Global Journal of human-social science: f
Political Science
Volume 14 Issue 4 Version 1.0 Year 2014
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Oil and Conflict Nexus: The Greed Model and Insecurity in the Niger Delta, Nigeria

By Crosdel Emuedo
Western Delta University, Nigeria

Abstract- The Niger Delta has for the past two decades been the focus of national and international discuss. The region was virtually ungovernable; enmeshed in panoply of violent conflicts that dove-tailed into near full blown youths driven insurgency. This made the region anarchic and inhospitable for the oil companies. Various studies posit a close link between natural resources and conflict, and oil as being central to conflict. This perspective is underpinned by the greed (economic) model, which posits that conflicts in Africa are greed driven. Militants' involvement in oil theft has given fillip to the notion that greed underpins insecurity in the Niger Delta. The paper examines the Niger Delta conflicts within the context of the greed model. The paper concludes that insecurity has been goaded by grievance rather than greed as conflicts in the Niger Delta evolved through many stages of oppression, repression and exploitation.

Keywords: *oil, greed, insecurity, niger delta.*

GJHSS-F Classification : *FOR Code: 160609*

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I. Introduction

Since the 1990s, African states have been dogged by insecurity from violent intra-state conflicts that nearly turned several states, Nigeria inclusive into failed states. These conflicts involved states well endowed with natural resources. Various studies posit a close linkage between natural resources and conflict, with oil at the apex (Khan, 1994; Karl, 1997; Coronil, 1997). The *economics of civil war* (Collier 1999) gave fillip to the natural resource conflict nexus. Thus Mbembe (2001:280) asserted that "Regions at the epicentre of oil production are bisected by repeated conflicts". The theory gives detailed illumination on conflicts in natural resources endowed states. It explains conflicts notably in Africa in terms of *economic* driven rebellion, due to natural resources profusion. The greed theory premises onset of violent conflicts on greed and not grievance (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000; 2002, 2004).In other words, greed defined in terms of opportunity cost of a rebellion provides explanation for the conflicts in natural resource endowed African states instead of grievance related issues; political marginalisation, exclusion and neglect. That is, the only interest of rebel leaders is the looting of resources for personal enrichment. Hence, Collier, (1999) asserted that the real cause of most rebellions is not the loud discourse of grievance, but the silent voice of greed. Other writers (Mwanasali 2000; Berdal and Malone 2000; Fearon and Laitin, 2003) also share this view. Resort to Insurgency it is said is hinged on the fact that natural resource dependent states often, suffer a horde of economic and political diseases (Auty, 2001); slow economic growth (Sachs and Warner, 1997, 2001; Manzano and Rigobon, 2001) and markedly high corruption level (Sachs and Warner, 1999; Leite and Weidemann, 1999; Gylfason, 2001). The model has generally underpinned explanations for conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. Indeed, conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, and Congo DR seem to strengthen the greed thesis.

The Nigerian State's view of the Niger Delta conflict seemed underpinned by the *greed* thesis, as; coercion has been the trademark policy under all successive regimes. Only President Yar'Adua attempted albeit feebly to end the conflict with amnesty declaration on June 25. 2009. But this was after massive air, land and sea attacks on Gbaramatu Axis (suspected militants haven) that killed 2000 persons but failed to stem insecurity. The amnesty was indeed, induced by militants' shut-in of a million barrels of oil daily due to attacks on oil facilities; pipelines, flow stations, platforms, drilling rigs and kidnapping of oil workers. The paper therefore examines the Niger Delta conflicts and in particular, the natural resource conflict nexus within the context of the *greed* model. It poses the question; *Is the greed model (lootable) oil resource adequate and proper in explaining insecurity in the Niger Delta?*

II. Conceptual Framework

Historical institutionalism or path Dependency explains conflicts in terms of historical events and choices that induce decisions in the present political situation of a state. It stresses that past political events largely inhibit the future in a state (Mahoney, 2000:510). It involves processes that are highly sensitive to events that take place in the early stages of an overall historical sequence (of a country) and "… self reinforcing processes in institutions that make institutional structures, and hence their policies, hard to change once the pattern has been accepted" (Peters *et al.*, 2005:1276). By showing that political developments are linked to institutional changes "and conceiving political choices as periodic interruptions in path-dependent policies, historical institutionalism tends to identify the chosen policy options as the logical, and generally the

Author: Department of Political Science and Sociology, Western Delta University Oghara, Nigeria. e-mail: emuedo@yahoo.com

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most rational … choice at any given time" (Peters *et al.*, 2005:1277). Indeed, this theory implies that a minor or fleeting action or a seemingly trivial lead for public policy can have important and irreversible influences and/or constraints on the institution of a state (Liebowitz and Margolis, 1995).

