
The State, Multinational Oil Companies, and Restiveness in the Niger Delta: Towards A Holistic Crisis Management

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Abstract: *The main objective of this study was to construct an understanding of the crisis in the Niger Delta through a historical account. I drew on the colonial and post-colonial frameworks of Garsombke and Garsombke (2000) and Banerjee and Linstead (2001) as my bearing for the experience of exploitation, marginalization, and human rights abuses in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It was found that there was a link between state militarized repression of the oil bearing communities and the neoliberal imperialist interests in oil exploitation in the Niger Delta. Policy directions were suggested for achieving peace and development and lasting security for all stakeholders in the Niger Delta.*

Keywords: transnational oil corporations; accumulation by dispossession; militarized repression; resistance; resource curse, Niger Delta crisis; Ijaw ethnic group.

1. Introduction

The Niger Delta crisis might have come as a shock to the international community following the extrajudicial hanging of the “Ogoni 9”, including late Beeson Ken Saro-Wiwa, on 10 November, 1995. This extrajudicial killing of environmental activists actually defined the *tipping point* for the resumption of the armed resistance to the mindless exploitation in the area. The first armed resistance was in 1966 during the so-called *12 Days Revolution* led by late Major Jasper Isaac Adaka Boro.

It might appear sudden because many in the wider public may not have been aware that the plight of the Niger Deltans has a long history stretching into the beginning of classical colonialism in Nigeria. The people of the Niger Delta

had been *silently* bearing the terrible burdens of the hydrocarbon civilization and the consequences of its flawed economic paradigm, such as the myth of infinite linear progress and the only one possible path to development (see Dussel and Ibara-Colado, 2006; Livesey, 2001; Vanderburg, 2009).

The spectacular attracts attention. The trigger for this paper was itself the shock of the massive bombardment and sacking of the Gbaramatu Kingdom in the Warri South-West Local Government Area of Delta State of Nigeria by the Nigerian Army on 13 May, 2009. The event was one of several such invasions in the Niger Delta but it was unprecedented in the extent (affecting an entire kingdom) and massiveness of the attack in terms of troops (the air force, navy, and amphibious soldiers) and kind of weapons (jet fighters, helicopter gunship, a warship, and several gunboats) used. After the sacking of the communities, a silent extermination campaign codenamed “cordon and search” commenced, which, ostensibly or ordinarily, was aimed at finding 18 soldiers missing in action (MIA), recovery of their weapons, and apprehending the militants who allegedly killed the soldiers. The campaign went on for a long time (see report in Amaize, 2009).

The wanton destruction of lives and property in the attack sparked off a spate of reprisal attacks on oil pipelines and other oil industry infrastructures by *armed resistance groups*, blackmailed as militants or terrorists. Public reactions against the attack were overwhelming. The House of Representatives’ debate on the attack and the desirability of extending it to other states in the Niger Delta was heated or charged and cacophonous.

Government then pulled out a carrot, offering amnesty to all the armed groups (militants or terrorists?) fighting in the Niger Delta. The offer ran through August to October 4, 2009 (see report in Agbo, 2009). An uneasy calm reigned as the armed groups unilaterally declared a *temporary cease fire* amidst the offer of amnesty as they also gave conditions for acceptance of the amnesty offer. Government is believed to be using the truce to retool its military for possible resumption of hostilities. Incidentally, the amnesty offer was one of the recommendations of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND).

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Many armed groups and factions of some accepted the incoherent amnesty offer, among other reasons, in hopes that it will pave the way for addressing the problems of the region. But it was an uneasy calm as the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and a faction of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) shunned the offer, vowing that they will rather fight to their very death. They even went ahead to file a law suit against the Nigerian federal government, challenging the constitutionality of the amnesty programme (the 'amnesty' is not in the constitution). Their contention is that, no one had been convicted of an offence for which a state pardon (amnesty) needs to be granted; that stopping supranational oil corporations from exploiting resources in their soil does not constitute an offence.

It is not widely known that the current crisis is borne out of a long period of neglect, marginalization, frustration, and particularly, coloniality. This gap in the historicity of the Delta crisis constitutes the problem of this paper. To guide the development of the paper, the problem may be reframed as follows: What are the roots of the Niger Delta crisis? Thus, the main objective of this paper is to construct a historical account of the Niger Delta crisis and inform the wider public with a view to deepening the appreciation for the suffering of the endangered people of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

The logic of the paper is set out to answer the key research question. After the introduction as above, I draw on colonial theory to historicize and ground the crisis in the Niger Delta. I take the next three sections to analyze the empirical data, which leads to the unmasking and explication of three aspects of coloniality (findings) in the brutality going on in the Niger Delta, namely classical British colonialism, internal colonialism, and corporate colonialism. I conclude the paper in the subsequent section.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Colonial Theory

This paper is set in the context of colonial theory (colonialism or coloniality) as a useful guide to the analysis, and deepening of the understanding, of the Niger Delta crisis. A theory explains or should be able to offer a scientific explanation or description of certain occurrences in the material or phenomenon it analyzes (Rohl, 2005; Sakellariopoulos, 2009). The colonial logic, indeed, the history of colonialism is the history of economic exploitation, political domination, denial of human rights, even dehumanization, and violent repression (see Rodney, 1972; Toffler, 1980: 96-99; Dussel and Ibara-Colado, 2006). Indeed, as Garsombke and Garsombke (2000) attest, many countries have histories of colonial governments which controlled the economic systems and deprived the colonized people of opportunities and development.

