Full Length Research Paper

Poverty in the Niger Delta. Implications for human security

Christian Akani

Political Science Department, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Rivers State.

E-mail: christian.akani@yahoo.com

Accepted 30 August 2013

For the past five decades, unimaginable petrodollar has accrued to Nigeria through the exploitation of oil and gas. Undoubtedly; this to a large extent has emboldened the economic profile of the country, especially in the 1970’s when it was described as a boom. It was this high economic pedestal that propelled the country to become an important continental player even in the West African sub-region. More important is the emergence of a nouveaux riche whose claim to affluence is traceable to emphatic link with the oil and gas industry. Regrettably, the region where this wealth is derived is wallowing in ash-mouthed poverty. As the Sir Henry Willink Commission of 1958 declared, it is ‘backward, neglected and poor’. Majority of the people that inhabit the place are not only existing below the bread line level, but denied of life- saving amenities. This paradox is an obvious reflection of official misgovernance, ‘confusion of Agendas’ and leadership dysfunctionalism. The focus of this paper, therefore is to demonstrate that the lingering poverty in the Niger Delta region has greatly engendered a drastic decline in the human security of the people. The aftermath is the grim struggle for survival, erosion of ethical standards and Juvenal delinquency. With analytical method which include a review of relevant literature on the Niger Delta including official findings and statements, the paper discovered that there is a discernable nexus between the poverty in the region and lack of human security. The paper concludes by suggesting that the Hobbesian existence in the region can only be mitigated with a conscious National Policy by officialdom to reduce the incidence of poverty, ensure an accountable governance, and herald an ethical leadership. This is the panacea for peace and human development in the troubled Delta.

Keywords: Niger Delta, Human security, Political Economy.

INTRODUCTION

For the past five decades, Nigeria often seen as the ‘demographic giant’ of the World’s fastest growing region ... (Sajimi, 2011) has witnessed an embarrassing leadership myopia, and unable to fulfill the dreams of its founding fathers. This is most worrisome considering the fact that it has unrivaled mineral endowment that can place it on the pedestal with the developed nations. The exploitation of oil and gas which commenced in the mid 1950s emboldened the economic profile of the country in the 1970s. The attendant economic boom of the time almost made the country a Mecca of some sorts. Sadly, by the 1980s the fabulous and fantastic wealth which exposed the economy to an avalanche of petrodollars was consciously and systematically drained into the private pockets of the custodians of State Power. The aftermath is that Nigeria which was reputed to be the fountain peak for the redemption of the Black race is now wallowing in ash-mouthed poverty, afflicted with preventable diseases and passing through series of motion without sustainable progress and possibilities. Most disturbing is the fact that the region where this wealth is derived is allowed to be a waste land with
skimpy official attention. It is awful to note that the Niger Delta (ND) region has remained in the 21st century the way, the Sir Henry Willink commission of 1958 described it as ‘backward, neglected and poor’.

The thrust of this paper, therefore, is to probe why the situation persists in spite of the harvest of protest and demands. It would also explain the implication of this reality for human security.

**METHODOLOGY**

In accomplishing this task, we shall use the analytical method. This means that we shall examine the relevant literature on the ND, magazines, periodicals and even official gazette and pronouncements so that we can have an objective assessment and analysis of the matter.

**Theoretical frame work**

Many schools have interpreted the ND crises based on subjective and sectional optic which have resulted to warped solutions.

In most cases they have compounded the problems and paved way for ethnic jingoists and opportunities to have access to the commonwealth.

The limitations of these attempts have made the theory of class inevitable . Derived from the Marxian political economy, it is firmly anchored on dialectics. It presupposes that ‘all things are limited and changing’ (Novack, 2007). Because human beings must first of all eat, drink, shelter and cloth themselves before they can turn their attention to politics, science, art or religion…. (Novack, 2007), they enter into production relations. It is the social relations of production that determine who owns what, appropriates surplus and who is exploited. Marx noted that those who own the means of production obviously determine the culture of appropriation, laws and aesthetics, Class becomes ‘a dynamic tool of change’ (Imaogeme 1989) determined by the control of means of production.

For Lenin ‘classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production … (Ekekwe, 1986). Classes emerged in a society owing to division of labour at the moment when private ownership of the means of production became a reality (Yormakova and Ratinikov, 1956). The Nigerian Social Classes were nurtured in the womb of colonialism, and this is why Nzimiro posited that … the theory of social classes exist in Nigeria, that each social class played particular roles in the economic and political system’s (in the country) (Nzimiro, 1984).