Institutions are thus, socially constructed in the sense that they embody shared cultural values ("shared cognitions", "interpretive frames") of the way things work (Meyer and Rowan, 1991; Scott, 1995:33; Zucker, 1983:5). Hence, some analysts opine that certain organisations come and go, but emergent institutional forms will be "isomorphic" with (i.e. compatible with, resembling, and similar in logic to) existing ones because political actors extract causal designations from the world around them and these cause-and-effect understandings inform their approaches to new problems (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991:11; Dobbin, 1994). Thus, even when policy makers set out to redesign institutions, they are guarded in what they can devise by embedded, cultural constraints. These constraints may be formal or informal, but deal with structures and institutions that set precedents which affect political and economic decisions in the future. They are referred to as historical accidents that impact actual political developments within a political terrain since the start of a particular path in a specified type of socio-political situation which is called a "critical juncture" may be small events capable of great after effects.

For instance, from the mid 1940s, Nigeria practiced fiscal federalism with revenue allocation based on the principle of derivation. But as oil became the main revenue earner, the derivation principle was switched for landmass and population; parameters acutely lacking in the Niger Delta. This denied the region the benefits of rapid development through oil resources (Emuedo and Ebohon, 2009b). The Niger Delta was thus, fiscally deprived, while the other region (ethnic majorities) continued to enjoy benefits of increased revenues. As such, despite the over $600 billion revenues earned from oil (Watts, 2008) the region remain deeply impoverished. Historical institutionalists argue therefore, that timing and sequence of a specific event or processes matter a great deal (Gerschenkron, 1962; Kurth, 1979; Shefter, 1977; Ertman, 1997). Thus, in the state of socio-economic underdevelopment, crisis of poverty has kept the Niger Delta besieged with insecurity.

III. Oil, the State and the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta as historically defined is the area bound by the Benin River in the West, Imo River in the East, Aboh in the North and in the South, Palm Point at Akassa (Dike, 1956; Willinks *et al.*, 1958; Akinyele, 1998). Based on this definition, the Niger Delta is today comprised of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States[1]. The total land area is 25,640 km^2; Low land Area 7,400km^2, Fresh Water Swamp 11,700 km^2, Salt Water Swamp 5,400 km^2 and Sand Barrier Islands 1,140 km^2 respectively (Ashton-Jones, 1998). Since the 1980s, oil has accounted for over 80% of state revenues, 90% of foreign exchange earnings and about 96% of export revenues (Ohiorhenan, 1984; Ikein, 1990; ICG 2006b; UNSD, 2009). Nigeria has 36.2 billion barrels in proven oil reserves as of January 2007 (RWI, 2010) and produces about 2.45 million barrels daily. But Guichaoua (2009) opined that were the Niger Delta more secured production would increase by between 100,000 and 500,000 barrels daily. The region also has an estimated 159 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of natural gas reserves (NNPC, 2009) but RWI (2010) but the figure at 182 Tcf. The Niger Delta is the twelfth richest area in hydrocarbon resources in the world (Klett *et al.*, 1997).

However, oil activities are major sources of pollution that cause severe damages to the environment (Okpokwasili, 1996; Snape *et al.*, 2001; Liu and Wirtz, 2005). This has been worsened by the oil companies' impunity of operations (Brooks, 1994); oil activities in the Niger Delta involved incessant oil spillages. For instance Shell's oil operations in Nigeria accounts for mere 14% of its production worldwide but account for over 40% of its oil spillages globally (Gilbert, 2010). DPR (Department of Petroleum Resources) reported that from 1976 to 2005 over 4 million barrels of oil was spilled into the environment in over 9,000 incidents (Egberongbe *et al.*, 2006; Emuedo, 2010). Some researchers have dismissed these figures, averring that actual figures are three times higher (Grevy, 1995; Banfield, 1998; Nassiter, 2010). Also, over 74% of gas (Watts 2001) or about 56.6 million cubic metres (Gerth and Labaton, 2004) is flared daily in the region. This constitutes the largest single source of global warming worldwide (Hunt, 2000). The flares generate temperatures of between 1,300°C to 1,400°C, produces cocktail of toxins; CO_2, VOC, CO, NOx and particulates round the clock and emit 34 million tons of CO_2 and 12 million tons of methane annually (Ake, 1996; Shelby, 1996:28; World Bank, 1995, 2000/2001). Thus, the World Wildlife Fund in 2006, dubbed the Niger Delta the most polluted place on earth (Watts, 2008).

