain structural requirements of the forces deployed are met by the Federal Government, the military can decisively prevail in the Delta region as it did over "Issac Boro's rebellion, Maitasine uprising, Odi and Zaki Biam crises" among others. This line of thinking is perhaps best represented by comment from an army officer who completed a tour of duty in the Delta (The News September, 2007):

The Federal Government ought to take decisive measures in handling the crisis. In as much as the government has commercial responsibility for infrastructure and economic development of the Niger Delta, the resort to arms by youths of the area and attack on security and military forces need not be condoned. Therefore there is need for government to take decisive military actions against any group who attack security and military forces. This could be achieved by attacking all known militant camps which includes Camp 5, Camp Africa, Okerenko and AGIC camps. Thus, avoid setting dangerous precedence which could lead to anarchy in the country and more problems in future.

On this view, the failure of the armed forces to accomplish the operational objectives of Operation Restore Hope and Operation Flush Out ("arresting the deteriorating security situation in the region and to prevent spread of the crisis to other parts of the Niger Delta") has less to do with the difficult terrain of the Niger Delta and the determination and dexterity of youth militancy, but more to governmental equivocation at providing the necessary logistical resources to the Joint Task Force. These include:

- Inadequate logistics support especially of "troop carrying gunships, uniforms, petroleum, oil and lubricant (POL) and provision for other basic essentials";
- Lack of specialized equipments such as flat bottom boats (FBB), fast patrol craft (FPCs), Inshore patrol craft (IPCs), helicopters and POL storage facilities like bowers. Others include communication equipment, operational vehicles, ballistic floatation vests, night vision devices and appropriate arms and ammunition;
- Surveillance devices like MPA, coastal radar, UAVs for extended coverage and intelligence gathering;
- Dedicated military jetties to enhance operational efficiency of the JTF. The use of civilians control jetties under the Nigerian Ports Authority "exposes the FPCs to possible attacks or sabotage";
- Specialist training in jungle amphibious and counter-terrorist warfare, to improve performance of troops and
- The imperative need to raise the troop level by additional Brigade to ensure effective controls of the difficult environment in the Niger Delta. The mandate of JTF initially recommended troop strength of Brigade level, whereas the current realities suggest a divisional strength for effective response.

While there is need for troop deployment in the region to contain the criminal excesses of banditry, bunkering and attacks on petroleum facilities, it is quite pertinent and legitimate to ask whether if all the above requirements for operational effectiveness were met, the military option alone can contain and stifle the current rebellion against the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies. The answer of course is categorically no.

Evidential support for such a pessimistic appraisal derives from two sources. The first is essentially extrapolative, the conventional wisdom regarding the ineluctable linkage of the past, present and future. The second source of empirical evidence, linked to the first, concerns development in three major areas of intra-system relations. First, the troop surge in the Niger Delta since 1993 has only aggravated rather than diffuse the situation in Niger Delta if considered in terms of the minimum threshold of assessing the success of any peace support operation: (i) "success in accomplishing the mandate, and (ii) "contribution to stable peace and security" (Bellamy and Williams, 2005:179). After a protracted period of battling insurgency in the region, the current situation as reported by the TELL Magazine ("50 years of Oil in Nigeria" 18th February, 2008) is grave: increasing and audacious attacks on oil, and gas facilities and ships, bunkering, piracy, kidnappings, gangsterism and banditry. As Governor Chubike Amaechi of Rivers state lamented:

Security remains the greatest challenge threatening our state. While this time it was difficult to ensure the safety of lives and property as aliens were taken at will and kidnapping became almost a daily occurrence. This is a place where criminals and warlords were on the prowl, foreigners were leaving our state in droves and investors divested from our state.

