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## **OIL AND GAS CONFLICTS IN THE NIGER-DELTA: SHIFTING FROM THE TENETS OF RESOURCE VIOLENCE TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTALISM OF THE POOR AND RESOURCE COMPLEX**

**Ayoola Samuel Odeyemi**

Research Assistant and MA Candidate, Environmental Policy Institute, Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

[aodeyemi@grenfell.mun.ca](mailto:aodeyemi@grenfell.mun.ca)

### **Abstract**

*Oil and Gas is the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. However, oil and gas production in Nigeria has been fraught with conflict, tension and rivalry, particularly in the Niger Delta region of the country for the past two decades. Commentators have attributed the high prevalence of the violent dimensions of oil-driven conflicts in the region to the high levels of poverty its people. Despite Nigeria's abundant oil wealth and position as a leading oil and gas supplier in the world, indigenes of the Niger Delta remain some of the poorest people on earth. The Nigerian government has made several futile efforts to curb the violence in this region, including military crackdowns on militant groups, granting of amnesty to encourage surrender, and the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). It is therefore pertinent to analyse the history of violence in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, examining the reasons for the violence and situating these conflicts in the context of local realities. Examining the social economic positions of the indigenes of the region in relation to the various attempts by the Nigerian government to curtail the conflicts in this region and exploring the reasons for the low success rates enjoyed by these attempts may be helpful in this analysis. I argue that the government of Nigeria should shift its attention from combating violence in the Niger Delta to addressing the issues causing this violence. Employing qualitative methods, I explore the theories of environmentalism of the poor and resource violence. I discover that environmentalism of the poor and resource complex theories describe the Niger-Delta situation better, and provide groundwork for further research into solutions by subsequent scholars and policy makers.*

**Keywords:** environmentalism of the poor; Niger-Delta; resource violence; resource curse; resource complex



## 1. Introduction

The conflict in the Niger Delta region where most of the crude oil in Nigeria is extracted is severely affecting not only the Nigerian economy but also the global prices of petroleum products. According to a special report released by the United States Institute of Peace, the losses of revenue from oil and gas have been increasing steadily since 2004. According to the report in 2004, clashes between militant leader Asari Dokubo and the Rivers State government or proxy militias spanned communities south of Port Harcourt and led to a loss of less than 25,000 barrels of oil production a day; in 2005, the assaults intensified and added several dollars to the global oil price; by 2007, regular oil production had fallen by 500,000 barrels; in 2008, as a result of all the clashes, production reduced from an average 2.2 million barrels per day to an average of 1.2 million barrels per day. As at 2009, amnesty was granted to militants who agreed to a cease fire and this led to a phase of uneasy peace, experts posit that the stability gained through the 2009 amnesty is now eroding in line with past cycle given the increase in violence with each election season, and is therefore a cause for concern (Newsom 2011). As a result of this, Nigeria is in need of a long lasting solution to the conflicts in the Niger Delta which may be found in a model that captures the social, cultural and political complexities of this region.

The article reviews the existing literature on the theories of resource violence and environmentalism of the poor, and relates them to the conflicts in the Niger-Delta. The central argument in this paper is that the government of Nigeria should shift its attention from combating violence in the Niger Delta to addressing the issues causing this violence. The paper employs qualitative methods including narratives, description and analyses of relevant themes.

The paper is organised into four main parts. Part one is this introduction laying down the background to the research and providing the methods and the structure. Part two provides the theoretical frameworks. Part three discusses the phenomenon of conflict in the Niger Delta. Part four applies the theoretical frameworks to the Niger Delta crisis. Part five concludes the paper.

## 2. Theoretical Background

The paper examines two major theories, resource violence and environmentalism of the poor, in analysing the conflicts in the Nigerian Niger Delta. It describes these two primary theories, showcasing how well they describe the situation in Niger Delta.



