

The unending Niger delta crisis: an ecological perspective¹

Abstract

This study attempted a contextual definition of ecology and an explanation of the ecological perspective of the Niger Delta crisis. The study also assessed the macro or external ecological build-up that culminated in the crisis that has seemingly defied the varying cosmetic solutions that have been attempted in the region. It further identified the dimensions or attributes of the ecological climate which has not only existed, but has also endured with a strong actualized potentiality to stifle and under-develop the Niger Delta region. The study that relied on valuable secondary sources of data concluded with some useful recommendations including a well crafted, integrated, systemic and holistic ecological approach that will entail the dismantling of the existing dimensional attributes that constitute the status quo ecological climate in which the Niger Delta region is embedded.

Key words: Niger Delta, Crisis, Climate, Ecological Perspective.

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Introduction

The Niger Delta palaver which started, metamorphosed through various stages of its development, and got rooted and entrenched with the collaboration of the key actors namely: the state, multinational oil corporations and local petit bourgeoisie, has reached a crescendo such .that it can appropriately be labelled a crisis. This crisis which has its foundation or origin in the colonial dispensation has arguably been processed by the processors through the neo-colonial dispensation to the modern dispensation so much so that the same ecology or climate, yet with its notable and discernible dimensions or attributes yet exist. The dimensions which include the legal/constitutional, policy/institutional and operational does not only depict the ecological origin, process, growth and development of the Niger Delta crisis, but also portray the efficacy of the same ecological perspective as the only genuine and permanent panacea to the crisis that has become a colossal loss and an embarrassment at the national and global levels.

Ecology: A Conceptualization

Ecology or climate, whether in organizations, governmental administration or society at large connotes personality (Aldag and Brief, 2009:32). It is a set of characteristics which are relatively enduring over time, typifying an organization and distinguishing it from other organizations (Knowles, 2010:45; Forehand and Gilmer, 2010:362). Such a set of characteristics create a distinctive ecology or climate and it has the tendency or potency of influencing the attitude of its members including individuals, organizations and societies (Pritchard and Karasick, 2010:126-146; Taguirui, 2010:26-27). Ecology or climate which is a commonly experienced but abstract phenomenon and often referred to by many

expressions such as atmosphere, environment, milieu and culture, is a relatively enduring quality of the internal environment that is felt by its members, influences their behaviour and can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics of the organization, society and the like (Taguirui, 2010: 26-27). It can also be viewed as a global expression of what an organization or a society is (Schneider and Snyder 1995:3 18). Ecology or climate which can equally be conceptualized as the study of how an organization, or society or any social system relate or interface with its environment (Webb, 2007:436) consists of multiple or diverse dimensions (Campbell et al, 2007:17). Some ecologies or climates can be described as considerable, warm and supportive, while others are indifferent, cold, hostile, and competitive (Aldag and Brief, 2009:32). The supportive and warm climate is the type that encourages and protects the individual's sense of personal worth and importance (Likert, 2007:127), while an unsupportive and cold type is the defensive and manipulative one. The dimensions of ecologies or climates which are multiple include legal constitutional, institutional and operational. In every organization or society certain factors or elements exert profound influence on the existing ecology or climate that is created or constructed whether by design or accidental (Rao, 2010:489). James and Jones (2010:1098), for instance, identified five factors that influence climatic creation or construction viz: context, structure, process, environment and system values and norms. Climate, whether supportive or hostile, is critical to the legal/constitutional, institutional and operational dimensions and it can be changed, recreated or reconstructed (Gordon and Goldberg, 2009:37-44 and McClelland and Burnham, 2009:100-110).

Ecological or Climatic Perspective: An Explanation

Ecology, which is a term utilized to describe the relation between any environment or climate and its environed system, has its origin in biology

and was first used to mean the interactions between living, nonhuman species and their environments (Riggs, 1980:107; Ezeani, 2009:51). Every society and its institutions are influenced by the ecology or climate or environment which consists of multiple dimensions viz: social, political, economic, cultural, bureaucracy and the like. The ecology or climate of public administration, for example, has long been of interest to development administration scholars like Riggs (1980:107) and Gaus (1974:75) among others. According to Riggs (1980:108) ecology of administration has to do with the ways in which the environment conditions the politic-administrative process. The environment, climate or ecology of anything, may be, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, sets parameters which must be viewed as constraints that limit what can be achieved and, concurrently, as resources or strengths that may be utilized by decision makers. These parameters or dimensions are very impinging in that they either constrain or enhance the policies, activities and operations that are germane for the smooth functioning of all social systems like institutions, organizations and societies (Hellriegel and Slocum, 2010). The concern in respect of the influence of the ecology or climate on administration has given rise to the ecological approach to the study of public administration. This approach which seeks to systematically relate public administration does not exist or operate in a vacuum, for it is deeply embedded or ingrained in the various dimensions or elements that make up its environment. The norms and values of society, for example, limit the activities of public officials and the methods which they can adopt to achieve their goals (MacRae and Pitt, 2010:16). While there may exist similarity in the formal structure of the public administration system of different countries, their informal and behavioural patterns possess considerable diversities, each being conditioned by its ecology or climate. This interaction between public administration and its environment was underscored by Heady (1979:64) and Richardson and Balwin (1996:24). In Heady's (1979:64) perspective,

bureaucracies and other political and administrative institutions can be better understood if the surrounding conditions, influences and forces that shape and modify them are identified and ranked to the extent possible in order of relative importance and if the reciprocal impact of these institutions on their environment is also explored. It is thus instructive to note that, it is imperative for administrators to take cognizance of the environment in their various decisions and how the environment may be altered or, inversely, how environmental transformations that are occurring by themselves may be modified (Riggs, 1980:108). The need for administrators to comprehend the nature of and take account of the changing environment which exerts influence of various types, both beneficial that are to be utilized and detrimental that should be counteracted (Croft, 2007:9) is also indubitable. A useful approach in the ecological analysis of different social systems is "structural functionalism". Riggs (cited in Arora, 1979:106) considered this framework of analysis appropriate to his ecological orientation in the study of administrative systems for in many ways structural functionalism involves a delineation of the general social context within which administration operates. Various scholars have used the structural-functional approach in social analysis (Persons, 1954:137, Merton, 1967:38-39). In structural functionalism, social structure is considered as "any pattern of behaviour which has become a standard feature of a social system" (Riggs, 1980:20; Swingewood, 2007:187-193). In structural, functional terms, a function involves "a pattern of interdependence between two or more structures, a relationship between variables and it refers to "any consequences of a structure in so far as they affect other structures or the total system of which they are a part (Merton, 1967:60-75). In the context of the above, three dimensions or attributes of the ecology or climate of the Niger Delta region namely: legal/constitutional, institutional and operational have been identified. This three-way dimensional ecology or climate in which the Niger Delta region is situated and operates was deliberately created

and constructed during the colonial era. This climate which has endured through the neo-colonial to the modern day has been reinforced and stimulated by the collaboration of notable actors including the Nigerian state, the multinational corporations and the local bourgeoisie.