These attacks took a catastrophic dimension with the 2006 blast of a gas line supplying the 1000 MW Egbin Station, the country's largest thermal generating plant. Worrisome and destabilizing of the industry is the recent attack on the largest offshore of facility, the Bonga oilfield, which produce 225,000 barrels and 150 million cubic feet of natural gas per day. It is not, therefore, surprising that the Guardian Newspaper of Monday, 18 February, 2008, reported that "Crude shut-in hits one million barrels per day" based on the report of Auditors at the National Petroleum Investments Management Services (NAMPIMS): "Nigeria and its joint venture partners both in joint ventures and PSC may be losing \$90 million (10.8 billion Naira) on a daily basis from this shut-in the countries.

The second consideration is obviously that the use of force only confronts the symptoms rather than the root cause of the crises. From a policy standpoint, dealing with effects of protracted social crisis (bunkering, kidnapping, piracy, vandalism/sabotage, gangsterism etc.) rather than the deep fissure of youth revolt and militancy in the Nigeria Delta may only aggravate rather than diffuse the increasingly explosive situation. As widely reflected in the literature, the root causes of the crises in the Niger Delta are political and economic which engendered marginalization, poverty and environmental degradation (proximate causes). These in turn triggers widespread social discontent: frustration and powerlessness; loss of livelihood and widespread sense of relative deprivation. (Idemudia and Ite, 2006:393). As Cyril Obi has aptly argued "The region is by far the most central to the nation's economic and political survival," but paradoxically, it is one of the "poorest, least developed and reciprocated for its contributions to national wealth".

Seen in the above context, youth militancy in the Niger Delta represents a "major contestation at two levels": First, it is a challenge by civil groups and communities in the ND over the control of oil and the distribution of its benefits among the constituent units of the nation. Second, it is a challenge to the state and its multinational partners of policies and practices that disadvantage the region, destroy its environment and impoverish its people (Ikelegbe, 2001:438)

Given this contestation, arising from the "contradiction of wealth generation amidst poverty and frustration and hostility to the state and multinational oil corporations", the path to peace from comparative historical experience reside more in constructive engagement with stakeholders in the region (as represented by the MOU evolved under General Akubakar Administartion) rather than the escalation of military operations currently associated with the mandate of JTFs RESTORE HOPE AND FLUSH OUT III. There is no doubt that given the prevailing state of insecurity in the region, the task of arresting criminal activities, restoring law and order as well as ensuring "a secured and enabling environment for socio-economic activities and unhindered operation of the oil/gas industries is essential to the economic survival of the nation. However, this calls for the primacy of political and economic instrumentalities in conflict resolution over the brazen and unrestrained expansion of use of force, as the report of the General Ogomudia's Committee on the Niger Delta recommends.

The reason basically resides in the nature and sensitivity of the Petroleum industry. As Rudolf Traub—Merz and Douglas Yates (2004) have rightly noted, "Oil platforms, tankers, pipelines and the whole integrated infrastructure of the petroleum industry are extremely vulnerable to attacks." The Nigerian Petroleum complexes is extensive and cannot be completely (especially the pipelines) militarily secured from insurgent attacks. Most of the oil supply is onshore "from about 250 fields dotted across the Delta", 5,284 on—and off—shore wells, 7,000 Kilometers of pipelines, ten exporting terminals, 275 flow stations, ten gas plants, four refineries and a massive LNG project in Bonny and Brass (Lubeck, et al, 2007:5). Securing this vast network of infrastructure from Insurgency amounts to a mission impossible and at best a logistical nightmare even for a division level JTF. Thus military operation cannot compensate for political solution or eradicate insurgency in the Niger Delta in the light of glaring environmental catastrophe, mass poverty and infrastructural underdevelopment of the region. As a member of the current National Assembly, Victor Ndonga-Egba has noted:

The military option having been used and some respites having been secured, I believe that we now have every opportunity to pursue, very urgently, physical and material development and to also address the root cause of the agitation proper. The primary cause was the agitation for rights and equity...But even though the criminality tended in the latter state to overshadow the genuine and authentic agitation of the region, you cannot miss out the underlying reason for the agitation in the first place – Justice equity and development.