## A. Resource Violence

This theory is based around the observation that many natural resource-driven jurisdictions are deeply involved with complexes of wealth and violence (Watts. M and N. Peluso 2014). This theory evolved from the earlier agrarian based theories in political ecology such as Blaikie's (1985) analysis of soil erosion and Hecht's (1985) work on Brazilian ranching. However as a result of the poor performance of resource dependent states particularly in Africa (Collier and Ong 2005), and the growing geopolitical concerns over resource scarcity and global struggles over strategic resources (Klare 2011), the attention of development economists and political scientists shifted to natural resources and resource commodities. This eventually led to the development of the power line of policy research under the theme of 'resource curse'. Under this theme, poverty, security and resources are brought together, and connections are drawn between a nation's dependence on primary raw materials and the deficits and dysfunctions associated with this dependence (World Bank 2011). The 1990's saw the development of literature reinterpreting the theories of comparative advantage in modernization (Rostow 1960). Under this new interpretation, governments captured rents from key resources, that is energy, minerals and agricultural commodities, thus creating overly powerful centralized governments and powerful patronage systems instead of democracies, which eventually result in corruption, poor economic performance and a lack of transparency. Karl (1997) described this situation where resource wealth is associated with developmental and governance failures as the 'paradox of plenty'. This led to the development of the 'resource curse' thesis by Basedau (2005), Brunnschweller and Bulte (2008), Rosser (2006) and Ross (2012). Under this new thesis, some authors posit that in resource dependent states, the combination of state pathologies and failures along with the poor economic performance creates situations under which conflicts are almost inevitable, while other authors like Klare (2011), Homer-Dixon (1999), Baechler 1998 opine that global or local scarcity of strategic resources make internal instability or inter-state conflict and destabilization more likely. Resource curse however is seen to condemn the states to poor governance which eventually results in civil wars over resources, contesting the state's power and means of resource control, whether territorial or non-territorial.

In Paul Collier's book, 'The Bottom Billion' (2007), he argues that most of the world's billion chronically poor live in 58 countries most of which are in Africa. He continued that these nations are



known for lack of economic growth and civil conflicts, and are caught in a number of traps, one of which is the civil war trap, which he posits are expensive costing an average of \$64 billion and having affected about 73% of the world's poor at one time or the other. Another trap he discusses is the natural resource trap, which occurs when resource wealth or dependency turns sour. Collier posited that he had identified a relationship between resource wealth, poor economic performance, poor governance and the likelihood of civil conflicts, which eventually results in resource wealth, originally viewed as a comparative advantage, turning out to be a curse. Collier further opined that possession of large quantities of oil by states creates big patronage, which according to him results in 'the survival of the fittest'. This situation occurs as a result of oil wealth which reduces political constraints and reduces the need to tax, and evolves the democracy in the state to a dysfunctional one focused on economic development. He explains that this situation occurs more readily in low income states that are economically diverse; this situation along with the existence of the survival of the fittest under oil dispensations and other natural resources creates a breeding ground for resource predation and the economy of rebellion and civil wars.

Collier (2007) also advanced the theory of greed over grievance theory, when he posited that rebellions have less to do with rebel leader's opinions on liberation, justice and equity which they put forward as their political projects; he believes that the agenda of the rebel leaders has more to do with organized crime, shadow states, mafia connections and the facility by which the political class loots the resources. He contends that oil wealth results in a flawed democracy with delusional political bodies, criminals pretending to be freedom fighters and wealthy patrons misappropriating funds, all leading to conflicts, civil wars and eventually making the people 15% poorer.