Critical Overview of the Niger Delta Crisis

As a mono-cultural nation with sole reliance on oil, gas, and ancillary derivatives, a preponderance of these resources is found in the Niger-Delta. Two of the three operating refineries in Nigeria today are located in this geopolitical zone. The oldest refinery is situated in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, whereas the other is situated in Warri, Delta State, the leading producer of oil and gas in Nigeria. The third refinery is situated in Kaduna, Kaduna State, in the geographical north of Nigeria (Jike, 2004). The bulk of the expatriate personnel in multinational oil companies live and work in the Niger-Delta, where the ubiquity of the natural resources has stemmed up the tide of petroleum exploration activities. The Niger-Delta area has often experienced one period of boom after another in alternation between several natural resources. There was the boom era associated with vigorous exploitation of agricultural cash crops such as palm oil, timber, rubber, and so on (Olatunbosun, 1975). However, the discovery of petroleum oil in Oloibiri in 1958 marked the watershed in general exploitation and mining operations in Nigeria.

Within ten years, which is on the eve of the Nigerian civil war, production had reached about 500,000 barrels a day, thus establishing Nigeria as a significant oil producer (Owoeye and Ojakorotu, 2002:179-180). The post -1956 era saw the emergence of several other multinational operators in Nigeria, including Mobil (now Mobil Exxon) in 1955, Tenneco in 1960, Gulf (which later became Chevron and Texaco (which are now merged and today known as Chevron-Texaco) in 1965 (Aturu, 1989:6; Ejumudo,

2005:124). With the full-blown oil exploration and production activities of the oil giants in the oil-bearing communities of Nigeria, several issues including environmental degradation, poverty, marginalization, resource control and outright underdevelopment of the Niger Delta region have surfaced and constituted unending sources of conflict including youth restiveness.

The most pervasive and predominant cause of environmental degradation in the Niger-Delta to date is petroleum exploration and ancillary problems of spillage. This assertion, however, does not preclude or diminish the importance of other environmental issues such as bush burning, petroleum fires, erosion of various configurations, Indiscriminate (sometimes toxic) waste disposal and excessive balkanization of land within the context of African land tenure among heirs and tenable inheritors along specific genealogies. Most of the other causes of environmental degradation pale into insignificance when pitched against the backdrop of oil exploration and the unintended consequences of spillage that have largely become a cog in the wheel of development of the Niger-Delta.

In the face of the petro-dollar dominated rich-oil wealth, Nigeria embarked on a frivolous path of profligacy, scampering from one white elephant project to the other with little use-value to the populace. The initial hope was lost and despair became the order of the day. General feelings of despair, disillusionment, and a profound sense of alienation became pervasive among the Niger-Delta peoples. With the discovery of oil, all other economic activities including agricultural pursuit became peripheral and subservient to oil exploration activities (Jike, 2004). The regime of oil boom resultantly became a paradoxical curse, largely because of the socio-economic dislocation of the Niger Delta people due to the devastating effects of the large-scale oil exploration and production activities by the many major oil players in Nigeria's oil industry.

In Nigeria's Niger Delta, the hydra-headed level of air pollution that has become closely associated with oil exploration and production activities has continued unabated. Some technical studies on the environmental consequences of oil operations provide insights into industry-mediated scourges of pollution, disease, resource degradation and socio-economic dislocation. Specific studies on Nigeria include assessments of the petroleum industry and the environment (Hutchful, 1970; Anderson, 1996; Kaladumo, 1996 and Oluwole et al, 2004). These studies throw some light on the deteriorating environment conditions in the oil producing areas. It has become common knowledge, for instance, that acid deposition is 'widespread' in the Niger Delta, while, as regards air quality, the level of carcinogenic risk in the area is 'unacceptable'. The work of Hutchful (1970) was one of the first attempts to document the environmental pollution arising from oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta region. He noted that the industry's operations are usually associated with pollution and that the extensive coastline nature of the region that is dominated by mangrove swamps, large numbers of offshore rigs and oil port facilities has accentuated the magnitude and perils of pollution in the region.

A most politically salient incidence of air pollution associated with oil exploration and production in the Niger Delta is from oil spills from flow stations, pipelines and export terminals among others. While oil spillages occur at various stages of product handling, from exploration and production through refining to distribution and marketing, no less than 96 per cent of the spills are associated with the actual exploration and production stage and hence localized in the producing areas (Roberts, 1998c). Between 1976 and 2005, there were over 10,005 reported cases of oil spills with a spillage of about 7.0 million barrels of which only

500,000 barrels were recovered while the rest (4.5m barrels) were retained in the environment. About 230,000 barrels of oil is spilt in 300 separate incidences each year in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states (World Bank, 2008), while in January 1998, about 40,000 barrels of light crude leaked from a Mobil producing Unlimited Pipeline at Eket in Akwa Ibom State.

In a similar vein, day and night, across the Niger Delta, oil transnationals burn off gas from hundreds of oil wells in huge fires. This process of continuous (24-hours) burning of gas produced with oil (associated gas) is called 'flaring'. It is the combustion of natural gas in stacks which may be vertical, horizontal or angular. The disposal of associated gas has been a major challenge to the country, for Nigeria is estimated as being responsible for a quarter of global flares and vents. This situation has several implications and consequences. First, is that the level of gas flares constitutes a massive waste of a vital national resource and secondly, gas flaring cause significant air pollution and damage with identifiable environmental effects including atmospheric and health hazards (Onosode, 2005). The flaring of associated gas across the Niger Delta pumps between 30 and 35 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year. With an estimated 12 million tons/yearly of methane, a very damaging greenhouse gas is emitted in Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa states alone. Studies on source emissions and ambient air concentrations of air pollutants reveal that the level of volatile organic carbons (VOCs) is very high, exceeding FEPA standards for most of them (Oluwole, et. al, 2004; Onosode, 2005).