Ndonga-Egba's observation was the subject of a study conducted by the Center For Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD) based in Port Harcourt. According to the study, the "ultimate solution" to the Niger Delta problem "lies in the ability of the Nigerian government to pursue a true and genuine agenda of demonetization, justice, economic stabilization and creation of opportunities for its citizens". The failure of programmatic response by government to the deplorable environmental and human conditions in the region can only result in accelerated crisis of gangstersim and violence:

Armed warlords operating in the region will undermine the region and plunge it into a dangerous conflict zone where the gangs will rule at the expense of legitimate authority, development, security and proper of all. The situation works hopeless, and, again, if not checked, the blood child in Somalia and other conflict zones armed the world will be a child's play (CEHRD, 2009).

The remedial measures required in the Niger Delta has been a subject of numerous past reports (the Poopola Report and the Alexander Ogomudia Reports etc.) and a host of grandiose development plans. So far, however, these reports and plans have either been ignored or treated with utmost levity by the majority – ethnic dominated Federal Government of Nigeria. Under the current administration of Umaru Yar' Adua a Niger Delta Technical Committee headed by Ledum Mitee was setup to "marry all the reports, produce a simplified version and give an idea of what kind of roadmap to take". The committee recommended, among others:

A labor employment scheme that will employ at least 2,000 youths in community work in each local government in the region, and also skills acquisition or employment centers "in line with international best practices on amnesty" for ex-militants;

Disarmament, Decommissioning and Reintegration (DDR) process that "begins with a confidence building measure on all sides including ceasefire and pull back of forces",

Grant amnesty to all Niger Delta militants willing and ready to participate in the DDR programme; address short term issues arising from amnesty to militants, by providing security for ex-militants and rebuilding of communities destroyed by military invasion, work out long term strategies of human capacity development and reintegration for ex-militants.

Equip the security forces especially the Navy to "effectively monitor activities within coastal waters to check illegal bunkering and trafficking of arms."

For the purpose of effective governance, the TCND recommended that the Federal Government should establish certain institutions and mechanisms to support the implementation of this report: National Minorities Commission to deal with special issues of Minorities' and Micro-minorities; A special Niger Delta Infrastructure Intervention Development Fund to support the building of capital projects and a Multi-stakeholders Niger Delta Policy and Project Compliance Monitoring Agency to monitor implementation of these recommendations and other programmes in the Niger Delta Region,

Carry out comprehensive audit and correct the imbalance against the region in matters of allocation of oil blocks, oil contracts, and allocation of marginal fields; undertake a Human Welfare and Human Misery Audit, every State of the Region as a means of capturing and redressing all incidences of violence, deprivation, killing, kidnapping, rape, and injustice in the region, and

Finally, a revisit of the crucial problem of fiscal federalism as "part of a total package for rebuilding our federalism in theory and practice." According to the report, the "fiscal dimension of federalism relates to the demand to rectify what is seen as a skewed pattern of resource generation, allocation and management." (TCND Report, 2009, Vanguard July 6, 2009)

As was the case with past reports on the region, the current report submitted by the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta has so far received only selective attention at best or treated with contemptuous superciliousness at worst. No white paper has been issued and "no follow up implementation and monitoring mechanisms were set up by government". (TELL Magazine, June 22, 2009) In other words, the TCND Report has suffered the same fate that beset commissioned reports on the Niger delta since the First Republic. As Ledum Mittee he noted:

It is clear that although past governments, since 1958 set up very high powered committees to look into the problems of the Niger Delta and these Committees submitted for reaching and comprehensive reports, they have suffered the same fate of non-implementation. In cases where some of the recommendations have been considered at all, they have been taken out of context and implemented piecemeal or without the required enthusiasm, consistency and monitoring (Vanguard, July 6, 2009)

This contemptuousness toward the appalling condition in oil producing areas by consecutive majority ethnic-dominated federal governments since the First Republic has generated the "current quagmire in which we find ourselves in the region and country today which has culminated in violence, kidnappings, oil theft, illegal bunkering, political uncertainty, economic dislocation, divestment, and inter and intra-community suspicion and conflicts". (Guardian, July 31, 2009) The inevitable consequence has been the protracted social conflict resulting from the "creeping insensitivity, neglect and at time, marginalization of already powerless and devastated communities which has made it possible for political opportunists, bad leaders, corruption, waste, institutional decay and inefficiency to thrive" (The News, June 8, 2009)