The paper contends that the crisis in the Niger Delta started from the time of British colonialism in Nigeria. British colonialism was a structuring phenomenon and came in three waves: direct British colonialism, internal colonialism, and corporate colonialism mediated through the state. This extends Osha's (2006) conception or framework of coloniality by unbundling post-colonialism into internal and corporate colonialisms in order to give salience to the role of supranational oil corporations in the Niger Delta crisis. There is a deep link between these colonialisms provided by the British omnipresence (though administratively absent in post-colonialism) in all these waves, through, among others, by its permanent interest in the Nigerian oil industry.

Thus conceived, the colonial theory framework takes account of the impact of classical colonialism on the subsequent socio-political structures and socio-historical relationships in ex-colonies, which fills the theoretical void left by many colonial theorists, such as those of Franz Fanon and Walter Rodney, as pointed out in Osha (2006). In this respect, as opposed to the position of Massamba et al. (2004), classical colonialism continues to be a relevant explanatory variable for the analysis of contemporary

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political and socio-economic issues in the developing world. In point of fact, colonialism is an unfinished business that keeps rearing up in different guises, such as the 'new empire', 'globalization', 'new imperialism', and suchlike. As Forbes (2009) states,

This exploration (colonialism) invokes the profound extent to which the legacy of slavery lingers in the lives of people of African descent and humankind as a whole through the colonization analysis... Brown (1979) asserted that slavery and colonialism in the New World represented relationships of subjection that contributed to the pathology of numerous modern societies.

In the three subsequent sections, I analyze the empirical data and discuss the findings, beginning with British colonialism, followed by internal colonialism, and, lastly, corporate colonialism.

3. British Colonialism

British colonialism in Nigeria was the expression of European grand imperialism in Africa. This was a concerted effort of European capitalist-imperialist countries as evident in the Berlin Conference of 1885, subsequent scramble for, and *partition* of, Africa into spheres of influence, trade, political domination, and economic exploitation. As Hansen (2002) suggested, the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 paved the way for the creation of the modern nation state system in Europe. Proliferation of this model of socio-political organization (structuring) took place alongside and following European colonialism. It was a traumatic development for minority ethnic groups even for Europe, as they were hoodwinked, assimilated into, and got lost in, the more populous and powerful ethnic groups. They were willing to, and did, surrender their sovereignty, identity, and culture to the emerging nation state. Now they know better; what are projected as the history, culture and national identity are those of the dominant ethnic groups. As such, the minorities are asking back their ethnic history, culture, and identity

(Geary, 2005). Thus, as Derrida (as cited in Newman, 2005) maintains, the modern nation state system has a *foundational violence*.

Nigeria as a nation state was masterminded by the British colonial administration. The broad historical facts of its creation, from the ceding of the Lagos Colony to Britain in 1861 to the creation of the Southern Colony and Protectorate, the Northern Colony and Protectorate to the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 are well known and need not detain us here. What is of paramount interest in this paper was how the British administration marginalized and sold out the Niger Delta to the dominant ethnic groups in the process of creating the Nigerian nation state.

While the traditional rulership institutions of the Hausa-Fulani ethnic enclaves were preserved, respected, encouraged, and made part of the apparatus of the colonial government (as the British used them in the indirect rule system), the British actually dismantled those of the Niger Delta ethnic enclaves. In particular, the British colonial administration deposed, deported, and humiliated King Jaja (Jubo Jubogha) of Opobo, King William Dappa Pepple (Perekole) of Bonny, Oba Ovonranwen Nogbaisi of the Benin Kingdom, and Nana Olomu of Itsekiri (see Osha, 2006). The raids on these kingdoms were accomplished with acts of massacre and pillage. Other raids included those on Akassa (1895), Nembe, Adagbabiri (1911), Patani, Okpokunoun (1911), and Enekorogha (1911) (see Legge, 1931). The trigger for the violence was the exploitation of the indigenous people, which led to resistance, which, in turn, led to the violent suppression (massacres, deportations, etc) of the people. For example, factories of the Royal Niger Company in Brass, Akassa, and Patani were attacked by angry, protesting, and resistant natives in 1882.

The regional structuring of the country produced the Eastern, Northern, and Western regions for the three dominant ethnic enclaves. There were no special provisions for the minority ethnic groups in each of the regional territories. The minorities in the Niger Delta were violently sawn asunder and thrown into the Eastern Region and Western Region respectively, where they were treated as colonial subjects. Following the well-founded fears of the

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minorities at the constitutional conference in London (1957), the Henry Wilinks-led Minorities Commission was set up to look at the issue. The more important issue was a guarantee or protection of their safety and political future. This was not done.