Another area of grave concern in the Niger Delta is water pollution. In many of the developed countries of the world, almost complete eradication of the water-born diseases has been achieved, a situation that is the reverse in the developing countries, particularly Nigeria's Niger

Delta (Ejumudo, 2010). And since water is a significant vehicle in the transmission of diseases when it contains water borne pathogens or disease producing organisms. These pathogens, which can be viruses, bacteria or parasitic worms, cause such diseases as dysentery, typhoid fever, cholera, infectious hepatitis and urban filariasis that is transmitted through mosquitoes breeding in polluted water. Water pollution has not only reduced the utility of water for industrial purposes, it has greatly affected the productivity of irrigated land in the Niger Delta region. The widely publicized Eket spillage in 2000 that drew the attention of the World Council of Mayors left dire consequences in its wake (Ejumudo, 2011). There are also fears that if the present trend of oil spillage and indiscriminate disposal of industrial effluents are not checked, aquatic life might be permanently damaged and some species of fish might disappear. The water pollution problematic in the Niger Delta is compounded by the fact that all pollutants, atmospheric, and land-based invariably enter water bodies by direct discharge, precipitation and run-offs (Narayanan 2007:155). Water bodies, thus, become sinks as well as carriers of pollutants. Water pollution has wide ecological impact, as it is an important raw material in photosynthesis and hydrological process.

Apart from air and water pollution and their attendant spill-over effects, land degradation has become ubiquitous. In fact, the agrarian status of the Niger Delta region altered with the huge discovery of oil in Nigeria. The people that hitherto cultivated different crops such as yams, cassava, maize, and groundnut with enough fresh fish from ponds, lakes, streams and bush meat from hunting became pauperized with the loss of their major sources of occupation and economic mainstay (Ejumudo, 2011). Soil degradation that is one of the implications of the activities of the various oil companies led to shortage of food from the farms and human beings have been particularly hit in the process, since most of their economic activities tied to the environment are either disrupted or

destroyed. Olalekan (2002:33), for instance, noted that environmental degradation reduced crops production leading to greater financial stress which threatens economic survival.

Urete (2002:21) also stressed that the impact of crude oil activities in the Niger Delta region is evident considering the fact that the valuable land which ought to have been used for the development of agricultural activities are been occupied by oil wells, pipelines, flow stations, borrow pits and the like. The thousands of hectares of land occupied by Shell that has been polluted and made barren is a typical example. Olubunmi (2003:12), in his study on oil spillage in East Boma of Rivers State, equally stated that as a result of frequent oil spillage in the area, many land became unsuitable for agricultural purposes. This is due to land degradation. In many communities in the Niger Delta region, people no longer till the soil again and this makes them to be idle. Arguably, excessive exploration and seismic activities have negative reverberations for soil toxicity and the quality of crops and there is a general concern among environmentalists that the quality of crops in the Niger Delta is rapidly deteriorating. The quality, size, and shape of traditional staples such as cassava, yam, plantain, and so on are adversely affected by the continuing forage for oil without the requisite environmental impact assessment. Essentially too, oil exploration and exploitation has culminated in declining natural resources (Onosode, 2005:14). Responses by the local people who are negatively affected by the hydra-headed soil degradation and devastation unending dilemma either attempt to find alternative sources of livelihood in the same locality, migrate temporarily to supplement their family livelihoods with income from elsewhere, organize collectively to undertake production or investment activities that would not be feasible individually or resist those that degrade their soil through legal and illegal activities.

Associated implications of the operations of the oil conglomerates in the Niger Delta region are oil spillage, gas flaring and pipeline vandalization. While oil spillages occur at various stages of product handling, from exploration to production through refining to distribution and marketing, no less than 96 percent of the spills are associated with the exploration and production and therefore localized in the producing areas (Roberts, 2005). Over the years, oil companies have spilt much oil in the region. Between 1976 and 2006, there were 9,005 reported cases of oil spills with a spillage of about 10.1 million barrels of which only 2.4 barrels were recovered, while the rest were retained in the environment. About 6,500m barrels of oil were spilt in 700 separate incidences each year in Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom states (World Bank, 2008). In January 1998 alone, about 40,000 barrels of light crude leaked from a Mobil Producing Unlimited pipeline at Eket in Akwa Ibom state. The incidences of spills and their impact are varied across the ecological zones, with more spillages in land than swamp and off-shore operations. This impact of spills on the Niger Delta environment is more revealing in view of the fact that Nigerian crude is very toxic and chemical dispersants often used to clean up spills tend to aggravate the damage on the aquatic environment. In addition, dispersants merely make spills more soluble and relatively invisible to the eye, but they do not remove the toxicity (Ayonote, 2005). The long-term effects of oil spills can be very enduring largely because the devastation of plants and farmlands continue in so far as spilled oil block oxygen supply and destroy essential nutrients in the soil like magnesium and nitrogen.

Arguably, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria poses unprecedented peace-time security challenges that threaten the corporate existence of the country as a nation state. Violent crimes, including politically and financially-motivated contract killings, cult wars, hostage-taking, kidnapping, arson, pipeline and oil installation vandalization threaten the

daily existence of the citizens and corporate integrity of Nigeria, while the security agencies lie prostrate. Agitations by ethnic minority groups, borne out of perceived or real deprivation and marginalization in the sharing of both economic and political benefits, have continued unabated. In fact, the youth militia groups are increasingly challenging community leaders, who in the past were unquestionably followed. This has led to a loss of societal values and the loss of traditional structures of authority. In earlier times, youth were typically at the bottom of the hierarchy (Aghalino, 2011). Today however, traditional rulers and elders in the various communities have lost control over youths. They have worked out their own largely unsustainable ways of reaching and dealing with the oil companies, government at every levels, and national and international organizations (UNDP, 2007:306). According to Roberts (2003), a state with in-built economic deprivation or marginalization outcomes cannot but lead to political exclusion. Where this obtains, crisis, even disintegration, is only but a mutually – assured expectation. A crisis of governance pervades the political system, which is, therefore, unable to play its expected role as a problem-solving device. Rather, inherent and open conflicts have attended this crisis of governance. In the same vein, economic well-being and well-operated political environment, which is the only protection against social injustice and violent outbursts, has been greatly compromised.

The Macro Ecological Metamorphosis of the Niger Delta Crisis

The Nigerian oil industry has its roots in the colonial state, which, through the 1914 colonial Minerals Ordinance, granted the monopoly of oil concessions in Nigeria to “British or British-allied capital” (IDEA, 2010: 144). The law served as the basis for the granting of an oil exploration license to Shell (Shell D’Arcy and later Shell BP) covering the entire mainland of Nigeria, an area of 367,000 square miles. Effective 1957, a

few years before Nigeria's independence, Shell surrendered some of its oil acreage to other oil multinationals and the state, leaving it with a total land area of 16,000 miles. At this point, there were no direct linkages between the oil industry and the rest of the Nigerian economy, other than the 50-50 profit sharing arrangement with the state under the rubric of the 1959 Petroleum Profit Tax Ordinance (IDEA, 2010:145). In the post-colonial era, precisely in 1969, the Federal Government of Nigeria abrogated the 1914 ordinance and transferred the "control" and "ownership" of oil to the state. Under the Petroleum Act of 1969, the entire ownership and control of all petroleum in, under or upon any land in Nigeria was vested in the state (Omorogbe, 2009:20). The fact that the ownership aspect in the Nigerian oil industry was copied verbatim from the colonial constitution where it said everything under the soil, and on the soil belonged to the colonial government and it is yet so stated in the Nigerian constitution (Tell 2008:80) smacks off the ecology or climate that was being constructed with negative concomitant implications for the Niger Delta region.