This brazen condition of domestic colonialism was aggravated overtime by the syndicated and programmatic "political instrumentalisation of social disorder", arising first from the "skewed pattern of resource generation, allocation, and management" through the proliferation of states and local government administrations in the majority ethnic-group geopolitical spheres. Second, this strategy of extraversion was granted legitimation through fiscal commission which literally strips oil-producing communities of statutory entitlements to revenues generated from oil exploration. These include the Dinah Commission of 1968, the Ojetunji Aboyade Commission of 1977 and Pius Okigbo Commission of 1979. As far as derivation principle enjoyed by the majority-ethnic dominated regions in the First Republic was concerned, for the oil producing states, the recommendations of these Commissions resulted in a State of "elimination without substitution". Thus Karl Maier has graphically noted in this regard that:

Immense wealth that oil represented was there to see but not to touch. People felt abandoned by the newly independent government of Nigeria and the companies that removed petroleum from their land but provided scarce educational and health facilities in return. Many locals saw an almost spiritual correlation between the arrival of the oil companies and the declining fertility of the land. The seeds of future conflict had been planted, and it was only a matter of time before they bore their explosive fruit.

This differential treatment of oil producing communities and states, compared with the cash crops (groundnuts, cocoa, palm oil) producing regions of the First Republic, was reinforced by elaborate pseudo-legal contraptions designed to

sustain the hegemonic structure of state-societal relations which operated in favour of dominant ethnic-nationalities in Nigeria. These include the Petroleum Decree (1969); the Petroleum Act (1969), the Exclusive Economic Zone Act (1990); the Land Use Act (1990), the Revenue Allocation Act; the Oil in Navigable Waters Act; Petroleum Production and Distribution, Anti-Sabotage Act; the Minerals and Mining Act no.34, 1999; Lands (Title Vesting etc) Decree No. 52, 1993, and Section 44 (2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission and National Inland Waterways Authority Act. On the basis of these considerations, Chris Akiri has aptly concluded in his analysis of two era of fiscal federalism and subsisting regimes in Nigeria that:

The four commissions on revenue sharing formula – Phillipson Commissions of 1946 and 1951, the Chick Commission (1953) and Raismon Commission (1958) – took into consideration the peculiarities of the federating regions and plumbed for derivation as the best option for the country. Those were the pre-oil days. But with the emergence of petroleum oil as the mainstay of the Nigerian economy in the mid-sixties, Nigerian leaders from the so-called three major ethnic groups (including Chief Accolowo) began to vociferate the oneness of the country, vigorously intoning and apotheosizing the oxymoronic conflation of “unity in diversity” (Guardian, September 30, 2008)

It is not, therefore, surprising he concludes that in 1965, the “Binns Commission, reading the collective mind of the oppressors, put an accent on equality of status and financial comparability as the dominant principle of revenue allocation”. Even Obafemi Awolowo who astutely defended the principle of derivation in relation to the rights of the regions to “keep any wealth that accrues to it either by the sweat of its brow, or by cunning, or by the unaided bounty of nature”, could not escape the inanity of propaganda double – lie when it came to the petroleum resources of the Niger Delta and helped shaped the Petroleum Decree (1969) and Petroleum Act (1969) that contradicts the grandiose postulations in his book “The Strategy and tactics of the People’s Republic of Nigeria” (1961).

Prognosis for Action

It is, therefore, pertinent to conclude from the above observations, that the path to peace and sustainable development of Niger Delta Communities lies in empowerment through a policy regime which recognizes the organic linkages between security, economic empowerment and development. What this structural condition entails is that the security policy response of the Federal government to the unsettled condition in the Niger Delta must address a spectrum of factors beyond the traditional concern for the defense of petroleum installations against internal subversion and external complicity and attack. These (in the Niger Delta) include a set of interrelated issues that now impact inexorably on policy formulation and planning.