For the minorities in the Niger Delta, the Niger Delta Development Board was set up to effect physical development in the region.

The pain and hence radicalization of the Ijaw ethnic group, in particular, stems from the construction of a counterfactual history of untrammelled socio-political development, a sort of nostalgia, which throws into relief the gap between “what it is” and “what it could or would have been” in development trajectory of this resource-rich region. This radicalization was aggravated by the permanent presence of the British in various guises and colluding with the local ethnic hegemony in perpetrating further acts of marginalization. Most provoking was the hanging of the Ogoni nine in which Shell was believed to be complicit (see Livesey, 2001). Shell still operates in the Niger Delta, extracting oil from the soil that soaked the blood of its illustrious sons who fought for environmental justice.

4. Internal Colonialism

The term, “internal colonialism” had been used to apply to the Niger Delta situation (see Okaba, 2005; Saro-Wiwa as cited in Osha, 2006). But it had not been systematically discussed as a theoretical frame of reference. This paper is intended to contribute to its systemization as a frame of reference.

The British groomed technocrats from the dominant sections of the Nigerian emergent nation state to hand over political and administrative powers to. The Nigerian power elite merely domesticated and perpetuated the administrative and industrial legacies from the British colonial administration (Ekuerhare, 1997:19-23; Chinelo-Nzelibe, 1981:16; Aderinto, 1998:228). This was part of the link between the British and Nigerian internal colonialisms.

History is a rather teleological process (see Bloch, as cited in Hammer, 2008). Thus, curiously, postcolonial

Nigerian technocrats become victims of what Derrida (Newman, 2001) called the “logic of replacement” by transgressing classical colonialism in the form of anti-colonial nationalism only to reenact it by imposing on the Niger Deltans, a variant of the British colonialism they had vehemently opposed. Thus too, there was an internal scramble for the Niger Delta sub-region just as the European capitalist-imperialists scrambled for Africa as resolved at the Berlin Conference (1885). The Niger Delta, *as an internal colonial territory, was of interest only as a source of raw materials and wealth to the Nigerian state operated by the ethnic hegemons.*

The humiliation and dismantling of traditional rulership institutions by the British were replicated by the Nigerian internal colonialist in the Niger Delta when the JTF bombed out the palace of the paramount traditional ruler of the Gbaramatu Kingdom, Pere Bebenimibo, in the Warri South-West Local Government Area in Delta State on 13 May, 2009, on the pretext or excuse that he had a close association with the ‘militant’ warlord, ‘General’ Government Ekpemupolo (Alias Tompolo) of the MEND.

Internal colonialism and the struggle against it take a form different from classical colonialism and the struggle against it. Whereas classical colonialism was imposed by foreigners and the struggle against it involved seeking political independence, internal colonialism has been imposed by dominant ethnic groups and the struggle against it, in the Niger Delta, involves a demand for *restructuring of the polity* in terms of cultivation and practice of confederation or *true federalism* (see Oyefusi, 2008; Tuodolo and Ogoriba, 1998) rather than seeking separate nation states through secession (cf the Biafra episode). The demand for resource control has become a national issue in the ongoing public hearing in all the six geopolitical zones for review of the problematic 1999 Constitution. Speaking for their subjects, the Governors of the 36 states of the federation are seeking the inclusion of resource control in the new constitution being fashioned out (see report in Fowoyo, 2009).

What constitutes internal colonization of the Niger Delta? It is constituted, as did classical colonialism, by the denial of a chain of rights, namely, land rights,

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environmental rights, spiritual rights, basic human rights; by political marginalization and domination, the statements of prominent politicians of these groups, and finally, the violence of the colonizing internal central administration.

The question of land rights is the most fundamental issue in the Niger Delta crisis. Two related decrees, the Petroleum Decree 51 (1969) and the Land Use Decree (1978), ruptured the traditional ownership and control rights to ancestral land and subsurface resources of the indigenous people. In particular, petroleum resources were, by the Petroleum Decree 51 (1969), declared national assets. (Currently, the Petroleum Industry Bill [PIB] is being considered in the National Assembly). By these laws, the land and its resources were *appropriated* by the federal government for the powerful dominant ethnic groups who have monopoly power at the central government, constituting what is akin to Harvey's (2007) "accumulation by dispossession". He elaborates,

By this I mean the continuation and proliferation of accretion practices...(which) include (1) the commodification and privatization of land and *the forceful expulsion of peasant populations* (as in Mexico and India in recent times) ... (5) colonial, neocolonial, and imperial processes of *appropriation of assets (including natural resources)*...(Harvey, 2007; italicized by the present researcher for emphasis).

The issue of allocation oil blocks in the Niger Delta is another indicator of the seizure of land of the Niger Delta for the benefit of the dominant ethnic enclave. Not even one Deltan has an oil block but some members of the dominant groups have.