Impacts of oil pollution and gas flares have resulted in adverse physical deterioration of the region's environment (Moffat and Linden, 1995), crippled agricultural practices (Ibeanu, 1997) and accelerated depletion of the mangrove forests (FAO, 2005:50). Specifically, oil impacted areas remain unsuitable for agricultural practices for decades (Ekekwe, 1983) due to soil degradation. Inoni *et al.* (2006) reported that oil spill of about 10% reduces crops yield by about 1.5% and farmer's income by over 5%. Oil pollution of water bodies have also, led to bio-accumulation of heavy metals to toxic levels by most fish species (Benson *et*

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al., 2007; Nubi, *et al*., 2011), acute decline in fish stocks and extinction of certain flora and fauna (Omoweh 1978; Emuedo 2010). Studies show that poor water quality affects species composition, assemblages and distribution of plankton (Boney, 1983), benthos (Dance, and Hynes 1980) and fish (Kutty, 1987). Additionally, heat from gas flares kills vegetation, impacts plants growth and crop yields (Mba 2000:223; UNDP 2006:186). For instance, drastic reduction has been reported in yields of sweet potato Udoinyang (2005) and cassava/yam (Odjugo 2007). Indeed Salau (1993) and Adeyomo, (2002) reported that crops yield reduced by 10% at a distance of 1000 metres, 45% at a distance of 600 metres and 100% at a distance of 200 metres from gas flare sites. Odjugo (2010) also, reported yield reduction of 85.7%, at 500m, 82.1%, at 1 km 75%, at 2km, and 32%, at 5 km from flare sites of seed vegetable; melon. The effects of these have constricted traditional means of livelihoods; exposing the Niger Delta people to extreme poverty vulnerabilities. Thus, despite its oil, the Niger Delta is Africa's epicentre of the poorest (Time 2006:20). It is in the light of the foregoing that the greed thesis is examined within the context of the Niger Delta.

IV. The Greed Versus Grievance Model

Over the past ten years various studies have been carried out on the causes of civil war, with the works of Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (see Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; 2002a; 2002b; 2004; Collier, 1999; 2000a; 2000b) being the most influential. Their works stirred myriads of inquiries into the relationship between natural resource endowment and the onset of civil war (Ross, 2004). The media such as *The Financial Times, The Washington Post, The New York Times* and *The Economist*, widely reported their findings (Fearon, 2005). They have been cited profusely in governmental and international reports on security and stability, including the reports of the Commission for Africa, the British Prime Minister's Strategy Unit[2], and the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change[3].

This view argues that two major factors are responsible for violent conflicts in natural resource endowed states: *grievance* over political marginalisation and exploitation and the quest for economic gains in the event of natural resource wealth *(greed)*. The latter, which is purely economic-driven, has immense capacity to increase the propensity of conflicts and wars since the wealth accruable through these resources creates incentives for different groups to vie for state control to enhance its quest for control of the country's wealth (Welsh, 1996:485; Young, 1982:170). Defining *greed* in terms of "…ability to finance rebellion …" and *grievance* in terms of ethnic and religious divisions, political repression and inequality …". Collier and Hoeffler (2002b:1), sets a paradigm for discourse into the dynamics of violent intra-state conflicts especially in natural resource endowed African states. They opined that wars or civil conflicts have the propensity of occurring "… if the incentive for rebellion is sufficiently large relative to the costs" (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998:563). The pivot of rebellion based on this view is drive towards state capture or secession – "… the incentive for rebellion is the product of the probability of victory and its consequences." (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998: 564).