This approach has however been criticized as though it gives an apt description of the situation in many resource dependent states, it fails to incorporate the influence of the other key actors in the oil and gas industry such as the multinational oil companies and banks. Perhaps, this is why Watts and Pelusso (2014) advocate for a shift in theories from resource curse to resource complex, by placing resources on a broader landscape of institutions, actors, agents and processes including legitimacy, authority and rule. They emphasize the importance of exploring the links between production areas and downstream sites of surplus accumulation and physical transformation, and identified the key players in the oil industry as the international and national oil companies, the oil servicing companies, the massive oil critical



infrastructures, the apparatuses of the oil based states, the engineering companies, financial groups, shadow economies, nongovernmental organizations, monitoring agencies, corporate social responsibility groups, research institutes, lobbyists, landscape of oil consumption, oil communities, military and paramilitary groups.

## **B. Environmentalism of the poor**

The theory of environmentalism of the poor was described by Narain (2015) in an article in Business standard, when she posited among other things that the local communities are the forefront of the environmental movement in India. To these communities, Narain argues that the environment is not a matter of luxury but of survival, as mining of the land and the cutting of trees lead to the drying up of already scarce water resources and results in their losing more grazing grounds and agricultural fields. She continued that even though they are aware of their poverty, they still insist that what for the nation can be termed development is only serving to make them poorer. This commentator posits that state actors should always listen to the voices of the poor, and the contention of these poor people should not be dismissed as anti-growth sentiments (Narain 2010).

By implication, the theory, environmentalism of the poor, posits that the best champions for the environment are the poor who depend on the environment directly for sustenance, as the harnessing of natural resources and the harmful effects that comes with it affect them more directly, therefore they can better understand the best ways to treat the environment while harnessing the natural resources. The theory also points out that actions that can be deemed as promoting development for the more wealthy class of the society can lead to impoverishment and suffering for the poor. Hence, in order to achieve well rounded development, stakeholders should see the idea of development as subjective, and the opinions and plights of the poor must be factored into development plans.

The environmentalism of the poor is based on the tenets of social justice, particularly claims to recognition and participation and is based on the belief that the fights for human rights and the environment are inseparable (Schlosberg 2007). Martinez-Alier (2013) is one of the key contributors to the development of this theory through his research; he posits that the environmentalism of the poor relates to actions taken when concerns are raised about the environment, in situations where the environment is a direct source of livelihood. He argues further that this theory is reinforced in other



values such as defence of indigenous territorial rights and enforcement of the sacredness of some natural elements.

Martinez-Alier (2013) divides the causes of the environmental conflicts into two major reasons; he opines that the first reason is the growth in population, which has resulted in the continuously increasing demand for energy to sustain the continuously increasing human population. He believes that the social metabolism of industries is the second cause of environmental conflicts; this he posits is as a result of the inability of industries to recycle energy.

Moore (2000) takes Martinez-Alier's arguments further by specifying that because fossil fuels could be used only once, new supplies always have to be obtained from "commodity frontiers". By implication, this ensures that the rate of natural resource extraction is continuously increasing and, if appropriate care is not taken, the negative impacts of these activities would also exponentially increase working more hardship on the poor in the region who depend on the environment directly for sustenance.

Another key principle under this theory can be identified in the arguments of Lawrence Summers, the chief economist of the World Bank, in 1992, when he posited that from an economic viewpoint, industries that are responsible for pollution should be situated in low income areas, because the costs of morbidity and mortality would be lower than in rich areas (Moore 2000). This view represents the uneven distribution of the cost and benefits of natural resource exploitation between the rich and the poor. While the rich consume large quantities of imported energy and materials producing an increasing amount of waste, many of the effects are exported to the regions inhabited by the poor. Even more commonly particularly in developing nations, raw materials are transported away from the localities they are extracted into the urban centres, where they are processed and utilized, making the wealthy occupants of the urban areas have better access to means of livelihood, riches and comfort while the poor indigenes of the rural areas where the resources are derived are left to deal with the pollution and impoverishment resulting from the exploration processes.