The appropriation of land and resources or "accumulation by dispossession" in the Niger Delta are evident in the manner the proceeds of oil are allocated. The dominant groups orchestrate the revenue allocation formulas in such a way that the oil producing states and communities are denied benefits from the funds while the allocation to the federal government is controlled by the coalition of the powerful groups who use same to execute federal projects in their enclaves, empower themselves through corruption, produce petty capitalists through payment for unexecuted

contracts, and all sorts of fraud. How many persons have been jailed for all the scam published in the newspapers on daily basis? What is the source of the money being embezzled – cocoa, groundnut, or palm oil?

Darah (as cited in Osha, 2006) and Jike (2004) suggest that the Niger Delta is the location of highly industrialized concerns (such as the Delta Steel Company [DSC], Aladja-Warri; the National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria [NAFCON], Onne; Port Harcourt Refining and Petrochemical Company [PRPC], Alasa-Elеме; and the Warri Refining and Petrochemical Company [WRPC], Ekpan). These are like the locating of FDIs outside countries of origin of the investing TNCs/SNOCs. They failed to see that the control of the facilities is far more important than the fact of their physical location.

The point is that unwritten socioeconomic praxis ensures that people of the dominant groups are in *real* control; they in turn ensure that, mainly, indigenes from their group are employed. Standard employment procedures such as aptitude tests and oral interviews are used, but, unfortunately, these are manipulated to favour their kith and kin.

Often, too, indigenes of the Niger Delta are appointed into top positions in the management hierarchies in these companies. But they remain figure heads, paying homage to some anonymous power brokers located in the dominant groups who sponsor their employment and are in actual control of these firms. So, their presence in top management positions does not benefit their immediate constituents in the Niger Delta.

This appropriation and distributive injustice are thrown into relief when it is remembered that the dominant Yorubas of the Western Region retained all the proceeds from cocoa; the dominant Igbos of the Eastern Region similarly retained all the proceeds from palm oil; and the dominant Hausa-Fulanis of the Northern Region similarly retained all the proceeds from groundnut. The cocoa, palm oil, and groundnut were the sources of government revenue in the agriculture economy of the immediate post-independence era. This was a clear practice of resource control. But in the advent of the oil economy, the afore-mentioned three dominant ethnic groups abandoned their cash crop

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production to concentrate on the control and sharing of oil revenues from the Niger Delta based on a *reverse resource control*. The resource control in the era of regionalism serves as the antecedent or model for the present agitation for resource control in the Niger Delta.

On 12 May, 1967, the regional structure and largely regional autonomy was abandoned when Major General Yakubu Gowon (as he then was) created 12 states from the four regions and put them together in a unitary federal system with the central government controlling the oil revenues. This *restructuring* was done just at the nick of the prosecution of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war. Two platitudes were rolled out to justify the *unitary federal government*, namely “To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done” and “unity in diversity”. The restructuring has been going on but the unitarism in governance and resource control at the centre remain unchanged, which makes the centre attractive as a political *Eldora do*.

Related to these is the issue of environmental rights; the rights to clean air, clean water, and clean surroundings. These rights are denied to the people of the Niger Delta. The environmental disaster consequent upon the exploration and exploitation of petroleum resources such as oil spillages, pipeline fires, and gas flaring are borne by the people of the Niger Delta (see Ana et al., 2009; Jike, 2004). Oil spillages include those at Egbema (1986), Ekakpamre, Oviri-Court, Ewvreni, Jesse (pipeline fire), and Beniseide near Ojobo all in Delta State; Oshika near Ahoada (1984/85), Ejema-Ebubu River in Ogoniland, and Osimiri near Obehie all in the Rivers State; and Eket in Akwa Ibom State (see Okaba, 2005: 20; Jike, 2004). Tellingly, the NEST (as cited in Okaba, 2005: 15) stated that 8,581 spillages involving nearly 28 million barrels of crude oil were reported in the period, 1970 to 2002. The damage to the soil and waterways (with their fisheries) can be appreciated when it is realized that the indigenous people are farmers and fishermen. More importantly, laboratory results in a study by Ana et al. (2009) in part of the Niger Delta indicated that

the median PAH level at Eleme as compared to Ahoada East was higher than the guideline limit 50 ng/l for

surface waters. The mean TSP level at Eleme was higher than the level at Ahoada East and the guideline limit 100 µg/m³. The median PAH level at Eleme was higher than the level at Ahoada East and the guideline limit < 100 ng/m³ for air. The survey results showed that at Eleme air pollution in the community was significantly associated with painful body outgrowths ($p = 0.027$) and the effect the air contaminants has was significantly associated with respiratory health problem ($p = 0.044$). At Ahoada East (which) commonly consumed aquatic food was highly significantly associated with painful body outgrowth ($p < 0.0001$) while use of domestic cooking fuel types was also highly significantly associated with child deformities ($p < 0.0001$). Hospital records showed high proportions of respiratory disorder among males (3.85%) and females (4.39%) at Eleme as compared to the proportion of respiratory disorder among males (3.68%) and females (4.18%) at Ahoada.

