

The Struggle for the Nigerian Soul: Niger Delta Debacle

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Abstract:

In the West Africa sub-region, conflicts, tension and crisis have become the defining characteristics of their statehood with some escalating into full scale civil wars, as in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote D'Ivoire bringing in their wake deaths, destruction and despair. Even the cases of Somali and the Darfur Region in the Sudan have defied all known solutions with attendant consequences of total and near disintegration of the two states respectively.

Ordinarily, Nigeria being a federal state, the general expectation had been a better management of conflicts and social tension within the polity. This is due to received wisdom that federal states are expected to accommodate more pluralities and cleavages within a polity as it allows for diverse groups representation through the instrumentalities of decentralised structures of states and sometimes local governments. However, this potential has not been fully maximised as the country still contend with so many crises that have almost stretched out its capacity for corporate existence with threatening disintegrative tendencies.

This paper interrogates one of the sources of conflicts in the country, the crisis in the Niger Delta Region. This is done against the backdrop of different attempts at management of the conflict which rather being ameliorated has assumed different dimensions; from self-determination struggles to recent experiences of kidnapping among other vices in spite of the much acclaimed amnesty programme of the federal government.

Key words: *Conflicts, Oil Politics, Federal State, Niger Delta Region and Nigeria*

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1. Introduction

Nigeria is presently passing through a critical historical juncture regarding the development in the Niger Delta region. The hen has finally come home to roost. The refusal, the neglect and the failure to implement various treaties, plans and programmes on Niger Delta right from the treaty of protection that the natural rulers of the area signed with the conquering British colonialist to the recent equally hegemony federal government imposed, Niger Delta master plan are now yielding undesired consequences. Thus, it has become more glaring that protests and contestations with the successive powers which had started as form of trade disagreements by the early Niger Delta naturalist and traditional rulers and chiefs such as Jaja of Opobo, Nana Olomu of Itsekiri and Ovaranmen Nogbasi of Benin, has gained sophistication beyond the amateurish 1960 revolution of Isaac Boro against Nigerian state to a full scale militarised action perfected in the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta MEND among other fierce militants groups operating in the area. Thus, a course which had the prospects of developing into a meaningful dialogue among groups of people who are demanding for opportunity to exploit the resources naturally bestowed in their environment to make a better living with the Nigerian state has degenerated into a violence monologue.

The current standoff has furthered diminished widely held belief of those few optimists that the democratic resolution of the crisis of Nigerian state especially after the aftermath of June 12 1993 election annulled by the military oligarchy and won by late business mogul M.K.O. Abiola with inauguration of civil rule in 1999 would usher in the necessary atmosphere for peaceful negotiation and not a continuation of military option by the Nigerian state against genuine agitations of the people of the Niger Delta.

At independence, Nigeria developed along the British imposed three (later four) regional structure. These regions were centre of socio-economic development drawing

resources from naturally endowed agricultural products of cocoa, coffee, cotton, palm oil and crude oil. However, this pattern of development was soon abandoned as crude oil gain increased prominence in the balance of trade of the country. In fact, by the mid 70s, oil revenue had become the new fiscal base of the political economy. The control of the new source of wealth, the crude oil, was taken over by the federal government thereby increasing the stake of politics at the centre. The nature of the hegemony politics assured the majority groups of the control of the centre to the exclusion of the minorities Niger Delta whose “vein” produced the crude oil. While the issue of hegemony has pitched the North against the South since independence especially in the contest for political space, the other minorities in the three regions of the country had in turn complained of hegemony of the ruling elite in the North, Western and Eastern regions of the country at independence.

As a way out of hegemony, several attempts have been made at state creation and ethno territorial reorganisation (Suberu, 1996: 28 – 31). However, the successive efforts by the military rather than addressing the imbalance have further worsened regional disparities in both political and economic opportunities available in the country. And this is mostly felt in the area of resource allocation which contrary to expectations, the division of the old regions into many smaller states has not translated into more revenue for the minorities or greater influence in the political arena. Thus, the exploitation of crude oil continue unabated without due cognisance to the views and aspirations of the oil bearing communities by both the oil multinationals and the Nigerian government who by virtue of Petroleum Decree of 1969, Offshore Decree, 1971 and Land Use Decree 1978 received the largest percentage of the oil receipt.