The agitation of the poor against the abuse of their environment is usually carried out using the weapons of the weak, examples of which are dialogue, direct confrontation, blockades, riots and protests, ranging from local to international involvement (Swyngedouw 1997). These agitations usually result in the establishment of new institutions and networks to facilitate and organize their struggles, as





can be seen in the establishment of Oilwatch in 1995, a network established to deal with issues of biodiversity, pollution, deforestation, protection of indigenous territorial rights and global climate change, as a response to the protests by indigenes of local communities that had been ravaged by the harmful effects of natural resource exploration in Amazonia of Ecuador, and the Ogoni and Ijaw peoples in the Niger-Delta (Oilwatch 2011). These institutions and networks, born out of environmentalism of the poor, serve as a link between local movements and wider global issues.

The argument for environmental protection effected by the poor under this theory can be applied through different approaches, one of which is through economic valuation, which can be seen when indigenes demand for monetary compensation or damages for their sufferings. Another approach is through the insistence on the enforcement of their rights through either territorial or fundamental human rights (Martinez-Alier 2013).

On the global scene, environmentalism of the poor forms part of the environmental justice movement. It can be found in the notions of ecological trade and ecological debt. This is made apparent in situations where relatively poor countries are forced to sell their raw materials at unsustainable rates with prices that do not include compensation for local or global externalities or in situations where rich countries make use of huge environmental spaces without making payments or even recognizing other peoples entitlements to these services.

### **3. Conflict in the Niger-Delta**

Major resource conflicts arose in the Niger Delta region in the 1980s when Nigeria had become almost totally dependent on petroleum and at a point that petroleum resources were responsible for generating 25% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Terminski 2011). The dependence on the oil and gas sector forced a huge number of families to abandon their traditional agricultural practices as the reduction in the export of agricultural commodities was making the market for agricultural produce dwindle drastically. As a result of this though, a large number of skilled Nigerians who were employed in the sector were well paid and growing in wealth. However, the masses particularly those based in the Niger-Delta were sinking deeper into poverty, as not only were they affected by the reduced market for agrarian products, but also their sources of livelihood like fishing and farming were steadily being destroyed as a result of environmental pollution and degradation arising from the extraction of oil from



their localities. This led to a situation where both poverty and urbanization were on the rise, with oil towns such as Port Harcourt growing quickly, but with the high prevalence of corruption, slow economic growth and a rise in unemployment. The majority of the people in the Niger Delta region lived in abject poverty.

## A. The Ogoni Elders

The conflict in the Niger-Delta intensified in the early 1990s due to growing tensions between foreign oil corporations and a number of Niger-Delta minority groups such as the Ogoni and the Ijaw who felt exploited by the companies and the Nigerian government. This conflict originally stemmed from tensions that could be traced to 1957, a year after the discovery of Nigeria's first commercial petroleum deposit. During this period, the Ogoni people, a minority ethnic group in Nigeria with a population of about half a million people in a region that covers about 1,050 km<sup>2</sup> in the southeast of the Niger-Delta basin, were being forcefully evacuated from their homes by the government, so as to allow the oil companies have access to the oil fields in their communities, while offering them paltry sums of money in compensation. This situation worsened in 1979 when the then Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria alongside the Land Use Act vested the state governments with the ownership of all lands within its their territories, and also added that all compensation for land would be based on the value of the crops on the land at the time of acquisition, not on the value of the land itself. By implication, the state government usually in collaboration with the Federal government were now empowered to allocate lands to oil companies as they deemed fit (Human Rights Watch 1999). The tensions grew in the 1970s and the 1980s when the government in several instances failed to keep their promises to provide special benefits to the people in the region for the hardships they were suffering. With their environmental, social and economic states rapidly deteriorating, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was formed in 1992 by Ken Saro-Wiwa, an Ogoni activist.