The scale of the ecological disaster may not attract the attention of the international community in the way the Bhopal, Chernobyl, Exxon Valdez, and Three Mile nuclear disaster have, but nonetheless, the international community will now appreciate the prolonged and systematic toxification (poisoning) of the source of sustenance of the people of the Niger Delta. In a sense, the exploration and exploitation of petroleum oil and natural gas constitute violence and the orchestration of a *systematic physical annihilation of the people of the Niger Delta*. Consider this fact in the light of the state brutality inflicted on these victims.

Again, related to environmental rights are the spiritual rights of the Niger Delta people, which are routinely breached in the course of the exploration and exploitation of petroleum resources in sacred forest sanctuaries. The Nigerian internal colonial state and SNOCs take a utilitarian, secular, anthropocentric (human self-centered); and terribly shortsighted, even daft, view of the environment to the detriment of the eco-centric view held by a coalition of radical environmentalists including the Niger Delta people, who correctly see the *quantum interconnectedness* (interdependence) of humanity and the environment (see

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Shelton and Darling, 2001). As suggested by various scholars, among them Shrivastava (as cited in Livesey, 2001; see also Misra, 2007), this view “places the natural environment on an ontological par with human existence”. This can be discerned from the problematic, yet important concept of “sustainable development” popularized in the report of the United Nations special commission, World Commission on Environment and Development, the Brundtland Report, captioned *Our Common Future* (see Banerjee, 2003). Humans are just a minor, though most powerful, component (encouraging the techno-centric view) of the environment *system* and *incapable* of a separate existence from it (see Bunge as cited in Pickel, 2007) because of “non-separability” as we live in a “correlated universe” (see Shelton and Darling, 2001).

The callous statements of two prominent politicians clearly attest to the fact of internal colonialism, which display the colonial logic. First, Chief Philip Asiodu, one time Minister of Petroleum Resources in the Nigerian federal government, speaking with his master’s voice, once said in a lecture delivered to Nigerian Public Servants in 1980:

Given, however, the small size and population of the oil-producing areas, it is not cynical to observe that even if the resentments of the oil-producing states continue, they cannot threaten the stability of the country nor affect its continued economic development (ultimately quoted in Osha: 2006).

This is a *revealing*, cynical, and callous statement. It suggests that a section of the population can be suppressed or dispensed with for advancing the economic development of another, which corroborates the above observation of a systematic physical extermination of the Niger Delta people.

The second politician is the Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Judiciary, the Hon. Alhaji Bala N’Allah, who went down on record as speaking the *mindset of the triumvirate of the federal government, the dominant ethnic group he represented, and SNOCs* when he said that “for the survival of the 100 million Nigerians, we (the dominant ethnic group) can do away with 20 million (Niger Deltans)” (as quoted in Oseya, 2009). Again this

callous statement corroborates the above observation of a systematic physical extermination of the Niger Delta people.

A notable fact is that the *Honourable* Alhaji Bala N'Allah's statement was made on the occasion of the *debate in the House of Representatives* over extending to other states in the Niger Delta, the fate which the Joint (Military) Task Force on the Niger Delta (JTF) meted out to (i.e., bombardment of) the Gbaramatu Kingdom in Delta State. It is interesting that the same House of Representatives that endorsed the JTF's "cordon and search" operation in the Gbaramatu Kingdom has given the US government an ultimatum to declassify Nigeria as a terrorist country (among 13 other countries) and end the "cordon and search" operation which she is conducting on the country following the attempt by one Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (from the Northern part of Nigeria) to blow up a US-bound Delta airlines plane with 278 passengers on board on 23 December, 2009 (see report in Mikairu and Akinboade, 2010).

Finally, state violence provides a characteristic trademark of colonization. This comprises punitive and excessive use of force against protestation made to the Nigerian internal colonial government. For space limitations, I only make an illustrative list of invasions of Ijaw villages and fishing settlements. These include the invasion of villages and massacre of their people in Gbaramatu Kingdom (which were Ekerenkoko, Kurutie, and Kurugbene or Okokodiagbene and others in 2009); the Odi massacre (1998); the Kaiama invasion (1998); the invasions of Opia, Ekiyan, Egbema, Gbarantoru, Ogodobiri (2003); the invasion and incineration of Agge (in August, 2008) in retaliation for the militants' attack on the JTF in Bomadi on 26 July, 2008 (see also Amaize, 2009) and the raid on Ayakoromor Community on December 1, 2010 in search of recidivist militant, John Togo, of the Niger Delta Liberation Force, NDLF, (Amaize, 2010).

Of some communities in the target list of the JTF as suspected militant strongholds or having criminal elements such as Ekerenkoko (in Warri South-West LGA), Enekorogha, Gbekebor, Oboro, and Ogodobiri – which are in Delta State, two have been invaded, namely Ekerenkoko and Ogodobiri communities. An attack planned for Oboro

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Community in 1998 based on an unsubstantiated allegation was aborted when the plan leaked (see press release in the *Punch* newspaper of March 31, 1998). Their people still live in fear. Enekorogha is particularly apprehensive as it had been burnt down in 1911 at the orders of Major Crawford, a District Commissioner of Warri at the time.

