

YOUTH MILITIAS, SELF DETERMINATION AND RESOURCE  
CONTROL STRUGGLES IN THE NIGER-DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA

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# YOUTH MILITIAS, RESOURCE CONTROL AND SELF DETERMINATION STRUGGLES IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA

## INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta region, Nigeria's oil belt has been the site of a generalized ethnic and regional struggle for self-determination since 1998, the location of often-violent confrontations between local ethnic communities and agents of the Nigerian state and oil companies involved in the extraction and exploitation of oil in the area. What began as community agitation has undoubtedly undergone several transformations. The first involved the flowering of civil society, which mobilized a popular civil struggle. The second saw the extension of the agitation from that against multinational oil companies (MNCs) to include the Nigerian state. The third transformation involved the elevation of the agitation from purely developmental issues to overtly political demands such as restructuring of the federal system, resource control and the resolution of the national question through a conference of ethnic nationalities. The current and fourth stage of the transformation has seen the entrance of youths, youth militancy and youth militias with volatile demands and ultimatums that have accentuated the scale and intensity of confrontations and violence with the multinationals and the state.

The youths presently spearhead and constitute the vanguard of Niger-delta conflict nationalists. They chart the course of methods, tactics and strategies and define the momentum, vitality, vocalization and diction of conflicts. The insurgency has involved diverse well armed and fairly well trained youth militias, which, using speed boats and operating fairly freely in the swamps, creeks, estuaries, rivers and coastal areas of the region, have engaged the Nigerian military and seized oil facilities, ships barges, workers and equipments. Increasingly, the youth militancy has become criminalized, with the region being transformed into an arena of economic crimes, violence, and war. The present Youths-led collective action in the Niger-delta draws inspiration from the 1966 declaration of a Niger Delta Republic by a group of nationalist youths led by cadet sub inspector Isaac Adaka Boro that involved an armed insurrection against the Nigerian state and the seizure of oil facilities. The recent and ongoing conflicts have witnessed massive deployments of the Nigerian Army, Navy and other security agencies and represent the most prolonged, extensive and intensive internal military action since the Nigerian civil war, with devastating effects on local and national security and stability and on global oil and gas related economic growth.

The negative impact of violence associated with youth-led self-determination struggles in the Niger Delta and the urgent need to resolve the complex crises invite an in-depth examination of the Youth, Militias and Self-determination nexus in the region. In other words, there is a need to understand the history, changing contexts and local and social processes and dynamics of the conflicts in the Niger-delta to guide policy-making. Who are the main parties to the conflict? What are their perceptions, values, attitudes and interests? What has been the role of civil society, gender, local elite, traditional governance structures in the prosecution, sustenance and management of the conflicts? How do youths perceive, formulate and respond to the resource control struggles? What social, economic, cultural and political processes conduce with youth responses and methods? What are the methods, strategies and consequences of youth engagement? What is the nature of state, corporate and international perceptions, responses and interventions? What are the efforts and results of conflict containment, management and peacemaking efforts and peacekeeping efforts?

These are the questions that this study attempts to provide answers to in the sections that follow. But first, we shall establish the conceptual and theoretical levers of analysis.

## 2 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

### 2.1 YOUTHS AND CONTENTIOUS COLLECTIVE ACTION

In Africa, young people constitute the majority of the population and are at the center of societal interactions and transformations. Yet children and youth are often placed at the margins of the public domain and major political, socio-economic, and cultural processes. In other words, "youth ordinarily is a category of early adulthood, emerging in activity and involvement in society but somewhat limited by societal values and some levels of dependency and perhaps agency" (Ikelegbe, 2006). As a demographic and social category, the youth is characterized by considerable tensions and conflicts generated by the process of social and physical maturation and in the adjustment to societal realities. Briefly put, youths are engaged in a struggle for survival, identity and inclusion, a struggle that shapes how they " as a social group respond to or more broadly relate to state and society in terms of engagement or disengagement, incorporation or alienation, rapprochement or resistance, integration or deviance" (Ikelegbe, 2006).

Youths are "makers of society", as they contribute to the structures, norms, rituals, and directions of society while also being shaped by them. They make themselves, through inventive forms of self-realization and an ingenious politics of identity (De Boeck, 1999a), and they make society by acting as a political force, as sources of resistance and resilience, and as ritual or even supernatural agents and generators of morality and healing through masquerade and play (Argenti, 2001, De Boeck & Honwana, 2005). On the other hand, they appear as 'breakers' in various ways: as risk factors for themselves through suicide, drug use, alcohol, and unsafe sex; by breaking societal norms, conventions, and rules; sometimes by breaking limbs and lives; and sometimes by breaking the chains of oppression, as the role of young people in fighting South African apartheid so powerfully illustrated (De Boeck & Honwana, 2005). Youth is therefore a tension-filled, highly unstable category whose management is of crucial importance for societal stability and development as it is a zone of restlessness, anxiety and chaos for the youth and society.

It is, as "breakers of societal norms", that youth in Africa is commonly perceived, characterized by suicide and drug use and most importantly by involvement in violence insurgencies and civil wars. Why this common perception? Or as expressed by Ikelegbe (2006) "what translates youth frustration and despair into mass action, insurgency and confrontations"? The dominant perspective in the literature sees the youths as "Breakers" as being rooted in a "negative youth culture". For Kaplan (1994), negative youth culture in Africa is the product of socio-environmental factors like urban congestion, polygamy, disease, environmental stress and superficial religion which all lead to a creation of a new barbarism of crime and violence. Richards (1996) sees negative youth culture as rooted in the collapse of the educational and social service systems, unemployment and physical hardships. The emergence of violence and armed rebellion is thus a response of frustrated youths to a failing or collapsed state and state institutions and services.

Abdallah on the other hand sees negative youth culture as a subaltern phenomenon, " a lumpen class of half-educated, unemployed and unemployable, informal or underground economy based marginal youths prone to indiscipline, crime and violence"( Ikelegbe 2006). The lumpen youths and

their negative culture it is claimed, would transform into opposition and challenge, which may provide the support base for violent struggles. From these perspectives, youth involvement in violence and crime can be ascribed to a disposing culture characterized by nihilism, populism, spontaneity, violence, resentments of the state and deviance from societal norms. Since such youth culture is different from that prescribed by society it is demonized by society, with youths being considered either to be at risk or to pose a risk to society. Children who are 'out of place' (Connolly & Ennew, 1996), who do not readily fit within societal fantasies of what youths should be are quickly perceived as "demonic", "discontented", and "disorderly" and are often feared and punished. The youth in Africa is thus described in popular and academic literature as "a social category in crisis, excluded, marginalized, threatened, victimized, abused and consequently angry, bitter, frustrated, desperate and violent. The popular perception is that it is such alienated youths that drift into violence as they respond to alienation by "becoming uncontrollably aggressive and violent ... establishing societies, frightening the middle classes and reinforcing, if not justifying dictatorships" (El-Kenz, 1996) .

As pointed out by Olawale (2003) and reiterated by Ikelegbe (2006) the negative youth culture argument has several weaknesses. First is that it generalizes an all inclusive and monolithic negative youth culture and presents it as tending in one direction in terms of manifestations and response. Second, negative youth culture is not specific to Africa but general to youths all over the world with such culture not having generated a worldwide cauldron of armed rebellion. Olawale provides a contrary explanation for youth violence. He locates this, not in a "negative youth culture but in "state weakness and collapse". For him, "the weak and failing public authorities, neo-patrimonialism, corruption, repression, abuse and other manifestations of state decay generate armed insurgencies and civil wars which pervert youth culture" (Olawale, 2003). For him, therefore, the emphasis should rather be on the inability of institutions of African state and society to mediate the transition process from youth to adulthood in Africa. It is such inability that motivates African youths to seek or create alternative social safety networks in the form of counter-culture groups or makes youth culture susceptible to perversion by armed insurgencies and civil wars generated by perverse manifestations of state decay.

The perversion of youth culture is reinforced by the fact that institutions such as rites of passage and other rituals of initiation or age-grade associations, which normally channeled forces of rebellion emanating from children and youth, as from other subaltern groups like women and structurally embedded in social dynamics which strengthened the social equilibrium are rapidly eroding. With traditional kin-based, ethnic, and multigenerational associations that manage the processual transformations from boy to man and from girl to woman having lost their taken-for-granted status and social significance, youths seek new avenues for socialization in the forms of gangs and its associated multiple subcultures expressed in terms of dress, music, specific modes of violence.

## 2.2 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: INSTRUMENTS OF CONTENTIOUS COLLECTIVE ACTION

Alienated from society, youths, along with other marginal or subalterns mostly embark on what Tarrow has termed "Contentious Politics" or Contentious Collective Action defined as "collective action embarked upon by people who lack regular access to institutions who act in the name of new/or unacceptable claims and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or

authorities”(Tarrow, 1999). In other words, contentious collective actions are attempts to redress allegations and perceptions of discrimination, exclusion, oppression, injustice, domination and exploitation which all arise from denials and violations of human rights. The bottom line of contentious collective action is the demand for rights. When youth action is seen as a form of “contentious politics”, popular perception of youth and youth revolt as “ill-informed, irrelevant, unstructured and largely episodic expressions of violence becomes erroneous.

For contentious politics to be mounted, coordinated and sustained, it needs the backing of “a dense social network and galvanized by culturally resonant and action oriented symbols. In other words it requires a social movement, “ those sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents”(Tarrow, 1999, 2) for its sustenance.

Social movements are important to the sustenance of contentious politics because

- a) Their ideological principles are essentially a diverse range of beliefs, ideas and values that are dominantly radical in terms of relations to existing configurations
- b) Their selections of practices, behaviours and culture challenge dominant ideas
- c) They pursue goals that often relate to reforms and change (Doyle & Mceachern, 2001)
- d) The agitation and claims they push often stem or emanate from grievances and social discontent against dominant practices behaviour and conduct in the political economy such as exclusion, marginality and inequity
- e) They are often populist and embrace a non-formal, non-institutional, grassroots politics or mass politics. It often comprises the popular forces of youth and women groups, poor students, artisans and so on. Its politics is that from below
- f) Their methodology for pressing claims is mass mobilization and collective direct actions. This involves protests, rallies and demonstrations. Sometimes their methods might include militant resistance, which may include blockades and disruptions.
- g) They usually construct a platform for action and change. They create and work through an array of local, national and international linkages, networks and alliances between numerous groupings and organizations. Their actions involve co-operation, collaboration, complementarity and mutual support among individuals, groups and organizations in the pursuance of agenda and claims.

In summary, social movements involve“ collective challenges mounted by relatively marginal groups against powerful elites and dominant ideologies”(Medearis, 2005) and represent the main expression of subaltern/marginal opposition to dominant power structure in society. Social movements are the dominant form of expression of contentious political action because “it is the main and often the only recourse that ordinary people possess against better equipped opponents or powerful states”.

### 2.3 FROM CONTENTION TO VIOLENCE

The strategy or posture adopted by a social movement at any point in time is a function of the “Political Opportunities” and “Constraints” that encourage or constraint participation in contention. Political opportunities refer to “consistent ... dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics”. Political constraints on the other hand, refer to “factors-like repression- that discourages contention”. The key source of political opportunity or constraint lies in state action. The state is more than a target of movements; it is the means by which a

movement defines its identity and strategy (Olarinmoye: 2007) because of “the great concentration of power in nation-states and the propensity to deploy them as and when due” (Ukeje, 2001, 353). Thus it is the character of the state as “instigator of violence”, that structures the strategies deployed by movements involved in contentious politics.

In Africa, the state is strong in terms of an over-developed capacity for violence and enforcement of its will and policies. At the same time it has an underdeveloped capacity to meet the political, social and economic needs of the majority of its people. Its marginalized peoples are thus pushed to engage in contentious political action through social movements that demand for fundamental changes that threaten state elites. The response is repression as the state in Africa is prepared to have recourse to repressive violence, not because it has much chance of succeeding, but because its own inherent weaknesses prevent recourse to less violent alternatives”(Mason & Dale, 1989). While repression can silence or curtail group action, it has the consequence of radicalizing movement action, as “violence under this condition becomes the easiest of all options available for use by a disadvantaged group because it does not have a high threshold of social transaction costs in terms of preparation and is also easier for isolated, illiterate and local groups to imitate”. In other words, in Africa where the daily lives of the majority of people is characterized by “powerlessness” (Aina, 1996), repression by the state, of movements that demand for changes that will end powerlessness leads to the contentious politics taking a violent turn as state repression is vigorously resisted by the people leading to civil wars, anarchy and collapse of states.

Youths are principal actors in the transition from contentious politics to violence because they are most affected by situation of powerlessness, which state oppression aggravates. For youths, violence becomes a bargaining weapon for negotiating, legitimizing or violating (oppressive) public order. Hence youth revolt as witnessed in Niger-delta and other parts of Africa are not “ill-informed, irrelevant, unstructured and largely episodic expressions of violence” (Momoh, 1996) but facets of contentious politics aimed at ending powerlessness, especially in the face of state oppression and callous indifference.

### **3. NIGER-DELTA: CONTEXT, ISSUES, ACTORS AND DYNAMICS**

#### **3.1 The Niger-Delta: Definition**

Two key factors influence the conception of Niger-delta within the context of Nigerian politics. The first is geography. The Niger-delta comprises the coastal low lands and waters-marshland, creeks, tributaries and lagoons-of the southernmost ends of Nigeria that drain the Niger River into the Atlantic at the Bight of Biafra (Ibeanu, 2000). At its core are the littoral states of Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Cross Rivers states of the south-south geopolitical zone of the country, and the riverine parts of Ondo state. it is home to over forty minority ethnic groups, including the Ijaws, Urhobo, Itshekiri, Efik, Ibibio, Ogoni, Ilaje, Kalabari, Ikwere, Isokos, Ndokwas.

The second is political whose main indicator is the presence of Crude Oil. Crude oil “whose exploitation has multiplied the environmental and developmental problems of the various Niger-delta communities” (Osaghae, forthcoming) has become the most critical factor in the definition of the Niger-delta. The tendency is now to regard the oil-bearing states, which mostly belong to the south-south (minorities) geopolitical zone as constituting the Niger-delta. As used here, Niger-delta

is taken to refer to "Calabar-Ogoja Rivers and present day Delta state axis" which as pointed out by Osaghae, "remains the hub of what emerged as distinctive Niger-delta politics".

