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EDITORIAL

Our first product this year 2013 is the Volume twenty-one Number one of Ife PsychologIA. It has twenty-five brilliant articles from around the globe. We believe that they will benefit our readers. Aristotle, opined that we are what we repeatedly do, excellence then, is not an act but a habit.

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Building

Domestic Terrorism, Official Response and the Politics of Black Gold in Niger-Delta, Nigeria

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Abstract

Modern societies are embroiled with varied levels of conflict. The type and intensity of conflict is often historically determined and the causative factors are also closely tied to the social dynamics of the global community. Many factors tend to account for modern conflict. Apart from having political, economic, and environmental causes some are precipitated by socio-cultural and human factors. One area of concern is the type of weapons and strategies employed in the furtherance of the various interests of the combatants. While few socio-cultural groups favor Ghandian strategy several others adopt violence ranging from insurrection to terrorism. It is within the purview of the weapons and strategies employed in modern conflict that this paper examines the dimension of conflict along Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. It situates this dimension within the category of home grown terrorism in order to establish its criminal burden and also uses conflict theory to explain its socio-political relevance. It finally concludes with several alleviating strategies towards solving the current imbroglio.

Keywords: Domestic, Terrorism, Conflict, Militants.

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Introduction

Conflict varies in intensity and in its consequences across major societies of the world. In the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, it appears so glaring that the environment is plagued with violence consistently nurtured by measurable sense of marginalization and acute deprivation. The dimension of conflict noticeable along several communities in this area reflects an intimate violence between the deprived inhabitants and the Nigeria state. This situation assumes a unique dimension in its manifestation to the extent that the driving force of current conflict draws strength from the structural contradictions attendant of Nigeria's socio-political arrangement (Ejibunu, 2007; Idemudia and Ite, 2006) on one hand and several other problems germane to oil exploration and resource allocation on the other hand. Another important factor that makes the conflict in this area unique is the fact that it constitutes a symbolic expression representing a social control from below (Baumgartner, 1984). It constitutes a form of social control because it remained the only option left through which the Niger-Delta people could air their grievances to the perceived elusive authority. The use of threat or violence in the case of Niger-Delta conflict is mostly perpetuated to communicate both political and economic related messages on salient issues affecting the well being of the area. The target is clearly defined and it involves the audience from whom the Niger-Delta militants seek reaction. It must be noted that Nigeria's structural environment as social field attract divers form of grievance representation and part of which is domestic terrorism experienced in the Niger-Delta.

Part of the problems engendering Nigeria's crisis can be located in continued relational distance between the rulers and the ruled on one hand and the acute inequalities existing between several aggrieved groups and their perceived adversary represented in the Nigeria state. Critical reflection help ascertain that there are degrees to violence but the one prevalent in the Niger-Delta when classified unambiguously represents a traumatic home grown terrorism. The reasons why this form of conflict is classified terrorism per excellence would be considered in the course of this paper. Niger-Delta crisis is driven by many real causes which are both environmental and economic in nature. In view of this, the paper examines major causative factors necessitating the use of extreme violence in the articulation of regional interest. It went further to examine the defining features and dimension of violence and establishes the consequences of such violence on national and

international socio-economic cooperation. It finally considers the criminal burden of prevailing violence and concludes with a far reaching conflict settlement strategies.