The cost in human life in the attacks is colossal. This is a worse colonialism than the classical British colonialism, considering that, compared to Algeria, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe; Nigeria got its flag independence from Britain on a platter of gold. This can be seen from the anti-colonial accounts in Franz Fanon's, *The Wretched of the Earth*; Peter Abraham's *Mine Boy*; Nelson Mandela's, *Long Walk to Freedom*; and Kenneth Kaunda's, *Zambia Shall be Free* for good accounts of de-apartheidization struggles in South Africa and de-colonization struggles in the other countries. The term, 'de-apartheidization', instead of de-colonization, was used in Osha (2006), to capture the peculiarity of the South African situation. In a similar way, what the armed groups are seeking is what I might coin as the *de-unitization* of the political governance of the country at the central level.

Again, considering that, unlike the secession-inspired Nigerian-Biafran Civil War (1967-1970), this violence against frustration-inspired protestation in the Niger Delta is excessive; the killing of its people seems punitive or smacks of Hitlerian holocaust. This much can be construed from the statements of the *Honourable* Alhaji Bala N'Allah and ex-minister Philip Asiodu, which were quoted above.

5. Corporate Colonialism

In this section, light is shed on the role of the SNOCs in the Niger Delta crisis. The role of SNOCs may be highlighted through empirical research findings here quoted *at length*:

In the past, a large portion of FDI was devoted to primary sector industries such as oil extraction or mining. Such investment is particularly troublesome with regard to human rights. Countries rich in raw materials tend to be problematic hosts, as they tend to be more autocratic (Ross, 2001) and prone to civil war

(Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). At the same time, extractive FDI requires a very high degree of commitment on the part of the investors. Up-front capital expenses are very high, and returns on investment are often not realized in the short term (Berman & Webb, 2003; Vogel, 2005). The end result is that investors may find themselves committed to an unstable and repressive host country (Blanton and Blanton, 2006).

What Blanton and Blanton (2006) observed is exactly what is going on in the Niger Delta. Shell has continued to exploit and pollute the Niger Delta environment despite its role in the crisis in the area. It temporarily withdrew from the Ogoniland but has returned and resumed operations there. But its annoying presence in other parts of the Niger Delta can be seen in the *Kaiama Declaration* of 1998 (Tuodolo and Ogoriba, 1998).

Corporate colonialism may be a good description of the new colonialism in the era of globalization. Luxemburg (as cited in Munck, 2009) stated that, in previous phases of capitalism, the core centre of capitalism made primitive accumulation by using political violence, force, fraud, and oppression to loot the periphery without any attempt at concealment. Munck (2009) sees a continuation of this process in the current globalization, which Harvey (2004) described as involving “accumulation by dispossession.” Whereas classical colonialism was carried out by the nation state, the new colonialism is carried out by supra-national corporations as they locate their FDI facilities in the developing countries of the world and exploiting these countries (for details on this exploitation, see Tausch, 1999). In particular, they create EPZs and extract attractive conditions for locating these facilities. These include tax freedom, guaranteed supply of cheap labour, complete autonomy, and provision of denationalized spaces, lax or paper environmental standards which are not enforced, such as gas flaring in the Niger Delta and other collusions which enable Shell, Chevron, Texaco, etc to disown their environmental irresponsibilities (see Vanderburg, 2009; Gibson, 2001; Blanton and Blanton, 2006).

Besides, state executives are expected to be and do play roles equivalent to being “country managers” of TNCs to

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make their country attractive for FDI location. The re-branding Nigeria project fits well into this scenario, as the Nigerian state appears determined to work hard to improve its *battered image* at home and abroad (compare Hodge and Coronado, 2006) and perhaps move the country to the EPZ quadrant; creating '*peace*' to boost oil revenues without addressing fundamental problems such as the issue of convening a sovereign national conference and others as listed in the Kaiama Declaration. It is noteworthy that the issue of the sovereign national conference was raised at the protest rally captioned "Enough is Enough" which was organized by civil society groups called the Save Nigeria Group (SNG) and executed on Tuesday January 12, 2009 and Wednesday March 10, 2010 at Abuja to address issues of corruption, the whereabouts of the President, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar' Adua, electoral reform, and constitutional review.

But its roots go deep into the time of British colonialism in Nigeria. While capitalist enterprises followed the British flag (Union Jack) and were a partner in, and beneficiary of, British colonialism, they survived the decolonization of the colonial political and administrative apparatuses. It was thus that the Royal Niger Company (as Lever Brothers since 1962) survived the eviction of British colonialism; Shell remained as a surviving colonial power, power over its supposed host communities in the Niger Delta.

But why *corporate colonialism*? To the extent that capitalist corporations exploit resources, suppress resistance, deny human rights, and dominate local business by monopoly power; to the extent that corporations engage in "*short-term exploitation of people and the earth for the sole purpose of making profits for the few*" (Renesch, 2008). During the time of British colonialism, the British authorities and commercial interests conspired to depose both Jaja and Nana Olomu who competed with, and constituted threats to, British companies. In particular, the Royal Niger Company, used its British charter of 1886 to prohibit Lagos merchants from trading along the River Niger (Hopkins as cited in Forrest, 1994). Only in 1972, the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree (NEPD) was enacted and enforced to

redress the dominance of foreign ownership of industry in Nigeria. But it was finally replaced with the Nigerian Investment Promotion Act (NIPA) in 1995 (see Oculi, 1986:140-163; Odozi, 1995:13-14).