They also stated that primary commodities dependent states seem to have lower conflict risk since rentier states are able to deploy accruable wealth for internal security and repression of all opposition as well as insurgency (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002a; 2002b). In the "economic causes of civil war", they concluded that; "*The effect of natural resource endowment is non-monotonic. Initially, increased natural resources increase the risk of war. … However, at a higher level, natural resources start to reduce the risk of war. We interpret this as being due to the enhanced financial capacity of the government, and hence its ability to defend itself through military expenditure, gradually coming to dominate* …"(Collier and Hoeffler, 1998: 571)

It would seem therefore, that natural resources endowment creates both incentives as well as risks of civil wars as happened in Congo DR, Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Thus, they insisted that conflicts – especially those that are resource-related are better explained by the greed model that focuses on the sources of finance of civil war (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002a; 2002b). They contended that though grievance may account for certain conflicts, the economic prospects for rebellion propels groups more easily towards violent conflicts. They therefore asserted that: … *social fractionalisation, measured as religious and ethnic diversity, lowers the risk of conflicts. Typically rebel organisations recruit their members from similar backgrounds and diversity may make it more difficult to generate a large rebel force and to maintain cohesion during war."* (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002b: 1). Two basic notions are disenable; (i) since insurgency is less about grievance than greed, rebellion is more of organised crime, (ii) government and rebels are two separate discrete entities.

Thus, by examining conflicts from this greed model, it becomes logical to understand mobilisation along rebellious lines as it would be easier to mobilise people when the state is relatively weak; when the opportunity cost for rebellion is lower than having peaceful negotiations; and above all when funds are really available (through several sources; extortion, looting and funding from the Diaspora) to acquire arms and personnel in the quest for state capture or economic power. They averred that it is difficult to mobilise enough rebellious forces against the state

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based on ethnic grievances. They opined that grievances based on ethnic hatred, political repression, exclusion and marginalisation implying ethnic diversity, diverse opinion, motives and political affinity within the polity, which is antithetical for cohesion against the state. Thus, it is obvious that violent conflicts can be explained more explicitly in terms of the economic drives that motivate groups to engage in violent acts. However, some writers have criticised the greed model on methodological grounds (Boschini *et al.*, 2004; Hegre and Sambanis, 2006; Murshed and Tadjoeddin, 2007). The next section discusses the main tenets of the greed thesis within the context of the Niger Delta conflicts.

V. The Greed Model and Conflicts in the Niger Delta

As earlier mentioned, the greed model has underpinned explanations for conflicts in resource endowed African states. However, the greed model seems limited in explaining the Niger Delta conflicts. For instance, inherent in the greed model is the notion that insurgents are motivated by greed, not grievance. That is, the focus of insurgents is on secession from, or, to gain control of the state for predation purposes. This does not seem to be so in the Niger Delta, as secession has never been part of the people's demand at any fora. Rather, they have only demand for restructuring of the Nigerian federation to reflect fiscal federalism as was applicable from 1953 to 1967. There is no evidence whatsoever, suggesting militants' attempt at state capture in their activities. In the absence of any secessionist attempt, or state capture, the greed factor, as the premise of insecurity becomes weakened substantially.

Another notion of the greed thesis is the separateness of rebels and government; i.e, government and rebels are two separate discrete entities. Again, this on close scrutiny appears not true for the Niger Delta. Politicians recruited and armed the earliest militias as political thugs to deliver votes in the 2003 elections. Thus, the militants got their start through support (finance and arms) from politicians, who make-up the government. Therefore, the idea, of an impermeable membrane separating two discrete entities; government and rebels not only becomes porous but actually breaks down. Additionally, huge caches of arms used by militias were overtly or covertly acquired from the Nigerian military (Watts, 2008). Even the economic argument; predation appears rather weak in the Niger Delta. Looting of natural resource (oil in this case), is a key argument of the greed model. Thus, militias' involvement in oil theft seems to justify greed as the cause of insecurity. However, oil theft in the region involves not only militias but it is organised through a network involving senior officials of state, armed forces and politicians. Indeed, oil theft is an endemic practice long known in the military era (Asuni, 2009b). Turner (1976) painted how Nigeria's rentier economy widened opportunities for parallel economies to develop around oil in which state officials and clients are deeply ingrained. With the advent of democracy in 1999, the state itself appear to "capture" rebellion and transformed it in its own likeness; a mirror at one end of a continuum not far removed from the official and unofficial economy of oil-related pillage, which is political practice in Nigeria (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2012). For instance, two naval officers, Rear Admirals Francis Agbiti and Samuel Kolawole were dishonourably discharged from service for illegally setting free a ship, MT African Pride, arrested on October 8, 2003 for stealing over 11,000 metric tons of crude oil (Omonobi and Abdulah, 2005).