The difficult terrain of Niger-delta has over time been used to justify the under development of the region. In other words, it is argued "although the area had what should have been something of a head start in being one of the earliest parts of the country to have contact with Europeans and forces of westernization, its terrain constituted a major obstacle to development" (Osaghae, forthcoming). The obstacle that terrain constitutes was acknowledged by the Willink Commission (appointed by the colonial government to enquire into the fears of minorities and the means for allaying them), which recommended the establishment of a special board, the Niger-Delta Development Board, to address the particular problems of the region.

But Niger-deltans argue that though the difficult terrain argument has some validity, it is a ruse. Their region's underdevelopment is political not geographical, because Lagos, the former federal capital has an equally difficult terrain and sits mainly on land reclaimed from the sea but it has modern and well developed infrastructure". Similarly, "many arid and desert parts of the country have been transformed into modern habitations". Thus, for Niger-deltans, the underdevelopment of their region is the consequence of deliberate policies of discrimination; deprivation and criminal neglect that minority groups in general have suffered from in the country. They thus see their present predicament as resulting from direct violation of their fundamental human rights by the Nigerian state. It is such claims of human rights violation that lie at the heart of Niger-delta demands, which focus on equity and justice in state-Niger-delta relations and make of it an exercise in contentious politics. Allegations and perceptions of discrimination, exclusion, oppression, injustice, domination and exploitation which Niger-deltans claim arise from denials and violations of their human rights have proved indispensable to the emergence and sustenance of their various contentious collective actions since independence.

### **3.2 SELF DETERMINATION AND RESOURCE CONTROL**

Two central issues constitute the ideological basis of the Niger Delta struggle. The first is self determination which refers to the choice of a nationality to live together in its own way, determine its own political fate, preserve its own affairs and develop itself or even democratize as it may deem fit. (Okwu – Okafor, 1994: 89)<sup>1</sup>. It relates to the right or freedom of a people that are subordinated, oppressed, dominated, colonized or even marginalized to assert and constitute themselves into a separate state. This right is guaranteed by the United Nations Charter and the African Charter on Human Rights, to all cultural, religious and linguistic minorities and peoples as part of the human strive for liberation. Self determination connotes the desire of a people for self existence, self management, self development and sovereignty over resources. This in one word is autonomy. Self determination does not necessarily mean separate and independent existence. Its end may be, at least for a while, the desire for cultural autonomy, ethnic rights, and justice, political representation and inclusion, development and resource flow.

Whatever it's meaning and extent, the right or freedom to self determination has driven numerous peoples all over the earth, to mobilize, solidarize, and build nationalism and to organize resistance through popular movements and institutions of violence. Self determination struggles have been fierce and violent and have several times manifested in inter-ethnic, religious, and regional conflicts, rebellions and civil wars.

The issue of self determination has arisen in Nigeria, first out of ethnic deprivation, exclusion, exploitation, discrimination and disadvantage, particularly in relation to resource contribution and distribution, political representation and developmental attention. It dates back to era of the regions within which minority groups, were marginalized by the ethnic majorities. The struggle for the ethnic collective or minority rights and ensuing ethnic nationalism and mobilization which began then resurged in the 1990s. The second issue in the discourse of self determination, in Nigeria is the ascendancy of the national question, which relates to questions and demands as to the existence, shape and sustainability of the Nigerian nation. This first emerged in the 1960s and has resurged since the 1990s in the Niger Delta region.

Self determination (contentious political) struggles in the Niger Delta has taken two forms. The first is what Osaghae (2001) has called "Accommodation Seeking Nationalism", that is demands for autonomy, for separate or "own" states and local governments within the Nigerian state as solution to the problems of minorities or powerlessness, the process and condition of deprivation and exclusion from the benefits and rewards of society" that has characterized their existence within the Nigerian state. Accommodation Seeking Nationalism is largely peaceful and non-violent in approach involving the use of negotiation and bargaining and constitutional mechanisms. The second (and current form) is "Self-Determination Nationalism or Resource Control Nationalism". Resource control nationalism is characterized by violence due to the widely varying conception of resource control held by the various actors in Niger-delta and the difficulty in reconciling such conceptions. Resources to the communities and peoples of the Niger Delta is not just "oil and gas" but include land, forests and water. Control for Niger-delta communities mean "ownership and control" of all resources which signify the freedom to willingly dispose of these resources, to negotiate its alienation or extraction without reference to a violent and or an undemocratic state.

The Ogoni struggle was the first ethnic assertion or claim to self determination of the second and more recent form of nationalism within the Niger Delta region (Okwu-Okafor, 1994:89-118).The Ogoni struggle was a struggle for physical existence, environmental justice, resources control, political participation, self rule and political autonomy. The Ijaws followed suit by the mid 1990s, by seeking political restructuring that guarantees the Ijaws, self rule, resource control, self development and regional autonomy within a true federal framework. In the Kaiama Declaration, the Ijaw youths, expressly sought self determination, self government and resource control and justice within Nigeria that should be restructured through a sovereign national conference of ethnic nationalities.

The second ideological basis of the youth struggle is Resource control. Briefly put, the concept of resource control that is dominant in the Niger-delta has three main components: a) the power and right of a community to raise funds by way of tax on persons, matters, services and materials within its territory b) the executive right to the ownership and control of resources, both natural and created within its territory, c) The right to customs duties on goods destined for its territory and excise duties on goods manufactured in its territories. Thus for communities of the Niger-delta, resource control signifies a change in the demands of Niger-delta community from " fairer sharing to total control of the natural resources found in a state by the state for use in its development at its own pace". For its proponents, resource control as conceived above is about self-determination and group survival and so not negotiable because resource control is essential for the survival of



the South-South peoples and is a sine qua non to the continued existence of the people of the area in the Nigerian federation.

The most articulate presentation of Niger-Deltans conception of "resource control" today can be found in the "Kaiama Declaration" of the Ijaw people proclaimed on the 11th of December 1998. The Kaiama Declaration, coined, sharpened and popularized the term "resource control" and set the tone for the present debate on the matter. Article 1 of the declaration, asserted that ownership of "all land and natural resources within the Ijaw territory as belonging to the Ijaw communities" because they are "the basis of our survival". Article 2 insisted on the "peoples' and communities' right to ownership and control of our lives and resources" while article 4 advised all oil companies and staff operating in the Ijaw area to withdraw from Ijaw land" pending the resolution of the issues of resource ownership and control in the Ijaw area of the Niger Delta".

The two other principal actors in the politics of Niger-delta, the MNCs and the Nigerian state do not share this nationalist conception of resource control. MNCs believe that resource control agitation by the people of the Niger Delta is merely a clamor for a return of parts of oil and logging revenue into the region. They see it as an exercise in fiscal federalism and not necessarily a change in status quo as they believe that once the states have been settled, there will be peace. To the federal government resource control advocacy and its meaning is a call for war or a break up of Nigeria. Government leaders believe that an agitation for control of resources is nothing but "separatist tendencies" that must not be tolerated, but crushed.

The Niger-delta struggle, from the above analysis is thus an exercise in contentious collective action aimed at ending discrimination, exclusion, oppression, injustice, domination and exploitation which Niger-deltans claim arise from denials and violations of their human rights by the Nigerian state. Such contentious collective action is pursued by "...resistance movements [which] emerge...with an ideology based on the principle of self-determination as a driving force for ethnic autonomy. Such movements were the expressed actions undertaken by the various ethnic nationalities to make their formal declarations and issuance of bill of rights in demand for freedom, access to basic needs and resources, protection from environmental pollution and equal participation in the polity"

### **3.3 Stages in Niger-Delta Contentious Collective Action**

Contentious political action in the Niger-delta can be made sense of by focusing on the activities of the principal actors involved in the struggle. Niger-delta Self-determination struggles have been pursued by two sets of actors, namely, the elders/elites and the youths. The elders/elites are the businessmen, retired civil servants, traditional leaders and political leaders in the Niger-delta. They dominate the political, economic and traditional power structures of the region. Their prominence flows from their role as intermediaries between the ordinary people of the region and the state/multinational corporations exploiting the oil reserves of the region. Through their role as intermediaries they are able to build-up great prestige and wealth with which they have established region-wide client networks. The Niger-delta elite provides a classic example of the phenomenon of 'Straddling" with one and the same person simultaneously occupying the key posts in political, economic and traditional spheres of public life in the Niger-delta, making of the Niger-delta elite a very powerful person. The elite in the Niger-delta generally adopt a peaceful, non-violent approach that involves the use of negotiation and bargaining with key stakeholders, principally the state and

multi-national corporations operating in the Niger-delta. Elites have generally pursued their demands through two types of movements a) socio-political movements and b) ethno-cultural movements.

**Socio-political movements** have related to the region's struggle from the advocacy, influence, opinion and political engineering planks. They have constructed numerous platforms for concerted regional action, which from the early 1990s have included minority nationalism, regional autonomy, federal restructuring, resource control, ethnic and minority rights and equity and political representation. The central grievance of socio-political groups is neglect and marginalization in terms of political representation and developmental attention, deprivation and disinheritance arising from poor benefits from the oil economy and more specifically the decline in the proportion of derivation-based allocation from the federation account. Usually, these groups are pan ethnic and region wide and comprise the very top crop of the region's elite.

Though numerous groups existed from the 1950s, more recent groups have emerged beginning from the 1990s such as; the Organization for the Restoration of Actual Rights of Oil Communities, Southern Minorities Forum, Ethnic Minority Rights Organization of Nigeria, Conference of Traditional Rulers of Oil Producing States, Association of Minority Oil States, The Niger Delta Peace and Development Forum, Movement for the Protection and Survival of Oil Mineral and Natural Gas Producing Communities of Nigeria, Niger Delta Professionals, Niger Delta Patriots, South-South Empowerment Forum, South-South Peoples Assembly, South-South Peoples Conference, South-South Peoples Forum and the Union of Niger Delta (Ikelegbe, 2005A) .

**Ethno-cultural movements** are Niger-delta community and ethnic groups that have since the colonial era been a basis for mobilizing and organizing community and ethnic development, politics and group interests. Since the exacerbation of the Niger Delta condition and with the deepening economic crisis, the decline in the benefits from the oil economy and increasing sense of neglect and marginalization, the growing disenchantment and social restiveness have found expression through these groupings. As a result, the community and ethnic associational fabric has become stronger, proliferated and more cohesive and has become a major formation for articulating and constructing claims and responding to the oil economy.

The major grievances of these groups are the absence of development evidenced mainly by poor social amenities and infrastructures, the poor participation in the oil economy indicated in poor employment and poor patronage in contracts and services of their indigenes and the poor benefits from the oil boom particularly low sharing of oil based revenues and poor corporate social responsibility of the MNCs. Arising from these, the groups have been addressing issues of environmental degradation and remediation, compensation and reparation, stakeholder-ship in the oil economy, increased developmental attention from the Nigerian state and the MNCs and increased representation particularly at the level of top officials and ministers of petroleum and the presidency.

The prominent groupings of this segment include the Movement for the Survival of *Ogoni* People, the *Egbema* National Congress, Movement for the Reparation of *Ogbia*, the *Urhobo* Political Stakeholders Forum, Movement for the Survival and Advancement of *Ekpeye* Ethnic Nationality, *Oron* National Forum, Old *Ahoada*. Joint Consultative Forum, *Egi* Ethnic Coalition, the *Ijaw* Elders Forum, *Elimotu* Movement, *Isoko* Community Oil Producing Forum, *Ijaw* National Congress, *Isoko*

Development Union and *Urhobo* Progress Union (Ikelegbe, 2001b, 2005). The elder/elite movements can be described as “systemic movements”. Systemic movements are movements that make demands for certain socio-political changes within the existing political framework. In other words, the movement engages in a form of interest group politics. They have generally advocated as solution to Niger-delta problems, separate or own states and local governments. Even though elite agitations produced results in the form of creation of more states, from two (Rivers and Cross Rivers) in 1967 to four (Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross River) in 1995 and five (Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom Cross Rivers and Delta), such solution has not achieved the satisfactory results envisaged “because of the erosion of the fiscal and jurisdictional powers and weakened governance capacities of state governments relative to those wielded by the former regions”(Osaghae, forthcoming, 10) .

The unsatisfactory results of “separate or own states and local governments” solution has spurred more forceful demands from elites for political solutions that would strengthen the jurisdictional and fiscal capacities of Niger-delta states. Their actions signaled a new phase in the Niger-delta struggle, the elevation of the struggle from purely developmental issues to political ones that include demands such as federal restructuring, resource control and resolution of the National Question through a conference of ethnic nationalities. A good example of such movement is the Southern Minorities Movement (SMM), which was founded at Eku in Delta state in February 1994. The movement submitted a memorandum to the military government of General Abacha's 1994/95 constitutional conference demanding a minimum of 50% derivation formula and the creation of six political zones, including one for the Niger-delta with substantial devolution of powers to the zones. The actions of SMM and similar organizations such as MOSOP drew great support from within and without the Niger-delta and heightened the tempo of mobilization within the region with youths willingly engaging in the activities of the movements.

The success of the movements as expressed in approval of the six zone formula and increased international scrutiny of the activities of oil companies in Niger-delta resulted in campaign by Abacha government to suppress such Niger-delta agitations which were considered to be a threat to the security of the Nigerian state. The campaigns of repression gave birth to the phase of youth domination of the Niger-delta struggle.

### **3.4 From Contention to Violence: Youths and Niger-Delta Struggle**

Youth involvement in the Niger-delta struggle took a decisive turn with the repression suffered in the hands of the Abacha government that turned Niger-delta communities into garrison enclaves patrolled by the Nigerian military. Youth movements began to gain prominence from the mid 1990's when the youths, exasperated by unemployment, growing impoverishment and in-miseration, inconsistent and poor transition programmes, poor human rights and economic reform policies and the annulment of the 1993 presidential election results, began to translate their frustration, anger and hostility into actions against the Nigerian state, the MNCs, their elites and elders.

The youths regarded the elites and elders as weak, fearful and ineffective in seeking access, dialogue and agreements with an insensitive and repressive state and exploitative and socially irresponsible MNCs. The youths decided to take their destinies in their hands by mobilizing, organizing and engaging the state and MNCs (Ikelegbe, 2005B). Though youths had not been passive participants in the Niger-delta struggle as they have been active participants in the forceful

actions and demands of groups such as MOSOP, they were more of foot soldiers with the elites calling the shots. It took the severe repression suffered under the Abacha government for them to be transformed into the vanguard of Niger-delta struggle. The youths took centre-stage with the Kaiama declaration of December 11 1998, which among other demands had given oil companies operating in the Niger-delta two weeks to pay compensation for destroying the environment of the region and to prevent the collapse of social infrastructure. The youths also raised political questions about the allocation of fiscal revenue in areas other than where it was derived and about decentralization and devolution of power on local community, and called for an overhaul of Nigeria's federal system.