MOSOP was formed to be the major campaigning organization representing the Ogoni people in their struggle for ethnic and environmental rights. The targets of the campaigns were usually the Nigerian government and Royal Dutch Shell. By December 1992, the conflicts between MOSOP and the Federal government alongside the multinational oil companies had escalated considerably. Both parties had begun to resort to violence, eventually leading to MOSOP issuing an ultimatum to the oil companies





(Shell, Chevron, and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation) demanding \$10 billion in accumulated royalties, damages and compensation, and "immediate stoppage of environmental degradation", and negotiations for mutual agreement on all future drilling. MOSOP threatened that if this was not complied with, they would embark on mass action to disrupt the operations of the oil companies (Nigerian Muse).

The government responded to MOSOP's ultimatum by banning public gatherings and declaring disturbances of oil production as acts of treason. Oil extraction from the territory had slowed to a trickle of 10,000 barrels per day (1,600 m<sup>3</sup>/d), which amounted to 0.5% of the national total at the point, as a result of the unrest in the region. By May 1994, military repression had escalated considerably. On 21 May, mobile policemen and soldiers attacked many Ogoni villages and by the end of the fourth day, Ogoni chiefs had been brutally murdered. Although Ken Saro Wiwa had been denied entry into Ogoniland on that day, he was arrested and detained in connection with the killings. The occupying forces, while claiming to search for culprits responsible for the Ogoni killings raided 27 villages, resulting in the death of 2,000 Ogoni people and the displacement of 80,000-100,000. More than 2,000 Ogoni people were forced to leave Ogoniland, escaping to neighbouring jurisdictions (Terminski 2011). Amnesty International described this crisis as deliberate terrorism.

By this time, the environment in Ogoni communities has been terribly degraded. As Barbara P. Thomas-Slayter (2003) noted:

Oil exploration by international oil companies, especially Shell, has turned the Ogoni homeland in Nigeria into a wasteland of pollution with a poisoned atmosphere and widespread devastation caused by acid rain, oil spillages, and oil blowouts. Lands, stream, and creeks are totally and continually polluted, the atmosphere has been poisoned, charged at it is with hydrocarbon, vapors, methane, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and soot emitted by gas ...

In May 1994, nine of the key MOSOP members including Ken Saro-Wiwa were arrested and accused of incitement to murder the four Ogoni elders. Although they denied all the charges, they were imprisoned for over a year before they were eventually found guilty and sentenced to death by a specially convened tribunal selected by the late General Sani Abacha, the then military head of state of



Nigeria. The activists were denied the due process of the law, and on 10 November 1995 were hanged by the Nigerian state (Thomas-Slayter 2009). The deaths of the Ogoni nine resulted in both international and national uproar, by groups such as the Commonwealth of Nations which suspended Nigerias membership, the United States, the United Kingdoms and the European Union who all imposed sanctions, none of which were on petroleum. In 2001, Greenpeace (2001) reported that

two witnesses that accused them [Saro-Wiwa and the other activists] later admitted that Shell and the military had bribed them with promises of money and jobs at Shell. Shell admitted having given money to the Nigerian military, who brutally tried to silence the voices which claimed justice

## **B. The Ijaw Youths**

Another key group in the history of the conflicts in the Niger-Delta was the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC), an organization formed by youths from the Ijaw tribe, a minority ethnic group indigenous to the Niger-Delta, to challenge control over their homeland and their livelihoods from the oil companies. In 1998, they issued the Kaiama Declaration, which called for oil companies to suspend operations and withdraw from Ijaw territory. They pledged to struggle peacefully for freedom, self-determination and ecological justice. They called their direct action campaign operation for climate change entitled “Operation Climate Change”, and it begun on December 1998. On 30 December 1998, while two thousand youths processed through Yenegoa, the armed forces opened fire on them killing at least 3 protesters and arresting 25 more. A dusk to dawn curfew was imposed and all forms of meetings were banned. However, although they continuously suffered attacks from the military which resulted in several casualties, Operation Climate Change continued and disruptions of Nigerian oil supplies continued through 1999 (Obi 2009).