First, security issues and policy responses in the region must be situated within the changing policy context: mass conscientization and popular revolt against ecological devastation and neglect which have “left much of the Niger Delta desolate, uninhabitable, and poor”. Security in this sense:

Refers to the carrying capacity of the fragile biophysical environment of the Niger Delta. It is the realization that an unsustainable exploitation of crude oil with its devastation of farmland and fishing waters, threatens resource flows and livelihood for both individuals and communities as collectivities, when a population feels its threatened livelihood it feels insecure. Therefore, elimination of deprivation is a key concern of the oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta. Since the state and its allies appropriate almost all the oil wealth from these communities, they are resentful of the state and petro business and feels that a good part of the financial resources should be invested in the communities” (Ibeanu, 200:24)

Second, the security policy of the Federal Government toward the Niger Delta must recognize the transformed social context: the dynamics and dialectics of the region’s “distinctive political economy”. Security in this context designates the “capacity of groups (and individual as their agents) to provide their physical and psychosocial need and livelihoods”. This means a progressive “elimination of objective conditions that limit this capacity, as well as reduction of fears and anxieties about their abilities to meet these needs”. In this sense, “security had to do with protection from poverty, exploitation, disease, bio-chemical contamination, injustice, and the like. The issue here is the control of resource flow” (Ibeanu, 2000:26). This new imperative as Orubu (1999:210) argued, is “based critically on the argument of sustainable development and intergenerational equity, potential output loss, negative externalities of oil industry activities and the implied new expenditure requirement in respect of mitigating and ameliorating programmes in oil producing communities.”

This new direction in thinking seems to have influenced both the General Abubakar and Obasanjo Administration initial policy thrust in the Niger Delta. This is the conviction that the approach of the previous military regimes of General Babangida and Abacha glossed over fundamental problems of state-societal relations in a highly unsettled social system with deep segmentations along ethnic lines such as Nigeria. In the process there was an "implicit disjunction between the state and society, slurring over questions about the social foundation of political power and the making of public policy" (Alavi and Shanim, 1983:289).

This consideration of stick and carrot approach may have underscored General Abubakar's conciliation moves in the Niger Delta by dispatching a high level delegation of military officers (Including Adm. Akhigbe, then Chief of General Staff, and General Bamiyi, the Chief Army staff and their civilian counterparts in government) on tour of the "trouble area to appeal directly to the people and through their traditional rulers, to bury the hatchet". This was followed two years later by President Obasanjo's comprehensive institutional response through the Niger Delta Development Commission. In other words, the Federal government policy toward the oil producing communities reflects the belated realization that youth revolts and violence in the Niger Delta in only a symptom rather than the cause of such crises. Everywhere in the world (Brazil, Colombia, Congo, Indonesia etc.) revolutionary pressure develops in condition of poverty and marginalization amidst the exploitation of natural wealth of the communities on ancestral lands.

Finally, the government should ensure through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the NDDC that, as an interventionary regime, its activities and performance profile meet the expectations outlined in the instrument of its incorporation. A contrary development could be catastrophic in the light of the multiple failures of past interventionary regimes, from the Niger Delta Development Board of the First Republic to the OMPADEC and Petroleum Trust Fund of the Generals Babangida and Abacha era. In the final analysis, the various communities of the Niger Delta will judge the success or failure of the Ministry of Niger Delta and the Niger Delta Development Commission, (and ultimately the seriousness of the Yar' Adua administration) in terms their effectiveness. As the Warri Accord puts it, the ultimate goal is to address the "dire and urgent need for the provision of basic amenities such as constant electricity, potable water, good roads and dredging of our riverine waterways with a view to the rapid modernization and urbanization of our riverine and township areas" in the Niger Delta. This, in sum, constitutes the terminal objective of conflict resolution in a condition of multiple disorders such as the Niger Delta Region.