Corporate colonialism of Shell British Petroleum in the Niger Delta was consolidated for good when the company found oil in Oloibiri in the present Bayelsa State in 1956. This discovery and the potential for national or dominant ethnic group accumulation were to determine the fate of the Niger Delta in the then emerging Nigerian nation state. While the Nigerian nation allowed Southern Cameroun under the leadership of Emmanuel Endeley to vote in a referendum and did opt out of Nigeria (see report by Adeyemo, 2002), it had no oil then the oil-bearing minority region in the Niger Delta was not allowed even to have autonomy in the then violently structured Nigerian nation state. It is comparable to the case of the Bakassi peninsula in which Nigeria is ready to fight to possess the territory despite the ruling of the World Court at The Hague. The minorities in emergent Nigerian nation state were sawn apart and dissipated into the Western and Eastern regions, where they were and are still treated as colonial subjects.

The Nigerian military is to the oil companies as the British (imperial) Royal Army was to the Royal Niger Company (for example) such that as trade followed the British flag (the Union Jack), so the oil companies follow the JTF as the military outfit secures the Niger Delta for Shell and other oil companies for oil exploration and exploitation purposes. But this has been met with resistance, as in the days of British colonialism, resulting in a cycle of stiff suppression and further resistance with damage to property and loss of life on both sides (see also Hummel as cited in Eweje, 2006, especially with respect of increasing demands by host communities and change in strategy from appealing to the federal government for development to violence in order to press home these demands). Shell, in particular, has also lost Davisian legitimacy in the Niger Delta; (see Davis, 1973 as cited in Eweje, 2006) limping along only with state protection. Some outstanding instances of resistance (movements) have been the following.

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(i) The 12 days revolution in 1966 led by late Major Jasper Isaac Adaka Boro (Ambaiowei, 2006).

(ii) The Ogoni resistance led by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). The stiff suppression came in the form of capital punishment for the leadership, among them, Ken Beeson Saro-Wiwa and eight others who were hanged in 1995. Ledum Mitee, who chaired the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, got off the hook (see detailed account in Osha, 2006).

(iii) The Kaiama Declaration of 1998 and formation of the Izon Youth Council (IYC) to monitor the implementation of the resolutions made at the meeting of Izon youths who met in Kaiama to deliberate on the Niger Delta situation. The resolutions of that meeting constituted the famous Kaiama Declaration (see text of the declaration in Tuodolo and Ogoriba, 1998).

(iv) The nudity match undertaken by multiethnic alliance of women to the offices of Chevron-Texaco and Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) on 7 August, 2002 to protest the destruction of their subsistence economy. Soldiers broke up the demonstration with violence, injured several women and killed at least five of them (Human Rights Watch as cited in Okaba, 2005:110; see account of the international reverberations of the nudity march in Turner and Brownhill, 2004).

For a contrast, in May, 1995, Greenpeace activist occupied Shell UK's Brent spar (a superannuated offshore oil storage and loading platform deep in the North Atlantic) to mobilize resistance to Shell's decision to decommission it and dump harmful chemical residues and radioactive wastes in its storage tanks into the North Sea (Livesey, 2001). It might be asked, "How many troops did the British government call out on behalf of Shell UK against Greenpeace?" Quickly, none!

(v) The rise of armed resistance (militantism), which takes the form of attacking oil pipelines and other oil industry infrastructures such as loading jetties or platforms (e.g., the Bonga drilling platform set deep in the Atlantic Ocean and

the Atlas Cove jetty for offloading fuel). Well-known armed resistance groups in the Niger Delta include (i) the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) (ii) the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), and (iii) the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF).

Oil constitutes about 85 percent of Nigeria's revenues (Ndebbio, 2006; Central Bank of Nigeria, 2004: 195-202). For example, of the gross revenue in the sum of N3.90 trillion to the federal government in 2004, oil accounted for N3.35 trillion. However, for the host communities, these activities had meant little else than pollution, degradation of the environment, and destruction of centuries-old traditional occupations that had been the mainstay of the oil-bearing 'host communities' (see Tolofari, 2004). A BP engineer who visited Oloibiri, an oil town in Nigeria in 1990 remarked: "I have explored for oil in Venezuela, I have explored for oil in Kuwait, I have never seen an oil-rich town as completely impoverished as Oloibiri" (Greenpeace International, 1994, as quoted in Eweje, 2006). Thus Eweje (2006) suggested that the Nigerian government should direct 3% of its oil revenue to develop communities where the oil is produced.