## **C. The Current Republic**

Nigeria returned to civil rule in 1999. There were many expectations on the measures that the new civilian government would take to address the problems of the Niger Delta. On 5 June 2000, President Olusegun Obasanjo established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to develop the



Niger-Delta by focusing on the development of social and physical infrastructure, and ecological and environmental remediation and human development. The purpose of this move was to solve the issues responsible for the conflicts in the region. However, the NDDC was largely unsuccessful in curbing the violence in the region, and has been subject to political influences and disruptions.

The upheavals that this paper has discussed eventually led to the militarization of the Niger-Delta. These paramilitary groups were majorly funded by local and state officials who believed they could wield these paramilitary groups to enforce their own political agenda. Before 2003, the majority of the regional violence was concentrated in Warri; however after the merger of the two largest military groups in the region, the Niger-Delta Volunteer Force (NDPVF) under Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) under Ateke Tom, both groups majorly comprising of Ijaws, the conflict became focused in Port Harcourt and outlying towns. Mujahid Dokubo-Asari is a former president of the Ijaw Youth Council, and under his leadership the aim of the NDPFV is to attempt to control the oil and gas resources in the region through bunkering. In June 2004, the situation escalated to the point where police, army and navy forces had to be brought to occupy Port Harcourt. The forces, rather than reduce the violence, only served to intensify it, by destroying the livelihoods of the villagers and using the conflicts as an excuse to raid homes of innocent civilians. The military was also accused of conducting air raids against villages reducing them to rubbles.

By the end of 2004, several battles had ensued over the Port Harcourt water front leading to the destruction of several settlements in the area. In August 2008, the Nigerian government launched military attacks against the militants, patrolling the waters and hunting them down, searching all civilian boats for weapons and raiding several known military hideouts (Obi *et al* 2011).

On 26 June 2009, the Nigerian government under President Umaru Musa Yar'adua announced that it would grant amnesty and an unconditional pardon to militants in the Niger-Delta, provided they surrender their weapons to the government in exchange for training and rehabilitation (BBC 2009). This began the era of uneasy peace that Nigeria is in now, as there are pockets of violence that erupt on a daily basis. Kidnaps in this region are still rampant, for example on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2014, two Pakistani construction workers and one Indian construction worker were kidnapped in Emakalakala town in Bayelsa state (Reuters 2014). Also by October 2012, Nigeria experienced a large increase in piracy off its coast. By early 2013, the country became the second most pirated nation in Africa next to



Somalia. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta is thought to be behind most of the attacks. Since October 2012, MEND has hijacked 12 ships, kidnapped 33 sailors, and killed 4 oil workers (Reuters 2014).

#### **4. Environmentalism of the Poor, Resource Violence and the Niger-Delta Crisis**

The principles discussed by the proponents of the theories of environmentalism of the poor and resource violence are very closely related to the situations surrounding the conflicts in the Niger-Delta. The Niger-Delta situation supports the claims of Narain in her article in Business standard, as the major champions for the environmental protection in the region are the poor people whose livelihoods are directly affected by the effects of environmental pollution. Although the oil and gas sector in Nigeria is helping generate funds for the nation and serves as a source of wealth and enrichment for the wealthy minority in Nigeria, it has been a source of impoverishment for the Nigerian masses particularly those based in the Niger-Delta region in Nigeria, as it is responsible for the death of their means of livelihood such as fishing and agriculture.

The main arguments of the earlier environmental protection groups formed in the Niger-Delta such as MOSOP and the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC) were based on claims for recognition as occupiers and owners of the land whose interests were to be protected and considered before oil exploration could be continued in the region. The leader of the MOSOP, Ken Saro-Wiwa, insisted that the right to a healthy environment was a fundamental right his people were entitled to, as every act of pollution against the environment directly affected the lives of the indigenes of the region. This is similar to the position held by the IYF. This situation was further aggravated that few of the benefits from the oil exploration trickled down to the indigenes of the region, as the benefits were mostly enjoyed by the wealthy educated professionals in the oil industry and the corrupt politicians and military leaders.