Therefore, the gradual environmental degradation spawned by lack of regard for the environment and people of the Niger Delta apart from producing discontents among the oil bearing communities has fed into an equally debilitating feature of Nigerian state which is lack of concern for the

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wellbeing and the social economy challenges facing the Nigerians as a whole. It is instructive to note that the various needs such as provision of education, health facilities, food supply, adequate water supply, good roads and overall infrastructural development has not attracted enough attention from the political elite. This is because the centralised strategy of delivering these public goods have been largely ineffective and inefficient (Ayoade, 1997:17).

The case of the Niger Delta has become more worrisome with passing years due to the special circumstance of the region. And why it is possible for other part of the country to turn to other alternatives in the face of government failure or neglect with individual and household becoming mini governmental authorities in addressing their essential needs and converting the natural resources in the environment for their daily sustenance, the same cannot be said of the Niger Delta. This is due to the nature of the terrain which has further being subject of continuous and serious environmental degradation as a result of oil production that is insensitive to the environment and the people. The intensification of insensitivity to the genuine feelings and agitations of the Niger Delta and lack of adequate response by the federal government and the oil multinationals operating in the area has heightened the stake of oil politics in recent time. As a backlash, there is observed a degeneration of the struggle for self determination by early nationalists; a cry for more inclusion in the Nigerian political economy, to an opportunist enterprise of self survival of various groups and individuals.

2. Federalism, Resource Control and Oil Politics: The Nexus

Federalism is a constitutional and political device aimed at formally recognizing diversities in a plural society. Thus, foremost writing on federalism recognized this. Thus, K. C Wheare maintains that

“... by federal principle I mean the method of dividing powers so that general and regional governments are each, within a sphere are coordinate and independent.” (Wheare, 1963:183)

Thus, it can be seen that this definition revolves around a formal division of powers between levels of government as a way of expressing the inherent plurality in a federal system of government (Jinadu, 1979).

In other word, it has been observed that constitutional division of powers as noted in most federations usually gives vent to the expression of federation (countries practising federal system of government) being union without uniformity or countries expressing unity in diversity. In other to uphold the tenet of federalism, which often involves shared rule and self rule, (Kincard, 2001:29) a conscious attempt is made to give a clear cut demarcation between the areas of responsibility of the federal government and states as well as area of necessary cooperation.

As a way of giving financial bite to the foregoing arrangement, fiscal federalism as emerged as an offshoot of federalism and entails a statutorily defined financial transactions among the different tiers of government, it operates like federalism under the principle of share rule juxtaposed with self-rule, and a general commitment to the rule of the game. Fiscal federalism deals with the allocation of government spending and resources to the various tiers of government so that each can perform its responsibilities (Taiwo, 2004: 24) In other words, fiscal federalism “exists when sub-national government have the power given to them by the constitution or by particular laws, to raise (some) taxes and carryout spending activities within clearly established legal criteria.” (Tanzi, 1995: 294)

Fiscal federalism or fiscal decentralization is distinguished from administrative decentralization which exists when most taxes are raised centrally but funds are allocated to decentralized entities that carry on their

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spending activities as agent of central government and according to the guidelines or controls imposed by the central government (Taiwo, 2004 :49) The guaranteed of fiscal autonomy to sub-national government by political federalism, which corresponds in meaning to fiscal decentralization, as against administrative decentralization, is the basic distinction between unitary and federal systems of government (Isumonah, 2005:175)

The concept of fiscal federalism therefore suggests that the allocation of responsibilities of the various tiers of government should be such that the central government would be responsible for the provision of national public goods and pursuit of equity and stabilization goals of government. Sub-national governments should then be responsible for the provision of local public goods. The sharing of government revenue among the tiers of government should also complement the sharing of government functions and taxes that are geared towards the pursuit of central government functions which should be centrally collected. This system of collection also tends to be appropriate where there are substantial economies of scale in tax collection, where the desire for tax uniformity is high and where the distribution of tax base is highly uneven or highly mobile across jurisdiction (Taiwo, 2004 :49)

Also, as the principle of expenditure assignment are largely independent of the principles of tax assignment, there is need for another exercise, namely, revenue sharing to supplement the independent or internally – generated revenue of the sub-national governments. Revenue allocation is generally a complex exercise as it involves both equity and efficiency issues and the value judgment of the government (Olaloku, 1979, Olowonmi, 1998:247-260). Thus, political considerations have always influenced the economics of revenue allocations in most federations of the world inclusive of Nigeria. This is due to the fact that there is non-correspondence between assigned functions to different levels of government and taxes or revenue needed to execute such functions in most federations (Olaloku, 1979,