This ecological or climatic build up with its multiple dimensions and manifestations accounted for the separate identity that the Niger Delta region canvassed throughout the conferences that preceded and culminated in the independence of the Nigerian State. It was, in fact, the fears, feelings and disposition of the Niger Delta region that precipitated the setting up of the Willinks Commission that succinctly stated the legitimate fears of the region concerning the aggression, subjugation and distinctiveness of their people and their quest to be on their own and have some measure of autonomy within the confines of the Nigerian project (Tell, 2008:80). Even though the Willinks Commission corroborated the fears, pains, marginalization and oppression of the region within the Nigerian project, if no protective or safety measures or devices are put in place, nothing significant was done to alter the trend or redress the

anomaly. Up till today, the modern Nigerian state, rather than dismantle the ecological foundation that was well designed, constructed and created during the colonial dispensation, it further intensified the heat of the ecological climate, introducing other dimensions that will be captured in the other aspects of this article. For example, in 1976, the Land Use Act which gradually seized control of oil revenues thereby denying the Niger Delta adequate control of revenues accruing from their land was promulgated. It is expedient to assert at this point, that the foundational ecological or climatic build-up in respect of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria, is not only non-accidental and problematic, it is traceable to the circumstances of our history that conspired to produce an elite that has caused further integration of the Nigerian state into the global oil relations. The same historical circumstances created an economy that is dependent to the extent that its position and relations to other economies in the international system and the articulation of its internal structure makes it incapable of autocentric development (Ake, 2005:55).

The local petit-bourgeoisie, a creation of the colonial system not by choice, but by circumstance, led the battle against colonialism out of self-interest. No wonder, the oil policies in the post-colonial era up to the present modern era in Nigeria reflect the typical contradictions that is symptomatic of the repressive and manipulative tendencies that characterized the colonial regime. At independence, the foundational ecological climate created during the colonial era, simply metamorphosed, with its structure already firmly set. The post-colonial leadership comprising the self-styled elite was not interested in fabricating a new ecological climate by structurally dismantling the one it inherited. The colonial ecological climate therefore, as far as oil relations in Nigeria are concerned, had imposed a certain logic and rigidity that did not only appeal to the local petit-bourgeoisie, but has largely affected the course of future development. This logic encouraged the persistence and

reinforcement of the colonial foundational ecological climate with which the Niger Delta Region is linked, entwined and interfaced. Thus, colonialism, in all its ramifications, was not merely a system of exploitation, but one whose main purpose was to repatriate the profits created by African labour to Europe with the development of Europe assured, while dialectically, this meant the underdevelopment of Africa (Offiong, 2000:110) including the Niger Delta area of Nigeria.

The Dimensions or Attributes of the Enduring Macro Ecological Climate in which the Niger Delta Region is Embedded

The Niger Delta region, like other groups in society, be it states, regions, local governments and significant others such as public and private sector organizations exist and operate in an external environment or climate. In varying degrees they must take into account the elements and forces of their external environment (Koontz et al, 2008:39). While they may be able to do little or nothing to change the forces, they have no alternative but to identify, evaluate and respond or react to these external forces that affect their operations (Koontz et al, 2008:39). The external environment or climate of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria has key actors including the state, multinational oil corporations and the local petit-bourgeoisie. It is a combination of these actors that generate the laws, institutions, policies, activities and operations that affect and shape the fortunes and destiny of the region. The three dimensions of the enduring macro ecological climate or environment identified for purpose of this study are: legal/constitutional, operational and institutional. The dimensions are analytical assessed here-under:

Legal/Constitutional Dimension

Nigerian legislation on petroleum predated exploration activities or efforts in Nigeria. The first piece of legislation was the Petroleum

Ordinance of 1889 which was followed by the Mineral Regulation (Oil) Ordinance of 1907, both of which provided the basic legal framework for the development of petroleum and its natural resources (Omogbe, 2009:16). The 1907 law stipulated, *inter alia*, that only British subjects or companies controlled by British subjects would be eligible to explore for oil resources. Although the mineral survey company pioneered mineralogical studies as far back as 1903, oil exploration started in 1908 when a German company, the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation (NBC) drilled about “fourteen wells along the northern edge of the Niger Delta Basin and off the coast of Lagos” (Ejumudo 2005:122). Essentially, various laws directly regulate the Nigerian oil industry. They include the Mineral Act of 1914, rephrased as the Petroleum Act of 1969, the Oil Pipeline Act of 1956, the Petroleum Profit Tax Act of 1959 and the various associated Gas Reinjection Acts, the Oil Terminal Dues Act and the Oil Navigable Water Acts, the Lands (title vesting) Act of 1993 and the National Inland Waterways Authority Act of 1996. The central focus is on the Petroleum Act of 1967 and the Petroleum Drilling and Production Regulations of 1969, both of which constitute the bedrock for the petroleum development in Nigeria (Omogbe 2001:19). To a very significant degree, the nature of the colonial and post-colonial Nigerian state are largely structurally the same, for the broad spectrum of laws and accompanying actions of the Nigerian state on the country’s oil industry have been no less an extension of the 1914 Mineral Act which vested all powers over resources (solid and liquid) on the state as Omogbe (2009:111-112) rightly articulated. For instance, the post-colonial state like its predecessor has the exclusive right to issue mineral prospecting and mining licenses and the sole power to collect royalties, rents and fees from the oil companies. Both the Petroleum Act of 1969 and the Land Use Decree of 1978 are complementary and designed to strengthen the instrument of oppression, suppression, marginalization, dispossession, deprivation and disempowerment of the Niger Delta people by the state in collaboration

with its allies, the multi-national oil corporations and the local petit bourgeoisie. The Land Use Decree, for example has been described by legal experts as one of the most ambiguous laws ever made (Shelter Watch, 1996:39) and that it is infested with many contradictions and confusion which must have made those concerned with its administration uncomfortable with its provisions. In fact, the controversy surrounding the statute stems partly from the inelegant draftsmanship which has made the interpretation and construction of its provisions subject of perennial debates and partly from its dramatic impact on land rights (CRP, 2009:1).