The expiration of the two week deadline led to youths nicknamed Egbesu boys marching peacefully to government House in Yenagoa, capital of Bayelsa state where they were shot upon by the police leaving several dead. The youth's reconvened in the evening and raided military checkpoints and police, seizing weapons and ammunition. The actions of the youths spread rapidly spurring copy as youths from the Odi ransacked their town's police station and proceeded to Yenagoa to join the Egbesu boys. Communities, which were "traditionally" less hostile towards oil companies and the state, became more belligerent. For example, the Supreme Council of Eket Youths embarked on a major protest, the first of such protest during the thirty years of Mobil's presence in the town (Ukeje, 2001).

The actions of the youths drew inspiration from the Twelve Day Revolution of the Niger-Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) between late February and early March 1966. The armed revolt, led by Isaac Adaka Boro, was predicated on the brazen oppression of the minority Ijaws in the then eastern region of Nigeria, specifically in the form of the underdevelopment of the region. The more immediate factors however was the coup d'etat led by those the Ijaws considered to be regional oppressors against a northern leadership seen to be an ally of the Niger-delta in the quest for an autonomous region.

The NDVS began operation on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1966 by declaring a Niger-delta Republic comprising the Ijaw area and territorial waters. The declaration further demanded the cancellation of all crude oil related agreements and directed the oil companies to stop exploration (Boro, 1982, 118-123). The NDVS took over Kaiama, Yenagoa, Imbiama, Oloibiri, Nembe, Patani, Odi, Sagbama and numerous other communities and closed oil installations and pipelines. After encounters with federal troops, the NDVS men surrendered, were tried for treason, convicted and sentenced to death in June 1966 but were released from jail in August 1967. As propagated by the youths, the December 11 1998 declaration of Niger-delta youths, which took place in Kaiama, the hometown of Isaac Boro, was a conscious attempt to invoke the spirit of the Twelve Day revolt.

The Twelve-Day Revolution can be seen as the historic antecedent of present youth militarism in Niger-delta in two respects (Osaghae, forthcoming)

- 1) In general terms, it signified the beginning of a more sharply focused and narrowly defined Niger-delta identity and consciousness that is increasingly centered on the present Rivers-Bayelsa-Delta states axis. The revolution also showed clearly that it was dangerous to ignore the situation in the Niger-delta or continue to take it for granted

- 2) Specifically, it marked the beginning of a generational shift in the Niger-delta struggle, as politicized, frustrated and impatient youths took over the scene from the older elites who they sometimes accused of "selling out" to the oppressors.

More important for youth-dominated mobilizations are the following features of the 12 day revolution:

- a) The uprising was comprised of a core of educated youths led by Isaac Adaka Boro, Samuel Owonaru and Nottingham Dick
- b) The NDVS recruited volunteer youths aged between 18-30 years from the Ijaw areas in the Mid-west and eastern regions
- c) The youths were camped in the creeks and trained in guerrilla warfare
- d) The NDVS was armed with light automatic rifles, revolvers and pistols, mines and improvised grenades. They also utilized speedboats.
- e) The Service was organized with rankings, commands and divisions
- f) The objective of the uprising was the nationalist struggle whose key objective was to "break the Niger-delta area into a nation and strive to maintain it (Boro, 1982, 96)

In other words, the features of the Boro revolution act as the template for present Niger-delta youth militants and militias as expressed in the Kaiama Declaration of December 11 1998 whose articles four and five established the vanguard role of the youths in Niger-delta collective contentious rights action.

In Article four

Ijaw youths in all the communities in all Ijaw clans in the Niger Delta will take steps to implement these resolutions beginning from the 30th of December 1998, as a step towards reclaiming the control of our lives.

Article five of the declaration promised that

Ijaw youths and Peoples will promote the principle of peaceful coexistence between all Ijaw communities and with our immediate neighbors, despite the provocative and divisive actions of the Nigerian State, transnational oil companies and their contractors...We affirm our commitment to joint struggle with the other ethnic nationalities in the Niger delta area for self-determination.

### **3.5 IDEOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE YOUTH STRUGGLE**

The Niger Delta youths have raised critical questions about the Nigeria State project; its equitability of rights and privileges and access to power, and resources.

In raising these questions, three issues have come to the fore. The first is ethnicity and regionalism. In the conception of the youth activities, Nigeria is made up of nationalities which are essentially ethnic groups and it is the relations between these groups in Nigeria that have disadvantaged the minority ethnic groups. Second, the Niger Delta or politically the South-South is regarded as a geo-political region within a competitive regional framework, which is comprised of minorities and though oil bearing, has suffered neglect and marginalization. There are two minority issues here, the first is the minority ethnic groups of the region and the second is an oil rich region

comprising of minorities. At both levels, the ethnic and the regional, the peoples have been disadvantaged within the Nigeria State project.

In both senses, ethnic and region, the Niger Delta struggle has built a nationalism, or shared sentiment and aspirations about marginality and oppression. It has strengthened the ethnic and regional identity by creating a sense of common conditions and causes, and particularly, a sense of common siege, threat, mistreatment, and misfortune, occasioned by state responses and the nature of state and corporate governance. The heightening ethnic nationalism has created a new generation of ethnic men, proud of their groups, and willing to fight against the mistreatment, oppression and marginalization of the group. It is the new generation of ethnic men and women that constitute the pool of ethnic militias, militants and activists. Ethnic nationalism thus is a key element of the Niger Delta struggle and in fact is a binding block for regionalism and the struggle against the Nigerian State. It is from the ethnic platform that strong networks and platforms for regional cooperation and activism have flowed. Among ethnic leaders, political leaders, business and opinion leaders, a strong Niger Delta platform for agitation and action has emerged since the early 1990s.

The second issue is the nationality question. The youths question the validity of the Nigerian State, on the basis of under-representation in political and administrative terms of their ethnic groups and region, insignificant share of national resources and even of its oil revenues, and thirdly, insignificant development attention. They also question the form of the Nigerian State and the use to which it has been put in relation to the Niger Delta. At issue is the nature of federalism, which has been progressively restructured in favor of central power and resources; a centre that has been hijacked, dominated and utilized to appropriate the resources and rights, of the minorities and the Niger Delta by the ethnic hegemons; Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo.

Ethnic nationalism as among the Ogonis, Ijaws, Itsekiris, Ogbias and others have been constructed on a base of exploitation, deprivation, injustice, unfair treatment, impoverishment by both the Nigerian State and the multinational oil companies. It has been particularly constructed on a siege mentality in which a fierce, oppressive and destructive security machine deployed by the Nigerian State and MNOCs has been left loose like a Leviathan to annihilate or exterminate them. Therefore the new nationalism is about survival, resistance and redress.

The third issue is the restructuring of the Nigerian State in ways and manners that guarantee ethnic and regional autonomy, self rule, self development, resource control, equitable and fair treatment and representation. These conceptions and the ensuring socio-political constructions are important for understanding the nature, character and dynamics of the Niger Delta conflicts. The ethnic and regional formulation of the national question and the Nigerian problem and the construction of ethnic and regional nationalism as a platform for struggle, resistance and action against the Nigerian State, provide a prism for viewing ethnic actions and regional support and the development of ethnic militias for fighting ethnic and regional grievances and causes. In sum, the militants are ethnic nationalists, or more specifically Ijaw nationalist engaged in a struggle for freedom and justice for their people. According to Dokubo-Asari, "he is neither a politician nor a militants, but an Ijaw nationalist" (*Daily Independent* 18:06:07). He further asserted: "I will continue on these issues of self determination, sovereign national conference and the right of our people to take that which belongs to them. I am fighting for self determination for my people".

### 3.6 CONFLICTS IN THE NIGER DELTA

There have basically been three types of conflicts in the Niger Delta, as discussed below.

**Federal Government – Community Conflicts:** these conflicts take two forms. The first involves the Niger-delta as a whole, by itself and/or in informal alliance with other ethno-political groupings, taking on the federal government for its laws and policies on oil exploration, production and revenue distribution. These conflicts are engendered by the fear of minorities regarding the domination by the larger ethnic groups and exacerbated by grievances over resource allocation and restructuring of the polity. Presently the most important of these conflicts are those over resource control. The second form of Federal Government-Niger-delta Conflict is that involving the federal government and specific communities where local communities engage the federal government over its misuse and abuse of force in protecting its own and oil companies' interests in the Niger-delta. The prime example of such conflict is that involving MOSOP and the Federal Government.

**Community versus Oil Company Conflicts** arise out of disagreements between local communities and oil companies over issues of compensation for extraction of oil and attendant environmental degrading of Niger-delta. Host communities claim that the activities of the multinational oil companies have negative impacts for which compensations and other benefits must be paid. Multi-national companies on the other hand either deny such negative impact or dispute the nature of the level of compensation to be made. Examples of such conflict include those of Umuechem-SDPC (1990), Ijaw vs. Chevron face off (December 2000), Elemenwo vs. Shell Conflict (2000), and Agalabiri/Abadiorma vs. SPDC (July, 2000).

**Inter and Intra-community Conflicts:** Intra-and inter community conflicts are struggles between and within communities for control of benefits that accrue from having oil on ones land or territory. Thus intra- and inter community conflicts are struggles over control of territory/land where oil pipes and oil wells are located. Examples include Bille-Ke conflict (2000), the Ogbogoro War (1998), the Nembe War (2000), Olomoro vs Oleh conflict (2000), Obeakpu (Oyigbo) conflict (1999)

## 4.0 YOUTH MOVEMENTS, MILITANCY AND MILITIAS

### 4.1 Militants and Militias

Militancy refers to combative and aggressive activism or engagement in struggles for identified causes. The involvement of youths in conflict in Africa can be described as exercises in militancy as they see themselves as involved in combative and aggressive activism against state and social inadequacies, which they see as contributing to their continued status as subalterns or to the denial of agency. In the Niger-delta, the term "militants" refers to gunmen who make political demands, including the release of imprisoned leaders, cash reparations for communities, change of electoral candidates and a greater share of oil revenues, among other issues. These political demands distinguish them, albeit tenuously, from criminals who simply kidnap people for money. Militants are also distinct from disaffected communities, whose people may perform kidnappings or attacks in the hopes of getting a clinic, school or cash, but have no overall political aims.

Militants in the Niger-delta display the following empirical features

- a) They are mostly youths
- b) They operate surreptitiously and clandestinely in cities and towns
- c) They are sometimes known as activists
- d) Are based in camps during the weekdays but return to towns and cities during the weekends
- e) Their camps are established far from towns and cities, deep in the mangrove swamps
- f) The camps are owned and controlled by those that are called bosses or commandants
- g) The camps are numerous and each may house 2000 or more youths
- h) The commandant obtains resources by extorting from the state and government using security threats.
- i) They carry sophisticated arms such as machine guns, explosives and cluster bombs
- j) They indulge in drug abuse, mainly alcohol (local gin) and Indian hemp (Marijuana)

In pursuance of the goal of self-determination goals militant youths in the Niger-delta region employed a variety of strategies, which ranged from peaceful protests to fierce armed conflict. The strategy deployed depended a great deal on the response by the state/federal government and tended to gravitate towards increased violence as the state persisted in repressive responses. It is to these strategies we now turn, beginning with localized and generally less violent resistance.

**Localized Resistance** basically rights-seeking resistance and protest involving obstruction of access routes, petition writing, delegations to state governments and oil majors and demands for social amenities by community based organizations. The repressive response of the federal government and oil companies to localized resistance spurred the adoption of more overtly violent methods such as attacks on state personnel and infrastructure (police stations, army camps, government offices) as well as hostage taking of expatriate and local oil workers and attacks, blockage and shutting down of oil pipelines, flow stations and other installations.

For example, the heightened insurgency after December 2005, has been associated with the arrest, incarceration and trial of Asari-Dokubo, the "flag bearer of the Niger Delta and leading light of the Ijaw nation" for treasonable felony in September 2005 (*Daily Independent*, 13 July 2007). The militants demanded his unconditional release and subsequently targeted attacks in response to developments in the trial by a Federal High Court. Asari-Dokubo's key role in the struggle is



demonstrated by the fact that the militants announced a cessation of hostilities and released some hostages following his release on bail following negotiations with the federal government on Thursday June 14 2007 (*Saturday Independent*, 16 July 2007)

Kidnapping and abductions of oil workers was aimed at forcing the oil companies and staff out of the region, albeit temporarily. This much was confirmed by Asari-Dokubo himself

“we asked them to leave our land” but they refused and sided with the Nigerian military, believing that the Army would protect them... the foreign oil workers should leave our land peacefully and come back peacefully when we might have resolved our differences with the governments” (*Daily independent*, 18 July 2007).

Hostage taking and kidnapping creates what is known as **Systems Disruption**. If properly targeted, they could cause cascades of failures that sweep entire systems. The result could be a paralyzed economy that produces costs that far outstrip the costs of the attacks. The success of systems disruption attacks has fueled the insurgency by creating economic chaos and radically diminishing the legitimacy of both the Nigerian state and oil companies. The attacks also have the advantage of being easy, inexpensive, and safe, as none of the infrastructure attackers was caught or killed for a long time. But the costs were enormous to the oil companies and government. For example, Shell experienced a decline by about 457,000 bpd production in its Western Delta operations in 2006 (overall oil output for the country fell by about 20–25 per cent in the period). Several of its employees were kidnapped, pipelines destroyed, and facilities seized. The company was forced to sack 1,500 staff in 2004 and another 3,500 in 2007, as a result of high operational costs and worsening security and production shut downs (Adebayo 2007: 11) The development of the Niger Delta region was also affected, as projects executed by foreign contractors such as road construction in the Eastern Delta, drainage projects and Mile One Market in Port Harcourt had to be abandoned for fear of kidnapping. (*Sunday Independent*, 17 July 2007) Some foreign countries, notably the USA, UK and Philippines asked their citizens to leave the region. Such was the magnitude of the crises, that the new president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua made its resolution a cardinal point of his inauguration agenda in May 2007.

TABLE 1: MAJOR ATTACKS ON NIGERIAN OIL INDUSTRY IN 2006 AND 2007.