Olowonomi, 1998:247-260). As a result, the higher-level government like the centre makes transfer of resources to the federating states and localities. These revolve around principle such as fiscal equity and efficiency especially in most developed federations of the world. However, in developing federations like Nigeria, other principles have emerged quite different from the former as a result of their being confronted with economic changes which required rapid response and adjustment than what the older federations experienced (Olaloku, 1979:10). Such principles include derivation, needs and national development. In Nigeria, the combination and application of some of these principles at various stages of development of the country has produced turbulent and highly politicized system. Currently, the forces agitating for greater weight to be attached to derivation principles are increasingly becoming ferocious than those agitating for other principles and the inability of the Nigerian state and government to respond positively and make necessary adjustment in the fiscal transfers constitute the kernel of prevailing crisis in the Nigeria political economy and underline the continuous marginalization of various groups within the country especially in the Niger Delta region of the country.

3. The Struggle for Nigeria Soul in perspective

The struggle for the control of Nigeria Soul which can be defined as the eternal struggle for the resources located within the country can be traced to the colonial era. As a colonial and dependent economy, there have been a contestation and struggle among the ruling elite for the political control of the state with the ultimate aim of accessing its economic resources. This struggle is set within the context of colonial state system thus its explanation will throw more light in its nature. The Nigerian colonial state served the interests of global accumulation (one drawn into the global economic system), at the periphery through the local extraction and transfer of resources to the metropolis. However, the exploitation of the country did not stop at independence, rather it developed another characters as the

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emerging ruling elite further intensified such exploitation to satisfy their selfish interest and the objective of the colonial lords. The result of this development for the country is a gradual under-development of its economy (Goulbourne 1979: 27-28). Owing to the under-development of the economies of the country, the emerging/ruling elite lack the economic base to control the state. Thus, lacking economic base, the Nigeria ruling elite has recourse to politics, which affords them the opportunity of controlling the use of scarce economic resources of the state (Ake, 1996:23-30). This is achieved by amassing wealth using the instrumentalities of state power. The inherent diversity in Nigeria federation further introduces a dangerous dimension to this contest for power. The various groups and communities within the country will stop at nothing to gain access to state power knowing full well that this in turn assures them of the control of scarce economic resources of the state. The tendency therefore is to exclude others in the process by appealing to ethnic sentiments and adopting if possible, violent means in the process of political competition, which has, as its ultimate and, (state) resource control (Ake, 1996:23-30).

However, before and immediately after independence there was agreement among the ruling elite to locate the centre of exploitation and appropriation of the state resources in the regions. Due to the fact that agricultural products which formed the bulk of state resources at this time were evenly distributed in the various regions and more especially because the resources were located in the area of the hegemonic groups controlling the regions; cotton and groundnut in the Hausa / Fulani North, Cocoa in the Yoruba West and Palm oil in the Ibo East, the leaders of the major political parties were contended with regional control. However, while the major ethnic groups benefited immensely from the arrangement the minorities in each of the ethnic enclaves called regions agitated to no avail to control their own political and economic destinies. Even the Willink commission established at the eve of British departure in 1958 could not address the minorities' fears in the country.

Another argument that can be advanced for the exploitation of state resources at the regional level was the “balance of terror” among the three dominant groups. This allowed each group to ward off contestation over the control of its resources from other groups. This manifested in the way the Western region that produced the lucrative cocoa in the world market was able to resist every move by other regions to access its resources through demand for removal of derivation principle from revenue allocation system. However, the state resources that have become regionalized at this period were accumulated by the political elites and their business partners while still committed to social, economic and general well being of the masses. This is ably described by Williams who observes that “the emergent successors to British colonial rule used the marketing boards to finance political activities, accumulate money capital, in their pocket, finance industrial and social development and build an indigenous capital class.”(Williams, 1980)

