Dedicated to

I dedicated this book to my late parents Mrs Oberhihi
Ojakoruru (16 June 2008) & Mr Omashaye Dickson
Ojakoruru (12 March 2009) for their selfless efforts to see me
through my educational career at Obafemi Awolowo
University Ile-Ife, Nigeria. It was very unfortunate that I lost
both of them at the time they should reap the fruit of their
labour.
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Chapter III:
Corruption and Militant Groups in Delta State Nigeria: Implications for the Nigerian State

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Abstract:
Corruption is a pervasive and conventional word in Nigeria. Its manifestations can be seen in the family, community associations, business organizations and even religious groups. In spite of the pervasive nature of corruption in the country, the government, the people and the media are interested in fighting the scourge. This paper examines one area in which corruption manifests itself, the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. The role of corruption in the formation, management and maintenance of militant groups. The study is based on primary data collected from rural communities where militant activities are very common in the Delta State of Nigeria. Corruption and the formation of militant groups are so intertwined that it has become a part of the culture of both rural communities in Delta State of Nigeria. The study also sheds light on the relationship between corruption and militant groups in the Niger Delta region. Niger Delta activities negatively affect the operations of the multi-national corporations, thereby affecting both global and national economies. There is, therefore, the need to diversify Nigeria’s economy as to reduce emphasis on the oil sector, which has amounted to loss of potential activities in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria.

Introduction
The struggle to make the Niger Delta area of Nigeria a better haven for both Nigerians and foreigners has taken a long time but without success. Most of those engaged in the struggle claim to be humanitarians and upright in their cause. One way in which such struggle is carried out is through the activities of militant groups, which negatively affect multinational oil corporations operating in the country. These activities also hamper economic growth and development. This is because sustainable development cannot be achieved in an environment characterized by corruption, violence and militancy. Corruption and militant activities have been a major impediment to the meaningful development of Nigeria including the Niger Delta area. This is because corruption reduces the money needed to provide social infrastructure and development projects. Corruption which permeated underdevelopment in the Niger Delta manifests in different ways such as corruption on the part of government officials and community leaders who fail to use public funds judiciously and militant groups who enrich themselves under the guise of fighting for the benefit of the people. Conflicts perpetrated by militant groups are often directed towards vestiges of multinational oil producing and servicing companies and sometimes against other communities. For example between 1981 and 1997, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) recorded 186 cases of conflicts within its sphere of operation. Between March and October 1997, aggrieved youths took 19 hostages in Delta State (Okpego, 1996:18). Since 1999 hundreds of oil company workers have been taken hostage by militants while some lost their lives.

The proliferation of violent conflicts in the Niger-Delta has brought about new developments in oil company/community relations. This is done inter alia, through the appointment of community liaison officers and community liaison committees, which is complemented by the direction of huge amount of financial resources to community
development. Such resources are often hijacked by greedy community and youth leaders. For example, Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC) claimed to have increased its expenditure on community development from about 2 million dollars a year before 1997 to about 32 million dollars presently. Mobil Oil claims to spend an average of about 8 million dollars on community development project between 1994 and 1997. Elf for its part, budgets about 5 million dollars a year on community development, while Chevron claims to have spent about 28 million dollars between 1990 and 1997 on community development (Ojo, 2002:3-8). In spite of the huge expenditure on community development, the Niger Delta area of Nigeria remains highly underdeveloped basically because of corruption and instictory on the part of the government, community leaders and militant groups.

For some people, the basic reason for the activities of militant groups can be summed up with a Nigerian proverb which states: “If a provoked houseboy cannot match his wicked master strength with strength, he elicits the master’s favorite goat”. This means that many people believe that the cause of militant activities in the Niger Delta is because the people are provoked over the slow response of the government towards the plight of people living in the area and the only way to publicize their plight is to cripple oil production. For example, the Governor of Rivers State Rotimi Amaechi stated that “one cannot just talk about violence without considering what created the violence”. He further postulated that “the cause of violence did not just spring; it was due to the long term neglect of the Niger Delta region beyond the level of human tolerance. The people have to fight back.” (Sunday Vanguard, 2008). While it is true that the problems in the Niger Delta and the slow response of the government to these problems is really a reason to be angry, the manner in which the anger is expressed calls for a critical analysis. In other words, one may be compelled to ask, why militant activities in the Niger Delta?