DATE	ACTIONS	OIL COMPANIES OIL SERVICING COMPANIES INVOLVED	REASONS	OUTCOME
January 10, 2006	-Kidnapping of four (4) staff.  - Blow up of crude oil pipelines.	Shell offshore E. A. Oil field	-	Militants tree hostages on January 30 but threaten new wave of attacks.
February 13, 2006	- Militants attack a barge operated by US oil services company and abduct 9 oil workers.  - Blow up of crude oil pipeline and a gas pipeline.  - Bombing of Forcados loading plat form.	Willbros	- March 27, 2006, militants release three remaining hostages kidnapped February 18	Suspension pf export from the 380,000 bpd facility shell shut 115,000 bpd E. A. plat form as precaution.  March 1, 2006 militants release 6 of the hostages kidnapped February 18: 1 American, 2 Egyptians, 2 Thais, 1 Filipino 2 Americans and 1 Briton also released
March, 18 2006	Militants blow up oil pipeline	Italian oil company Agip	-	Shut down of 75,000 bpd facility.
March 10, 2006	Killing of an oil executive in port Harcourt	Baker Hughes (an American Co.)	-	-
May 11 2006	Kidnap of 3 oil workers	- Italian Oil Contractor Saipem	-	-
June 2, 2006	- Abduction of 6 Britons 1 Canadian and an American from Bulford Dolphin oil rig.	Norwegian oil filed services group Fred Olsen Energy	-	Hostages are released two days later
June 7, 2006	Militants attack a natural gas facility in the Niger Delta.  - kill 6 Soldiers  - kidnap 5 South Korean contractors	Shell	-	
June 20 2006	- Kidnap of 2 Filipinos in Port Harcourt	Beaufort international	-	Freed 5 days later
July 6, 2006	- Gunmen kidnap Michael Los, a Dutch oil worker in Bayelsa State.	-	-	Released 4 days later
July 25, 2006	- Attack of flow station and 24	Agip	-	Hostages released and

	workers taken hostage			flow station abandoned July 31 after pay off by Nigerian government
August 3 2006	- German oil worker Guido Schiffarth, a 62 year old, snatched from his car in Port Harcourt by men dressed as soldiers.	Bilfinger and Berger	-	Released on August, 19, 2006
August 4, 2006	- Gunmen abduct 3 Filipino oil workers from a bus near Port Harcourt	-	-	They are released 10 days later.
August 7, 2006	- 2 Norwegian and 2 Ukrainian oil workers kidnapped	-	-	Freed on August 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2006
August 10, 2006	- A Belgian and a Moroccan contractors kidnapped in Port Harcourt	-	-	Both released August 14 <sup>th</sup>
August 13, 2006	- 5 foreign oil workers (2 Britons, a German, an Irish and a pole) Kidnapped from a night club in port Harcourt.  - An American also kidnapped earlier the same day.	-	-	-
August 16, 2006	- Lebanese man kidnapped	-	-	-
August 24, 2006	- An Italian oil worker is kidnapped by gunmen in Port Harcourt.	Saipem	-	He is freed 5 days later.
October 2, 2006	- 25 Nigerian oil employees seized after an ambush of boats carrying supplies to shell facilities in the Caw Thorne channel.	Royal Dutch Shell contractor	-	They are released two days later.
October 3, 2006	- 7 foreign oil worker (four Britons, one Indonesian one Malaysian and a Romanian) kidnapped in a raid on a compound for expatriated contractors	Exxon Mobil		All of them released on October, 21.
November 2, 2006	Two employees, one British and one American are kidnapped from a survey ship off the coast of Bayelsa.	Petroleum Geo-services (PGS)	-	Freed on November 7, 2006
November 22, 2006	- A British oil worker is killed during an attempt by Nigerian soldiers to free 7 hostages abducted by militants earlier the same day.	-	-	-
December 7, 2006	- Gunmen kidnap three Italians and one Lebanese from a residential facility	-	-	-
December 14,	- Gunmen invade the Nun	Royal Dutch Shell	-	-

2006	river logistics base in Bayelsa state and hold 5 people hostage.			
December 18, 2006	- 2 car bombs explode in Port Harcourt in an oil company and oil company residential compound. There were no casualties	- Agip - Shell	-	-
December 21, 2006	- Militants storm the Obigifiled facility in rivers state, killing 3 people.	Total	-	-
January 5, 2007	Gunmen kidnap 5 Chinese telecom workers.  - Militants plant a car bomb in an oil company residential compound in Port Harcourt	Shell	-	- Shell evacuates Some Staff From Compounds In Port Harcourt, Bonny Island and Warri.  - Gunmen, free 5 Chinese telecom workers on January 18 2007.  - An Italian is also released.  3 foreign hostages remain in captivity.
January 10, 2007	- Gunmen attacked a base in Bayelsa state kidnapping a South Korean and one Nigerian oil worker	South Korea's Daewoo Engineering and construction.	-	Freed on January 12, 2007.
January 16, 2007	- 3 people including a Dutch oil worker are killed when their boat was attacked by gunmen on its way to the Bonny island export terminal.	South Korean firm Hyundai	-	-
January 20, 2007	- Militants seize Cargo ship on its way to Warri Port taking all 24 Filipino crew members hostage.	German shipping line Bacoliner	-	Released on February 13, 2007.
January 23, 2007.	- Gunmen Kidnap 2 engineers, an American and a Briton, in Port Harcourt, on their way to work.	-	-	-
January 25, 2007	- 9 employees of Chinese National Petroleum company under contract with an oil company were kidnapped.	Shell	-	They were released on February 4, 2007
February 6, 2007	- Gunmen kidnap a Filipino oil worker on Port Harcourt-Owerri road.	-	-	-
February 7, 2007	- A Filipino woman is kidnapped by gunmen in Port Harcourt.	Total oil Co.	-	-

	- Same day, a French oil worker, Gerard Laporal is kidnapped by Gunmen			
February 17, 2007	- 4 young Nigerian men serving as missionaries abducted from their apartment in Port Harcourt.	The church of Jesus Christ of latter day saints	-	-
February 18, 2007	- 3 Croatian oil workers abducted in Port Harcourt	Hydro dive Nigeria	-	-

Militants have pursued their objectives basically as “anti-systemic” movements. These are groups that perceived systemic changes as virtually sine qua non to their demands for structural change. They believe that the system as it exists is not beneficial to the poor and ordinary people as a whole and desire a change. They perceive that the objectives of the elites are highly parochial and not necessarily in the interest of the people. They thus do not seek to advance their cause via the traditional access to elite influence; rather, they embrace militant, activist and extremist political tactics that seek to challenge the system itself and its governing rules. In the Niger-delta, anti-systemic groups have taken the form of Militias and Cults.

#### 4.2 MILITIAS:

A militia is an armed civilian group engaged in some paramilitary, security, crime and crime control functions in the projection or defense of communal, ethnic, religious and political causes. In the Niger-delta, there have been two types of militia

- a) The majors such as Egbesu Boys of Africa, Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force, Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC) Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) and MEND (Movement For The Emancipation of The Niger-Delta); and
- b) Community and Warlord based militias such as Ijaw Freedom Fighters, Mobutu Boys, Niger-delta Freedom Fighters, The Atangbata Youths, The One More River to Cross Youths, The Olabrakon-Opre Youths, The Oweiesan-Ogbo, The Adaka Marine, The Ogbokore Youths, The Alagbada Youth of Kombo, The Tomgbolo Boys

#### 4.3 CULTS/GANGS:

Like the militants, these were originally formed to protest perceived social injustice. Cult groups such as the Icelanders, Greenlanders, KKK, Germans, Dey Gbam, Mafia Lords, and Vultures, were formed in the early 1990's as university fraternities. Cults are thus groups of individuals dedicated to providing security and economic opportunities for each other and their respective communities, subscribing to an oath of allegiance and secrecy and relying mostly on violent means to achieve their ends. Cult memberships, methods of operation, and initiation rites, which involve oaths of allegiance, remain secret. Unlike the NDPVF or MEND, once an individual joins a cult, they are in that cult for life, barring exceptional circumstances. Membership ranges from 20 to 3,000 persons. Some are pro-state or pro-government; some are anti-state, while others have no clear political objectives.

At some stage, cults and gangs were taken over by criminal elements that used the gangs to sell drugs, rig elections and fight each other, among other activities. The Secret Cult and Similar

Activities Prohibition Law (hereafter Secret Cult Law) passed in June 2004 officially listed about 100 cult groups, which are now banned. These included criminal gangs, spiritual and politically motivated groups seeking power and control, gangs that controlled waterways and passages, as well as those involved in oil bunkering activities.

The relationship between cults and ethnic militias is very close. – as a matter of fact most of the so-called ethnic militias are loose federations of cult groups. In late 2003, in an effort to increase their access to weapons and other resources, many of the “cult” groups formed alliances with either Asari-Dokubo’s or Ateke Tom’s armed group as the two leaders fought for control of oil bunkering routes. Although the smaller groups retained their names and leadership structures, Asari-Dokubo and Tom assumed command and control responsibilities over the militant actions of these smaller groups.

Table 2: List of Cult groups banned under the Secret Cult and Similar Activities Prohibition Law 2004

Agbaye	Eagle Club	Neo-Black Movement
Airwords	Egbe Dudu	Night Mates
Amazon	Eiye of Air Lords Fraternity	Nite Hawks
Baccaneers (Sea Lords)	Elegemface	Nite Rovers
Barracuda	Executioners	Odu Cofraternity
Bas	Fangs	Osiri
Bees International	FF	Ostrich Fraternity
Big 20	Fliers	Panama Pyrate
Black Axe	Frigates	Phoenix
Black Beret Fraternity	Gentlemen’s Club	Predators
Black Brasserie	Green Berets Fraternity	Red Devils
Black Brothers	Hard Candies	Red Fishes
Black Cats	Hell’s Angels	Red Sea Horse
Black Cross	Hepos	Royal House of Peace
Black Ladies	Himalayas	Royal Queens
Black Ofals	Icelanders	Sailors
Black Scorpions	Jaggare Confederation	Scavengers
Black Sword	KGB	Scorpion
Blanchers	King Cobra	Scorpion
Black Bras	KlamKonfraternity Klansman	Scorpion Fraternity
Blood Suckers	Ku Klux Klan	Sea Vipers
Brotherhood of Blood	Knite Cade	Soiree Fraternity
Burkina Faso: Revolution	Mafia Lords	Soko
Fraternity	Mafioso Fraternity	Sunmen
Canary	Malcolm X	Temple of Eden Fraternity
Cappa Vandetto	Maphites /Maphlate	Thomas Sankara Boys
Daughters of Jezebel	Mgba Mgba Brothers	Tikan Giants
Dey Gbam	Mob Stab	Trojan Horses Fraternity
Dey Well	Musketeers Fraternity	Truth Seekers
Dolphins	National Association of	Twin mate
Dragons	Adventurers	Vikings
Dreaded Friends of Friends	National Association of Sea	Vipers
Blood Hunters	Dogs	Vultures
		Walrus
		White Bishop

#### 4.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE MILITIAS

There is a convergence of interests of the militia and those of the Niger Delta leaders. As articulated at different times, the major interests include the following.

1. A restructuring of the Nigerian state and its federalism in such ways that guarantee self-determination, political autonomy and fiscal control, true federalism, community control over development strategies, protection of land, dignity, culture, freedom, environment and natural resources of the Niger Delta people, and the right of states and communities to resource control
2. A broad based development programme to transform the region.
3. A political autonomy that guarantees political participation, representation and community participation in resource management.
4. Implementation of a minimum of 50% derivation.
5. A halt to the development of new Oil and gas pending the complete clean up of the environment (Oderemi 2007: 15)
6. Achievement of Self-determination and resource control to be addressed through a sovereign National Conference of ethnic nationalities.

#### 4.5 ARMS AND SOURCES

Given that the defining feature of militias and cults is their willing use of violence, the militia groups operating in Delta State, especially those of the Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Urhobo, well armed. Asari-Dokubo declared in 2004 that he owned 67 boats, each armed with two light machine guns (*Newswatch*, 2004:10), and more than 3,000 assault rifles (IRIN, 2004d). The 'General Commander' of the NDPVF, Columbus Epebada, once boasted that the group had the GPMG [general purpose machine gun], the SLR [self loading rifle], AK-47 Kalashnikovs, MG [machine guns] and several others, in addition to over five thousand arms among which the GPMG alone were up to 273 (Abubakar, & Emmanuel Bello. 2004).

Among the weapons in use were fully and semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, machine guns, and shoulder-fired rockets (known as "bazookas"); as well as more traditional weapons such as fishing spears and cutlasses used for agriculture. These weapons were readily available for purchase in Warri at prices that according to one investigation ranged from around 80,000 Naira (U.S.\$570) for a shotgun, 120,000 Naira (\$850) for a Kalashnikov rifle, to up to 300,000 Naira (\$2,150) for a "bazooka" (Bisina, 2003; Ebo, 2003).

Table 3: Firearms submitted at Bori Camp, Port Harcourt, 7 October-30 November 2004

Assault Rifles	778
AK-47s	324
Czech SA Vz 58	429
HK C3	22
FN-FAL	22
Shotguns	3
Light Machine guns	19
Beretta 125	12
MAT 49	2
Czech model 26	2
Sten MK 2	7
Machine guns	1
Czech model 59 (Rachol)	2
MG 36	1
Hunting rifles	3
Pistols	9
Revolvers	4
Craft weapons	17
Shotguns	10
Revolvers	7
Air guns	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1675</b>

A number of small arms originate from other war-ravaged parts of the West African sub-region, particularly Sierra Leone and Liberia. Members of the Nigerian military have reportedly brought back arms from Sierra Leone, where they took part in ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group) for resale at huge profits (Musah & Niobe Thamson, 1999). Supporters of the armed groups within the oil industry or political parties and even members of the state government either provided weapons or the funds and required contacts to buy them. Traditional leaders seeking protection from armed groups also supplied weapons, including a local chief from Okrika who Ateke Tom claims purchased weapons for the NDVF (HRW, 2005). Before the April 2007 elections, for example, politicians in Niger State imported massive amounts of arms for their "security detachments" (which also likely went to thugs hired to help rig the elections) (*Vanguard*, April 13) .

Weapons exchanged for stolen or bunkered oil were another major source. Illegal oil bunkering has reportedly been a significant source of revenue for both the NDPVF and the NDV. Weapons captured or seized from local stocks or bought from corrupt individuals also added to the armed groups' stockpiles. These included arms captured from (or sold by) the Nigeria Mobile Police and Nigerian army personnel; those captured or bought from Cameroonian soldiers stationed in the Bakassi peninsula (whose jurisdiction is disputed between Nigeria and Cameroon); and those purchased from ex-Nigerian soldiers also deployed to the same region. One group leader claimed that arms were available from vessels moored just off the coast of Rivers state, and could be purchased by anybody who could afford them. For example, Asari-Dokubo pointed out that "We



are very close to international waters, and it's very easy to get weapons from ships, we have AK-47s, general-purpose machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades." Warri, the commercial capital of Delta state, is also known as a major arms trafficking hub. Smugglers from Guinea-Bissau, Gabon, and Cameroon reportedly use speedboats to reach offshore ships and purchase guns that they then sell to their respective communities in Warri, from where they are often trafficked elsewhere (Obasi, 2002).

