

**State Failure and Violent Regional Conflicts in Nigeria:
The Niger Delta Ethnic Militias in Perspective**

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the constraints of Nigerian federalism against the backdrop of the chronic resurgence of the ethnic Militias in the Niger Delta region, and the need of its reinvention to suit the exigencies of pluralism devoid of regional agitation. The paper interrogates the federalist idea and how it has failed to manage diversity of the Nigerian state. The implore secondary such of data collection. It adopted the frustration aggression theory to provide the foundation of the study and illustrate the causation between the independent and dependent variables to determine its effect. It also conceptualized the categories of militia in both Nigeria and other countries in a tabular form. It further elucidate the constraints of the region and how it has suffered under the dominance of the central government and the MNOCs, through their unwillingness to respond positively to the demands of the region. Therefore, the argument advanced is that the pitfalls have created an ungovernable space in the Nigerian federation for militia occupation, and been considered as the root cause of militancy in the region. The paper suggested that a federal state whereby the mechanism for dealing with such federalism has fractured or in the process of failing will facilitates militia manifestation, especially when the clearly stated conditions for the formation of the federation are breached by the system. Therefore, the paper concluded with suggested measure in curbing insurgency in the region.

Keywords: *Nigerian State, Niger Delta, State Failure, Regional Conflicts, Pluralism, Autonomy, Federalism, Ethnic Militias, Self-Determination.*

INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta of Nigeria is highly heterogeneous with over 40 ethnic groups who speak more than 100 languages and dialects. The region comprises 185 out of the 774 local government areas and covers 9 out of the 36 states of Nigeria: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. With over 30 million people, according to a 2006 population census, and an estimated population density of 265 people per square kilometer, the region accounts for more than 23 percent of Nigeria's population.

The Niger Delta area contains vast reserves of oil and gas, which play an important role in the Nigerian economy. In spite of these abundant natural resources, the Niger Delta is marked by poverty, economic underdevelopment, inequality, and environmental degradation. Historical

tensions and a proliferation of armed groups (militant, criminal, and ethno-sectarian) contribute to changing conflict and security dynamics in the region.

The Niger Delta peace and conflict landscape has undergone significant changes since 2009 when the Federal government commenced a Presidential Amnesty Program for ex-militants in the region. However, the relative security brought about by the amnesty program has been eroded by the emergence of other conflicts. This paper examines the trends and patterns of conflict risk and violence, identifies key interrelated drivers and pressures on peace and stability at the regional state and local levels

This paper offers an explanatory perspective on the character of the Nigerian state in relation to its *modus operandi* and how it has created ungovernable space for the occupation militants in the Niger Delta.

2. The Concept of Militancy: The word militant, comes from the 15th Century Latin word "militare" meaning "to serve as a soldier". It could be compared and contrasted to several other words such as activist, belligerent, combatant, rebel, crusader, demonstrator, vigilante, rioter, extremist, fundamentalist, mercenary, partisan, protester, and zealot (Wikipedia). Ikelegbe 2010 identifies characteristics of militias. First it is an armed force of ordinary persons or, as Zahar puts it, 'an armed faction' engaged in combat or fighting or that resorts to violence to attain certain objectives. (Marie-Joelle Zahar,2006 in Ikelegbe 2010). To him, the above presupposes first that it is a civil force or a privately organised group of armed persons and second that it is largely an informally organised force whose structures, hierarchies, commands, procedures and processes are usually not fixed and rigid. Third, it is generally mobilised voluntarily on the basis of some common identity challenges or general concerns and threats (Ikelegbe & Ikumu 2010)

Militancy is the state or condition of being combative or disposed to fight, the active championing of a Cause or belief. Militancy is a form advanced to fight humanitarian and political causes, such as that purportedly fought by the Niger Delta militants. Militancy as described by the BBC English Dictionary is the behavior or attitude of people who are active in trying to bring about political change, often in ways that may be unacceptable to others.