In this study the Nigerian ruling class refers to those who determine the political fate of the country, those who inherited political power from the departing colonialists and has continued to reproduce themselves in all facets of the Nigerian socio-political landscape --military, economy and business. The beauty of this theory is that it will transcend the issues of ethnic sensibilities and sectional bias for an objective, valid and scientific ‘explanation of the historical evolution of poverty in the ND and how it can be surmounted. As a Marxist approach its holistic focus has been adjudged as…the most effective methodological tool in modern social science (Nzimiro, 1984).

**Niger Delta and the Nigerian State.**


Before we delve into the study, it would be pertinent to have an overview of the place that has catapulted the economy to an enviable pinnacle. ND is one of the deltas of the world. It is located at the Southern most part of Nigeria in the South-South geopolitical region. There are over 3,000 human settlements covering an area of 70,000 sq*km. It lies within the lower River Niger especially where the River splits into its major tributaries, River Nun and Escravos. From the Benin Basin in the west it goes up to Agbor in the North and then to Imo River (Ozo-Eson and Ukiwo, 2001). According to Akai, The Niger Delta comprises of about 1,600 communities making up nine States in all with 27 Senatorial zones and 18 Local Government Areas.

It is the World’s Second largest wetland, which is made up of mangrove swamps and low lying alluvial plants at the end of the Niger River, and of the great tributaries of Sub-Saharan Africa making it an incredible fertile region (Akai, 2010).

ND is home to multietnic groups such as Ikwerre, Ogoni, Ijaw, Ogba, Ahoada, Urhobo and Itsikiri, with a population of more than 31 million people. Most importantly, it is naturally endowed with more than 36 billion barrels of reserve and 187 cubic trillion feet (ctf) of natural gas. Since 1956 when oil was struck in commercial quantity in Oloibiri (Bayelsa State) and 1958 when the first shipment of oil took place, the country has been awash with unimaginable petro-wealth. The discovery of oil and the subsequent boom entrenched a mono-economic foundation in the country. It surpassed the contribution of other products and gradually became an indispensable determinant in the economic life of the country.

In 1929, export production accounted for about 57% of Nigeria’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Oil palm
products alone accounted for between 85% and 90% of the total volume of exports during the same period (Anyanwuee, et al (1997). Unfortunately, all that became history when oil was discovered.

In 1961 Oil contributed only 2.7 percent of total export earnings, while non-oil exports accounted for 93.3 percent. But the share of oil rose to 92.6 percent in 1975 and 96.1 percent in 1980, and the share of non-oil export fell to 7.4 percent in 1975 and to 3.9 percent in 1980 (Ake, 2001). This development has made the region the hub of myriad oil-related activities, as more than 11 oil companies operating in 159 oil fields (Guardian, 2006), Crisis cross the area with their heavy equipment, pipelines, vehicular and human movement.

From 0.2 million in 1958, the country’s export earning soared to N 3,1234 million in 1980. It is estimated that between 1990 – 1993, Nigeria got about $99.3 billion and between 1965 -2000, the sum of $300 billion was realized from the sale of oil (Akani, 2004). This economic windfall must have prompted Adebayo to declare that Oil revenue also substantially improved Nigeria’s balance of payments position by not only reducing the deficit but with actually wiping out, replacing deficit with surplus that reached N3,056m in 1974. The country’s reserve assets also showed marked improvement from N150m in 1970, the reserve expanded to N3,77b in 1975 (Adebayo, 1988).

Furthermore, from 1999 to 2007, the country realized the sum of N16trillion from the sale of oil. In a recent report by the African Development Bank (ADB), it noted that Nigeria’s total earnings from crude oil was $600 billion (N84 trillion) in the past 45years. This has been corroborated by the 2009 report of the Amnesty International (AI). This clearly shows that Nigeria immensely benefited from the huge amount of $606b member countries of Organization of Petroleum countries (OPEC) realized from oil between 2000-2002 (OPEC Revenue fact sheets June 2003).

In accordance with the agreed revenue sharing formula, between 1999 – 2007 some of the ND States got a big chunk of money from the consolidated fund. For instance, within the period under review Delta and Rivers States received N542 billion and N622billion respectively. Interestingly, within this period over N3trillion flowed from the Federal Account to the Niger Delta. Seventy percent of this went to the State Governments, 22 percent to Local Government and eight percent to NDDC. From available data what NDDC did with its eight percent is more visible than that was done with 92 percent between the States and Local Governments (Aghemelo and Ibhassebor, 2011).