Thus, militias' engagement in oil theft is not enough to denominate greed as motivating the conflicts. Many writers' have attributed insecurity in the Niger Delta to greed because they misconstrued activities of armed gangs (pseudo-militias) in the region before the onset of insurgency as those of militias. In discussing the Niger Delta conflicts, a dichotomy must be made between the era of pseudo-militias (2001-2004) and real militancy (2005-2009)[4]. This dichotomy would show that militias paid little attention to oil theft. For example, (CC, 2009:159) shows that oil theft averaged 400,000 barrels daily between 2001 and 2005 (armed gangs era) but plunged to about 110,000 barrels between 2006 and 2009 (militias era). Between 2001 and 2005 the pseudo-militias either escorted oil bunkering vessels for their patrons, or engaged in oil bunkering for themselves. This was what led to the fight (war of the creeks) between Asari Dokubo and Ateke Tom in 2004. The fight was over sphere of influence (governable space) for oil bunkering activities for themselves, after Dokubo became estranged with erstwhile godfather Governor Peter Odili of Rivers State. Even if the armed gangs are equated to militias, their involvement in oil theft would also not justify the greed label. For, as, Agbonifo (2007) stated, resort by militants to economic predation to sustain the conflict does not diminish issues that ignited the conflict. Indeed, what the actions of the militias have brought to the fore is that violent conflicts could contain elements of greed and frustration (Arnson, 2005). The reason is that a political conflict could mutate into a situation were short term economic benefits assume primacy; in violent conflicts, greed and grievance may coexist (Arnson and Zartman, 2005). The question then is would insurgency have arisen had the benefits of oil accrued to Niger Delta, as the ethnic majority regions with agriculture?

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VI. What Factors Underpinned the Niger Delta Conflicts

Kapucinski (1982:34-35) noted that "Oil creates the illusion of a completely changed life, life without work … life of ease, wealth, fortune, power". The advent of oil in the Niger Delta brought expectation of rapid socio-economic development. The expectation was not unfounded. Before the advent of oil, revenue sharing was based on the principle of derivation. From 1946-1967, each region received minimum 50% of the revenues it generated. As a result, the regions of the tripartite major ethnicities enjoyed rapid socio-economic development. The North established Arewa house, Ahmadu Bello University, Kaduna Polytechnic, Durba Hotel, Bank of the North and New Nigerian Newspaper; the East set-up University of Nigeria Nsukka, United Bank for Africa, Commerce Bank, the Presidential Hotel chain and Premier Brewery; while the West set-up University of Ife, Ibadan Polytechnic, Cocoa House, Western House, industrial estates, Housing estates at Apapa, Ikeja (Lagos), Bodija (Ibadan), National Bank and African first Television station (Emuedo and Idahosa, 2005). Lacking in resources, the Niger Delta was utterly undeveloped; Willink *et al*. (1958) described the region as "*poor, backward, neglected*". The Niger Delta's impoverish state compared to others led to Isaac Boro's 12-day revolution in 1966. But in 1967 when oil revenues surpassed agriculture, the derivation principle was replaced with landmass and population; two parameters acutely lacking in the Niger Delta. As Fashina, (1998:109) opined, abnegation of the derivation principle was determined by primordial interests of the different factions of the ethnic majorities based on their political power. For the switch guaranteed increased revenues to regions of the major ethnicities but denied the Niger Delta benefits that the major ethnicities enjoyed from agriculture (Emuedo and Ebohon, 2009b).