Ethnic Militias are essentially youth based groups formed with the purpose of promoting and protecting the interests of their ethnic groups, and whose activities sometimes involve the use of violence.(Adejumobi, 2002). Sesay etal (2003:23) defined militia as an irregular or paramilitary group usually made up of civilians who might have received some

form of non- formalized or unofficial military training and are armed with weapons. Badmus (2006) defined it as ‘extreme form of ethnic agitation for self determination as various ethnic groups assume militant posture and gradually metamorphosed into militia groups each of which bear an ethnic identity and purport to act as the machinery through which the desires of its people are sought and realised.

According to Ikelegbe 2010, there is considerable fluidity in colouration and roles and in fact militias could, and do, wear different tags at different times. Community, ethnic and youth militias, for example, could be insurgent or counterinsurgent, political and progovernment or even vigilante militias. Vigilante militias could become political and pro-government militias and criminal militias could have political or even insurgent motives. Counter-insurgent and statist militias could also be community-, ethnic- and youth-based. The Kamajor militias in Sierra Leone, though initially formed and supervised by government officials, became a grassroots popular community movement organised, supported and even sponsored by community leaders and members (Ibrahim Abdullah and Patrick Muana 1998 in Ikelegbe and Okumu 2010) .The Interahamwe in Rwanda was both a state militia and an ethnic militia (Ikelegbe and Okumu 2010).

Types Goals Cases

	Types	Goals	Cases
State militias	State Reserve army / auxiliaries of national armies	Complement state militaries	National Guard (Nigeria)
	Government- supported/ patronised	Counter insurgency	Popular Defence Force Janjaweed (Sudan) Kamajor (Sierra Leone) Fifth Brigade (Zimbabwe) Arrow Group (Uganda) Jeunesses Patriotes (Côte d’Ivoire)
Non state private militias	Political militias	militias Political objectives Struggle for political domination militias	Mambas, Cobras and Ninjas (RoC)
	Community ethnic militias	Identity rights Struggle for inclusion, resources justice	Egbesu/Oduduwa People’sCongress (Nigeria) Mungiki (Kenya) Militias under Southern Defence Force (Sudan) Interahamwe (Rwanda)
	Youth militias	Identity Resource access Insurgency	NDVF/ MEND (Nigeria)
	Vigilante militias	Security Crime control	Bakassi Boys (Nigeria)
	Warlord militias	Struggle for power and resources Commercial violence	Armed bands and cult groups in the Niger Delta (Nigeria)

Source:adapted from Ikelegbe and Okumu (2010)

3.0 Theoretical frame work

The frustration-aggression theory emerged in 1939 championed by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears of the Yale University Institute of Human Relations. The theory posits that frustration always precedes aggression, and aggression is the sure consequence of frustration.

The theory opined that frustration causes aggression, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target. Hence, innocent foreigners suffers kidnapping in the region. Significantly, theory is an eminent explanation

for riots, revolutions and insurgency in some cases like the Niger Delta region because of their age long deprivation that is expressed in their bottled up frustration and anger through violent regional conflicts in the Niger Delta region

Therefore, the violent regional conflicts in the Niger Delta may be investigated in relation to failure of the Nigerian federation. The dimension and magnitude of the perceived injustice of exclusion of various forms, such as political injustice, ethnic marginalization and economic exclusion in social services are the reasons for the persistence violent in the region.

4.0 The Path to Violent Militia Agitation in Nigerian Federation

There is a consensus among Nigerians that all is not well with the structure of the federation. Ayoade John (1998:101) has dismissed Nigerian federalism as "a forced brotherhood and sisterhood that has been the subject of continual tinkering, panel-beating and even attempted dissolution as a result of imbalances". Even General Sani Abacha, whose personalized and tyrannical rule unmasked and admitted in 1995 that there was need to address the imbalance in Nigerian. Therefore, this paper draws the nexus of a failing state and the growth of militias in the Niger Delta from the following perspectives