It is within the context of this policy thrust that a number of proposals have been put forward during the series of intervention and workshops in the past eight years of Obasanjo/ Yar' Adua Administrations. Of particular interest is the dual, if controversial, options put forward by Ebere Onwudiwe, a professor of political science at the Central State University, Ohio, United States of America: the Alaska and Abuja options. The Alaska option derives from the policy of the Union towards Alaska in which its "citizens are entitled to their share of oil revenue payment." On this view he proposed that "the best way to tackle the Niger Delta problem is direct cash transfers to Nigerians":

This model of taxable resource revenue distribution to individual Deltans creates a powerful endowment effect that has significance for government accountability. People care more about their money (income tax for example) than the allocations to their state governments that they never get to see the legal framework for the implementation of this model is for government to decide what share of derivation fund should go to the state government and how much should go to individual citizens of the Niger Delta. This can be established by a special loan that will also set up a Niger Delta Revenue Distribution Agency perhaps under the NDDC or as an independent entity.

Although from Onwudiwe perspective, this model could impact directly on the life expectancy of beneficiaries, however, the inflationary consequences for a country that imports virtually all consumer products was bound to be catastrophic. Such direct payment will only encourage ostentatious life style through massive acquisition of foreign imports rather than productive investment. The oil producing communities could certainly benefit more from the commitment of derivation allocations directly to physical quality of life infrastructures: roads, light, water, hospitals, schools, community library, and ICT learning resources.

The second option according to Onwudiwe's proposal is for "the federal government to build from the scratch a brand new Federal Delta City, FDC, on a territory carved out of three adjoining Delta States":

The city which should be our country's second planned metropolitan could start as the hub of new petrochemical industries that use petroleum and gas as raw materials. The construction of such a city will constitute an employment bonanza for many Nigerians and the peoples of Niger Delta. Once this is done, the hands that now reach for the revolver and machine guns, will be gainfully employed and this would be appropriate antidote to militancy. (Newswatch, 2007:17)

However, there is current unease about the seriousness and the direction of the current administration of Yar'Adua. The fur ore over the proposed Niger Delta Summit under Professor Ibrahim Gambari is indication of public temper. As reported by a newspaper columnist (Sunday sun, June 29,2008:8), the "militant group contended that rather than hold another conference, the Federal Government should implement the report of the General Alexander Ogomudia Panel on the Niger Delta, which was set up by the immediate past Olusegun Obasanjo administration as a starting point for further negotiations". In a characteristic manner, President Yar' Adua yielded to protest and replaced Gambari (his kinsman) with Mitee (a Deltan), noted above, but finally ensured that the Report of the Technical Committee on Niger Delta (TCND) was given the treatment it deserved: ignored. Instead in May 2009 he yielded to the option the military establishment has been pushing and resisted by the previous administration of Obasanjo: a coordinated assault on the militant camps and positions in the Niger Delta.

Under the pretext of unacceptable provocation – seizure of foreign ship and its crew – the JFT unleashed ground, air and sea assault – on militant camps. The allegation of piracy and bunkering as causes belli was, however, not convincing to the general public as there is significant evidence to the effect that "some JFT commanders, some serving and retired military top brass, top politicians and Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation personnel are part of the burgeoning bunkering bazaar" (TELL, 22 June, 2009). As one of the militants put it, "ships involved in bunkering are not planes. They do not fly in and out but go through series of security barriers". On the contrary, as was widely revealed in the tumultuous days following the death of General Sani Abacha in 1998, all members of his Armed Forces Ruling Council had oil wells and were tied to the network of illegal oil trade. As one member of the current National Assembly has noted: "What is going on in the Niger Delta is no longer the legitimate struggle of the people for a fair deal, but an "economic war" between the JTF and militants who are fighting for their pockets." (TELL, June 22, 2009:26). Indeed, as TELL Magazine Special Report noted:

The militants are stubbornly barging into the bunkering business because they feel the oil belongs to them and that outsiders are feeding fat on the illegal proceeds. They also feel that the proceeds of the oil legally sold are also stolen by government officials. As a result of the rising income profile of some Niger Delta people, including militants, sources say they are becoming financially strong enough to go beyond just providing security for the bunkers proper. This has been a major source of conflict. That is why the JFT is cracking down on "indigenous" operators in the upstream and downstream sectors of the black market of the oil industry.