As a result, after over 40 years of oil, the Niger Delta remained "*poor, backward, neglected*", as oil failed to improve the region. Hence, Lubeck *et al*. (2007) asserted that the Niger Delta is archetypal case of the "paradox of oil"; vast oil resources only beget deep catholic poverty. This geo-political contradiction of poverty amidst oil wealth gave rise to frustration and angst in the region. As Dollard *et al*. (1939:1) has noted "Aggression is always a consequence of frustration". They opined that "Aggression always presupposes the existence of frustration" and also, "frustration always leads to aggression" Dollard *et al*. (1939:7). In other words when an individual, a group or groups are prevented from reaching their goals they get frustrated and often, this results in aggression (Barker *et al*., 1941). Aggression it is stated results, from feelings of the people that their progress is being deliberately blocked by others to hurt them, hence they view it as personal attack (Averill, 1982, 1983; Weiner, 1985; Dodge, 1986). According to Berkowitz (1969, 1978) frustration has been constantly fingered as precursor of aggression.

Closely linked with the frustration-aggression model is the concept of "relative deprivation", which states that often, people perceive themselves deprived, relative to others (Barker *et al*., 1941). In the opinion of Stewart (2000) this happens when conditions improve for one group but not for another and the deprived group deem this unjust. Relative deprivation as Gurr (1970) noted, is the variance between what people think they deserve, and what they are getting. Often, this gives rise to group identity. The potential for collective violence is strongly tied to the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among group members Gurr (1970:24). Thus, group and identity are vital for grievance (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000), without these, organised large-scale violence, is unfeasible, even if conflict is underpinned largely by greed (Olson, 1965). Ronnfeldt (1977) outlined fourfold sense in which the term relative deprivation can be understood; comparison with a situation in the past, to other social groups, to what the actors feel they expect or to a mix of the preceding three. The last point may provide the key to understanding the transformation of erstwhile peaceful conflicts to violent forms, in the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta people are unable to see the benefits of oil, as agriculture had done to other regions in the past, a change in the country's historical path. Arising from the foregoing, it is argued that conflict in Niger Delta is intertwined with the denial of the ontological needs of the people, exacerbated by bad governance. As Lowenthal, (1986:250) opined, "The Niger Delta conflict transcends the conception of conflict simply as the fear of the past lived in the present; it is an engrained and habitual awareness of deprivation". That is, having experienced abject neglect for years, the Niger Delta people need no re-enactment to retrigger their unassuaged history injuries and injustices. It should be noted that when dialogue and constitutional means of seeking redress are anathema, violent forms of expression become inevitable. The Niger Delta suffered exploitation under colonialism; this has remained unchanged in post colonial Nigeria. The Nigerian state is perceived in Niger Delta, since independence as, hostage to the tripartite majority ethnic groups. This has deepened the injunction between state policies and the needs of the ethnic majorities, except where such needs coincide with the clannish and primordial interest of the ethnic majorities; often, they do not.

Hence, the Niger Delta has remained epicentre of ethnic minority rights protests as under colonialism. Azar (1990:7) has noted that "A single communal group or a coalition of a few communal groups that are unresponsive to the needs of other groups in the society ... strains the social fabric and eventually breeds fragmentation and protracted conflicts. Strident call for

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fiscal federalism as was the case prior to until 1967 was goaded by the asymmetry of development between the Niger Delta and non-oil producing areas. Palpably pervasive poverty has remained the hall mark of years of oil exploitation in the region. This mirror of neglect gives fillip to Azar's notion of protracted social conflict and diminishes Colliers subordination of grievance to greed. The history of exploitation of Niger Delta shows that the people are justified to be aggrieved, thus, weakening the greed factor in explaining the Niger Delta conflicts. Buzan (1991:19) identified five areas of threat to human security; military, political, economic, social and environmental. The Niger Delta conflict fits this classification. It includes crises of confidence owing to protracted failure of the state to deliver good governance; dissatisfaction with the current revenue allocation regime, leading to demands for resource control; pervasive poverty occasioned by oil-activities; polluted environment; threats to personal and communal security; disregard for minority rights; alienation; denial of access to economic opportunities and exclusion from main stream politics. Thus, Watts (2008) noted that the Niger Delta conflicts are expression of long and deeper geography of exclusion and alienation by which the region came to suffer all the social and environmental harms of oil activities and yet receive in return, very little of the oil revenues. In other words, the conflicts are reactions to the contrived inequality, hindering the region from development and ignored by the state.