4.1 The Nigerian Federalism and the Birth of Militancy:

At inception of Nigerian Federalism, there was a large devolution of powers to the regions. Consequent upon this, each region enjoys considerable autonomy over its internal affairs in addition to having a regional police force and civil service etc. In contemporary times, the concept of federalism has been punctured by the elites, especially during the era of oil boom. At this time the Nigerian federalism was made to be over centralized, and all the sensitive functions were shifted to the centre. (Elaigwu, 2005:252). The derivation principle went underway and revenue allocation surfaced significantly. The centre allocate to the units discretionary percentage and control the bulk of the revenue generated from the oil rich Niger Delta. This planted the seed of discord between the region and the centre. As Saro-Wiwa aptly observes, "Oil is not only money, it has been at the centre of Nigeria federalism, for a long time, with the federal government reserving for itself, "a huge chunk of Oil revenue" (Bamidele 2004:10). This erases the minority compliance to the political authority, and replaced by violence.

The centralizing trends arose largely from the character of the political elite that needed a strong interventionist state to facilitate accumulation. Thus, the high stake of the central government in the control of crude oil became an important channel for the dominant elite to

facilitate the process of appropriating the oil wealth for private use, at the expense of oil producing communities. The expropriation of this revenue has produced a variety of negative consequences for the communities of the Niger Delta.

This resulted to various forms of responses and agitations, especially the armed conflicts in the regions (Gboyega 2008:1). Boko Haram? a different issue. The Arewa People's Congress (APC) representing the interest of the North has not been as vociferous as the MOSSOP, MOSSIEN, MOSB groups in asking for separate existence for the singular reason that the north has been in control of political power in Nigeria for the greater part of the existence of the Nigerian state (Obianyo 2007:1). If anything the APC works to spoil the separatist agitation of other groups, it is the belief of the other groups that the north has benefited more than any other group from the Nigerian Project, having been in control of state power and all the largesse accruing from it. A phenomenon Jega (1996:96) refers to as the phenomenon of reactionary ethnicity. Jega thus noted:

The faction of the ruling classes that controls political power at the federal level tends to rely on reactionary ethnicity to generate group solidarity to secure its hegemony. Those who lose out of this power game in the accumulation process, also, whip up "fairytales" and reactionary ethnicity to cultivate group solidarity so as to prop up and strengthen their contest for hegemony.

The militia agitation or liberation struggle of the Niger Delta region from the domination of the majority ethnic group in the post independent Nigeria state is an indication of the artificiality of the state, especially when the federal project has failed to create unity, group opt for a deviation from state hegemonic control and exploitation which creates state fragility.

The manifestation of this position can be captured from Boro's revolutionary speech;

Nigeria is not the natural creative (sic) of Almighty God rather it is the artificial making of the British colonial masters with the support of their Nigerian cohorts. Every permutation points to the fact that a particular region of the country is indeed all out to make itself the Lord and master over the rest. We have done everything within our limited legal powers, using the unpredictable democratic and constitutional factors to draw the attention of the establishment to the intention of some people from a particular region who are trying to make Nigeria uninhabitable for the rest of us. So far, all our cries have fallen on deaf ears, hence the inevitable and avoidable liberation crusade (Chinda, 2004 in Nabhon 2010)

The practice of federalism in Nigeria was marred by series of punctuations, resulting to calls for alternative model of governance or what is referred to as 'fiscal federalism' by the ethnic nationalities. This perspective was poignantly captures by Ramphal (1979:19) when he asserted that:

For a federation to be able to resist failure, the leaders and their followers must feel federal – they must be moved to think of themselves as one people with one common, self-interest – capable, where necessary, over-riding most other considerations of small interests... 'the good' for any must be consciously subordinated to or compatible with 'the good for all'. This then is

tantamount to an ideological commitment not to federation only as a means...but...as an end, as good form its own sake, for the sake of answering the summons of history.