Three explanations can be adduced. Firstly militants have decided to step up their attacks to keep the Niger Delta on the front burner so that the Nigerian government will not lose sight of the seriousness of the problem in the area. From the point of view of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and its supporters, the people of the Niger Delta have suffered an unprecedented degradation of their environment due to unchecked pollution produced by the multinational Oil Corporations operating in the area. As a result of this policy of dispossessing people of their lands in favor of foreign oil interests, within a single generation, many people have been deprived of the natural job of farming and fishing. People living in the Niger Delta have found themselves in a situation where government and international oil companies own all the oil under their feet, the revenues of which are rarely seen by the people who are suffering from the consequences of it (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2008). It is...
pertinent to mention that the oil companies cannot pretend that they
do not know what is happening to the environment in the Niger Delta.
In an attempt to maintain stability in the area, the Nigerian
government obviously has abused the rights of individuals and
communities, while the oil companies have become direct
beneficiaries of these crude attempts to suppress dissent. This is
because multinational corporations can use their economic power to
influence the government to solve the developmental problems in the
Niger Delta. Secondly, it is argued that militant activities have
intensified in the Niger Delta because of the emergence of a splinter
group from MEND as a result of disagreements over the sharing of
revenue taking, a charge often denied by the group. This means that
those who subscribe to this school of thought believe that corruption
among militants is the basic reason for their actions. Thirdly militant
activities are on the increase because of corruption on the part of the
government, community leaders, and militant groups.

Corruption and illegality on the part of government officials and
community leaders is the main reason why the Niger Delta area of
Nigeria is not developed. Militants in the area therefore use their
activities as a means of getting their share of the national cake as they
continue sounding the alarm for the need to develop the Niger Delta.
Since the target of militants is mainly workers and installations of
multinational oil corporations, it becomes very difficult for them to
achieve their objectives. This also affects government revenue and the
economy in general. For almost fifty years since Nigeria gained
independence from British colonial rule, oil has been produced in
Nigeria and has been the mainstay of the economy due to the neglect
of the agricultural sector. Since oil became the mainstay of the
economy corporate politics has increased with successive military
regimes. Under these regimes the Nigerian government has signed
laws that appropriated oil resources and placed these under the
control of multinational oil companies, such as Shell and Chevron.

Corruption in Nigeria: An Overview

One of the greatest problems militating against the development of
Nigeria including the Niger Delta area is corruption. Corruption has
been defined as the abuse of public trust for private gain; it is a form
of stealing (Dawus and Smith, 2006:353). The Federal Government of
Nigeria’s Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Act
(2000) states that corruption includes bribery, fraud and other related
offences. Oba (2000:89) also argued that corruption is a form of
bad moral behavior by an individual or a social group which results
in unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators against established
legal norms and agreed moral ethos of the society. The absence of
corruption encourages investment and efforts to expand the pie rather
than grab over its distribution and thus encourages growth; to this
date, improvements in governance in general and reduction of
corruption in particular could be means to accelerate the process of
development (Todaro and Smith, 2006:552). Nigeria is ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Daily, low-level corruption is visible on the streets; policemen extorting money from motorists to supplement their meager wages. In Nigeria, financial gain derived from corrupt activities is often called “easy”. Nigerians have different attitudes towards corruption. Although they vaguely believe that corruption is not in the best interest of the nation, many hold the view that life is a grim battle for survival. For those who hold tenaciously to this belief, it is a waste of time to talk about corruption; they only smile when they come across opportunities to be corrupt (Amadi, 1982:82).

For decades the government has generated huge oil revenues, yet the country suffers from lack of basic infrastructure, while greater percentage of Nigerians lives in poverty due to corruption. In recognition of the harm of corruption has been doing to the nation, several policies and institutions have been established to fight it. These include: War Against Indiscipline during the Buhari/Eldorado regime (the only regime that showed seriousness in the fight against corruption); War Against Indiscipline and Corruption by the Abacha regime which was very corrupt and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) established by the Ojukwu regime which turned out to be the most corrupt.

Oil Politics, Corruption, and Militant Activities

Nigeria was primarily an agricultural country after independence in 1960. First, prior to independence about 80% of the country’s labour force was engaged in agricultural activities. Secondly, agricultural products accounted for 85 percent of Nigeria’s foreign exchange earnings. The steady increase in the production and rise in the price of crude oil in the International market in the 1970’s led to the neglect of the agricultural sector which provides employment for majority of the people. The proceeds from the sales of crude oil were not used to develop the various sectors of the economy. Corrupt political leaders used the oil wealth for their selfish interest thus impoverishing the greater populace (Sedex, 1981). The lack of diversification of the economy away from oil production is one of the main causes of the conflict in the Niger Delta. The domination of oil politics has resulted in a disproportionate focus of efforts to gain employment and be associated with the oil industry. This has resulted in a more-focused that fails to realize the potential for other economic activities based on local assets (Nkoro, 2008:7).

Conflict and Militant Activities in the Delta State of Nigeria

Delta State is one of the states that make up the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. It was created out of the defunct Bendel State on August 27, 1991. Violent conflicts in the state are very common among the three
major ethnic groups inhabiting the southern part of the state where oil production activities are mainly carried out. These ethnic groups are Ijaw, Isoko, and Urhobo. Of the three ethnic groups, the Ijaws are known to have more militant groups that operate both on land and in the water.