It is sad to note that the management of this wealth by the Nigerian State left much to be desired. This has engendered a trail of tears and rising discontent within the region. The reality is that there is an equivalent proportion of the amount of wealth siphoned from the region to the expansion of the ranks of the poor. This reason for this contradiction is the focus of the next section.

The Nigerian state and oil

It has become indubitable that the Nigerian State is a colonial contraption to achieve an imperial agenda. The manifestation of this agenda commenced in 1851 when Lagos was bombarded under the pretext of stopping slave trade, and in 1861 the city was annexed as a crown settlement. A crown colony was a territory which had been annexed by the British crown. Thus, it formed part of the dominions of the crown, and its inhabitants were British Subjects. As it was part of the dominions of the crown, it was directly administered by the British Government (Okafor, 1981). Colonial incursion into Africa (Nigeria) was not precipitated by a desire‘… to deliver a message of emancipation through civilization’ (Bayart, 2010). But a conscious effort to satisfy the economic demands of European political economy. In fulfillment of this economic demand, the colonial State was overtly interventionist, administratively disorganized, disoriented and disjointed pre-colonial social and political formations. By the time Africa gained political independence in the 1960s, it had nurtured a nascent bourgeoisie that took over the baton of ruler ship. The new nation states was given a name, a flag and a national anthem, and then handed over to a select group of western-educated elites, most of whom were sympathetic to colonial administration, whether they had been groomed for leadership by them or imprisoned or exiled by them (Maathai, 2009). This nascent bourgeois class became the new African elite.

Many scholars like Rodney (1972; Ake (1978); Fanon (1967): Akani (2010): Maathai (2009) have extensively written on the colonial subjugation of African Political Economy. But suffice it to say that the contact between Africa and Europe from the fifteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries did not ensure a robust legacy. In Nigeria for instance, all the judicial, economic and political programmes of the colonial state ranging from imposition of cash crop economy, the 1906 amalgamation of the colony of Lagos and Southern protectorate, the 1914 amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates and the colony of Lagos, the constitutional conferences of 1953 – 1958 and eventual independence were part of the stratagem to entrap the post colonial state into the international capitalist cocoon. This is the ‘imperialist World order’ which’…. Operates on the primacy of the endless accumulation of capital, through the eventual commodification of everything (Egbon, 2011).

By the time the country was politically liberated on October 1, 1960 it was apparent that the Nigerian State has become a peripheral partner within the world economic order. It was neither in control of its economic fortune nor possess the political will to take independent
action. This economic weakness was aggravated by the crop of rulers who became the custodians of state power. They were obviously unprepared to overcome the challenges of nation-building, completely divided and suspicious of one another. As a class which owed its relevance to politics they decided to use the state to consolidate their political and economic foundation. Therefore, the state assumed an economic symbol. This explains the cantankerous nature of political struggle, and why leadership often degenerated into demagoguery.

In this political milieu, dictatorship becomes a near alternative.

Although there were flashes of leadership excellence, they were not harnessed for a united Nigeria destined to cater for the welfare of its people. Consequently, the country suffered from a leadership deficit, became a haven for ethnic jingoists who use ‘…all sorts of ethnic and counter ethnic associations and preferred to be using them to defend the interest of the people. They exhibit a criminal fixation in the capture of raw power by all means necessary including violence…’(Ihonvbere, 2011).

The criminal fixation to capture political power reduced politics to a diabolical game. Hence right from the 1959 elections to the recent past, electoral contest has been characterized with flagrant disobedience of the rule of the game, and all kinds of malpractices. In this scenario, it is not awful for administrative mediocrity, grand corruption, obscene flouting of ill-gotten wealth and blind worship of bigness to be in vogue. As Ake posited ‘…I consider how African (Nigerian) politics has been constituted to prevent the pursuit of development and the emergence of relevant and effective development paradigms and programs (Ake, 2001).

The emphasis on politics is such that ‘political power was everything, it was not only the access to wealth but also the means, to security and the only guarantor of general well-being (Ake, 2001).