The origin of the law in Nigeria is traceable to a similar law enacted by the British in northern Nigeria, inspired by English tradition which vested all land on the English Crown (CRP, 2009:2). The law can therefore be described as one of colonial inspiration and feudal inclination. Arguably, no where else in Nigeria has the impact of the Land Use Decree manifested, in all its ramifications and inequities as in the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria's main oil-producing region. Section 28 of the Decree, for example, provides for the revocation of the rights of occupancy, while section 29 provides for compensation payable on revocation of right of occupancy. The Land Use Decree also sought accommodation for the oil companies who need land for virtually all its operations. In fact, the oil giants need land for exploration. production, transportation of crude oil by pipeline, construction of oil terminal stations, flare sites, airstrips, offices and staff quarters. This partly explains the logic behind the content of the Land Use Decree which also provided a buffer for the oil giants to be more reckless in their operations. This may also be a part explanation for why Shell, for instance, can afford to flare gas on a daily basis since 1956 when it discovered oil in the Niger Delta and yet be shielded by the state over litigations on land where oil is explored or produced (Omoweh, 2009:115). Essentially, the issue of land ownership is the most fundamental around which the politics of environmental pollution and

degradation and its concomitant socio-economic crises are centred in Nigeria.

Previous studies on the land question in Africa, especially those by Denman (1978:15); Omotola (1988:12); Ollenu (2005:2 1) and Moyo (2005:32) had demonstrated that land was no man's creation. Rather, it is a gift of God. They had also noted that land ownership 'as rooted on the basis of first occupier and its use over a long period which sometimes spanned twenty years or more without counter claim. Therefore, the structure of land ownership and tenurial system were mostly familial and communal in pre-colonial Nigeria, although in some cases traditional and village heads held land in trust for their people. With the imposition of European rule on Nigeria, the structure of land ownership was distorted and altered and European land laws which vested all land including the resources found therein especially minerals resources on the colonial state held sway. These laws, particularly the Mineral Act of 1914 defined the nature and content of land ownership in colonial Nigeria. The Post-colonial Nigeria state rephrased the Mineral Act of 1914 as the Petroleum Act of 1969 with some changes and strengthened by the Land Use Decree of 1978, the mining companies of both the colonial and post-colonial dispensations had access to land only through the state, for which they paid rents and royalties to the state for the lease period. Since their acreages were on lease, the mining companies are not accountable to the people, but to the state, whose pre-occupation was to further their economic interest by getting more rents from land and royalties for the exploitation of its resources (Omoweh, 2009:212-13). Land protection in the light of sustainability was, as a result, and is still not of any interest to the state that gradually rendered the Niger Delta people into paupers for through successive legislation including the Petroleum and Land Use and squatters in their own land. For through successive legislation, including the Petroleum and Land Use Acts, the Federal Government gradually

seized control of oil revenues thereby denying the Niger Delta people the adequate control of resources accruing from their land. Thus, the entire structure of the macro ecological climate in which the Niger Delta is embedded and which has seriously stifled its development or facilitated its underdevelopment is founded or predicated and premised on the legal and constitutional framework from which the other two dimensions of the climate identified in this paper emerged.

Operational Dimension

The Passive Concessionaire Era (1914 — 1969)

Since 1956, when the then Shell-BP struck oil in commercial quantities at Oloibiri in the Niger Delta after an investment of over N30 million in 1950, crude oil exploration, production and transportation activities have been on in the region with the first export of Nigeria's crude oil in 1957 (Ejumudo, 2005:123). Within ten years, that is on the eve of the Nigerian civil war, production had reached about 500,000 barrels a day, thus establishing Nigeria as a significant oil producer (Owoeye and Ojakorotu 2002:179-180). Concessions were granted to Mobil (now Mobil Exxon) in 1955, Tenneco in 1960, Gulf (which later became Chevron and Texaco (which are now merged and today known as Chevron-Texaco) in 1961, Elf (formerly Safrap and Agip in 1962 and Phillips Petroleum in 1965, when the sole monopoly given to Shell-BP was revoked in 1959 (Ejumudo, 2005:124; Aturu, 1989:6). A few companies like Esso (which later became Exxon), Union Oil and Great Basin from America showed passing interest and then pulled out in the period between 1965 and 1970. At this point, the oil industry had no linkages with the rest of the Nigerian economy, save for the 50-50 profit sharing arrangement with the state under the rubric of the 1959 Petroleum Profit Tax Ordinance (IDEA, 2010:144-145). During this concessionaire era, the oil industry was dominated by the oil multinationals and government's role was limited to collecting rents and

royalties from oil companies and making laws to regulate the activities of the oil sector, for there was no meaningful resolve to assume an active role in the industry (Soremekun, 1999:10 1).

State Participation and Restricted Activism Era

Although the ownership structure of the oil industry was not changed during the concessionaire era, in 1969, the Federal Government of Nigeria, abrogated the 1914 Ordinance and transferred the “control” and “ownership” of oil to the state, after a number of enabling laws including the Companies Act of 1967 which compelled all the oil companies to incorporate Nigerian entities in which the concessions were vested and the Petroleum Profit Tax (Amendment) Act of 1967 came into force (Ejumudo, 2005:125; IDEA, 2010:145). The state also imposed OPEC terms on all oil companies operating in the Nigerian oil industry and formally joined OPEC in 1971. In April 1971, the Nigerian National Oil Corporation was set up by the Federal Government via Decree and acquired majority participating interest in the industry by entering into joint venture agreements with oil multinationals operating in Nigeria. It took up to 60 percent equity ownership of all the operating companies except Shell where it acquired 80 percent with the nationalization of BP in 1979 over the Zimbabwe crisis. The state eventually reduced its interest in BP to about 55 percent, surrendering the remainder to Elf (10 percent), Agip (5 percent) and Shell (30 percent). These joint ventures have continued to account for the bulk of Nigeria’s oil production and export. In the downstream sector, the state acquired controlling interests in Shell Marketing (National Oil) and Chemical Company renamed Unipetrol. The other important oil marketing companies like Total, Mobil Marketing, Agip Marketing, Texaco and Elf were owned 60 percent privately by Nigerians and 40 percent by the foreign companies (Ejumudo, 2005:130). All the same, the state was not able to displace the foreign giants of the domestic market viz: Mobil, Total Agip and Texaco. The arm of state capitalism in

the Nigerian oil industry was eventually established in 1977 and it took over the functions of the Nigerian National Oil Corporation as well as those of the then Ministry of Petroleum Resources (Asiodu, 1994:166; Ejumudo, 2005:134). The Corporation was responsible for the regulatory and control functions and for determining oil policies in Nigeria in relation with other foreign governments. However, it could not withstand the sophistication, monopoly of oil technology and knowledge of global oil markets of the oil giants. This disadvantage position was further compounded by the hydra-headed and cut-throat competition for access to oil wealth, which weakened the NNPC and made it vulnerable as a result of excessive political intervention, corruption and high turnover of qualified manpower. In fact, NNPC lacks the will to regulate, participate or compete in the oil industry and the 1990s were years of unprecedented state dependence on oil multinationals to increase oil exploitation and provide more revenue for resolving the national crisis (IDEA, 2010:145). Therefore, the Nigerian state became deeply dependent on a mono-product that it did not control and the accompanying vulnerability to the oil giants, especially Shell Petroleum Development Company and the volatile global oil market, produced salutary effects on the Nigerian political economy.