There were also arms sent in by smugglers across the land borders of the neighboring countries of Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, through the Lagos-Benin coastal axis extending across West Africa as far as Liberia and Sierra Leone and Nigeria's northern borders with Chad and Niger. Many of the arms smuggling rings operate out of Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon and Nigeria (IRIN, May 2006). The smugglers used speedboats to connect with ships on the high seas, and then ferried the arms back to shore. (IRIN, 2006).

Some of the weapons in the armed groups' stockpiles were acquired after attacks on police and military outposts. During such attacks, the militant groups broke into police or military armories and carted away arms. Corrupt security officials also sold weapons to militants. While the presence of craft weapons among those surrendered in Port Harcourt provides evidence of the existence of an underground industry, there is little information available regarding products, production levels, or the quality and price of weapons. Today, Akwa, the Anambra state capital, appears to be Nigeria's leading small arms craft manufacturing centre. There are also reports of Ghanaian gunsmiths traveling to Nigeria to train local blacksmiths in gun-making skills.

#### 4.6 FUNDING OF THE MILITIAS

Armed militia groups in the Niger-delta get funds for their purchase of arms mainly through "oil bunkering". Government and oil-industry officials say groups like Dokubo's NDPVF and MEND, which have popped up in the region in recent years, fund their weapons purchases by tapping crude oil from pipelines into barges for illegal sale to tankers waiting offshore. Such thefts are locally known as bunkering. The process of "*illegal bunkering*" entails loading crude oil (or/and petroleum products) into barges in the labyrinthine creeks of the Niger Delta, directly from oil field production wellheads, or from NNPC jetties at Okrika, Calabar, Effurun, Escravos, Atlas Cove (Lagos), or from a myriad of private jetties.

Oil bunkering is a criminal offence under the Special Tribunal (*Miscellaneous Offences*) Decree No. 20 (1984). The decree prescribes very stiff penalties, including death by *firing squad*, revocation of licenses, and forfeiture of both fixed and moveable assets, for offences. The scope of Decree No. 20 (1984) covers willful or malicious obstruction, damage, tampering, or interference with the free flow of crude oil and/or refined petroleum products.

From the coastal states of Nigeria, specifically in the swamps of the Niger Delta in Delta, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Ondo, and Bayelsa States, large inventories of stolen crude oil or petroleum products are typically trans-shipped into larger ocean-faring marine vessels, waiting patiently on stand-by, either mid-stream, or offshore, for their booty. In the hinterland, particularly in Abia, Benue, Delta, Enugu, Edo, Kogi, Ondo, Lagos, and Ogun States, large inventories of refined petroleum products (petrol, kerosene and diesel oil) are loaded directly into tanker trucks from the

point of deliberate rupture of petroleum products pipelines that traverse the length and breadth of Nigeria.

Flowing directly from the issue of oil bunkering is that of control of territory. Funds from oil bunkering are dependent on the ability of an ethnic militia to maintain control of territory that pipelines pass through and efforts made to expand such territory. In other words, territory becomes sacred to ethnic militias, and struggle over its control lies at the heart of the dynamics of ethnic militia actions in the Niger-delta. For example, much of the violence in 2004 around Port Harcourt appears to have been motivated by struggles to control territory and thus bunkering routes. A state government spokesman told Human Rights Watch that the conflict between Asari-Dokubo and Tom was likely based on "disagreements over business transactions and contracts for protecting barges that lift crude oil. (HRW, 2005)"

Some of the most intense fightings between October 2003 and October 2004 centered around villages located on tributaries about twenty to forty kilometers southwest of Port Harcourt, including Buguma, Bukuma, Tombia, and Ogbakiri. The area is the site of several oil wells, flow stations and gas gathering projects operated by Shell Petroleum Development Company in the Cawthorne Channel. Key militia leaders such as Asari and Tom Atake, in their desire to gain control of villagee such as Tombia and Bukuma due to their proximity to lucrative bunkering routes in the Cawthorne channel, manipulated local disputes by providing their local supporters with sophisticated weapons and speedboats.

#### 4.7 THE MILITIAS AND THE CIVIL STRUGGLE: INTERFACES

Youth-elite relations in the Niger-delta are characterized and mediated by distrust and suspicion as the two following examples show.

a) Since the mid-1990's, youth groups have grown more powerful and resentful of village chiefs. In some areas, groups that did not benefit from the largesse handed out, have increasingly accused local chiefs of working with both oil companies and the government to oppress, exploit and marginalize them. In 2000, at Ewreni, youths accused their traditional ruler, the *Ovie* of cornering much of the money given to the community by oil multinationals for various social and developmental projects. The disagreement soon degenerated into a "regicide" as the youths attacked the *Ovie*, killed him, tied him to a car and dragged the body through the town in the ultimate humiliation for a monarch.

b) For the Ijaw Pro-Active Leadership Council, Niger-delta elites are traitors as

They went to bed with the devil; they sowed their seed with the enemy. They colluded with the devil to spill the bloods of our innocent mothers, fathers, and brethren in Odi, Odioma and indeed Ijawnation. They colluded with the devil to defraud Ijaw nation and deprive Ijaw nation of her rightful resources and revenue; resources that our youths gallantly gave their lives for in Kaiama and all over Ijaw land. Now the time has come "they must reap what they have sown" The bloods of the innocent are crying for justice. All the perpetrators of the tragedy and massacre at Odi, Odioma and numerous other Ijaw towns will not know peace until justice is served<sup>3</sup>.

But beyond these strains the militias respect, liaise with, reach out to or listen to ethnic and political leaders who are acknowledged to demonstrate understanding of the conditions of the people, commitment to the peoples improvements and patriotism and zeal to the cause of the ethnic group and region. Among these leaders are chief Edwin Clark, Alabo Tonye Graham–Douglas, Chief Dumo Lulu–Briggs, Chief Paver Ziakede Aginighan and the leaders of the Ijaw National Congress. The militias respect these ethnic leaders. They are loyal and extend elements of camp discipline to community and influential leaders. But this applies only to those acknowledged and committed leaders the Ijaw struggle.

The second issue here is how the militia groups relate to the other youth movements or organizations. In Ijaw land, the apex youth organization is the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC). The militias are affiliated to the IYC in principle. The IYC is comprised of graduate members. IYC denounces unnecessary self interested actions, and is still respected and regarded as the central Ijaw youth body. As a result, the militias defer to the Council and carry out general orders as the case may be. The IYC plays the leadership role in the youth conduct of the struggle. It should also be noted that the educated elements in the struggle direct and steer the struggle. They are the link between the militias, the government and ethnic leaders. They are influential, are in the cities, relate with the town and camp, moderate and exercise leverage over the militias but are more of supporters. The ethnic and political leaders and educated youth leaders mediate in the struggle between government, MNOCs and the militias/community.

The Niger-delta crisis is essentially an exercise in contentious politics as it involved a marginalized identity group within the Nigerian state engaging the state, through movement action in a struggle to enforce their fundamental rights as citizens of the Nigerian state. Niger-delta contentious politics took a violent turn because of the political constraints and repressive responses imposed by the state on Niger-delta contentious collective action. The frustration such constraints generated transformed the element of rebellion inherent in all contentious collective action into hatred and violence. Youths have played a leading role in the violent phase of Niger-delta contentious collective action because they are the most affected by the situation of powerlessness, which state oppression aggravates. For them, violence becomes a bargaining weapon for negotiating, legitimizing or violating (oppressive) public order.

#### **4.8 RESOLUTION STRATEGIES**

The Obasanjo Administration adopted a three-pronged approach; military action, accelerated development of the region and engagement. The situation is not very much different with the successor Yar'Adua Administration, in spite of its avowed commitment to redressing the developmental and environmental challenges of the region. There have been extensive and intensive military deployments since the late 1990s, coordinated under various acronyms and currently as Joint Military Task Force or Operation Restore Hope. The Nigerian Army and the Militants have recorded successes and failures in the ongoing hostilities. In several instances, the militants have over powered the military and taken over oil installations and vessels, while the military have on occasions stormed militant held facilities, dislodged militants and rescued oil workers. For example, in Ogboinbiri, Ijaw South LGA, Bayelsa there were gun battles on 1 June 2007 between the military and the militants. The military had flagged down a militant boat that defied it at a river check point. In the ensuing clash, 9 militants were killed and their guns and ammunitions confiscated (*Daily Independent*, 14 July 2007). But the militias, retaliated on 17<sup>th</sup> June

2007. They stormed and took over AGIP oil facility in Ogoinbiri and chased the military away and held 12 workers hostage (*Daily Independent*, 18 July 2007). The military, according to the former chief of Defense Staff, General Martin Agwai is capable of crushing the militant uprising but for restraints and mandates, which have emphasized dialogue rather than all out force. (*Daily Independent*, 9 July 2007).

The state governments and political leaders in the region have been the major actors in the resolution of local conflicts. After the inauguration of new administrations on May 29<sup>th</sup>, the Bayelsa State Government, for example, negotiated and secured the release of 12 expatriate hostages and 1 Nigerian, after between 14 and 38 days of kidnap in Ijaw South Local Government Area (*Daily Independent*, 14 July 2007). Similarly, the Rivers state governor secured the release of two hostages who had been held for 24 days. Another 19 hostages were released to him on 16 June 2007. These releases were the outcome of dialogue, negotiation and payments of ransom. The Bayelsa state governor, Mr. Timipre Sylva, personally visited the militant camps twice in June 2007 in the creeks, discussed with militia leaders and secured the release of hostages held in the camps (Abermudu 2007 : Avi)

Some state governments have also put in place several programmes to address the insurgency. The Rivers state Government' introduced the 3E approach, of engagement, education and empowerment (*Daily Independent*, 14 July, 2007), while Bayelsa state embraced re-orientation, skills acquisition and employment.

## 5.1 SECTION B: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized both primary and secondary data. For secondary data sources it relied on newspapers, magazines, reports and documents published by government and non-governmental organizations (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, International Action Network on Small Arms, NDPEHRD (Niger Delta Project for Environment, Human Rights and Development), Center for Environment, Human Rights, and Development (CEHRD) and Internet document search.

Questionnaires, Oral interviews and Focused Group Discussion (FGD) sessions were deployed to source primary data for the study. The study sites were Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta states, the core Niger-delta states and the location of most of the youth-led insurgency in the region. The sampling technique was largely purposive due in part to the sensitivity of the issues investigated, which warranted utmost caution. In Bayelsa State four local governments were sampled, namely, Yenagoa, Southern Ijaw, Ekeremor and Kolokumo. In Delta State, three local governments were sampled (Burutu, Sapele, Warri-South), while in Rivers State, five local governments were sampled; Obiapor, Port Harcourt, Khana, Bonny, Gokana.

Two open-ended questionnaires were used to elicit two types of information about the conflict. The first, the General Sample (GS) questionnaire elicited general information about the conflicts and was directed at community members, youths, women and elders. A total of 255 questionnaires were received from those distributed, (80 in Bayelsa, 100 in Delta and 75 in Rivers). The second questionnaire (key informant sample) sought in-depth, broad and sensitive information from more informed citizens of the region such as ethnic and community leaders, youth activists, past and present militants and opinion leaders. A total of 55 questionnaires were received here 20 in

Bayelsa, 20 in Delta state and 15 in Rivers State). Oral interviews were also conducted. The objective was detailed and informed information from youth and political leaders. About eight interviews were conducted in Bayelsa and Delta States. Three FGDs each were conducted in Bayelsa (Yenagoa), Delta (Warri) and River (Port Harcourt) states with sample sizes of 12, 8 and 8 respectively.

### 5.1.2 SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Our general Sample respondents were drawn largely from the age grade 25-34 and 35-44 years, male, Christian, with a fair share of married and not married status. (Table 6). They had mainly post secondary and secondary educational qualifications and were either public servants, private sector employees, business men, and traders or self employed. Their income status was between low and middle class. In ethnic terms, they were mainly Ijaws, with a sprinkle of Ikweres, Ogonis, Urhobos and Itsekiris. The key informant sample consisted largely of those in the age brackets 25-34 and 35-44, male, Christian, married and had secondary or post secondary education. They were mostly public servants and private sectors employees, and within the low income and middle income groups. They were also mostly Ijaw, with a sprinkle of Urhobos, Itsekiris, Isokos, Ukuani, Ikwere, Ogba and Etches.

**Table 4: Research Instruments, Target Samples and Sample Sizes**

Instrument	Target Audience	Objectives	Sample Size (Bayelsa)	Sample Size (Delta)	Sample Size (Rivers)	Total
Open ended Questionnaires	Community Members, youths, women, elders	General information about the conflicts	80	100	75	255
Open-ended Questionnaires	Ethnic and community leaders, youth activists, past and present militants	Elicitation of more in-depth, broad and sensitive information from more informed citizens of the region	20	20	15	55
Focus Group Discussions	Ditto	Ditto	12	8	8	28
Oral Interviews	Informed and influential leaders	Elicitation of Detailed information	5	3	-	8

**Table 5: Sampled States/Local Government Areas and Communities**

States	Local Government Areas	Communities
Bayelsa	Yenagoa	Yenagoa
	Southern Ijaw	Oporoma
	Ekeremor	Aleibiri
	Kolokumo	Kaiama
Delta	Burutu	Burutu
	Sapele	Sapele
	Warri-South	Warri
Rivers	Obikpor	Zakpai
	Port Harcourt	Finima -
		Port Harcourt
	Khana	Bomu
	Bonny	Bonny
Gokana	Bori	

The research instruments addressed the central planks of the research: conceptions and perceptions of self determination and resource control, the problems and goals of the Niger Delta struggle, the causes or explanations of the conflict, the role and perceptions of the youth, the profile, perceptions and goals of the militias, the roles of traditional, political, business and community leaders and women, the methodology of the struggle, issues in the resolution of the conflicts and the effects of the conflicts.

The data elicited was analyzed in the open ended questionnaires using a question-by-question content analysis of responses. These were then categorized and frequency counts and computation of percentages undertaken as presented in the tables below. The focus group interviews and oral interviews were transcribed from tapes. Content analysis was then undertaken to derive insightful comments by content analyses. In all the instruments and particularly in the key informant questionnaires, oral interviews and FGDs, important comments and arguments were identified and where relevant used as samplers.