Having established their hegemony and dominance through a Hobssian political contest, the ruling class bounced on the wealth of the country and privatized it. Any political appointment at whatever level of government becomes a rare opportunity to participate in a looting spree. From councilors of Local Government Areas to Chairmen, National Assembly members, the Presidency, Ministers to top civil servants, retired army generals to serving military top brass and their cohorts are all engaged in the worship of materialism. The list cannot be exhausted. For instance, while General Ibrahim Babangida is yet to account for the $12.4billion from the oil windfall of 1991, within four years the 469 National Assembly members will earn the sum of N338.6 billion (The Sun Newspaper, June 3,2011). In fact, a Nigerian senator earns three times more than the President of the United states of America (USA), President Barrack Obama.

According to the 2009 world report of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on Nigeria, ‘government corruption and mismanagement robbed Nigerians of their rights to health and education (Akpotor, et al, 2010). This was made possible because of the malevolently coercive character of the Nigerian State which has installed a siege mentality on the people. Today, the locus of power and affluence is oil. With power there is no impossibility in your lexicon as justice is always in your interest. Obi succinctly put it in this manner.

Therefore, and the control of the oil patrimony is the ultimate prize in Nigerian politics for the capture of oil power in Nigeria is the equivalent of a ‘Midas touch’ of immense proportion, which no one would willingly give up… (Obi, 2002).

The profitability of corruption and hubris of raw power have strengthened the grip of the ruling class on the economic vein of the country. The consequence is the expansion of the rank of the poor just as Marx has averred long time ago that accumulation of wealth on one pole has led to accumulation of poverty, misery and distress on the other pole.

Poverty in the Niger Delta

Ordinarily one would have thought that the mind-boggling wealth derived from ND would have hastened its turn-around to a paradise of sorts. But today, the reverse is the case as the region displays amazing paradox, remained bywords of economic distress, pervasive corruption and poverty. This situation has pushed millions of people below the breadline level and extreme poverty.

Scholars have described the state of ND in these terms- paradox of plenty, resource curse, Dutch disease, Curse of the Nation and devil’s excrement’. Correspondingly, the Nigerian State has become a ‘contaminated elephant’ suffering from a ‘rentier syndrome’ and presided over by a cursed leadership. The picture portrayed here is that for more than five decades the amount of petro-dollars that flowed into the country has eluded its origin of extraction. Hence, the reproduction of a poverty-stricken population denied of the possibilities of human development and flourishing.

According to the 1990 World Bank report, ‘poverty is the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. It is a condition of in capacity that inhabits the fulfillment of social expectations, including lack of command over basic consumption needs’ (Adebiyi and Isiola, 2006). Poverty demeans the dignity of the human person. Portrays the victim as a social outcast, a liability to be dispensed with. Poverty induces innate tension, revulsion, despondency, social discontent and upholds a stasis.

It ‘…has an unrivalled potency to cause and generate disaffection, chaos, anarchy and exacerbates social instability which undermine democracy (Ogundiya and Baba, 2005).
The negative effect of poverty on people constrained the United Nations to name poverty as first of the eight goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to the Federal Office of Statistics (F.O.S) report in 1996, the 'incidence of poverty rose from 27.2 percent in 1980 to 42.7 percent in 1999. Almost 26 million Nigerians were core poor in 1996 and about 13 million in 1995, an indication of a rising poverty level.

As at 2003, 70 percent of the population was living below one dollar per day (Adebiyi and Isiola, 2005). Also the 1998 Human Development Report (HDR) noted Nigeria as one of the Poorest countries in the world...It ranked 54th with respect to Human Poverty Index (HPI) making it the 20th poorest country in the World (ogunbiyi and Baba, 2005).

In the ND, the poverty prevalence is growing despite its abundant resources and oil wealth. The situation has worsened since the late 1990s, to the extent that communities in the region are considered among the poorest in the country. A World Bank report in 2007 indicated that over 70 percent of the population are poor, with 35 percent living in absolute poverty (Ekpenyong et al., 2010). The 2009 report of AI shows that from 1980 - 2004, the incidence of poverty has been on the increase (See Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edo/Delta</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>Edo-33.00 Delta -4535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross River</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>41.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imo/Abia</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>Imo-27.39 Abia-22.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ondo</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>42.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers/Bayelsa</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>Rivers -29.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bayelsa 19.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The reason for this inequality is not far to seek. Zinn noted that 'the poverty of the country is such that all power and sway is got into the hands of the rich, who by extortionist advantages, having the common people in their debt, curbed and oppressed them in all manner of ways (Zinn, 1990).