The Dysfunctionality of the Operations and the Impact of the Alliance on the Niger Delta

That the alliance of the Nigerian state with the oil giants and the domestic bourgeoisie has played a dominant role in the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta is indubitable. The choice of the word “underdevelopment” is predicated on the understanding that the region has prospects for development, but not potentialities for same due to the laws, policies, actions and operations of the trio (three actors) in the alliance that has produced stagnation and retrogression in the region (Jhinghan, 2010:22). A clear picture of the nature of their operations and its impact on the

Niger Delta region is the real motive behind their alliance, the role that colonial capitalism played in shaping the nature of the post-colonial oil economy and the collaboration that re-integrated the neo-colonial economy into the global capitalist system. The role of the oil giants (transnational corporations) as agents of underdevelopment in the developing world has for long been acknowledged and highlighted (Omoweh, 2009:23-24; Rodney, 1986:244). Thus, the alliance did not only enhance the financial interests of the partners from the crude oil produced in the area, it equally enhanced surplus capitalist accumulation in the global oil and gas industry, leaving the region as the wretched of the earth. This primitive accumulation of capitalism draws sustenance from colonies and semi-colonies and its expanding reproduction seeks markets throughout the globe (Sau, 1978:36). Therefore, a clear understanding of the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta region by the alliance partners demands an in-depth consideration of the nature and problems of monopoly capitalism in the global oil and gas industry of which Nigeria's upstream petroleum sector is an integral part. The legal/constitutional foundation did not only create the environment which is up till today plaguing the Niger Delta region. It also set the stage for the operational menace in which the region has been engulfed.

A deeper insight into the nature of the collaboration by the three partners in the unholy alliance can largely be provided, taking cognizance of the fact that the Nigerian state (pre-and-post-colonial) formulates the policies that creates and determines the political and business environment that are element for the capitalist development of the oil industry and the exploitation and under-developmnet of the Niger Delta region. For instance, due to the peculiar nature of crude oil production and transportation, the oil pipeline Act enacted in 1958 by the colonial state enabled the oil companies to obtain legal permit to lay oil pipelines linking up their various oil wells and fields across the Niger Delta, which are

connected to their terminals from where crude oil is eventually exported. The effects of the exploration, exploitation, production and transportation activities of the oil companies including gas flaring have been devastating to the rich-oil region called the "Niger Delta". This is because these activities destroy the soil, waters, vegetation and crops of the people. The environment is not only polluted and degraded, the costs in terms of the destruction of the economic base of the rural people who have been denied their sources of livelihood defies any accurate statistical calculation and quantification. The level of environmental degradation in the region is manifest in the inability of the environmental resources, like the atmosphere, river, soil and vegetation to renew themselves naturally which, invariably, incapacitates the people of the Niger Delta from regenerating themselves socio-economically.

The mass of the people of the region are therefore pauperized through rural poverty that is foisted on them. The people can thus be described as poor, malnourished, miserable, wretched, landless, neglected and virtually vulnerable and lacking in basic social amenities. The nature of rural poverty in the Niger Delta can be linked to the operations of the oil giants, supported by the state (both colonial and post-colonial) and its unproductive local bourgeoisie in the spirit of their unholy alliance. This is expected because the colonial state was created to facilitate the capitalist exploitation of the Niger Delta in particular and Nigeria in general. At the heart of the rural poverty in the Niger Delta is land; for land which is regarded by the people of the region as the root of their ancestral origin, is the most badly hit by environmental degradation. And since land provides the basis for the main economic activities in the region, the politics of land provides an insight into the nature and complexity of the rural poverty afflicting the Niger Delta region. For example, the Mineral Act of 1914 as amended in 1967 and the Land Use Decree of 1978 vested the ownership of land in the state. By implication, the oil giants apply the

mining acreage and pay rents and associated fees to the state, which is the only entity that is legally empowered to protest. The people of the Niger Delta region are therefore rendered landless and squatters in their ancestral land by reason of the provision of the state laws on land. Regrettably too, the alliance of the state, the oil giants and the petit bourgeoisie makes the oil companies, particularly Shell Petroleum Development Company arrogant, reckless and insensitive to the plight and feelings of the devastated Niger Delta region and its impoverished people. In the mentality of Shell and the other oil giants, the region is a minefield that cannot be polluted, such that gas flaring, oil spillage and dumping of untreated wastes on land/swamps and sea are considered as normal hazards that accompany oil exploration, exploitation, production, transportation and storage. The operational dimension engendered and instigated largely by the foundational legal/constitutional dimension of the Niger Delta crisis has generated a lot of tension characterized by protests, militancy, youth restiveness, piracy, kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, illegal bunkering, violence and the like. State violence in the form of aggression against targeted groups has been the distinguishing mark of the responses and intervention tactics in conflict issues in the region, especially during the military dispensation (IDEA, 2010:146).

Institutional Dimension

The challenges of development; that is to say the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is as old as the colonial dispensation. These challenges range from the absence of basic social amenities and infrastructure to shortage of skilled manpower and socio-economic dislocations caused principally by blocked access to wealth. This anomalous state of affairs was admitted by the Willinks Commission of 1958 in its recommendations to the then Colonial Government, shortly before Nigeria attained independence in 1960. The only remedy that the

Commission proffered to assuage the agitated people of the Niger Delta region was the creation of The Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA) in 1959 to cater for the developmental needs and aspirations of the region. However, the impact of the NDBDA, which was supposedly an interventionist agency, was so infinitesimal and inconsequential that it can at best be described as an abysmal failure. Acting under the guise that it does not want to be reckoned with as insensitive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people of the rich-oil region, the Nigerian state began its own community- based projects. Similar to those embarked upon by the oil giants, they did not address the environmental degradation and they did not seek to reverse the rural poverty which became the characteristic feature of the Niger Delta. The Presidential Task Force (PTF) which the Babangida led military administration established in 1988 failed woefully to handle the complex ecological crisis and the deep-seated rural poverty in the oil areas. In 1992, the Babangida regime created the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) to replace the Presidential Task Force. Although the Commission was originally construed as a developmental strategy to cater for the needs of the oil-bearing communities, it became overtly clear that it was political machinery designed to serve the purpose of the self-seeking military junta through the erection of a clientele of political supporters in the Niger Delta.