Though the struggle for environment justice, equity and fairness is a major factor to the growth of militia, but many scholars have located the cause of militancy within the nature and character of the Nigerian federalism (Adejumobi 2000 125; Ugo 2004: 66; Ighodalo 2002: 30; Osaghae 1995, 332-339). Soremekun and Obi's noted that:

The oil-producing minorities through their spokesperson, pressure groups and demonstrations continue to seek redress within a federation they see as being structured against them, especially in terms of revenue allocation formula and the continued lack of development in their areas. (Soremekun and Obi 1993)

As Akinyemi observed;

The crisis in the Niger Delta region is more than an environmental issue, it is more than a developmental issue and it is more than a security issue. It is a combination of all these as it is now further compounded by becoming part of the struggle for a true federal and fiscal structure (Akinyemi 2002:5).

However, in Nigeria, the ideological commitment necessary to make federalism work is grossly lacking right from its formative years, Nigerian leaders have been demonstrating a lot of scepticism about it. This finds expression in various appellate that have been used to describe Nigeria's unity and its federal structure such as Tafawa Balewa's 'the mistake of 1914' and Obafemi Awolowo's description of Nigerian federalism as 'an abominable and disruptive British heritage (Abdulrasheed 2007).

Federalism does not presuppose strangulation of the units by the centre and accumulation of all resources of the units and further allocate it in a manner to deny minority group of their legitimate fiscal power and authority over their resources. It is from this aspect that federalism is referred to as the 'worship of an unknown god' by those who subscribe to the federal idea (Ayoade 1982:3). According to Ikelegbe (nd)

The practice of federalism in Nigeria has engendered considerable dissatisfaction. It has not engendered a sense of equity, justice and fairness. It has generated considerably the feelings of marginalization and domination. It has not built on voluntariness, participation and popular will; it has also built a platform for fierce competition among the constituent units and further demonstrates a sense of betrayal and manipulation to promote ethnic agenda within a united framework, a reflection to the Nigerian federalism as a union without unity and has promoted violence and militancy in the Niger Delta.

The agitation of Nigeria's ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta also shows a gradual drift towards disintegration, providing a chaotic atmosphere emanating from lack of purposeful and visionary leadership. It is on this backdrop that Ikelegbe (2005) opined that,

The Nigerian state is failing. It post independence hope of greatness and of giant-hood in Africa is faltering. The project has remained at best problematic. A major manifestation of this failure is evident by the resurgence of identity politics and conflict, and their violent repression by the state in a ruthless and uncompromising manner (Ikelegbe 2005:70).

4.2 Ethnicity and Militancy: Militancy in the Niger Delta has been ethnically charged, as it has been used as a motivator for the underlying struggle for political and monetary gains in the Nigerian state. Yet it is a secondary driver of militancy in the Niger Delta, even if used as a primary agency for violence.

Ethnicity is a fact of Nigerian life. Nigeria is a federation of ethnic groups and the rights and resources of the ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta region have been usurped by the majority ethnic groups, having the Niger Deltans consigned to slavery and possible extinction. Hence, the minorities hold the view of Obafemi Awolowo that;

In a true federation, each ethnic group, no matter how small is entitled to the same treatment as any other ethnic group, no matter how large. Therefore, the presence of neglect, marginalization in Nigerian state brought to the fore, the growth of militia in the Niger Delta.

4.3 The State, Oil Multinationals and the Construction of Militias: In the Niger Delta, gas flares burn 24 hours a day in many communities without alternative provision to the plight of the people, a constant reminder to the people that the oil companies are working with the government and not the people. Again, the impact of significant oil spills across the region since the mid-1960's has also reduced the potential for traditional livelihoods, fishing and farming which has left the oil wealth region to a poverty stricken region. The oil companies do not dialogue substantially with the people, rather these companies parley with government and chose to harass arrest and detain members of host communities when they protest for their well-being.