I wish to summarize the systematic suppression and violence of the colonial project in the Niger Delta with the words of the philosopher, Marcuse, when he stated that

Throughout the world of industrial civilization, the domination of man by man is growing in scope and efficiency. Nor does this trend appear as an accidental, transitory regression on the road to progress. Concentration camps, mass exterminations, world wars and atom bombs are no 'relapse into barbarism,' but the unrepressed implementation of the achievements of modern science, technology and domination (Hammer, 2008).

The ultimate beneficiaries of the appropriation of natural assets are the stock holders of the transnational oil firm (see Morgan and Kristensen, 2006), whose stock values continue to rise from which they *eat to death* while the plundered indigenous or local people who sit atop the oil *starve to death* (see Dussel and Ibara-Colado 2006).

Duggar (1989) once stated

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In the corporate economies of the contemporary West, the market is a passive institution. The active institution is the corporation ... an inherently narrow and shortsighted organization ... The corporation has evolved to serve the interests of whoever controls it, at the expense of whomever does not (quoted in Banerjee, 2008).

In the next section, I draw conclusions for the paper from the evidence presented in the previous sections.

6. Conclusion

The focus of this paper was on coloniality as a structuring framework and its central role in the development of the Niger Delta crisis. The main objective was to construct an understanding of the crisis, which was theoretically grounded in the dynamics of colonialism, and to use the scholarly critique to inform and urge a reform of the convoluted socioeconomic managerial praxis (see Pleasants, 2003) in the Nigerian context.

It was found that the Niger Delta crisis has a colonial ancestry. This involved a succession of colonialisms; from classical British colonialism to internal colonialism, and finally a continuing corporate or neo-imperialist colonialism.

It was also found that colonialism generated a vicious cycle of violence constituted by colonial exploitation, resistance to the exploitation, and repressive violence; followed by a further cycle of internal colonial exploitation, resistance, and violent suppression; yet followed by corporate colonial exploitation, resistance and militarized suppression – in an interminable recursive process.

The deeper issues include political restructuring of the foundationally violent and flawed nation state to reflect true federalism, resource control (fiscal federalism), environmental regeneration, and subsurface land rights. Thus, the solution to, and management of, the festering crisis must be holistic and sustainable.

Massive and accelerated development of the area can ease up the demand for resource control. But it appears that with the current level of political awareness and collective bitter experience of prolonged neglect and repression, the

issue of physical infrastructure development alone may not go very far in assuaging the restiveness or crisis in the Niger Delta.

The federal government did well by setting up the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta. The report, containing the blueprint for the development of the sub-region, was made after broad consultations with stakeholders and an integration of all previous commission reports on the Niger Delta. The constitution and chairing of the Committee by the one surviving member of the Ogoni 9 gave a feeling of belongingness and respect to the voices of victims. Thus, the master plan proposed for the development of the region as in the report of the Committee appears to touch the hearts of people of the region and should be faithfully, systematically, and fully implemented.

But not to be ignored are the contents or grievances vocalized in the Kaiama Declaration. It is a mistake to regard the crisis as “youth restiveness” arising from “youth unemployment”. The issues go far beyond this simplistic reductionism.

Equally important is the issue of reparation to the people of the Niger Delta for the mindless exploitation of the sub-region from about 1956 when oil was discovered in Oloibiri in Bayelsa State to date.

Finally, corruption must be fought with the last drop of blood. Part of the problem of the development impasse in the Niger Delta, in particular, is the corruption of most of the governors and politicians from the sub-region. The vast sums of money that flow back to the area for development seem to go down into the drains in abyss. By contrast, those in the North have visible developmental results to show for the relatively small allocations from the federation account.

This crisis puts to test the capability of the Nigerian leadership to resolve an internal crisis of protestation against marginalization, which is the economic disenfranchisement of its own subjects; doing so in collusion with transnational oil corporations operating in the Niger Delta sub-region, as has been attested to in a Platform report published in the UK (see Chigbo, 2011). The Platform is London-based oil and gas related NGO. If this effort fails, it will not be attributed to lack of knowledge or ideas but to the lack of political will, capability, and commitment.

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Although I used coloniality as a frame of reference, it does not mean that it is the only framework possible for understanding the subject of the present paper. One might use other frameworks such as *resource curse*, which has been used to explain the high incidence of armed conflicts in regions with resource wealth (Blanton and Blanton, 2006; Adedeji, 1999 as cited in African Development Bank, 2007: 111-125). Another possibility is Harvey's (2007) concept of "accumulation by dispossession" which he used to describe the appropriation of public assets of developing countries by circuits of international capital in the name of privatization of these "loss-making" assets. Researchers involved in future studies may wish to tap these frameworks.

I agree with Forbes (2009) in her observation that no standpoint is neutral because every individual or group is embedded in the world and, as Pickle (2007) suggested, there is no permanent isolate; every individual is part or element of a system or will soon be. So, I find myself inextricably involved in the issues addressed in this paper, as a victim. Yet, this embeddedness of the present researcher may be advantageous in terms of his being a sort of participant-observer, which makes the study semi-ethnographic in nature with all the benefits of a long period of empirical observation (gathering, as it were, qualitative longitudinal data) and in-depth non-statistical, content analysis of data and issues.

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