It should also be noted that before the situation escalated to full scale guerrilla warfare, most of the confrontations against the abuse of the environment were carried out using the weapons of the weak, like the IYF's protests and riots. One of the achievements of the struggles of the MOSOP was the establishment of the Oilwatch which was established partly as a result of their struggles (Reuters 2014).

It is important to note that the environmentalists approached their struggles from both economic valuation as can be seen in MOSOP's demand for \$10 billion in accumulated royalties, damages and



compensation, and the insistence on the enforcement of fundamental and territorial rights, as can be seen in the NDPFV insisting that they had territorial rights over the oil in their regions and attempting to control the oil and gas resources in the region through bunkering.

Under the theory of resource violence, it is obvious that the oil and gas reserves are the root cause of the complexes of wealth and violence that exist in the Niger-Delta region. Also like Rostow (1960) observed, the government of Nigeria captured rents from the oil and gas sector in Nigeria by vesting itself with the ownership over all land and natural resources in Nigeria under the 1979 constitution and the Land Use Act, resulting in an overly powerful centralized government with close ties to States and multinational oil companies who paid heavy bribes to the government for access to lands containing oil, leading to the prevalence of corruption, lack of transparency and poor economic development in Nigeria. This resulted in Nigeria getting trapped in the 'paradox of plenty' as defined by Karl (1997).

One should note, however, that though Collier's (2007) descriptions of the resource curse applies to the Niger-Delta situation, it fails to effectively cover all the key actors in the Niger-Delta situation, particularly the involvements of the multinational oil companies, who are key players in the continued instability in the region. An example of this can be seen in the Greenpeace report in 2001 two witnesses claimed to have been bribed by shell to falsely testify against Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other members of the Ogoni nine, with promises of money and jobs at shell. Shell also admitted to having given money to the Nigerian military to silence the voices which claimed justice.

Also, it should be pointed out that though the violence in the Niger-Delta has been taken over by shady characters whose motives are questionable and can fall under the greed over grievance theory, it was not always so. As seen from the history behind the conflict in the Niger-Delta region, the original champions of the environment in the region such as the MOSOP and the IYF had altruistic intentions and were interested in the welfare of the people. It is therefore safe to say that the theory that most successfully fits the Niger-Delta situation under the theories of resource violence is the resource complex which is broad enough to cover most of the issues responsible for the conflict in the Niger-Delta, including the principal actors and institutions responsible for its continued existence.



## 5. Conclusion

As shown by the various failed attempts by the Nigerian government to curb the violence in the Niger-Delta, the issues resulting in the conflict are very complex and require solutions that are tailor-made for the region. Since the theories of environmentalism of the poor and the resource complex may be able to successfully explain the reasons for the existence of the conflicts in this region, it is advisable that potential solution policies should embrace these theories. That is to say such policies should take into account the opinions of the indigenes of this region. This gesture may serve two main purposes: solving the specific problems of the Niger-Delta and its people, and granting legitimacy to whatever solution policies proffer.

Policies for addressing the problems of the Niger Delta should also take into account every key institution and actor responsible for the violence in order to ensure that they do not continue to undermine the restorative efforts made by state and non-state actors. Steps should be taken to protect the traditional means of livelihood of the indigenes of this region so as to mitigate the effects of oil and gas exploration. The government should establish a framework where these indigenes can table their grievances on nonviolent platforms so as to help the region break free from the cycles of violence it has been plagued with. This paper has revealed that if the government should shift the focus from their battle with the militants in their bid to end the conflicts in the region to a strategy that includes a higher involvement of the indigenes in the decision making process in the oil and gas development in their local environments including a better scheme for the distribution of the profit derived from oil and gas extraction in the region, the government would achieve more success in curbing the conflicts in the region than they have achieved in the past.

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