4.4 Oil and Structural Deficiency of the Nigerian Federation: The military created several states and local governments during their regimes which was design in a manner that the north had more and larger than the rest put together which opportune them to receive more federal presence, employment and oil money of the Niger Delta through federal allocation against the derivation principle of the Nigerian federation. This means that the Niger Delta agitation is also a reflection of these unequal units that has engendered the northern domination in the Nigerian politics and marginalization of the Niger Delta region.

4.5 State Repression and the Emergence of Militias: The Nigerian State responded to the regional protest, agitation in a brutality and suppressive manner. Over the years, the federal government merely criminalized the demands of the ethnic militias and regional violence and

adopted an extreme force as a solution. Hence state is often referred to as lacking dialectical approach as a veritable tool for conflict resolution in a secular state like Nigeria.

According to Boro

“Year after year, we were clenched in tyrannical chains and led through a dark alley of perpetual political and social deprivation. Strangers in our own country! Inevitably, therefore, the day would have to come for us to fight for our long-denied right to self-determination,” Boro 1963

To Ken Saro-Wiwa, “The revenue sharing formula adopted by the Government amounts to *“robbing Peter to pay Paul and trying to kill the hen that lays the golden egg”* (Ejior, Ritchie 2002:1). Therefore, he agitated until he was killed by the military government under the leadership of Sani Abacha. According to Ikelegbe,

Militant actions against the oil economy have always been accompanied with state repression. The mobile police and the military have been deployed against protesting communities with terrible fatalities at Umuechem in 1990, Ikebiri I and II in 1999, Choba in 1999 and Odi in 1999. When MOSOP began mass protests against Shell in Ogoniland, the federal government sent in a security force to maintain continued oil exploitation. The force became an army of occupation for several years that looted, maimed, raped, killed, and harassed the Ogoni people (Ikelegbe2006:115).

The Nigeria Mobile Police Force (MOPOL) was too brutal to protesters against Shell at Umuechem in Rivers state, and the Community was virtually destroyed on 31 October 1990; 80 people were killed and about 500 houses were leveled, thus triggering an unprecedented number of Internally Displaced People (IDP) in the history of that community (ICG, 2006a: 6-7).

The Rivers State Internal Security Task Force, a well-armed military outfit, was primarily formed for the repression, suppression, harassment, humiliation, arrest and unlawful detention of members of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) during their campaign against Shell and self-determination in Ogoniland between 1993 and 1996. Apart from the unconstitutional execution of the Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight Ogoni compatriots, the force, which virtually metamorphosed to an army of occupation and raped, tortured, maimed, looted and summarily executed about 2000 people extra-judicially (HRW, 1999: 9; Adeola 2001: 40).

A combined team task force invaded of Choba community to suppress a protest against WILBROS (a foreign oil servicing firm) in 1999; 10 people were killed, 25 women raped and the communities were temporarily deserted (CLO, 2002: 50-61). In 1999 hundreds were killed and property worth about N25 billion were destroyed in Odi (Emordi and Azelama 2006). In 2003 (JTF) made up of over 4,000 troops were deployed with codenamed “Operation Restore Hope” for effective suppression protesters in a violent manner (Ikelegbe, 2005). In October 2005, Odioma was invaded and over 17 people were killed, including infants (ICG, 2006)

The JTF also descended on agitators in Gbaramantu kingdom especially to crush Tompolo, who in a reactive action launched attack on oil tank farms to cause enormous loss for their

compromise that ended with federal government amnesty deal and creation Niger Delta ministry.

Following the launching of the Ogoni Bill of Rights in 1993 by Ken Saro-Wiwa, he was framed up and tried by a special military tribunal (in what the rest of the world termed a kangaroo trial) which convicted and sentenced him with 8 others to death. He was hanged on November 8, 1995 amidst international uproar and condemnation. During which he stated:

You can kill the messenger and you cannot kill the message, in his statement to the court he said "After all your judgment, convicting me is a mere formality. From the second day of the killing of the four prominent Ogoni sons, I've been adjudged guilty. "Today is certainly a black day for the black man. In the course of the trial, I have been brutalized, my family almost ruined. I am a man of ideas in and out of prison -- my ideas will live." I would like to die "in bed, dreaming." "My only regret is that I was ever born a minority in Nigeria." And I would like my epitaph to read as follows "Here lies the gentle, sweet man Nigeria loved to cheat. They denied him even in death the normal six feet of earth (Kayode Oladele 2004:1).