The OMPADEC essentially deepened the misery of the people of the region given the political motive behind its creation and operations as mostly evident in the kind of projects that it embarked upon in the oil region and the manner it awarded the contracts (Omoweh, 2009:246). The Commission was somewhat glaringly designed to fail, for it was neither interested in addressing the environmental concerns of the oil-bearing communities, nor was it concerned about reversing the circle of poverty and neglect to which the people has been subjected. Acting on

behalf of the state, the Commission exhibited overt hostility against the youths who were adjudged to be fanning the flame of agitation under the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM) and the Isoko Youth Movement (IYM). Worse still, it aided the arrest of these youth organizations and others who were perceived as opponents to the fraudulent transition agenda of the self-styled military president, Ibrahim Babangida. Notably, the increased anger in the oil-bearing communities with the crude and exploitative activities of the oil giants such as Shell, and the growing perceptions of federal government's tacit endorsement of these, resulted in restiveness and the formation of activist youth organizations and militia groups in the Niger Delta.

Between 1990 and 1999, at least, 24 of such groups were formed, which have intensified struggles, often with violent outcomes, against the oil companies and federal state agents and agencies, such as the police and the armed forces. Many of these groups have, within one decade, made declarations, that underscore self-assertion and autonomy in the control of resources and management of the affairs of the communities in the Niger Delta (Jega, 2007: 222). These include the Ogoni Bill of Rights; the Kaiama Declaration; the Aklaka Declaration of the Egbi people; the Oron Bill of Rights; the Warri Accord and the resolution of the first Urhobo Summit. The OMPADEC equally established a clientele base into which traditional rulers and significant others including notable petro-dollar contractors were incorporated. These allies of the Babangida administration were awarded contracts valued at N60 billion and the contracts were taken as gratis, a plausible explanation for the failed unexecuted contracts. The Board of the Commission headed by A.K. Horsefall was eventually sacked in 1995 and Eric Opia was appointed as its Sole Administrator and he was later replaced with Dan Omatsola (Omoweh, 2009:17) OMPADEC was to any critical and discerning mind, a

fraudulent venture, a financial jamboree or spree and a state institutional framework to further the exploitation of the already pauperized and devastated Niger Delta people, for the commission was not responsive to the developmental needs of the victims of the activities of petro-dollar business in Nigeria. In fact, for many years, disbursed funds were by far short of what was budgeted, as Table I below indicates:

Financial Resources to OMPADEC, 1992-1995

Year	Budgeted ₦ Millions	Actual release ₦ Millions	Difference N Millions
1992	6,041.54	1,614.09	4,427.45 (%)
1993	6,413.36	2,618.85	3,794.39 (%)
1994	2,628.84	3,992.47	+ 1,363.63 (%)
1995	7,826.48	3,077.14	3,509.34 (%)

Source: Tempo Magazine, December 1998: CBN reports between 1992-1995.

The major policy instrument by which the Obasanjo administration pretended to use to intervene in the Niger Delta crisis is the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). This Commission was expected to be an improvement on the woeful performance of the defunct NDBDA, PTF, OMPADEC and the ill-fated Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) that was established by the Abacha administration supposedly to improve infrastructure in the entire country, but which neglected the Niger Delta region. The NDDC was not significantly different from the previous deliberately designed failed efforts of the ill-fated state so-called interventionist development agencies because the thinking of the state and its allies in the exploitation and underdevelopment of the Niger Delta has not altered. Although the Commission appears to have scattered some projects across the Niger Delta states, nothing significant can be said to have been achieved in the light of the so-called development-based

purpose for which the NDDC was set up in the first instance. At least, while the name of the intervention agency has changed like the “Green Revolution” programme of the Shagari administration which replaced the Obasanjo “Operation Feed the Nation” programme; the state apparatus and the internal dynamics or workings has not changed. That the Commission is another aloof government agency like its predecessors and a superficially refurbished cocoon for official corruption by the state and its cronies is evident, considering the fact that eight years after its existence, the oil-rich region which is the treasure base of the nation fares relatively poor in every indicator of well-being. It is also evidently pellucid that the region is still locked up and mired in poverty, unabated youth unemployment, lack of infrastructural development, dysfunctional education system and environmental degradation and devastation which appears pervasive and unending. The insidiously high unemployment rate in the Niger Delta has, for instance contributed largely to the security threat by the youths whose survival instincts compel them to engage in various forms of anti-social behaviour including pipeline vandalization, thuggery, kidnapping and other destructive acts. While it is true that the parlous state of infrastructure in the region is partly self-inflicted because of the corruption of the elite in the Niger Delta, an x-ray of the Niger Delta crisis provides an integrated picture which shows that the region’s state governments that have squandered their Federation Accounts and Internally generated revenues are part and parcel of the same state that is in alliance or collaboration with the oil giants and the petrodollar elite.

The Yar Adua/Jonathan administration with its sincerity and commitment posturing promised a holistic approach to the Niger Delta crisis and intended to actualize a Niger Delta Development Plan, yet it clearly stated that the Federal Government’s contributory share to the NDDC’s funds in the sum of Two Hundred and Twenty-Four Billion Naira (N224b) which was not paid by the Obasanjo’s administration had expired (Vanguard,

2008:14). The level of indebtedness currently stands at over Three Hundred and Sixty Billion Naira (N360b). The administration also created the ministry of Niger Delta affairs and put in place an amnesty programme. While the former was supposedly meant to facilitate the development of the region, the later was probably designed to stop the menace of militancy and the accompanying dastardly acts of the armed Niger Delta youths whose reactions and responses had steadily and stoutly been against the unending regime of neglect, oppression, marginalization and pauperization by the Nigerian state in collaboration with the oil conglomerates and the local bourgeoisie. The Niger Delta ministry initiative has turned out to be a mockery because it has not achieved anything as far as the development of the region is concerned and the amnesty programme has only succeeded in selectively getting some of the militant youths to accept pardon and participate in training programmes that will enable them to acquire skills that will enhance their living standards. All the same, neither the over one year three months administration of President Goodluck Jonathan or the Niger Delta ministry has been able initiate and execute infrastructural development projects to tangibly address the hydra-headed nature of under-development that the oil-rich region had been enmeshed in and rehabilitate the teeming youths that are desperately in need of safety nets.