Denial of opportunities to reduce inequalities is in particular, potent force of grievance. Sociologists have indeed suggested that conflict is quite often, a smoke from the fire of unjust state policies and the political process (Keane, 1998; Churchill, 2005). Some analysts hold the view that violence is often, the only "political resource", available for those at the periphery of the political arena, to influence policy (Lipsky, 1970; McCarthy and Zald, 1977). In the opinion of El-Kenz, (1996:51-52) violence is the mode of response to the problems that state institutions are unable to solve because violence often, yields concessions from states (Piven and Cloward, 1977; Button, 1978). This is indeed true for the Niger Delta because the increase in derivation revenue from a crippling low of 1.5% in the 1980s to 3% % in the 1990s and to 13% in 2001 arose from the spread of violent protests in the region (Fubara, 2002:25). Thus, for Gurr (1991) violence is the only means for poor, deprived and marginalised people to redefine the process perpetuating their conditions. He stated further that "The greater the inequalities the more likely disadvantaged groups are to take collective action; particularly if the inequalities are reinforced by legal barriers established by dominant groups" (Gurr, 1991:181). For the Niger Delta, this is essentially true as Van Dessel (1995:29) observed, "Too many promises and disappointments in the past have exhausted the patience of the people". The violent conflicts that have characterised the Niger Delta are therefore, expressions of economic and political disparities (Welch, 1995).

VII. Concluding Remarks

The Niger Delta conflicts no doubt, may have had its fair share of predation; exemplified by the unholy mix sometimes of insurgency and criminality as evidenced by the involvement of armed groups in oil theft and hostage taking. However, with regards to the Niger Delta, the greed model provides no politics and no history and hence a very simplified version of events in the region. As a result, the Niger Delta conflicts appear to suffer disconnect from the greed thesis of conflicts. This is because in looking at oil-related conflicts in the region from the perspective of ordinary men and women in the oil host communities, the point is made that under certain conditions; such as conditions of large-scale and prolonged social justice deficits as in the Niger Delta, violent conflicts may help to define for the "deprived" region and for the Nigerian state, a more socially sensitive development and democratisation trajectory. This is the point that exponent of the *greed* model basically misses or indeed obscured. It is therefore argued that grievance due to frustration appears to be most suited for an appropriate interpretation of events in the Niger Delta. Protest strategies may be mere rational efforts by people poorly positioned to make claims on the state using conventional means. Thus, jettisoning of "Gandhian" tactics to embrace AK47 is the response to the state's insensitivity to the region's plight. Thus, as Okonta (2006) asserted behind the insecurity in the Niger Delta, is a political subject forced to resort to violence to restore his rights and dignity as a citizen.

Notes

1. The Niger Delta as, defined, has a population of about 11,015,676; 5,616,418 men and 5,399,258 women (NPC, 2007). It is the locale of about 90% onshore oil production and for over two decades, area of intense oil pollution, environmental degradation and military interventions (Isoun, 2001; Mickwitz, 2003; Omeje, 2006). But in Part 1 Subsection 2(1) of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Act 1999, the Niger Delta is politically defined as being synonymous with the nine oil producing states; Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. The Niger Delta, as politically defined, extends over 70,000 km^2. This area has a population of about 31 million people, consisting of more than 40 ethnic groups, speaking some 250 dialects. Furthermore, Imo State is in the Ibo heartland inhabited by the Igbos; one of the three major ethnic groups in the country. The same

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applies to Ondo State that is in Yorubaland, inhabited by the Yorubas; the second largest ethnic group in Nigeria. This implied that the real intent of the NDDC is not to cater for the Niger Delta *per se* but was merely intended to deceive the world that efforts are being made to develop the region.

2. Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2005). *Investing in Prevention: An International Strategy to Manage Risks of Instability and Improve Crisis Response*, London: Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office. This report contains 17 references to co-authored work by Collier and Hoeffler.
3. United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, New York: United Nations, 2004, endnotes 16, 22 and 110.
4. Various armed gangs and cult groups existed in the Niger Delta before the unset of insurgency in late 2005. These consisted of those people that were armed by politicians to secure votes in the inglorious 2003 elections but were dumped after assuming power. The bad blood that ensued between erstwhile masters and their estranged boys on one hand and fight between erstwhile foot soldiers over governable space for oil bunkering on the other, led to the creek wars of 2004.

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