True to the words of Ken Saro-Wiwa, after his death, his vision resonated deep into the youths of the Niger Delta region (Welch 1995:9). The hijacks and attacks of oil installations became more pronounced and Ijaw Youth Council was formed on the 11 December 1998 at Kaiama town. (Agbo2007:75; Emordi etal 2006).

5. The Phases and Growth of Militancy for Resource Autonomy in the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta struggle for environmental, social and political equity and justice has taken place in six phases.

The first phase of militancy emanated from the colonial alienation and resistance of exploitative trade bargains. Therefore, alienation is a major cause of militancy and the brutal suppression of the Niger Deltans dates back to history. The deportation of King Jaja of Opobo (1887), Nana of Itsekiri (1892), King Ibanichuka of Okrika (1896), Ovoranmen (1897), and the deportation of King Koko of Brass are cardinal evidence in this regard. The bone of contention between the traditional political leadership and the Colonial State was the resolve of the Niger Delta rulers to defend their commercial and political rights which were threatened by the economic activities of the imperial Royal Niger Company (Tamuno 1972).

The second and the rest phases were pushed forward by (Ikelegbe 2005). According to him these phases was prior to independence,

Began first as an agitation for special developmental attention because of the unique ecological difficulties of the region, and the third largest wetland in the world, comprising estuaries, swamps, rivers, rivulets, creeks, mangrove swamp and lowland rain forest, is a difficult terrain with enormous developmental challenges. Second, it was also part of the minority agitation for special protection and development guarantees. The agitation in part resulted in the establishment of the Willinks Commission of 1958. Its recommendation led to the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1962. The struggle at this phase was a region wide political agitation led by political leaders such as Harold

Dappa Biriye of the Rivers Movement. The discovery and commercial production of oil in the region intensified the agitation as it began to include the equitable reward and benefits from oil. (Ikelegbe 2005)

The third was a militant phase, very brief phase in 1966. Following the weaknesses of the NDDB and continued under-development and neglect of the region, a group of youths led by Isaac Adaka Boro, then a former cadet sub inspector, from present day Bayelsa State, organized and led the Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) to declare a separate state of "Niger Delta Peoples Republic" from Nigeria on 23 February 1966.

According to Boro

Today is a great day, not only in your lives, but also in the history of the Niger Delta. Perhaps, it will be the greatest day for a very long time. This is not because we are going to bring the heavens down, but because we are going to demonstrate to the world what and how we feel about oppression... Remember your 70-year-old grandmother who still farms before she eats; remember also your poverty-stricken people; remember, too, your petroleum which is being pumped out daily from your veins; and then fight for your freedom." "For this reason, and for the good name of the Ijaws, do not commit atrocities such as rape, looting or robbery. Whatever people say, we must maintain our integrity. Moreover, you know it is against Ijaw tradition to mess about with women during war. You have been purified these many days. Be assured that if you do not get yourselves defiled within the period of battle, you shall return home safe even if we fail". Boro warned and the men of the Niger Delta Volunteer Force each took the following oath before the revolution: "I...a Niger Delta citizen from the town of...today herein sworn in at the Revolutionary Camp of the Niger Delta Volunteer Service, as (an officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned or a serviceman) do solemnly declare to uphold the natural rights and integrity of the Niger Delta peoples and fight with my life for the restoration of same. So help me God. (Boro, in Akpobulokemi 2003)

After these electrifying words, the 27-year-old Isaac Adaka Boro declared the Niger Delta Peoples Republic (NDPR) on February 23, 1966, kick-started the "12-Day Revolution" which drew the attention of the world to the Niger Delta struggle. This was closely followed by the declaration of the Republic of Biafra which culminated in the 30month civil war (Ikelegbe 2005).