On the whole, the legal/constitutional, operational and institutional dimensions of the Niger Delta crisis is such that one can safely summarize that there has been a superficial tinkering with the burning issues that concern the collective destiny of the Niger Delta people and the region that is both the treasure base of the Nigerian state and a hot-bed of crisis and a contested terrain of power play. The bottom line of this deliberate approach that reveals the insincerity, negligence and lack of commitment on the part of the state and its elite, is the demonstration of the hollowness of the mission and the deceit of the vision behind the cosmetic

and dubious so-called development-based state intervention agencies.

Panacea to the Unending Niger Delta Crisis

Several positions have been canvassed as possible solutions to the intractable Niger Delta crisis. Such positions include the provision of basic social amenities as a way of redressing the neglect of the oil bearing communities and their pauperized people, a tripartite developmental strategy that will involve counterpart funding by the Federal Government, oil bearing State Governments and the Oil Giants; Community-participation Development Model, Niger Delta Development Master Plan, Development-oriented intervention Agencies, and a holistic approach to the Niger Delta crisis, Resource Control and true Federalism (IDEA, 2010:150-156; Omoweh, 2009:280; Magbagbeola, 2010:32). These positions are various responses to the recognized fact that in spite of the huge natural resource base of the Niger Delta regions, its sustainable development dream remains a mirage and its future is being threatened by environmental degradation and deteriorating economic conditions (Magbagbeola, 2010:32).

In as much as the above suggested approaches are somewhat varying developmental initiatives, only the last one: resource control and true federalism is tangibly structural and therefore appears in tandem with the ecological solution that is the thrust of this article, except the contextualization dimension. All the same, the resource control and the federalism debate have its variants. For instance, does the Niger Delta region desire to control her resources so as to further empower the states in the region which is part of the state (Nigeria) apparatus that has sacrificed the development of the Niger Delta on the altar of reckless corruption and personal aggrandizement and both aided and facilitated the underdevelopment of the region. All the other approaches have not

only been superficial, hypocritical and advertently un-genuine, they are also monumentally fraudulent and diversionary. At least, the state, the multinational oil giants and the petit bourgeois collaborators could not have done anything significantly different to reverse the increasing incapacity of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta people, especially as they have not conceptualized the development of the region in the context of the logic, values and history of the Niger Delta (Omoweh, 2009:261). For example, the ambitious-like NDDC and the Master Plan initiative of the Obasanjo Administration which is theoretically the most comprehensive of all the pseudo-developmental efforts in Nigeria and was designed to involve the various oil-bearing communities in the region in the conceptualization, design and implementation of projects to be sited in their localities turned out to be a governmental gimmick and a ruse. Also, the Community Participation Development Model is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, especially as the elders and youths are not only working at cross purposes, they are equally disgruntled to the extent that they place more emphasis on their personal interests than the larger community interests. At the heart of the solution of the Niger Delta crisis, therefore, is the ecological perspective or approach that will require the dismantling of the various dimensions that characterize and typify the existing (status quo) macro ecological climate that surround and has determined and shaped the direction, underdevelopment and destiny of the region from the colonial genesis, particularly the oil era. This approach will require an abrogation, revision and amendment as the case may be, of the obnoxious and repressive colonial and post-colonial that had set the centre stage for the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta.

The legal/constitutional reconstruction imperative will culminate in the recreation of the appropriate genial climate that will favour and enhance the development of the region, *ceteris paribus*. It is in the context of this new climate, reinforced by the right commitment to and predisposition by

the Nigerian State, the Oil Multinational Companies and the other relevant stakeholders including the oil-bearing state governments and communities, that the holistic development of the Niger Delta will be facilitated, sustained and guaranteed. Encapsulated in this macro ecological perspective, are oil resource control and management, community participation in development initiatives and efforts, capacity building and human capital development as well as other sundry issues affecting the Niger Delta region and its people. The politics of resource control, for instance, has its genesis in the manner by which revenues from petroleum-related economic activities have become the mainstays of the Nigerian political economy (Jega, 2007:221). The current sharing formula which gives the federal government more than 50% of the federation account and the remainder to the states and the local government is not only unjust and inequitable; it has also generated a lot of tension among the Niger Delta people. The alteration of the legal/constitutional, operational and institutional dimensions of the macro ecological climate of the Niger Delta is a necessary condition for resolution of the crisis. This will mean restructuring the Nigerian society, economy and polity in the direction of letting the Niger Delta people control and manage their resources. This quest for restructuring and resource control and management is borne out of a deep-seated feeling of marginalization of the Niger Delta people in spite of the huge petroleum wealth that Nigeria has generated from the region (IDEA, 2010:150). To this end, all the laws that militate against the rights of the region to significantly control its resources should appropriately be abrogated or amended. Thus the various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria including the Niger Delta should be allowed autonomy and a fairly significant access to their resources and political power in the spirit of true federalism.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The Niger Delta crisis is undoubtedly a burning national issue that has somewhat attracted global attention. This rich-oil region from which so much oil has been extracted is largely underdeveloped, pauperized and threatened by defoliation, poverty, environmental devastation and ecological extinction. The magnitude of oil spillage and environmental deterioration issues concerning the region have also been acknowledged by sundry organizations and international development agencies (Environmental Rights Agenda, 1998: 17; CLO, 1996:15; Human Rights Watch, 1999:70). To free the Niger Delta from the shackles of underdevelopment that was deliberately designed, constructed and imposed by the Nigerian state and its allies and to facilitate the process of true development, the critical issues that are located in the macro ecological climate of the Niger Delta must be genuinely addressed in a holistic fashion. This macro ecological approach is however, a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the developmental process by which the region and its people can reproduce themselves socially, economically and politically in consonance with their values, choices, experience and originality. This position derives from the fact that variables in the micro (internal) ecological environment of the Niger Delta are also useful and germane in the calculus of development for the region. A combination of both the macro (external) and the micro (internal) ecological climate of the region constitute a sufficient condition for the complete resolution of the Niger Delta crisis. While the macro environment is the primary, the micro environment is the secondary, both being complementary. The focus of further research efforts should be in the area of good governance as sustainable approach to the lingering Niger Delta crisis and dilemma. This expected good governance thrust, which will be developmental in mentality, orientation and practice, is expected to address the many-sided problems of Nigeria's oil-rich region in a sustainable fashion, as against

the present superficial piece-meal tinkering with the collective destiny of a pauperized, marginalized, oppressed and agitated people as well as under-developed and disadvantaged region.

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