This is inflamed by the seamless relationship between the Nigerian State and the multinational oil companies which allows them carryout their seismic and drilling activities without the slightest regard and respect to globally accepted environment laws. The aftermath is the reckless generation of negative noise which most often affect the hearing capacity of the people, lack of remedial attention to constant oil spill which decimate aquatic life, flora and fauna, and emission of noxious gases into the atmosphere thus increasing the rate of green house effect in the ND.

AI reports that between July 1979 – August, 2004 more than 1,100,548 million barrels of oil were spilled into the environment (AI, 2009). The Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) also reported that between 1976 and 1999, the region experienced 2,676 of oil spills (CLO, 1996). In 2010 a total of 3,203 cases were recorded, and between 1986 – 2003, more than 50,000 acres of Mangrove disappeared from the coast, largely because of oil and gas exploration as well as coastal erosions (Odoeme, 2011). Constant oil spill and erosions have drastically reduced agricultural production and incurably affected the living standard of the people. Since majority of the ND communities solely depend on the environment, their social and spiritual existence are negatively affected. It is estimated that about 50% - 68% of the active labour force are engaged in one form of agricultural activity or the other including fishing and farming (Worgu, 2003). This means that with the despoliation of the environment through oil spill and erosion, a greater number of ND people are displaced from their natural habitat and exposed to hunger. It is estimated that 10 million people in the area are destitute, with 14 million people living in poverty in the rural communities (Udonwa et al., 2004). The Warri women protest of August 26,2002 is predicated on the fact that crabs, fish, periwinkle, farmlands and even animals have been destroyed because of the unregulated activities of oil companies. According to them,

Oil pollution and gas flaring has killed all the fishes, farmers who farm the land Cannot get anything from their land any more because of gross environmental degradation. Oil spillages have destroyed their lands. As a result of these we are hungry. Our children are suffering. This gas they are flaring is causing some remembrance of us to die pre-maturely (Jike, 2010).

With a polluted environment and constant gas flaring, which is associated with carbon dioxide, sulphure hexafluoride, and methane, the region is gravely vulnerable to global warming. This is acutely compounded by poor infrastructural foundation such as basic health care, good roads, good drinking water, educational facilities and ventilated by preventable diseases like malaria, cholera and skin diseases. There is therefore, infant mortality of 120 out 1,000, child mortality of 63 out of 1,000 and under five mortality of 100 out of 1,000 (AI, 2009). The hopeless and hostile environment of ND have made survival a war of all against all. All kinds of stratagems are employed to keep moving in this 'State of nature'. Lewis posited that a culture of poverty is

An adaptive and a reaction of the poor to their marginal
Table 2. National HIV/AIDS Sentinel Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abia</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akwa Ibom</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayelsa</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross River</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edo</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imo</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ondo</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WD</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


position in a class-stratified highly individualized, capitalistic society. It represents an effort to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair which develop from the realization of the improbability of achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society (Lewis, 2003).

In the ND, this culture of poverty has manifested in various ways such as early initiation into sex for money, breakdown of family values, juvenile delinquency and crime. It is not stupendous that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is high in the region. Since the epidemic was discovered in the 1980s, a lot of efforts have been made by officials to curb the menace, but the extreme poverty in the ND has allowed it to explode, as Udonwa, et al noted that HIV/AIDS breeds poverty and poverty breeds HIV/AIDS (Udonwa et al., 2004). From 1981 – 2001 about 40 million people including children have met their death as a result of HIV/AIDS. Global estimates of people living with HIV/AIDS in 2007 was 33 million and 67% of them were in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS/WHO 2007). The constrains of poverty have thrown caution to the winds in the sexual risk –taking behaviour of the people. The reality is that ND has become an incubator for HIV/AIDS.

When oil company workers come ashore after months of separation from their families, their sexual activity among the population contributes to the spread of HIV. Likewise, three of Nigeria’s five seaports are in the Niger Delta region. Sailors spend upwards of 4 to 6 months in the Sea, back on shore they are exposed to the some sexual risks as oil company workers (Udonwa et al., 2004).

According to the National HIV/AIDS survey, HIV/AIDS prevalence in the ND from 1999 – 2003 increased from 5.5% and slightly reduced to 5.4% in 2003, while Nigeria increased from 5.3 and reduced to 4.8. (See table 2).