**Table 6: SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS: GENERAL SAMPLE**

SOC. CHARACTER	BAYELSA				TOTAL	DELTA					TOTAL	RIVERS				TOTAL
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-55-		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	
Age.	12.5	53.75	27.5	6.25	80	11	48	28	11		0.4	4.5	2.2	0.4	75	
Sex	Male	Female			80	Male	Female			100	Male	Female			75	
	64	16				7.8	2.2				4.5	0.3				
Religion	Christian	Muslim	Traditional		80	Christian	Muslim	Traditional		100	Christian	Muslim	Traditional		75	
	7.6	-	0.4			9.5	0.5	-			75	2	-			
Marital Status	Married	Not Married			80	Married	Not Married			100	Married	Not Married			75	
	3.9	4.1				4.7	5.3				3.8	3.7				
Education	None	Pri. Secon.	Secondary	Post	80	None	Pri. Secon.	Secondary	Post Secon.	100	None	Pri. Secon.	Secondary	Post	75	
	0.25	13.5	3.25	2.25		-	0.7	0.3	6.3		-	0.5	1.6	5.4		
Occupation	Bus/	Govt/	Private	Self/		Bus/	Govt/	Private	Self/	100	Bus/	Govt/	Private	Self/	75	
	Trading employed	Public				Trading employed	Public				Trading employed	Public				
		Servant					Servant					Servant				
	13	18	11			8	49	17	7		17	19	12	4		
Income	Low	Middle	High		80	Low	Middle	High		100	Low	Middle	High		75	

	6.25    0.3    0.6		4.7    4.9    0.4		41    29    5	
Ethnic Group	Ijaw    Others    2 34	100	Ijaw    Urhobo    Itsekiri		Ijaw    Olwere    Ogoni    Urhobo Others	75
LG	Southern/Ijaw    Yenogoa Ekeremor    Brass  16                    33            20 3		Bomadi    Sapele    Burutu Warri  5            43            44	100	Port Harcourt    Phalga    Khana Bunny  19            3            12 30	75
??	Egbema            Others  3                    5	80	Others  2		Gokana  11	



Table 7: SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY INFORMANTS

	BAYELSA					KIS	DELTA					Total
Age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-55		Total	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-	Total
1	2	10	5	3		20	2 0.1	5 0.3	8 0.4	5 0.3	-	20
Sex	Male	Female				20	Male	Female				20
2	17	3					15	5				
Religion	Christian	Muslim		Traditional Religion		20	Christian	-	Muslim		Traditional	
3	16	-		4			19	--	1 0.1			
Marital Status	Married	7				20	Married	Not Married				20
4	13						14	6				
Educational qualification	None	Primary		Secondary		20	None	Primary	Seconda ry	Post Secondary		20
5	-	-		7			-	1	5	14 0.7		
Occupation	Business Trading	Civil/Public Servant		Private Sector	Self Employed	Unemploy ed	20	Business Trading	Civil/Pub lic Servant	Private Compan y	Self Employed	Not Emplo yed
6	2	7		4	2	5		-	9	3	2 0.1	6 0.3
Income Level	Low	Middle		High			20	Low	Middle Income	High Income	-	
7	5											

		15	-			8	10	2			
Ethnic Group	Ijaw		-	Kolokumo	20	Ijaw	Urhobo	Itsekiri	Ukuam	Isoko	20
8	20	-				14	2	2	1 0.1	1 0.1	
Local Govt. Areas	Yenagoa	Southern Ijaw	Ekeremor	Opokuma	20	Burutu	Warri South	Patan	Sapele		20
9	11	5	2	2		9	2	1	8 0.4		

	RIVERS					Total
Age	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-55		7
1	(1)	(3)	(4)	1(3)		
Sex	Male	Female				7
	14	1				
Religion	Christian	Muslim	Traditional Religion			7
3	15	-	-			
	10					
4	Married	Not married				7
	4	3				
	(10)	11(5)				
Educational qualification	None	Primary	Secondary	Post Secondary		7
5	-	-	(1)	(14)		
Occupation	Business	Civil/Public Servant	Private	Self Employed	Unemployed	7
6	Trading	111(10)	11 (2)	-	111 (3)	
	-					
Income Level	Low	Middle	High			7

7	11	(4)	-		
Ethnic Group 8	Ijaw (4)	Ikwere 2 0.3	Etehe 1 0.1	Ogba 111	7
Local Govt. Areas 9	Obiakpor 9 0.7	Khana 1 0.1	Talga 1 0.1	Port Harcourt 1      Others 3	7

## 5.2.1 DATA PRESENTATION

### PERCEPTION OF SELF DETERMINATION AND RESOURCE CONTROL

At the root of the agitation and conflicts are the issues of self determination and resource control.

#### 5.1 SELF DETERMINATION

The research sought to determine the self determination content of the youth struggles, by seeking responses to questions of perceptions and faith in the Nigerian State, grievances against the State, belief in the actualization of their aspirations within Nigeria, and what they thought needs to be done in the re-constitution of Nigeria.

The Nigerian state, as seen by the General Sample (GS) is a great nation (11.3%); and richly endowed (16.9%) but has largely failed and is not working (21.4%); corrupt (24.6%) and plagued by bad leadership (11.3%) (Table 8). By way of more graphic descriptions, the Nigerian state is seen as possessing huge potentials and opportunities, and abundant natural and human resources. But despite this, the nation is seen as failing, drifting un-democratic, repressive, oppressive, exploitative, unstable, indifferent to the citizens sufferings, incapable of meeting basic needs and harnessing the abundant human and material resources. This situation is largely attributed to a leadership that is corrupt, greedy, visionless, weak, insincere, ethnocentric, and insensitive, a leadership that further disregards the constitution and rule of law.

**Table 8: PERCEPTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE**

	BAYELSA		DELTA		RIVERS		TOTAL	
	GS	%	GS	%	GS	%	GS	%
Great	16		4		8		28	11.29
	(20%)	20	(4%)		(11.76%)	11.8		
Failed/Not Working	8		26		19		53	(21.37%) 21.37
	(10%)	10	(26%)	26	(27.94%)	27.94		
Richly Endowed	8		30		4		43	(16.94%) 17.34
	(10%)	10	(3%)	3	(5.88%)	5.9		
Corrupt	34		21		6		61	(24.60%) 24.60
	(42.5%)	42.5	(21%)	21	(8.82%)	8.82		
Partial	1	(1.25%) 1.25	2	(20) 20			3	(1.21%) 1.21
Has bad leaders	12		7		9		28	(11.29%) 11.29
	(15%)	15	(7%)	7	(13.24%)	13.23		
Under- Developed	1		9		4		14	(5.65%) 5.65
	(1.25%)	1.25	(9%)	9	(5.88%)	5.9		
Oppressive	-	-	1		18		18	(7.66%) 7.25
			(10)	1	(26.47%)	26.5		
Total	80		100		68		248	

In relation, to the Niger Delta region, we sought to know the existence of and nature of grievances in both samples, against the Nigerian state (Table ). In both samples, the major grievances were

the failure to develop the region and state malgovernance as indicated by poor resource inflow, bad leadership and domination by majority ethnic groups. The neglect and scarcity development and poor development attention of the region is linked to its huge resource endowment and contribution. According to some respondents: "the other regions consume without producing to the national purse while we produce without consuming" "The Nigerian government too is a thief" "they siphon our resources" "they deprive us" "when we protest, they ignore us and most times threaten us with.... the military and police"..... "when we fight back or revenge they call us militants"

**TABLE 9: GRIEVANCES AGAINST THE NIGERIAN STATE BY NIGER DELTA PEOPLE**  
**GS** **KIS**

GRIEVANCES	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL	
Failure to Develop the Region	45 (58.44%)	44 ( 44.4%)	12 (23.53)	101(44.49%)	10 50%	12 60%	6 40%	28	50.91
Mis-government/Bad leadership towards the Region/poor resource inflow	10 (12.99%)	29 (29.29)	2 (3.92)	41(18.06)	3 15%	5 25%	6 40%	14	25.45
Majority Ethnic Domination	3 (3.90%)	15 (15.15%)	7 (13.73)	25 (11.01%)	4 20%	3 15%	3 20%	10	18.18
Corruption	11 (14.28%)	-	8 (15.69)	19 ( 8.37)					
Unemployment	6 (7.79%)	8 (8,08%)	3 (4%) 5.88	17 ( 7.49)					
Faulty Constitution/laws	1 (1.30%)	3 (3.03%)	7 (13.73)	11 ( 4.85)	3 15%			3	5.45/
Un-democratic	1 (1.30%)	-	-	1 ( 04.44)	-				
No effective Youth programme	-	-	12 (16%) 23.53	12 (5.29)	-				
	77	99	51	227	20	20	15	55	

The grievances indicate an ethnic minority underpinning of the under-developed and marginalized Niger Delta people. According to some key informants "the federal government, dominated and controlled by the North especially has .... oppressed, exploited and de-humanized the Niger delta people for decades" "with false laws skewed in the favour of the majority tribes and at the expense of the oil producing Niger Delta people". In other words underlying bad governance and under-development in the region, is the attitude of the majority ethnic group towards their minority counterparts. The unfair, unjust and inequitable treatment of the region in terms of in flow of revenues, from its oil resources is seen as flowing from this. As one oral interviewee in Warri: Delta State put it "Nigeria milks the Niger Delta to death and takes the milk to other places, leaving the area destitute". Some respondents claimed that the state has acted against the region's interests in terms of laws and polices that disinherit and appropriate their oil and gas resources and oppress them.

In spite of the grievances, however, there is great faith in the Nigerian State. About 62.4% of the G. S and 74.5% of KIS express belief in Nigeria. This is largely hinged on the greatness and potentials of the country (12.1%). Though existing problems deplete this greatness, some respondents believe they would be resolved and the potentials realized (35.2%). For those that do not believe in Nigeria, and this seemed highest in Bayelsa, the core Ijaw State, the reasons included in the GS ,

poor governance and corruption (22. 1%), absence of justice, equity and fairness (8%), the partiality of the State (7%) and absence of true nationhood (5.5%).

For those who still believe in Nigeria, particularly in Delta State, such faith was qualified with such provisos as:

“but the Nigerian State must develop the region” or with conditions such as “if justice ad fairness is enthroned” or with hopes such as “the wrong can still be made right” “one day, good leaders will emerge” “will get there in spite of problems” or “our problem is the leaders” (interviews in Bayelsa and Delta States June 2006).

Quite intriguing is the large proportion of those who had lost faith in Nigeria, particularly in Bayelsa State. The reasons given such as “Nigeria is the self business and property of those that rule”, Nigeria has failed totally’, “they have made us slaves in the country” indicate the feelings of the interviewees about the viability, performance, partiality and utility of the state project. Some respondents hinted at the possibility of “Nigeria’s break up in no distant future” (Bonny) or heading for or near collapse or sitting on a time bomb” and is near anarchy” (Port-Harcourt).

The youth problematic is manifested in the expression or non-expression of faith in the Nigerian State. Some of our respondents claimed to have lost faith because “the state does not consider the youths in her programmes”; it does not consider their future and has no vision for them” (Gokang) (Khana); The “youth has been neglected, “unemployment is the order of the day” (Port Harcourt); The state is insensitive to the plight of the youth”; In fact, the state has disappointed the youth in this part of the country” (Khana).

Further investigation of the attitude of Niger Deltans towards Nigeria was directed at their assessment of whether their aspirations could possibly be realized within Nigeria. About 81.4% of the GS believe that their aspirations would be realized within the framework of Nigeria. The reasons given indicated that the response is conditional on the institution of good leadership (65.3%) true federalism (10.2%) and justice (10.2%). As some respondents put it, aspirations can be achieved” if the Federal Government decides to be honest, and her leaders decide to be “committed and willing to correct the anomalies in the region” and if “the ethnic nationalities are sincere with one another” or “decide to collaborate”. (Khana; Rivers). However some respondents qualified the kind of aspirations that can be achieved. While the aspirations for better conditions and opportunities can be achieved, that for self determination cannot be achieved.. The reasons given for the perception that aspirations could not possibly be realized within the existing Nigerian State, are failed promises, corruption and marginalization.

These responses on the perceptions, faith in, grievances and realization of aspirations within the Nigerian state indicate generally that though there are deep grievances, dissatisfaction and discontent, the people of the region, have considerable faith in Nigeria. Nigeria remains the nation-state framework for the realization of their aspirations. This essentially means that the self determination content of the struggle, in spite of its recurrent hype on it, is low, particularly among the non Ijaws. It further suggests that self determination, as generally conceived, is not separate existence but political autonomy within a reconfigured nation state.

The issue of what needs to be done to Nigeria was also investigated. The responses reinforce our position on the content and direction of the self determination struggles. As Table 10 indicates, the central recommendation relates to the institution of a system that guarantees equitable and fair treatment of the region, true federalism and resource control and the reformulation of the constitution through a national conference. Within these responses emerges a clearer picture of the concept of self determination in the region. It relates to a re-structured federation and federal practice that guarantees regional autonomy, control of resources and development and fair and equitable treatment. The methodology for instituting this should be a new constitution that is made through dialogue and negotiation in a national conference of ethnic nationalities or sovereign national conference.

**Table 10: RECOMMENDATIONS OF ISSUES FOR RE-CONSTITUTING/RE-CONFIGURING THE NIGERIAN STATE**

	GS				KIS			
	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL	Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total
National Conference/New Constitution	16 (23.5)	8 (6.61)	25(37.88)	49 (19.22)	3(18.75)	3 (15%)	8(53.33)	14 27.5
True Federalism/Resource Control	4 (5.88%)	67(55.37)	14(21.21)	85 (33.33)	5 (31.25)	10 (50%)	3 (20%)	18 35.2
Good governance		3 (2.48)	4 (6.06)	7 (2.75)	7 (43.75)	6 (30%)	1 (6.67%)	14 27.5
Equitable and fair treatment of region	46(67.65)	35 (28.93)	17(25.76)	98 (38.43)	1 (6.25)	1 (5%)	2(13.33)	4 7.84
Others	2 ( 2.94)	8 ( 6.61)	6 (9.09)	16 (6.27)	-	-	1 (6.67)	1 1.96
	68	121	66	255	16	20	15	51

Two of our interviewees in Warri, Delta State clearly expressed these views. According to them, if Nigeria must remain, give every region autonomy and let them control their resources” (Warri 13/06/07). And except there is a people oriented constitutional conference involving all the ethnic groups to discuss the basis of our co-existence, peace will continue to elude us (Warri 19/06/07).