Conceptualization
Domestic terrorism

To understand the domesticity of terror in any given setting, an idea of what should be viewed and classify as terrorism remains crucial. Many scholars have attempted the definition of terrorism from different levels of disciplinary background. One definition that appear unique from the point of view of this paper was offered by Gurr (1989). He conceives of terrorism as the use of unexpected violence to intimidate, suppress or coerce people in pursuit of political and socio-economic objectives. Terrorism is also seen as all criminal acts directed against a state calculated or intended to create terror in the minds of particular persons or a group of persons or the general public (Duffy, 2006; Bolaji, 2010). Yinusa and Adeoye (2008) argue that terrorism involves activities such as assassination, murder, kidnapping, hostage-taking, hijacking, shoot-out with police, sabotage/vandalism, arson, biochemical attacks, exotic pollution, rail derailment, threat/hoax, extortion, armed attack, theft of nuclear materials, violation of diplomatic immunity, ambush/barricade, arms' smuggling, and theft break-in. Domestic terrorism as adapted in this paper constitutes a unilateral self help initiatives embarked upon by organized or loosely organized civilians within the local community, whose contention is driven by altruistic motives directed at a clearly defined objective and its physical impact measurable in mass violence or attacks on state or organizational infrastructures. Domestic terrorism exists in the category of violence cross-sectionally perpetuated along Niger-Delta region by a group often called militants. Although, terrorism is a controversial concept assuming variety of meanings, it involves motivated tactics such as bombing or vandalizing pipelines, hijacking, assassination, kidnapping or hostage taking done to serve wide variety of ends and ideologies including political, economic and religious purposes.

Militant: As an adjective, connotes "aggressive" and "warlike." Considering the grammatical usage of the concept, it refers to demonized, unreasonable or irrational people who are dedicated to cause that is anti-development and whose activities must of necessity be quashed. For the purpose of this paper the concept will denote people seeking justice in the face of perceived injustice.

Conflict

When considering the inherent meaning of conflict one should quickly remember that the concept is amenable to different type of usage. Basically conflict involves incompatibility of goals and it exists whenever one set of goals, need or interests disagree with other set (Akinboboye, 2002: Deutsch, 1971). Within the purview of sociology and political science, conflict refers to "struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aim of the opponent is to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals" (Coser, 1967). It entails incompatibility of what is offered by the government as in the case of Nigeria and what is expected by the aggrieved Niger-Delta militants.

Conflict is often birthed as a result of strain systematically injected into the social system with attendant consequences in deprivation, domination, extreme inequality, unfairness, poverty and human degradation. It is symbolically expressed in open confrontation or hostility. Conflict in this paper assume divers struggle, antagonism, and combat mutually entered into by Nigerian State and the Niger-Delta militants with the intention on both sides to have the ultimate control over exploration, sale and the utilization of resources accruing thereby. Conflict in this context also involve very different kind of actors represented in the 'aggrieved' acting in group of different kinds and numbers with different levels of organization and resources under clearly defined or calculated environment.

Theoretical Relevance of Terrorism in the Niger-Delta Contextual Usage

When examining the nature of conflict in the Niger-Delta region, the appropriate theoretical framework that best capture the current situation is the Neo-Marxian approach. It is within this purview that the paper considers the work of Taylor, Walton and Young. Taylor, Walton and Young (1973) facilitate the task of understanding violent related conflict in the Niger-Delta region. They argue that the key to the understanding conflict in modern age lies in the analysis of material base of any given society. It is opine that capitalist mode of production and its attendant relation of production generates and intensifies multi-dimensional inequalities measurable in accessibility to, allocation of, and consumption of resources. Taylor, Walton and Young convincingly argue that change and human liberation from shackles of domination, marginalization and other forms of injustices

can only be realized through the adoption of radical and violent transformation. Consequently, the Militant youths in the Niger-Delta area chose the option of violence for obvious reasons. Terrorism becomes a meaningful attempt to construct and develop situational conception of their material base. Terrorism in this regard is deliberate and conscious acts with both socio-economic and political motives. Target against public properties and kidnapping of expatriates involve strategies meant to bring about 'equitable distribution of oil revenue between the Nigeria state and the oil producing communities'.

From the stand-point of these theorists, terrorism is an example of people fighting back against the injustices of capitalism. Therefore, pipeline vandalization, injurious acts, hostage taking, and several other anti-social behavior constitutes a rewardable venture "helping" to change the imbalance reproduced in resource allocation and the deprivation engendered thereby. Theoretically, the violent driven change for example in the Niger-Delta will correct existing and future injustices created in oil exploration and revenue consumption. It is within this analytical frame the paper considers Niger-Delta complexities.