From the above, it may not be a hyperbole that ND is on the brink of environmental disaster. It is this unbearable condition that heralded the emergence of the militia groups. They saturated the region with small arms and light weapons (SA.L.Ws), and deepened their brutality which made life worthless and short. In all honesty, the emergence of militia groups can be linked to the rising frustration of the people, and lack of channels for redress. As the BBC monitoring Africa noted, it is a product of prolonged, unbridled, ignoble exploitation (BBC, 2004). In the next section, we shall examine the implication of this scenario on human security.

Implications for human security

Human security is not a novel concept in development studies. It was popularized by the writings of Mahbub ul Haq, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Amartyn Sen, the 1998 Nobel Prize Winner in Economics and Sadato Ogata. Simply put, human security can be defined as security for the human being. This suggests a deviation or a focus shift from the state or national security. The latter is for the protection and defense of the territorial integrity of the state. This state –centered definition has its background in the 1648 Westphalia treaty which confers the state international legal personality. While section 1 of the 1933 Montevideo Convention clearly states that ‘the state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications- a permanent population, (b) a defined territory (c) government and (d) Capacity to enter into relations with other states, and ‘section11 also states that ‘the federal state shall constitute a sole person in the eyes of international law’.

One is therefore, not amazed that the struggle to capture ‘...the use of State power, consolidation of State and seizure of state power’ (Dukor, 2003) is often contentious because it is associated with ‘authoritative allocation of values’. Control and protection of state power becomes the basis of state security. Perhaps it is the wide leverage of the state that prompted Max Weber to declare that it has a monopoly of the use of violence.

According to the 1994 UNDP report, human security is
‘freedom from fear and freedom from want’. It is unarguably people centered and geared towards the protection of the core human values. It is a process that is uncompromisingly anti-dehumanization of the human person, and abhors the stultification of human development. Human security ‘means the security of people, their physical safety, their economic and social wellbeing, respect for their dignity and worth as human beings and the protection of their human rights and fundamental freedoms’ (Akire, 2003).

Cilliers noted that human security ‘is security of the individual in his or her personal surroundings within the community, the ability of the people and communities to pursue a safe livelihood on equal terms (Cilliers, 2004:11). For Tabyshalieva, it is a contrast to state-centered security that mainly counted military power, human security opts for a more inclusive and multifaceted notion of security based on individual (Quoted in Akire, 2003). Human security therefore is the protection of the human being from all insecurity and threats that would hinder the optimization of his natural potentials, abilities and skills. It is concerned with ‘faith in tomorrow’ without hindered ‘stability of the political and economic situation’, not concerned about weapons of mass destruction, but with human life and dignity (Hai, 2008).

From our discourse thus far, we can abstract four vital components of human security. These are,
(a) People-centered
(b) Universal
(c) Interdependent
(d) Preventive

The above shows that human security is not regionally bound but has a universe application, geared toward preventing chaos in the globe and multifaceted in application, in an effort to protect the individual from the harsh realities of a complex industrial world.

It is germane to note that since the end of the WWI to the beginning of the 21st century, the globe has been inundated with inexplicable tensions, political insurgenacies and preponderance of militia uprising. Unfortunately, these have led to the butchery of millions of helpless and armless people and millions more rendered homeless and unending suffering.

Africa has had its own share of protracted conflict which devastated and soaked the continent in SALWs. The aftermath is a destruction of the prime of the continent. From 1990 – 2002, the continent recorded 6,177 casualties from 296 acts of international terrorism (Cilliers, 2004). Specifically, the internal conflict in Liberia led to the death of 250,000. The first and second genocide in Rwanda and other clandestine killings drastically depopulated the country. Between April and September 1994 between 25,000 and 45,000 people including Tutsi, were killed (Premier, 2009). The result of this unimaginable damage is increase of the number of child soldiers, in the continent, creation of... a voiceless mass of peasants only good enough to toil the earth for their masters’ (Premier, 2009), Africa is almost ‘divorced from the International system (Bayart, 2010), and the dreams of the post colonial era shattered (Maathai 2010).

The United Nations High commission on refugee noted that the cost of humanitarian Aid in Rwanda increased from $386m in 1994 to $897m in 1996 (Premier, 2009), and the World Bank also noted that resources directed by conflict away from development use are estimated at $11billion a year in central Africa and more than $800m in West Africa (Adetula, 2000). It is therefore imperative that human security should occupy a pride of place in its development estimation. This is why human security is most often seen as part and parcel of the human troika – Human Security, Human development and Human rights. The human troika is aimed at a common goal, the promotion of capacities and opportunities for enhancement of the good life for the individuals, to instill an infinite drive for excellence and fundamental freedom. From the above, we can deduce the main currents of the concept as;
(1) Respect of universal rights
(2) Accountable governance
(3) Capacity development
(4) Environmental protection.