The collapse of the prices of commodity products of cocoa, groundnut and palm oil in the world market which formed the pivot of regional economy in the first republic coupled with increasing prominence of oil receipt in the Nigerian revenue profile led to a shift in the arena of competition for state resources by the political elite from the regions to the centre. This shift was affected through promulgation of Decrees 15 of 1967, 13 of 1970, 9 of 1971 and 6 of 1975. Thus, with the promulgation of the above Decrees, the balance of control and access to revenue effectively shifted to federal government leading to fiscal centralization (Obi, 2005: 199). Fiscal centralization becomes inevitable because apart from the nature of production and system of collection of oil revenue which is both an enclave economy with foreigners controlling its production while oil rents, royalties are paid directly to the federation account, even the multi-national companies involve in oil production prefer to deal directly with the federal government than other levels of government to ensure predictability and guarantee security,

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which may not be easy to realize when dealing with many centres of power (Turner 1978.)

Another reason is the need to protect adequately the selfish interest of the ruling elite irrespective of geographical and political differences. Here, the argument is that contrary to claim by the federal government that oil revenue are used to pursue national integration, maintenance of political stability and even development as reasons for reducing weight attached to principle of derivation to the oil producing areas instead oil wealth have been used largely to sustain a national(parasitic) political elite (Ihouvbere 2003: 187).

The third reason for fiscal centralisation as part of hegemony politics is the exploitation of the minority ethnic groups on the altar of unity and national development. This can be seen in the fact that when the agricultural products from the major ethnic groups constituted the major sources of revenue for the country, derivation principles with the regions retaining largest proportion constituted the core of the revenue formula. However, when source of revenue shifted to crude oil from the minority ethnic groups, revenue is taken over by the federal government distributed on the basis of needs, population and national interest. Thus, while reviewing the reports of the various revenue allocation committee set up since 1968 when federal government took over the control of oil revenue (Isumonah, 2005: 127) concluded that they are “flawed in social and to some extent ethno regional composition ... both disregarded the recompense for negative externalities of oil exploitation and the sensibilities of those who live in the oil – producing areas by rejecting derivation principles in their recommendations.”

From the above, it is obvious that fiscal centralisation would not benefit the oil minorities who remained marginalized from the scheme of things and were dominated in the most strategic sphere of national life (Obi, 2000: 84) and this is especially manifested in the political process and economic management of the country (Osayinwere and Iyare, 1991:71). The need to redress the lopsidedness has

constantly defined the struggle of the Niger Delta minority against Nigeria state, its ruling elite, the oil multinational and lately the ruling elite of the oil bearing states.

Apart from the oil-bearing communities, the effect of this fiscal centralization for the whole country is that a centralized course of development was embarked upon which while sustaining a ruling elite that takes advantage of state resources to satisfy personal ends, resulted in lack of overall socio-economic development of the country.

Owing to the above, one can observe that the root cause of the Niger Delta crisis can be located in the general crisis of governance enveloping the country as a result of the inability of the Nigerian state to meet the basic needs of its citizenry such as provision of water, foods, hospitals, employment, good roads amongst other needs. This crisis can partly be traced to the adoption of centralised strategy of development (Omitola, 2008). However, this problem has been accentuated due to the peculiar environment of the Niger Delta region which made it difficult for the people to adopt various survival strategies as easily done in other parts of the country.

Thus, the various marginalisation and alienation of the Niger Delta has led to a lot of pressures against the Nigerian state and the various military governments in the past taking diverse forms of protest from these oil bearing areas on the need for greater access to oil resources and need for adequate environmental protection of their areas. The struggle at its initial stage was directed against the multinational oil companies in form of peaceful protest or blockading of oil installations, sabotage of oil pipelines and physical assault of oil company staff by villagers vanguard, 1989; Newswatch, 1990 cited from Obi, 2000: 88). While at the level of the Nigerian state and at international fora, the struggles have been carried out through organisations such as Movement for Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) Ijaw National Congress (INC), Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) and Ethnic Minority Rights Organisation (EMIROF) (Obi, 2000:

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87 – 90, 2005:199 200) among other minorities group in the Delta region.

These organisations often presented a clear national agenda and are well organized at the popular level (Obi, 2000:88) such agenda include the Ogoni Bills of Rights and the Ijaw People Kaiama Declaration which have received attention of various international organisations aim at revealing various political and economic marginalisation of the people of the Niger Delta. The effect of all these struggles during the period of military rule except the pittance increase of derivation principle to three percent and establishment of Oil Minerals Producing Development Commission (OMPADEC) during Babangida administration and thirteen percent derivation obtained from the national conference organized by the Abacha administration in his bid to legitimise his regime in 1994, the lot of the Niger Delta has been a system of organized state repression which involve whole scale military actions involving outright sacking and levelling of communities and villages.