Establishing the Defining features of Niger-Delta Domestic Terrorism

The nature of conflict in the studied area can conveniently be classified as domestic terrorism. In this classification, violence becomes the defining feature of Niger-Delta conflict style. Conflict style involves pattern of responses or cluster of behavior that people use in conflict. Black (2004) identifies the characteristics of terrorism as including: as a unilateral form of self help, involving the use of force or violence, target the interest of the collectivity, and its victimization closely tied to social location of terrorist activity.

Analyzing Niger-Delta domestic terrorism under the purview of Black's model therefore, this form of conflict constitutes a unilateral self-help initiative systematically handled with potent aggression and aimed at liberating the region from conceived marginalization or resource domination blamed on the Nigeria state. It is also characterized by the use of force with the attempt to injure incapacitate, intimidate or hold others hostage and the deprivation of law abiding citizens the conducive atmosphere to pursue their livelihood. It targets government interest in the oil sector and functions to destabililize the current economic arrangement. . It

involves the adaptation of secretive features and a well organized citizen driven quasi warfare (Gibbs, 1994).

Militants operate underground and inflict domestic terror on victims which are most often oil workers and expatriates. As a well coordinated activity, it is usually perpetuated by disillusioned youths who attack and withdraw into creek areas. The group activity is often rewarded with not only money collected as ransoms but also with the existence of protection offered by other sympathetic factions or members of their group residing in urban centers. When compared to other types of conflicts experienced in the country both past and present, the current defining features of conflict represented in hostage taking clearly distinguishes the violence as unique. Having established the defining features of terrorism in the Niger-Delta, it is highly important to discuss the most potent and deadly form of terror currently making the round in the area. The one that had generated collective concern lately is hostage-taking.

Causative Factor and Hostage Taking in the Niger-Delta

The phenomenon of hostage taking in Niger-Delta region can be explained from three major dimensions, its causes, processes and effects. In considering the precipitating challenges and events that birthed hostage taking in the Niger-Delta region, one need to trace various developments that culminated to the formation of the militant groups on one hand and the circumstances that triggered the intensification of hostage taking on the other hand. There are three broad based variables that help explain current trend. The first is situational, the second, strategic and the third, contractual. Exploring the situational variable, unfriendliness of Niger-Delta environment brought by oil-spills and gas flaring often caused degradation to farmlands and sufficiently endangers water habitats. This situation is inhibitive to economic pursuit and invariably reduces the economic potentials of the affected people. Akpan (2010) posit that oil exploration has had far reaching negative environmental, social as well as economic impacts on the host communities. The reflexive nature of the problem generates strain often objectified in complex violence. There exists visible deprivation of opportunities and deprivation of descent living.

Considering the Strategic variable, the failure of several other grievance handling mechanism adopted by the aggrieved youths accounts for the adoption of hostage taking as a weapon of last result. The conflict have already passed several stages and methods adopted with significant failure include demonstration, issuance of

threats, pipeline vandalization, subtle bombing of public infrastructures, and lately hostage taking. It should be recorded that all forms of representation hitherto adopted were meant to get the attention of the government so as to re-visit her stand on the recurring decimal of resource control but all to no avail. The resultant attention can only be explained in the contractual variable that attended various agitations. Contractually, government efforts mostly directed at alleviating the plight of the Niger-Delta people involve low and higher responses registered at international, national and local levels respectively.

There are pragmatic attempts in the area of infrastructural development and citizens' empowerment in the affected area, but the most unfortunate thing about this is the failure of lofty ideas being translated into concrete realities. This is explicable in the contradictions inherent in Nigeria socio-political environment. The question of corruption and "unholy alliances" between oil conglomerates and Nigeria's government readily comes to mind. The problem of unaccountability both at the level of exploration and usage of oil revenue facilitate corruption at a level diametrically opposed people empowerment and infrastructural development. By implication Niger-Delta people are victim of government vices and combative networking of international capitalism. The assuredness of Nigeria's acceptance as willing partner by the beneficiaries of oil exploration, confer on the nation an avowed support even in the face of systemic annihilation of her citizens. The multi-nationals are gaining from the existing arrangement both legally and otherwise and the elongation of this is measured in official corruption and suppression of meaningful agitations. The major slogan in this regard is that of "we will deal with them no matter whose horse is goose" What mostly attest to this is the continued enlistment of brutal force by the state to address the problems of violence involving Niger-Delta militants and varied level governments. The militarization of the conflict instead of exacerbating it generates counter-reactions more violent and deadly. The use of excessive force often marshaled through the drafting of the Nigerian military to quash the militants' expressive conflict account suitably or the adoption of hostage taking as a best alternative.