In his Millennium Report, the former Secretary General of United Nations Kofi Anan noted that ‘Once synonymous with the defense of territory from external attack. The requirements of security today have come to embrace the promotion of and individual external value’... ‘it embraces more than absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health and ensuring that each. Individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a stop towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom from future generation to inherit a healthy natural environment. These are the interrelated building blocks of human and therefore natural security (Anan, 2000). From our discussion so far, it is pellucid that the ND has grossly suffered from unbearable human insecurity and the consequences are “…stories of personage tragedy, grief, misery, poverty ... in the shallow prosperity of our ‘affluent society’ (Zinn, 1990). In this circumstance, the implication is that for more than five decades, ND has been deprived the enjoyment of the human troika. This is a flagrant breach of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and other International Human Rights Instruments. As Kemal Davis, UNDP Administrator noted ‘freedom from poverty is a basic human right and tackling poverty should there from be addressed as a basic human right not as an act of charity (Hai, 2008). Indeed, the whole essence of poverty and the state of morass which ND finds itself due to oil exploration is a violation of section III of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which guarantees right to life, liberty and security of person; section 25
which guarantees, the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and of his family including food, clothing, housing and medical care...’ and section 26 which guarantees the right to education’.

Apart from the above, the brutality of the militia groups occasioned by their free use of SALWs has put the life of the people on the margin, and the frequent kidnapping of innocent persons for huge ransom. In a research by the Institute of Academic Freedom in Nigeria, a non-governmental organization from 2006 - 2010, more than 500 people were kidnapped with majority of these from the ND. This state of affairs is a violation of the United Nations covenant on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance. In fact section I stated that ‘no one shall be subjected to enforced disappearance; practice of enforced disappearance constitutes a crime against humanity...’

The emission of toxic gasses into the atmosphere and oil spill on the environment has almost rendered ND a wasteland. Gas flaring, a process whereby crude oil is burnt off, pollutes the Delta Rivers and

Streams, and emits some 35 million tons of carbon dioxide and 12 million tons of methane a year, ... The construction of canals and roads, largely to service the industry, has resulted in extensive environmental degradation in the region, creating stagnant ponds of water, killing forests and flooding fields. Every year the Delta is polluted by 2.3 billion cubic meters of oil... shell Petroleum Development corporation... reports that 50, 200 and 123,777 barrels of oil were spilled in 1998 and 1999 (Wamala, 2002).

Lancet, a medical journal reported that ‘direct contact with the oil (oil spill) or its vapours can cause skin rash and eye redness, while prolonged and repeated exposure at low concentration can cause nausea, dizziness, headache and somnolence (AI report, 2009). This is a violation of the Kyoto Protocol which provides that Carbon emission should be reduced ‘by 5.2% below their baseline over the 2008 to 2012 period. (Mgbouyesi, 2010).

Apart from violating the right of lawful use of their environment, the hostile condition of the region has in no small, measure reduced the free practice of their cultural heritage.

This itself is against the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Article 4 of the Declaration stated that ‘the defense of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative inseparable from the respect from human dignity...’while section II of the Declaration on human settlement, General Assembly resolution 51/177 December 16 1996 and 53/242 July 28, 1999 states that ‘we shall promote the conservation, rehabilitation, and maintenance of buildings, monuments, open spaces, landscapes, and settlement patterns of historical, cultural architectural, natural, religious and spiritual value’. The glaring lack of social amenities in the ND which has erupted into a development stasis is a violation of section II of the 1993 Vienna Declaration. The article states that the right to development should be fulfilled so as to meet equitably the developmental and environmental needs of the present and future generation. It becomes apocryphal how the ND can be part of the fulfillment train of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015.

This reality shows that the region has been consigned to perpetual doom and under development. This is a hindrance to all efforts geared towards the satisfaction of the core need of the individual, actualization of the highest level of human potentialities, ethical excellence, freedom and a robust cultural life. This trend must be urgently reversed to save the 31 million people that inhabit the region.

CONCLUSION

The ND crises have become a prominent feature in Nigeria's Socio-political discourse. This is because of its impoverished status and frustrated expectations arising from the disproportionate and skewed allocation of resources which is completely not in favour of the poor. The aftermath is an avalanche of protests and declarations expressing the deepening decadence of the region in the face of fabulous affluence.