## 5:2 CONCEPTION OF RESOURCE CONTROL

Resource control is a major issue in the Niger Delta conflict. As such, we investigated the conception of resource control in the KIS. The responses indicate three contending perspectives. First is resource control as control and management of resources for self development. This is phrased by several respondents as “to control our natural resources”, “manage our own property the way we want it”, “to control our God-given resource to better the lot of the downtrodden people”, and “controlling the resources found in, under and on the land and waters of the people of the Niger Delta by the people themselves”. The second perspective posits resource control in terms of claims to ownership. As some respondents in Bayelsa State put it “it is to be in charge of what belongs to us”; “Give us what belongs to us”. The third perspective sees it in terms of greater

participation and greater portion of the shared benefits from oil resources. As one respondent put it, resource control has to do with being “a major stakeholder in the resources of the Niger Delta”.

**Table 11: CONCEPTION(S) OF RESOURCE CONTROL**

	KIS			
	Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total
Controlling and managing resources for self development	11 (55%)	11 (55)	4 (26.66)	31 (56.4)
Claiming ownership of what belongs to you	5 (25%)	8 (40)	1 (6.67)	16 (29.1)
Directing/controlling own resources	4 (20%)	1 (05)	10(66.67)	8 (14.5)
Total	20	20	15	55

The first perception, ownership and control, (56.40 per cent) is perceived, within the context of a federal state, to mean reverting ownership from the federal government to the states and ethnic nationalities which then taxes and remits a proportion to the federal government. As one respondent in Bayelsa State put it, “we don’t want the federal government to assist us to control our resources; the federal government is an intruder”. This will involve a complete reversal of the current configuration of fiscal relations.

To define more specifically, what elements of ownership, control and sharing that the Niger Delta people want, there is the need to specify, what percentages of oil resources they want or claim entitlement to. The KIS revealed that in Bayelsa State, the respondents wanted 100 per cent control. As one of them put it, “100 per cent to the Niger Delta, while we contribute our quota to the federal government as a federating unit, in the fashion of the American model”. In Delta and Rivers States, the respondents preferred a percentage share of between 31 and 50 per cent..

The other thing to note is that resource control is associated with perceptions of equity and fairness. To several respondents, it meant equitable distribution and reward for the region, which is seen to derive from true federalism. As one respondent (GS) put it, “there will never be equity, justice nor fairness except there is first resource control and true federalism”.

### **5.3 PERCEPTIONS OF THE NIGER DELTA CONFLICT**

There is a central issue of what the conflict is all about, at least in the perception of the people. This relates to what the problems of the region are, what the goals of the struggle are, and what the ethnic groups want from the struggle. The GS investigation (Table 12 ) of the problems that underlie the struggles reveals that the main problems are perceived as poor status of development (infrastructures, social services) that is seen to be contingent on neglect and lack of developmental attention (29.88 per cent), economic deprivation and exploitation that are related to the externalities of oil exploitation, degraded environments, endangered ecosystems (environmental hazards and destroyed sources of livelihoods), the region’s resource contribution but poor revenue and benefits in flow (23.1 per cent) and the absence of oil resource ownership, management and control



(13.55 percent) As one GS respondent put it, the Niger Delta people are not even recognized as the breadbasket of Nigeria. They are not given their rights as the oil producing area”.

**TABLE 12: PERCEPTIONS OF PROBLEMS OF THE NIGER DELTA  
GS**

Problems	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Neglect/Lack of Development	22 (28.57)	38 (44.71)	15 (16.85%)	75 (29.88%)
Economic Deprivation/Exploitation	22 (28.57%)	18 (21.18%)	18 (26.22%)	58 (23.10%)
Marginalization	4 (5.196%)	2 (2.35%)	16 (17.98%)	22 (8.76)
Ill treatment as minority groups	4 (5.19%)	2 (2.35%)	18 (20.22%)	24 (9.56)
Heavy unemployment	10 (12.99%)	11 (12.94%)	6 (6.74%)	28 (11.16)
Absence of resource control	15 (19.48%)	9 (10.59)	10 (14.495)	34
Poor Leadership	-	5 (5.88%)	6 (6.74)	10 (3.98)
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>251</b>

The other problems mentioned; marginalization (8.76 per cent) and ill treatment arising from their minority group status (9.56 per cent) relate to issues of political representation, inclusion, resource distribution and issues of equity, justice and fairness within the Nigerian federal state. Of particular interest is the problem of heavy or mass unemployment. This arises from the negative externalities of oil, lack of development, economic deprivation and poor resource in flow and benefits to the region, which are identified as underlying the conflicts.

The investigation of the goals or purposes of the struggle should add to our understanding of the conflicts (Table 13). The goals are identified as resource control (30.9 per cent), equitable and just treatment (24.7 per cent), developmental attention (16.6 per cent) and inclusion and adequate representation (11.6 per cent). These goals flow from or are related to the problems identified earlier. In sum, the region is seeking adequate attention, recognition and participation in its oil resources, adequate development and representation and fair, just and equitable treatment of its citizens as minority groups. These issues relate to resource management, governance and minority rights.

**Table 13: THE GOALS OF THE NIGER DELTA STRUGGLE  
GS**

GOAL	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Developmental attention	15(21.74%)	13 (16.05%)	9 (20.45%)	37 (19.07%)
Inclusion and Adequate Representation	13 (18.84%)	10 (12.35%)	3 (6.82%)	26 (13.40%)
Resource Control	15 (21.74)	22 (27.16%)	3 (6.82)	40 (20.62%)
Self Determination	10 (14.49%)	3 (3.70%)	-	13 (6.70%)
Equitable and Just treatment	13 (18.84%)	28 (34.57)	14 (31.82%)	55 (28.35%)
Freedom/Emancipation	3 (4.34)	5 (6.17)	15 (34.07)	23 (11.86%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>194</b>

The study further investigated in the KIS what the Ijaw, the largest ethnic group in the region and the hotbed of youth insurgency and the other groups; Urhobo, Isoko, Itsekiri, Ogoni, Ogbia, Ikwerre, Ilaje, Ndokwa, and others want from the struggles. The results (Table 14) indicate the main demands as development, resource control or adequate derivation based funds within a better federal framework, equitable, fair, just treatment and freedom and self determination. These are congruent with the identified problems and goals. One of our key informants in Bayelsa State put the demands this way; “we want development, employment and particularly, our resources should not be resources for the whole Nigeria... why should our resources be used to develop others at the expense of the Ijaw?”.

Of particular note here is the demand for self determination (11.8 per cent) and secession (2.7 per cent). Self determination was identified earlier as one of the goals of the struggle (Table 13). It is also interesting to note that the above goal and the demands for self determination and secession are more dominant among the Ijaw. This is perhaps attributable to the fact that the Ijaw are the largest ethnic minority in the region and currently produce the bulk of agitators and militants. It is perhaps the most aggrieved as a large minority group with the greatest oil resource endowments. Its situation typifies that of most other Niger Delta groups in terms of low resource inflow, poor development, low political representation and inclusion, poverty, unemployment and economic deprivation.

A key informant in Bayelsa state articulated the demand for self determination thus: “[what] we want [are] equity, fairness and justice. But since these are seemingly unattainable, we want a Republic of our own. I mean, we want a country of our own”. Obviously, self determination is largely equated to regional autonomy, self rule and self development. while secession is an extremist and minority conception in the region.

**TABLE 14: WHAT THE IJAW AND OTHER GROUPS IN THE NIGER DELTA WANT**

	Bayelsa		Delta		Total	Rivers		TOTAL
	Ijaws %	Others	Ijaws	Others		Ijaws	Others	%
Development	7	7	5	12		4	5	40 36.36
Resources control/true Federalism/Adequate derivation	5	5	8	3		4	2	27 24.55
Inclusion/belonging/Political Representation	-	-	2	2		1	4	9 8.18
Freedom/Equity/Fairness/Justice	1	5	3	3		1	2	15 13.63
Self Determination	4	2	2	-		3	2	13 11.82
Secession	2	-	-	-		1	-	3 2.73
Abrogation of obnoxious laws	1	1	-	-		1	-	3 2.73
Total	20	20	20	20		15	15	110

#### 5.4 THE YOUTH AND THE CONFLICT

The conflicts are essentially youth driven in terms of conduct of the struggle, the central actors and their foot soldiers. Therefore it is necessary to investigate how and why the youths emerged as the major actors in the conflicts, the perceptions of youth roles in the conflict, youth perceptions of the conflict, and the perceptions of what the youths want from the conflicts.

**Table 15: THE YOUTHS AND THE CRISIS  
GS**

	FACTORS	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Factors in the Emergence of Youths as major actors in the Struggle	Loss of Faith in Elders	40 (57.14%)	31 (46.28%)	2 (3.03%)	73 (35.96%)
	Vibrant segment of population	15 (21.43%)	12 (17.9%)	8 (12.12)	35 (17.24)
	Failure of Elders to secure development	5 (7.14%)	12 (17.9%)	21 (31.82)	38 (18.71%)
	Search for greater involvement	10 (14.29)	3 (4.48%)	-	13 (6.40)
	Fighting for rights/entitlements	-	2 (2.99%)	11 (16.67%)	13 (6.40%)
	Politics	-	-	24 (36.36%)	24 (11.82%)
	Lack of government response	-	3 (4.48%)	-	3 (1.5%)
	Poverty/Unemployment	-	4 (5.97%)	-	4 (1.97%)
	Total	70	67	66	203
Perception of Youth Roles in the Niger Delta Struggle	YOUTH ROLES	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	Vanguard of the Struggle	26 (43.3%)	32 (57.14%)	31 (53.45)	99 (53.80%)
	Freedom fighters	34 (56.7%)	20 (35.71%)	16 (27.59)	70 (38.04)
	Criminal and Violent	-	3 (5.36%)	3 (5.17)	6 (3.26%)
	An Un-focused segment	-	-	5 (8.62)	5 (2.72%)
	The Only hope of the Struggle	-	1 (1.79)	3 (5.17)	4 (2.17%)
Total	60	56	58	184	
youth Perception of the Niger Delta Struggle	FACTORS	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	A fight for rights	10 (15.38%)	4 (4.94%)	4 (6.67%)	18 (8.74%)
	Struggle Against Injustice	35 (53.85%)	20 (24.69%)	6 (1%)	61 (29.61%)
Focus and Purposeful Struggle	20 (30.77)	45 (55.55%)	20 (33.33)	85 (41.26%)	

	Long but Continuous Struggle Until Aspirations are met	-	4 (4.94%)	23 (38.33)	27 (13.11%)
	Struggle for Survival and Livelihood	-	8 (9.88%)	7 (11.67%)	15 (7.28)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>206</b>
Perception of What the youths want from the Niger Delta Struggle	<b>What The Youth Want</b>	<b>BAYELSA</b>	<b>DELTA</b>	<b>RIVERS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	Development	25 (33.78%)	46 (48.94)	15 (21.74%)	86 (36.29)
	Resource Control	24 (32.42)	12 (17.77%)	16 (23.19)	52 (21.94%)
	Employment	15 (20.27)	22 (23.40%)	10 (14.49)	47 (19.83%)
	Freedom fairness and Justice	-	7 (7.45%)	9 (13.04)	16 (6.75)
	Adequate attention and pride of place	10 (13.52%)	6 (6.38%)	18 (26.09%)	34 (14.36%)
	Political Representation	-	1 (1.06%)	1 (1.45%)	2 (0.845)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>237</b>

The major reasons for the emergence of the youth as a central plank of the struggle are the loss of faith in the region's elders and leaders (40 per cent) and the failure of the elders to secure the much needed development from the Nigerian State and Multinational oil companies (18.7 per cent). Then youths as a vibrant segment of the population {17.2%} therefore began to seek greater involvement (6.4 per cent) in the struggle for rights and entitlements (6.4 per cent). There is also the factor of politics and particularly youth involvement in elections and campaigns, which engender engagement in the conflicts (11.8 per cent). (Table 15).

Table 16: SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS: GENERAL SAMPLE

	BAYELSA				TOTAL	DELTA				TOTAL	RIVERS				TOTAL
Occupation	Bus/	Govt/	Private	Self/		Bus/	Govt/	Private	Self/	100	Bus/	Govt/	Private	Self/	
	Trading	Public		employed		Trading	Public		employed		Trading	Public		employed	
		Servant										Servant			
	13	18		11		8	49	17	7		17	19	12	4	
Income	Low	Middle	High		80	Low	Middle	High		100	Low	Middle	High		75
	6.25	0.3	0.6			4.7	4.9	0.4			41	29	5		
SOC. CHARACT	Ijaw	Others	2		100	Ijaw	Urhobo	Itsekiri			Ijaw	Olwere	Ogoni	Urhobo	Others
Age.	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55- 11	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-
	12.5	53.75	27.5	6.25	-	48	28	11			0.4	4.5	2.2	0.4	
Ethnic Group					80										
Sex	Male	Female			80	Male	Female			100	Male	Female			75
	64	16				7.8	2.2				4.5	0.3			
Religion	Christian	Muslim	Traditional		80	Christian	Muslim	Traditional		100	Christian	Muslim	Traditional		75
	7.6	-	0.4			9.5	0.5	-			75	2	-		
Marital Status	Married	Not Married			80	Married	Not Married			100	Married	Not Married			75
	3.9	4.1				4.7	5.3				3.8	3.7			
Education	None	Pri.	Secondary	Post Secon.	80	None	Pri.	Secondary	Post Secon.	100	None	Pri.	Secondary	Post Secon.	75
	0.25	13.5	3.25	2.25		-	0.7	0.3	6.3		-	0.5	1.6	5.4	

	Southern/Ijaw Brass	Yenogoa	Ekeremor		Bomadi	Sapele	Burutu	Warri		Port Harcourt	Phalga	Khana	Bunny	
	16	33	20	3	5	43	44			19	3	12	30	
LG														
??	Egbema	Others		80	Others					Gokana				
	3	5			2					11				

The content analysis of the responses here is quite instructive. The youths were disappointed with the elite and elders who employed methods (accommodation and incorporation) that failed to yield quick and concrete results. The state and oil companies did not listen to them. In effect, the elders were perceived to be ineffective and not willing to fight the cause. They took things too easy. They were seen as weak, docile, corrupt and betrayers of the cause of the struggle. The youths then emerged on the scene. They forced their way into the whole situation when they discovered that the future appeared bleak: "They could not allow their tomorrow to be completely destroyed before they take over tomorrow". "They had to act, take over the struggle, forcefully and claim rights that have been denied them for years". "They had to pick up arms and fight for their rights". And "they emerged at the time we needed them to come to our aid because they are the ones that are able to face the military men". The glory of the youth is in their strength. "Since our representative leaders were being silenced in one way or the other, the suffering youths had to emerge".