The causes of violent conflicts and militant activities in Delta State cannot be given a straight jacket identification given the complexity associated with the problem of causation in the social sciences. In spite of this difficulty, understanding the causes of conflicts is the first step towards its prevention, management or resolution (Adekanye, 1999:107). A proper diagnosis of the causes of conflict in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria including Delta State requires a comprehensive dissection of conflicts. These are structural background conditions of conflict and conflict accelerating factors and the triggers.

The structural background conditions of conflict at best only point to the existence of conflict potential but cannot explain the actual occurrence of a given conflict. They include differences in ethnic groups, languages, religion and culture. Other accelerating factors include demoralization, rising cases of unemployment, rising poverty, marginalization (perceived or actual), the demands for empowerment, stress and strains of environmental cum human insecurity. The combined effects of the structural background conditions of conflict and the conflict accelerating factors produces alarming social and ethnic tensions and conflicts (Adekanye, 1999:108).

There is no gainsaying that Delta State is a harbor of conflict accelerating factors which ignite from time to time. First, rising cases of unemployment is a cause for concern in the area. Erahere (2003:14) commenting on this situation states that a lot of youths including university graduates have resorted to bike riding (Okada) to make ends meet. The rising cases of unemployment in the area breeds rising poverty. According to the UNDP Human Development Report (1999), seven million out of twelve million people in the region sustain life with a daily total of less than 1 dollar a day. The World Bank Report (1997) also indicates that GNP per capita is below the estimated national average of 200 dollars per year. It further shows that 88 percent of households are illiterate. Only 30 percent of the population has access to health care and some 85 percent lack access to safe drinking water. This indicates that the Niger Delta region is suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, social deprivation, job poverty, filth and squaller and ideological conflict (UNDP, 2006).

Secondly environmental degradation and human insecurity is another conflict accelerating factor in the area that require careful attention. The problem of environmental and human insecurity is basically due:
to the activities of multinational oil companies. The exploration, refining and transportation of petroleum products result in social and ecological disturbance. These include explosions from seismic surveys, pollution from pipeline leaks, blowouts, drilling fluids and refinery effluents as well as land alienation and widespread destruction of the natural terrain from construction activities (Bachofen, 1985:81). The activities of oil companies have contributed to the marginalisation of the peasantry in oil producing areas and threaten its conditions and existence. Oil exploration and exploitation have permanently alienated large tracts of land and accentuated land insecurity (Alakon, 1999:97). Pollution of terrestrial, atmospheric and marine environments is another aspect of environmental degradation. The dangers of pollution in this area is accentuated by three factors: an extensive coastline dominated by mangrove swamps, large numbers of offshore rigs and oil port facilities. These offshore activities pose particular danger to the sensitive mangrove ecology (Moe, 1985; Ajibade, 1993; Human Rights Watch, 2002; Ojo, 2002; Uduaghan, 2008). Oil industry pollution arises from variety of sources. The first is crude oil from pipeline leaks, failure of equipment or tank overflow from excessive pressure, failure along pump manifolds, blow out of oil wells and sabotage to well heads and flow lines (Amayah, 1981:183). Additionally, drilling mud and wastings and gas flaring operations are also sources of environmental pollution (Bachofen, 1985:80).

There is no doubt that these conditions are causes for concern to the people of the Niger Delta area. Their aspiration is to have these problems ameliorated. That is why the people continually make claims on the government and oil companies. Such claims have been in the form of demands for compensations, increased revenue allocation to oil producing states, provision of adequate social and economic infrastructure, creating more job opportunities for the youths and the demand for resource control (Onukwe, 2001; Eze Onwukwe, K. 1993). The slow response of the political system to meet most of the demands of the people can be related to the contradictions of the country’s corrupt economy. The problems of rising poverty, unemployment and environmental decay with no real solution in sight have worn the seed of frustration in the minds of many. This makes them susceptible to aggression and militant activities. The quest for political redemptions or revolts is also related to the ubiquity of violence during periods of election. In a nutshell, it is generally comprehended that the recurring crisis in the Niger Delta region is the product of the deep-seated sense of neglect and marginalisation by the government and oil companies in supporting critical human development and provision of basic social amenities. The situation in the Niger Delta is indeed a paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty.
production of goods for world market (Kpiri, 1987:18). The goal of multinational oil corporations in the Niger Delta is to ensure the exploration and exploitation of crude oil in the most cost-effective manner. The underdeveloped nature of the communities where these activities are carried out generates hostilities from the host communities. While it is true that some of the perpetrators of violence are aggrieved because of perceived marginalization, others are interested in enriching themselves. Therefore, the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta due to corruption on the part of political leaders and militiamen makes it difficult for oil companies to perform efficiently and effectively. Apart from interrupting production, multinational corporations spend huge sums of money for the payment of ransom. The Niger Delta case is a topical issue that must be critically examined. The conflict in Niger Delta is due to the level of marginalization and degradation done to the region. However, it has led to the shut-down of many oil wells and production facilities (Human Rights Watch, 2005; Delphox, 2004; Iyoha, and Ademu, 2000).