The most worrisome part of this crises is that ‘oil and gas resources from the region provide 80 percent of government revenue and 95 percent of foreign exchange 'This is the inherent paradoxes that has come to characterize the Nigerian political economy; a political economy that has been structurally damaged and deformed by systemic corruption financed by oil... (Okowa, 2005). The corruption spree of the ruling class has brought’... wealth and poverty, security and insecurity and development and under development in equal measures (Ibeanu, 2008). All these drastically reduced the potential of human troika, especially human security to triumph.

A UNDP report noted that "available social development indicators in the Niger Delta point to inadequate, unavailable and poor quality infrastructure and social services, from water to telecommunications. The historical neglect of the regions development posses on steep barrier to attaining socio-economic transformation and poverty alleviation (Egbon, 2011)."

Although the Nigerian State has made efforts to address the lingering paradoxes of ND, but the result has been unimpressive and unsustainable. Right from the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) of the 1960s, to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, the result has been the same. Opening up a new channel for the enrichment of the custodians of state power. It is just laughable that in the 21st century, a region that harbours the economic well being of more than 150 million people is allowed to fallow...
and its people living in bondage. While commending the Government for the Amnesty programme, it must be noted that it is just a temporary and plastic measure which will fizzle out with time. Training a few people considered ‘devilish’ without regard to the fundamentals of ND Question may be shifting the doomsday. Militia insurgency may not and cannot be the only vital bane or hindrance to ND development. Therefore the poverty in the ND can be reduced somewhat if the following measures are taken into consideration;

(1) The Nigerian ruling class must be convinced that time has come for a holistic development of the country, particularly the ND. This commitment should go beyond official sermons and prebendal calculations. This is important because, there have been many well-intentioned official policies but the implementation has left much to be desired.

(2) Arising from the above is the kleptocratic instinct of the ruling class. It must be stated in clear terms that as long as the virus of corruption continue to flow in our national vein the rank of the poor will continue to expand. The Nigerian State must be consistent and combative in addressing the crime of corruption in all ramifications. One wonders why the billions of money pumped into the ND suddenly disappeared without any qualitative change in the environment, yet the culprits are free from the ‘ambit of justice’.

According to the former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Anan, ‘Corruption is an insidious plaque that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes equality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish’. It is against this backdrop that the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 58/4 of October 31, 2003 on Convention against Corruption, article 5(2) stated that ‘each state party shall endeavour to establish and promote effective practices aimed at the prevention of corruption’.

A commitment to tackle the menace and damage of corruption is the genesis of firm institution of human security in the ND.

(3) There should a meticulous and gradual implementation of the ND Master Plan. It would be a colossal waste of resources to allow the Plan to gather dust when it contains the blue print for the turn around of the region. If the 2008 National budget can set aside the sum of N444.6 billion and N900b in the 2012 budget for ND security, no amount can be considered high for human development.

(4) NDDC should be transparent and accountable at all times. The commission should not be a place to compensate political party faithful and cronies. The lacklustre performance of the Commission is because of the racket of contracts and unchecked corruption going on. It is not news that contracts involving huge some of money are awarded to incompetent, inexperienced and pale entrepreneurs and in turn sold in the open market to the highest bidder. In this process merit and quality of service are jettisoned.

(5) Civil society must brace up and wake the people from their slumber. The legendary docility that has come to represent the attitude of people to official matter has in a large way contributed in the arrogance of power and ostentatious lifestyle of public officers.

Therefore, civil society must be the vanguard of change through constant education, enlightenment and critical check on negative actions of the Government. This will gradually install a culture of accountability and respect to rule of law in the country.

REFERENCE


Etokidem J, Samuel I. (2004). ‘Oil Doom and Aids Boom in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria’, Institute of Child Health and Primary Care, College of Medicine, University of Lagos, Lagos.


Isola ward, Adebiyi MA (2006). ‘Poverty rate are economic conditions in nigeria. a comparison of pre and post reform periods’ in the national economic empowerment and development strategy. philosophy, opportunities and challenges, University of Lagos Press, Lagos.

Jike VT (2010). ‘Social consequences of environmental and resources of non-violent protest by women in the Warri Metropolis of Southern Nigeria, Department of Sociology and Psychology, Delta State University, Abraka.