The climax of state repression and the turning point in the Niger Delta crisis was the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the MOSOP leaders and his compatriots on some trump up charges by the Nigerian government. This action cannot but be linked to the wide publicity that Ken Saro-Wiwa and MOSOP had received at both national and international levels for the Niger Delta cause especially at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the European Human Rights Commission and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. Also linked closely to the above was the perennial closure of the operations of major oil prospecting company in the country- the Shell operation based in Ogoniland with its adverse effect on the revenue base of the country. This singular government reaction to the pressure mounted by MOSOP and other groups in the Niger Delta turned the tide in the struggle as opportunity for dialogue have been foreclosed between the federal government and the Niger Delta groups. Hence, there emerged a new dispensation of intense militant activities

characterised by a regime of terror in the oil bearing communities to hinder oil expropriation.

The advent of democratic experience of the Fourth Republic created a new impetus for diverse groups within the country to express their grievances or displeasure with the state with the expectation of some democratic settlement. The people of Niger Delta as a result also increase the tempo of their agitations. The first reaction of the federal government to the struggle was the creation of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The commission, an intergovernmental agency was established to address the developmental and ecological problems of the oil bearing areas of the country. The NDDC is controlled by the federal government known for its strategy of centralised development planning; this fact has led to some criticism in spite of several claims of NDDC of bringing about development. Criticism levied against NDDC includes corruption, lack of sufficient local contents and community participation and inadequate funding by the federal and the oil multinational companies (The Comet, 2004). The commission is further seen as a means of political patronage for supporters of the ruling PDP government at the centre (The Vanguard, 2004). Thus, instead of advancing the lot of the Niger Delta people the trend of development now is that socio-economic and political opportunities created by the advent of democracy are appropriated mainly by the elite. One can safely conclude then that the present crisis in the Niger Delta is a crisis of centralized pattern of development engendered by a pattern of petroleum exploitation. Other components of the problem include Land Use Decree, extreme concentration of fiscal resources in the federal government, successive changes in derivation principle to development opportunities, national stability and for national integration.

Another manifestation of the Niger Delta struggle during the current democratic rule is the crisis of the onshore – offshore dichotomy in the application of resource control. This particular struggle was later joined by other states in

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the Southern part of the country and it become a rallying point on Southern Governors to demand for resources control from the federal government of resource found in their respective states.

As a way of responding to the agitations, the federal government sought a judicial interpretation of the sea-ward boundary of a littoral state within the Federal Republic of Nigerian for its purpose of calculating the amount of revenue accruing to the Federation Account directly from any natural resources derived from the state pursuant to Section 162 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999.

In delivering its ruling on the interpretation of Section 162 (I) of the 1999 Constitution, the Supreme Court made some pronouncements, which if fully implemented could considerably reduce the persistent face-off between the oil producing communities and other state governments in the South on one hand and the Federal Government on the other. The court ruled: (1) that the sharing of derivation fund of 13% among oil producing states should begin on May 24 1999; (2) that Gas should be part of derivation; (3) that 1% direct allocation from the federation account to the federal capital territory is illegal; (4) that the funding of the judiciary and payments to NNPC – joint venture partners as first-line charges from the ‘federation account’ is unconstitutional; (5) that the servicing of external debts from the first-line charge is unconstitutional; (6) that the non-payment of derivation on capital gain tax and stamp duties is unconstitutional. The federal government was perpetually restrained from further violating the provision of the constitution on first-line payment. (This Day, 2002:3, Ogundare, 2002:20).

On the issue of seaward boundary of a littoral state within the federal republic of Nigerian, this was put at the low water mark of the land surface thereof (if the case so requires as in the Cross River State) within an archipelago of islands the seaward limits of inland waters within the state.

However, reaction to the Supreme Court's ruling was mixed. It was small wonder then that efforts were made by both parties to reach a political settlement. While the federal government tried to reach an accommodation with the oil-producing states, there were renewed calls for resource control by the Niger Delta states. At the National Reform Political Conference held in 2005, the Niger Delta states were pitched against states in the 'core North' which argue that there can be no resource control because control of natural resources including oil is vested in the federal government pursuant to Section 44 (3) of the constitution of federal republic of Nigeria.