Objectives and Consequences of Hostage-Taking

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Objectives and Consequences of Hostage-Taking

Hostage-taking possesses long and short term objectives intended to be achieved by those concerned. The action constitute what Thomas (1964) called the advertisement of the cause. Considering the short and long term implication of hostage-taking in the Niger-Delta region for Nigeria's future, it is glaring that in short term the militants goals are tailored towards the disruption, incapacitation and destruction of current and further exploitation of oil resources with the ultimate intention of achieving their long term objectives. Another formidable reason accounting for militants shot term objective consists of the irritative approach (hostage-taking) adopted by the group to elicit counter-reaction from government so as to put the structure and status occupiers in a tight corner or at best in bad light to enable them gain both local and international sympathy. The long term objectives involve the restoration of control explicable in ownership, manipulation and consumption of oil revenues.

Consequently, the incessant taking of expatriates' hostage engenders public curiosity and engages the discursive potentials of the independent observers. The expressive nature of this negative ends is more felt by both perpetuators, the victims, the international community and the independent observers (Christopher, 2003). For the immediate communities and others, it serves as a threat of danger and traumatic suspense because no one knows or can tell whose turn to be held incommunicado and therefore it forms warning signals to those that are likely to be the potential victims in the next round of attack. Internationally, it is unambiguous indicator to the home countries of the expatriates that their sector of corporation is generating unpalatable consequences for the host communities in which most of their drilling are domicile (Blumenthal, et al (1975).

This major goal of Niger-Delta militants calls to question the basis of Nigeria existence as a nation and forms a potent instrument of destabilization. It undermines both political and socio-economic potentials of Nigeria and constitutes not only a disservice to Nigeria but a disincentive to investment drive. Conflict environment generate explosion of violent crime and this affects investment and destroy human social capital (Bannon and Collier, 2003). It is a primitive response to the challenges of global economy and a development which must be quickly checked. If allowed to thrive and permitted to assume uncontrollable dimension its multiplier effect will cause the removal of food from the tables of average Nigerians since for now oil remains the mainstay of national existence.

Establishing the criminal burden of Hostage-Taking

The analytic framework for the establishment of criminal liability of the typology of terrorism prevalent in the Niger-Delta would necessitate the consideration of criminalization and decriminalization thesis of hostage-taking. This will involve the use of demonization and non-demonization approach to exonerate or/and to establish the culpability of violent actions often embarked upon by the militants. Demonization approach tends to underplay the genuiness of major claims which forms the basis of conflict and proceeds to paint the aggrieved as undesirable elements. On the other hand non-demonization approach involves concessionary strategy to resolution of conflict.

Critically, hostage taking can be assessed under the provisions of Nigeria's penal code and it should be noted that the quality of action clearly violates legal and political code thus making it a crime. The question one would need ask is 'at what point and when should hostage taking be classified as crime'? The answer is simple, it becomes a crime when the practice translates or conforms to the principle of market economy. It is a point when hostage taking is no longer perpetuated to secure concession from the state but become a source of income. Also it is that point when hostage taking gravitates to the level of near murder or real murder as in the case of Mr. who died in the custody of the Niger-Delta militants. Apart from the shortcoming associated with quality of acts, hostage-taking can be criminalized through the use of diversionary tactics by irresponsive government. Arrest and re-arrest of the aggrieved forms the occupation of the government and their acolytes.