Discussion of Fieldwork Findings:

From the tables below, the following are the major findings of the study:

1. The desire to improve the quality of life of people in the Niger Delta is a major reason for the formation of militant groups and the perpetuation of their activities. This means that corruption on the part of political and community leaders and its concomitant effect on the neglect and underdevelopment of the Niger Delta is a major reason for militant activities. The absence of corruption encourages investment and efforts to expand the pie rather than fight over its distribution. To this extent, improvements in governance in general and reduction of corruption in particular could be means to accelerate the process of development (Tolerau and Smith, 2006:552-554). The result of the neglect of the Niger Delta is widespread poverty and penury in the area. This finding is corroborated by the view expressed by Akoko (1999:18) that poverty contributes to frequent cases of violent conflicts in the Niger Delta. This situation is aggravated by the perception of the people that the source of their problem is not the unavailability of resources to transform their lives from status to quality but the mismanagement of such resources. Nwachukwu (1999:18) points that production and export of crude oil from the Niger Delta accounts for over 90 percent of Nigeria’s total export earnings and about 90 percent of
federal revenue. In spite of this, corruption has caused massive unemployment among the youths particularly university graduates. Additionally oil prospecting activities have caused environmental degradation in the area, which adversely affects the traditional occupation of farming and fishing in the region (Ogie 2002:15-20). It also affects multinational firms and their workers. For example in 2006, militants kidnapped some expatriates and demanded the immediate payment of 1.5 billion dollars compensation by Shell Petroleum Development Corporation to some Ijaw communities who dragged the company to court over oil spillage which they refused to pay. The hostages were released after due negotiation between the government and the kidnappers (Ogie 2007:31).

2. The formation of militant groups and militant activities is a means for making money. In other words, corruption is another reason for militant activities. Most of the respondents believe that militancy is also a means of getting some share of the national cake which the Federal Government has refused to share equitably. In May, 2018, militants demanded N1 billion to release two kidnapped foreign nationals working for the Lone Star Drilling Company, a service contractor to Agip Oil company. May 9, 2008 (Ogie 2007:52).

3. Militant groups have leaders who control the behavior of their subordinates. Leaders of militant groups control the behavior of their subordinates through the use of threats and force. Some also believe that education of members and persuasion are other ways of controlling the behavior of militants by their leaders. The study also shows that recruitment and training of more militaries is currently going on. This finding can be supported with the statement made by Aari Dokufo, deputy leader of MNND that many youths are availing themselves to be recruited as militiamen and that the initiation ceremony can be quickly performed even at a bar or a restaurant (see Vanguard, July 10, 2008).

4. Militants do not want oil production activities to end permanently in the Niger Delta. This is because they are benefiting from their militant activities due to oil production. Majority of the respondents feel that oil production should not be disturbed in order to compel the federal government and multinational oil corporations to develop the Niger Delta. The activities of the militiamen are as a result of the continued denial of economic, social and cultural rights to the oil-rich communities in the area. Although the primary obligation for realizing the economic, social and cultural rights of host communities
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4. There should be effective communication among the various parties to the conflict. Such communication should focus on the values and perception of the militiamen. Roadblocks to communication such as ordering, threatening, preaching, judging and enforcing should be avoided. The governmental and multinational oil corporations in the area should keep active in the conflict. The goal of active listening is to discover the other person's perspective.

5. Efforts of government and multinational oil corporations should be directed towards social peace building i.e. putting in place deliberately constructive and progressive steps that could lead to positive social transformation (intellectual, behavioural and environmental change). The transformation of individuals needs to reach out to those who need change more because of their peculiar nature in the conflict situation. These include youths, children, women, and members of civic society organizations.

6. Strict environmental standards for air, land and water pollution should be enforced. The environmental protection agency should be strengthened for this task. Market based instruments like pollution taxes and efficient charges should be utilized. Revenue obtained from pollution taxes should be ploughed back into developmental projects or used to compensate inhabitants of the Niger Delta who have suffered as a result of environmental damage. An attempt should be made to mainstream environmental concerns in national economic policies. This will promote viability and sustainability of environmental policies.

7. Information on how funds are being disbursed, the amounts, projects meant for and those entrusted with the funds. Furthermore, where the projects are to be sited and date of implementation and completion should be made known to the people, in order to ensure accountability and transparency. This process should occur after the people have been consulted about their needs and expectations. Thus, collection and dissemination of information as regards to the region should be given considerable attention in order to achieve a permanent conflict resolution in the Niger Delta region.