The fourth phase from the 1970s saw disparate, un-coordinated and localized conflicts by host communities (HCs) against the MNCs. The communities abandoned to poverty and lack of basic facilities and infrastructure even in the midst of the oil boom of the 1970s began to direct their grievances against the MNCs. The militant activities of this era was the nonviolent protests mainly involving blockages of the access roads to oil facilities and occupation of oil facilities. (Ikelegbe 2005) The fifth phase (1990–1996) was occasioned first, by the insensitivity of MNCs and the state to HCs agitations. The state supported by MNCs became more repressive against the HCs agitation through attacks and murders, thus destroying the protesting communities, including Umuechem and Ogoni in Rivers State. The Niger Delta people began to organize the struggles through civil, community, ethnic and regional groupings. The first major group was the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) subsequently, the groups in the constitutional conference of 1994–1995 won the concession of an increased allocation of 13% of oil revenues based on the derivation principle. During this period, the region was militarized and the special military task force under Major Paul Okutimo terrorized the Ogoni region between 1992 and 1998. In 1995, after a kangaroo trial and killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others leaders intensified the struggle (Ikelegbe 2005). The Sixth phase was MEND.

The killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa was an eye opener and created a bond among the ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta for their immediate formation violent groups such as Egbesu

Boys of Africa, Ogbokunne, Meinbutus, Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationalities in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), led by Asari Dokubo. His arrest by federal government further strengthened the formation of other militias groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

5.1 Militancy: The Evidence of Nigerian State Failure

Though, subsequent upon the protests and agitations of the region, states were created and the Niger Delta got three out of the twelve that were announced in 1967 to enable the Federal Government to gain support from the Niger Deltan region to win the Nigeria civil war.

The Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) established in 1961 based on the recommendations of the Willink's Commission. The Oil and Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) was also created in 1992. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Ministry of Niger Delta was also created in set up in 2000 and 2008 respectively.

These measures have not genuinely addressed the essential problems and are considered as stopgap methods and deception to the region. Thus violence continued unabated till the federal government joint amnesty by late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and former president Goodluck Jonathan on 25 June 2009.

Hence the Nigerian federalism failed as a device for promoting unity in diversity and became crisis prone. This is what Ayoade calls '*Reconciliation middle between separateness and unity, anarchy and emporium and between balkanization and territorial integration, In Africa, federalism has served as a device for providing unity without union and to delicately balance national unity and sub-national diversity (Ayoade 1998:3.)*'

In other words the history of human existence proved that groups often challenge the authority of the state, seeking for ethnic interest or greater regional autonomy. Essentially this is what Akinyemi described as

The rise of militias is a feature of plural societies: societies which have fractured structurally and where the laid down mechanism for dealing with such pluralism has failed or is in the process of failing..." Each of these militia groups claim to be representing the political interest of their various ethnic groups as well as the security of life and property within their communities. (Akinyemi 2002:1)

The rise of ethnic Militias in the Niger Delta emanated from the centralized Nigeria federalism, created an ungovernable space for militia occupation in the Niger Delta regions.

6. Conclusion

The one of the major manifestation of Nigeria state failure is the growing ethnic militias in the Niger Delta which has posed a serious threat to the survival of the Nigeria project. The cause of the failure is the fact that the state is incapacitated, weak, ineffective, and unstable political institutions, bad governance, privatization of the state, personal and exclusionary rule which has engendered youth violence and contestation against the state powers and its hegemony to promote a pervasive strife that encourages exit from loyalty to the state to their primordial conclave as instrumental to the emergence of regional agitation in the Niger Delta. Therefore, violent militia activities is a child of necessity, evidenced from the growth of ethnic militia in Angola, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Somalia which are also directly related to similar odds such as centralization of power.

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