Considering the decriminalization thesis of hostage taking, morally, hostage taking constitutes exonerable offence for several reasons. First and foremost it is environmentally induced and enmeshed in economic, political and may even be socio-cultural (Crenshaw, 2003). As a form of social control, it expresses a 'chronic grievance with long history and involve the use of force that is usually projected against symbolic enemy represented in the state and has its ultimate goal of overthrowing domination or oppression (Baumgartner, 1984). It is a pursuit of justice in the face of injustice. From the position of this paper it is opined that hostage taking should be devoided of criminal label since doing such may be counter-productive. In line with this view, Chomsky (2001) opines that there may be need to explore criminal procedures for finding evidence, apprehending criminals and dealing with reason for using terror to press home demands against injustice. It is pertinent that

modern states should be weary of such procedures; since it ends to aggravate retaliative approach to the existing problem. Nigeria government within this purview should adopt other result oriented strategies in resolving current socio-economic realities of Niger-Delta region. It is on this basis the paper recommends other palliative measures towards the resolution of Niger-Delta crisis.

Towards a Peaceful and Prosperous Niger-Delta Region

This section attempts the resolution of current conflict in Niger-Delta region. The first step towards the resolution of the present conflict demand a systemic or objective sorting of claims and counter-claims put forward by the stakeholders in conflict. The necessity of sorting lies in the redefinition and appreciation of what is perceived as injustice, marginalization or deprivation by the two parties since there exists a conceptual gap. There is an urgent need for the establishment of the accuracy of claims and this will require conflict analysis by an unbiased umpire.

The second stage is to establish realistic and unrealistic actions and demands of both parties. Unrealistic demands on the part of the aggrieved involve the quest for secession an idea often muted by a cross section of militant group, request for outrageous percentage of control over oil revenue and in the believe that violence will yield desired result. On the part of the state, unrealistic actions and misconceptions include the believe that power is might and that government possess the instrument of infallibility by being adamant, it may also include the notion of possessing the mandate of annihilating whenever any section of the country run counter to the interest of those in power. Government should note that it holds the mandate of responsibility to all constituent units that make up Nigerian state and the relationship of adversarialism will erode state legitimate authority to command compliance or reference from the citizens. Having established the pre-requisite, the next stage involves concrete steps towards lasting peace and these will consists of the following:

Instituting collaborative agenda: Mutual understanding must be reached on short, medium and long range doable goals that will increase the development of the affected region. Expectedly, development programmes should be well defined and address specific needs that are germane to good living and self-development. Collaborative efforts should also include the inputs of the multi-national corporations and their various subsidiaries. The oil companies should go beyond scholarship awards and strive to

provide free education at all levels to willing youths and children of the region. Education is the bedrock of social development since partially or unenlightened people are potent instrument of destabilization and disorder.

Interdependence necessitating adjustments and concession devoided of insincerity: The state must come up with a clear statement on genuine intentions to engender the empowerment of the deprived group. The channels of disbursement of support must be accessible, willing to distribute without bottleneck or conditionality and its products affordable. Those concerned must jointly agree on modalities of support mechanisms and state integrity must be maintained. The use of middlemen should be minimized and premium should be placed on feedbacks. For a lasting impact, government should explore the area of training and dissemination of skills so as to foster self-sustainability and less dependency on government or oil multinationals. There is need to review the current amnesty programme in order to address the gray areas militating against it success.

Finally, there must be a commitment to constructive conflict resolution and immediate ceasation of arrest and criminalization of those labeled militants.

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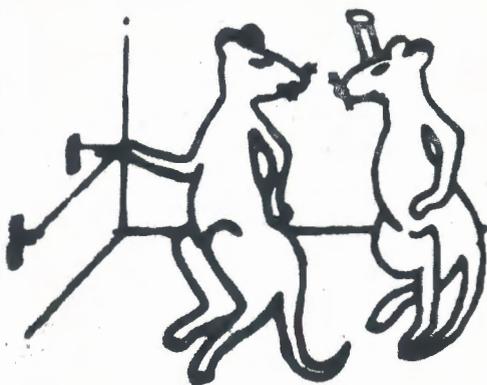
'Boy, have I got this guy conditioned!
Every time I press the bar down
he drops in a piece of food"