The failure of the May 2009 offensive of the Joint Task Force (JTF) to achieve its strategic objective ("final solution") of "flushing out brigands and cowing criminals" in the Niger Delta, the Federal Government came out with the "face-saving option of an amnesty for all militants who surrendered their weapons and renounced armed struggle." (Guardian, July 31, 2009:22). Although the Federal Government has declared the disarmament and decommissioning exercise an unmitigated success, there is, however, considerable evidence to support the skepticism that among the thousands of "militants" that "surrendered" are the "bayside boys" (Lumpenproletariat), the teeming unemployed youths of the sprawling shanties of cities and towns (such as Port Harcourt and Warri) in the Niger Delta. These youths have been extensively associated with clandestine activities such as the sale of small arms and light weapons, drugs and political thuggery during elections ("hired guns"). The Movement for the emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), for instance, has distanced itself from the exercise and only declared indefinite ceasefire after its series of retaliatory attacks. Said Adejumbis observation is highly germane in this regard:

What then do we make of the current amnesty by Yar' Adua in the Niger Delta given these contexts for amnesty provision? Perhaps the president and his advisers seek to provide incentive for the militants to shelve their guns and see reason, which may be a basis for future peace talks. But the president has not tabled any proposal of a dialogue or talks with the militants – he only offered unconditional amnesty. The second possibility may be just for the regime to be seen to be doing something without any clear agenda of what it seeks to achieve and how it seeks to achieve it. At least granting amnesty is a big media hype especially in the western world. The amnesty may them provide a diversion for the Nigerian state to complete its military operation and wipe out the militants completely from the region. (Guardian, July 13, 2009:73)

It is obvious that amnesty alone does not address the objective conditions – injustice and underdevelopment of the region – that precipitated the revolt in the region in the first place. As the chairman of the Technical Committee on the Niger

Delta, Ledum Mitee, noted, "Amnesty as stand-alone that fails to accompany some attempts to address the issues could be counterproductive... Dealing with militancy alone might be dealing with the symptoms of the problem. Indeed, dealing boldly with the fundamentals isolates the militants and removes the rug from under their feet". Elizabeth Donnelly, African Programme Manager at the British Institute Chatam House, has similarly observed that "it would be unrealistic to say this is the end of the Niger Delta's problem. The amnesty process is a chance to implement some change but there are a lot of reasons to be skeptical since there could be more broken promises." In the light of past betrayal and implementational failures, it would be a historic achievement of incalculable proportion for the Umaru Yar' Adua administration if it overcomes bureaucratic obstacles and intrigues and sustain the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process (DDR).

However, both his style of leadership and the enormity of countervailing social forces (representing powerful majority-ethnic complexes) suggest that the "crisis may linger for a long time". Considered from this standpoint, Adejumo's (2009) conclusion is irresistible: that the "serious democratic deficit in Nigeria's political system today suggests that the Nigerian ruling class still cherishes violence in realizing political ends or goals...Wherever the democratic voices of the people cannot be heard and prevail armed resistance tends to be an attractive option especially for those who are already engaged in it." How this dialectics of force and resistance is played out will determine the future of Nigeria in the next decade: failed, collapsed or problematic State?

The grim prognosis of the Western Intelligence Community (especially the US Intelligence Report of 2005-2008 on Nigeria) notwithstanding, with any post - Yar' Adua leadership audacious enough to unleash social change the catastrophe of the accelerated unjunctural crises and deep contradictions in the Nigerian social formation may be deferred if not avoided. As yusuph OLaniyonu (This day, 5 November, 2009) has forewarned, "time for sloganeering should be over. What is needed now is real action...concrete development programmes must be embarked upon immediately. We cannot afford to lose the current momentum."

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