The import of the foregoing therefore is that in spite of democratic rule, not much has been done to accommodate the political and economy agitations of Niger Delta people as various recommendations by stakeholders including those of the National Political Reform Conference refused to be implemented hence the intensification of "violence." Even the latest effort by the federal government to stem the tide of the crisis with the creation of Niger Delta ministry was greeted with the declaration of oil war by Niger Delta groups' tagged "Operation Barbados" with resultant killings, destruction and grievance to the people of the area and as a matter of fact resulting in several loss of thousands of oil production.

However, there appears to be a complete abandonment of the original cause for the agitations of the people of the Niger Delta going by the recent activities of some of the groups now popularly referred to as militant groups. The activities of the militant have become more brutal these days as rarely does a day pass without fighting, kidnapping or killing of either government security agents, staff of petroleum companies or rival groups. However, the activities of most of these groups have been prosecuted or hijacked to pursue the interest of the ruling elite or their factions. For instance, there are various factions of members of Ijaw Youth Congress with each faction enjoying the patronage of various members of the political elite. Also, the intense competition among them

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and the various political battles they have to fight against perceived or real enemies of their benefactors especially during the 2003 and 2007 general elections and even after have reduced the Niger Delta region to a perpetual war zone.

Further revelations on how militants and cult groups are used to unleash mayhem in the Niger Delta region are coming from River State True and Reconciliation Committee headed by retired Justice Kayode Esho. Specifically one of the much sought after leaders of the militant cum cultist groups claimed that the recent crisis in Port Harcourt are at the instance of some unscrupulous politicians who want everything to themselves at the expense of the people (The Nation, 2008:12). Another development in the area is that the militant groups contrary to the noble efforts of groups such as MOSOP, are involved in wide array of activities such as selling of crude oil which in some cases are actually exchanged for sophisticated arms and ammunitions; extortion of protection fees especially by youth from companies operating in the area amongst other vices. The argument often canvassed for reducing the struggle to the issue of butter and bread or individual or group survival strategy as the present statecraft could not meet the expectations of the people they therefore resort to self help especially when the officials of the state are engaging in high level of looting of the treasury as ably demonstrated in the Alamyseghba saga where a sitting governor of Bayelsa was arrested in London by the metropolitan police for carrying a brief case containing one million pound sterling suspected to be money for laundering.

4. Rescuing Nigeria Soul: The way forward

The way forward for rescuing Nigeria from the struggle over its soul which is the resolution of the crisis for the control of the oil resources can be located in the peaceful solution to the Niger Delta crisis. This solution must be multi-faceted as no one quick fix solution can meet the political, economic and social marginalisation and

dislocations that the regions have been subjected to for the past fifty years that oil was discovered in Olobiri in the present day River State. These solutions which must be put in place fast enough to address the current drift towards anomie in the Niger Delta and the consistent disintegrative threat on the country must have as their ultimate goals the genuine opening up, accommodation and incorporation of Niger Delta in the Nigerian State

This can be achieved under a decentralized political economy that will allow for development of infrastructural and social services at sub-national unit level and also integrated development on the basis of economies of scale where necessary through cooperation among states and not through federal government imposition of programmes and policies or tokenism actions such as establishment of NDDC or the recent creation of Niger Delta ministry. Only this approach can lead to overall benefit of economic side of federalism by transforming Nigerian federation from mere strategy of maintaining conflict through redistribution of continuously shrinking oil-wealth in the name of federation account.

The way out will also involve a change of direction to include self-reliance, people entered and poverty reduction strategy, diversification as opposed to mono-cultural dependency economy. This will address immediate needs of the people of the area especially the vulnerable groups thereby reducing or totally eliminating the proliferation of militant groups. In addition to this there is an urgent need for massive infrastructural development of the area by the federal government with immediate mobilisation of men and materials to sites to convince any doubting Thomas's that the era of meaningless talks is over and that the time for concrete action on the development of the Niger Delta is now.

Lastly, for enduring and sustainable solution to the crisis, the federation needs to be structured in way to provide necessary framework for popular participation in activities of governance and the institutionalization of means

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of control by the people thereby reducing the gap between the Nigerian state and its people.

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