The investigation of the perception of youth roles in the struggle reveals that the youths were seen as vanguards (53.8 per cent) and freedom fighters (38 per cent). Some respondents saw the youths as driving the struggle, and as an active, brave, courageous, articulate and determined segment, while some believed that they had raised awareness about the struggle, and that they were instruments of change and development for a better tomorrow in the region. They were also seen as the strength of Niger Delta society, as fighting for their possessions, as having the courage and braveness to deliver the region. However, a few respondents saw the youths as criminal and violent (3.3 per cent) and unfocused (2.7 per cent). Some respondents even thought that their activities had become uncivilized, terrorist and criminal (interviews Sapele 15/06/07; Yenagoa 8/06/07).

The responses revealed that first, the roles of youths were seen as right, focused and purposeful (41.3 per cent), a struggle against injustice (29.6 per cent) and a fight for rights (8.7 per cent). The indications were that the struggle was perceived as right, just, purposeful and directed against injustice, deprivation, abuse, exploitation and oppression. Quite interestingly, although the struggle was seen to be long, its continuation was justified - until their aspirations were met (13.1 per cent). (Table 15). Along the same lines, the struggle was believed to be for survival and livelihood (17.3 per cent).

The content analysis of our respondents in the G.S. Sample, oral interviews and FGDs, give more flesh to the responses. First the youths saw the struggle as one for the people, aimed rightly at liberating the people, to compel development and employment, to bring about desired changes, and particularly a better life for the region. Second, the struggle was seen as a just, sincere and genuine cause, a good fight, a noble struggle, a struggle worth fighting for, a struggle for freedom and equal treatment. Third, the struggle was seen as the right of the youth, a fight that they and no one else could prosecute. It was their time to fight. the struggle was their life. The youth, it was claimed, had a right to fight for what belonged to them.

Fourth, the struggle was seen as the only way, the only choice and the best option in the circumstance to the redress the poverty, deprivation, underdevelopment, frustration and other hazards confronting the region. To all intents and purposes, the people had been pushed to the wall. Fifth, the struggle was a task that had to be done, a fight that had to go on until the desired

goals were attained, a struggle that had to be sustained and pursued to its logical conclusion. Finally, the struggle was seen as being capable of yielding returns, or profit for the people.

The responses as to what the youth wanted from the struggle indicate that these included development (36.3 per cent), resource control (21.9 per cent), employment (19.8 per cent) and adequate attention and pride of place (14.3 per cent) (Table 15). These responses reflect what the ethnic groups in the region wanted: massive development, and a fair or reasonable share or total control of the region's oil resources. The significance of what the youths wanted can be discerned from the content analysis of responses.

The youths want a "better life, the eradicating of poverty" (Port Harcourt 18/06/07), "good education, scholarships, skills development opportunities, massive employment, employment opportunities, social and economic empowerment" (Port Harcourt 12/06/07) "a guarantee or some protection of their future life or of better life, living conditions, economic wellbeing, and meaningful living" (Ekeremor Bayelsa 07/06/07).

## 5.5 THE YOUTH MILITIAS

The youth militias as a major focus of the study attracted considerable attention. The reasons for their emergence, profile, categories, sponsorship, goals and genuineness were investigated in both the GS and KIS and in the FGDs and oral interviews.

The youth militias are perceived to have emerged from a youth loss of confidence in the Nigerian State (19.3 per cent) (Table 16) and regional/ethnic leaders that sought more accommodationist approaches. But apart from these, the militia phenomenon was founded on poverty and unemployment (17.9 per cent), frustration and sense of oppression (14.5 per cent) and persisting feelings of neglect and exploitation of the region (14 per cent). Some of these poor, unemployed and frustrated youths fell prey to manipulation of political leaders particularly in Rivers State (7.3 per cent)



**TABLE 16: YOUTH MILITIAS - Reasons for the Emergence of Youth Militias**

	<b>BAYELSA</b>	<b>DELTA</b>	<b>RIVERS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Loss of Confidence in the State	25 (34.25%)	11 (16.18%)	4 (6.06%)	40 (19.32%)
Loss of Confidence in Leaders/Elders	28 (38.35)	2 (2.94)	-	30 (14.49%)
Poverty and Unemployment	4 (5.48%)	19 (27.94%)	14 (21.21%)	37 (17.87%)
Frustration/Oppression	-	22 (32.35%)	8 (12.12%)	30 (14.49%)
Neglect/Exploitation of the Region	8 (10.96%)	11 (16.18%)	10 (15.15)	29 (14.01%)
Need for Resource Control	8 (10.96%)	1 (1.47%)	3 (4.54)	12 (5.80%)
Access to Guns Arms	-	-	5 (7.58)	5 (2.42%)
Selfish Motives	-	2 (2.94%)	3 (4.55%)	5 (2.42%)
Manipulation by Political Leaders	-	-	15 (22.73%)	15 (7.25%)
Fight for Justice/Good Cause	-	-	4 (6.06%)	4 (1.93%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>207</b>

**GS**

The issue of loss of confidence in the elders and leaders was raised earlier. The elders were believed to have betrayed the struggle, having been too “ready to sell off the struggle to satisfy self and family and having only obtained “paltry benefits” from their chosen “peaceful negotiation and consultation”. Though the youths had been “chesting out and taking the fight of the struggle” and “realized that except you fight, no body would fight for you”, there was a base of degenerating poverty, mass unemployment, deprivation, long suffering and a rising mass of anger, frustration and discontentment that pushed the youth towards militancy. The same conditions also made the youths amenable to elite manipulation. The loss of confidence in the state, arose from the persistent neglect and exploitation of the region, the failure to dialogue and negotiate and the use of the military to maltreat the communities and citizens.

Insights gleaned from the content analysis of responses (KIS, GS, Oral interviews and FGD) indicate that the militia phenomenon arose first from the failure of government to yield to demands. This precipitated loss of hope and confidence in the state. Second, political and ethnic/community leaders and state governments funded, armed, sponsored and used militias and cult groups particularly during the 2003 and 2007 general elections but dumped them afterwards. As one respondent in Bonny put it “they emerged from and are offshoots of government and opposition killer squads, thugs, and bouncers...They are monsters created by government” The exposure, recognition, funding and other support during the elections oriented the armed bands into not just political roles but also violent economic struggles for cheap funds, hostage taking and bunkering. Criminality among the armed youths grew in part out of this. The third element is that the militia arose as a response to state repression. According to a respondent in Bonny; “they emerged after mass killing of the people by the Nigerian Military. They feel retaliation is the best way out”.

But who are the militias? What is their organizational profile and categories? In other words, what is the profile of the militias? (Table 17)

The study found that militia groups are fairly hierarchically organized, command based (30 per cent) and disciplined organizations (20 per cent) that are also fairly enlightened, purposeful and focused (14 per cent). However, they are violent and brutal (10 per cent) and have segments that are self interested, and greedy (12 per cent) and cultist (10 per cent). They are not easily amenable to categorization. They are numerous categories (38.5 per cent), but they are mostly found in camps, armed bands and cults (23.1 per cent). Some are however ethnic and community based militias (19.2 per cent), sponsored (11.5 per cent), or self sponsored (7.8 per cent). There are also militias that are freedom fighters and others that are not.

The ethnic militias are larger groups, as are militias that are bands of liberation fighters. Non freedom fighters or those more permanently associated with non Niger Delta interests were associated with bands and cults built around individuals. There were those that were more involved with piracy, bunkering and ransom taking. The sponsored militias were organized around politicians and ethnic leaders and were devoted more to self centered objectives than the regional struggle, while the non sponsored ones were built around prominent 'warlords' and activists of the struggle.

The militias were perceived to be dominantly sponsored by political leaders (42.6 per cent) and ethnic leaders (21.3 per cent), while a significant proportion (31.9 per cent) believed they were self sponsored, a perception supported by the forms of motivation, management and control in the groups. Indeed, militia and camp leaders had groups that were trained, armed, and funded by them. The ethnic/community and political leaders component of sponsorship seemed to be related to the arming and funding support that was linked to manipulation, teleguiding and utilization of the militias groups for political and selfish purposes. An oral interviewee in Delta State however averred that "we have no sponsors or godfathers, but we compel most political leaders and elders, government functionaries and very rich businessmen to give us money. Some political leaders may come and negotiate their political business with us and pay us. I don't think that is sponsorship. We work and they pay us". There may therefore be sense in the remarks of a Delta State key informant who believed "They are sponsored by individuals who use them to satisfy selfish ends and by communities and ethnic groups who see them as those fighting for their rights"

According to some key informants and oral interviewees in Delta State, (Burutu, Sapele), they usually operate under a general commander (commandant), who ensures direction and common goals. Sometimes, there are component units outside the control of the commandant. Contrary to public opinion, "some of the militias are enlightened people who have the feelings of the people at heart"; "They are a highly structured and organized network with a philosophy and a cause"; They have mechanisms that check relations within and for disciplining erring members"; They have administrative units, secretaries, spokesmen, spies and combatants. The latter constitute the largest segment". "Those that are not educated are the Field Marshalls". The Egbesu is the general name of the militias, which have many sub-groups. In the Bayelsa State area, there are between 20 and 30 militia groups and camps.

The militias pursue diverse goals, the major ones being resource control and true federalism, (29 per cent), development (23.6 per cent), equitable, fair and just treatment and respect for the collective rights of the ethnic groups (21.8 per cent). Besides these altruistic goals however are selfish interests and individual aggrandizement (14.5 per cent). The genuineness of the motives and struggle of the militias was investigated. It revealed three categories. There are the genuine militias

which pursue the pure objectives of the Niger Delta struggle (36 per cent). There are those that combine regional objectives and selfish struggles (30 per cent). Then there are those that pursue selfish interests and survival and take the struggle as the struggle for livelihood (34 per cent). The latter two groups are said to have “derailed, by “kidnapping to make money”, pirating and creating havoc in the water ways, and bunkering oil”. But even the genuine militias may digress from time to time to meet economic and arms needs of the struggle.

The question of how the militias are perceived, the reasons for their proliferation and relative success, their involvement in inter communal and ethnic wars rather than the struggle and the problems or challenges were also investigated (Tables 17,18, 19). The militants are youths. They mingle with the people and operate surreptitiously and clandestinely in the cities and towns. They are usually around on weekends but return to the camps (office) during week days. They may be seen as activist or even as non governmental organization members but not as militia members. But Ijaw activists know them. The level of support and unity among the Ijaws is such that the militants are not betrayed.

The militias are in camps, distant communities or virgin lands or islands in the creeks, and along the sea coast. These camps are numerous, established and owned by bosses or commandants. Each camp may comprise of as many as 2,000 youth militias or more. Several volunteers are turned down because of the size and the ensuing problem of manageability of the camps. The commandants run the camp from resources obtained by extortion from state and Local Government councils using threats, multinational oil companies and oil servicing companies, bunkering and sale of oil in the high seas and, in some cases, kidnapping and ransom demands.

Most militia groups and bands are involved in bunkering. They use the money to run the camps, and to purchase arms. The distinguishing feature is that bunkering by genuine freedom fighting militias is for the sustenance of the struggle while bunkering by criminal militia groups and bands is for self enrichment. Also, the genuine militia groups are more subject to the influence and co-ordination of the apex Ijaw youth movement, the Ijaw Youth council. Criminal bands, cults and militia groups, on the other hand, operate less under such broad controls. There is however some level of intermingling or overlapping between the genuine and criminal militias. This is because, even within the militia groups, there are bands and cliques which perpetuate criminal activities without the knowledge and outside the control of the camp commandants.

There has been a mushrooming of militia groups since 1999 and particularly since 2004. The main ethnic nationalistic and liberation driven militia leaders are however losing control to others who are less driven by altruistic motives. With such proliferation, criminal bands, cults and cliques have emerged in large numbers, particularly in Rivers and Bayelsa States. Most militants are initiates of the Egbesu deity. Initiation is undertaken at Egbesu shrines which are presided over by Egbesu priests. By 2006, the most notable chief priest was Augustine Ebikeme who also headed the Supreme Egbesu Assembly. He was mostly on the run from state security forces. The militias believed in the invincibility of Egbesu and therefore took initiation baths or sprinkles before militant actions. Casualties were attributed to defiling or being stained by wrongdoing, in relation to codes of behaviour. For example, an Egbesu militant was not expected to steal, rape or desecrate sacred places.

The militia groups controlled territories in the waterways and creeks and fought themselves over control of territory. Territory was crucial to the groups because of bunkering, access to multinational oil companies and even access to political leaders. The prominent militant groups in the Western Delta were the Mambutu Boys and Ijaw Liberation Heroes. The Niger Delta Vigilante and Niger Delta Volunteer Force was the main group in the eastern axis.

The popular support for the militants was quite high initially, except for the criminal segment. With time, the popularity declined. First, there was a decline in social acceptability, as members became increasingly stigmatized. Second, those involved with piracy and related crimes were no longer accepted as happened to some militant pirates who attempted to steal Local Government funds in Ekeremor. Third, the open use and celebration of guns and militancy no longer enjoyed the support of the IYC.

**Table 17: Profiling the Militias (KIS)**

		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	%
Perception	-Political Thugs	-		1	1 (2.2)
	-Right/Freedom Fighters	13	12	4	29 (61.7)
	-Bold, Brave, Aggressive Youth/angry	2	3	-	5 (10.6)
	-Poor/Unemployed deprived youth	4	1	2	7 (14.9)
	-Self Interest	1	1	-	2 (4.2)
	-Criminal, indiscipline	-	3	-	3 (6.4)
		20	20	7	47
Organizational profile	-Disciplined	6	4	-	10 (20)
	-Hierarchical Command/Organization	8	3	4	15 (30)
	-Enlightened/purposeful focused	3	3	1	7 (14)
	-Not disciplined	-	2	-	2 (4)
	-Violent/Brutal	1	2	2	5 (10)
	-Self-interest/greedy/deviled	-	3	3	6 (12)
	-Cult groups	-	-	5	5 (10)
		18	17	15	50
Categorization	-Freedom Fighters	-	2	-	2 (7.8)
	-Sponsored Militias	-	2	1	3 (11.5)
	-Ethnic & Community Based	4	-	-	3 (19.2)
	-Camped/Armed Bands/Cultist	1	1	-	5 (23.1)
	-Numerous	1	1	4	6 (38.5)
		6	6	3	10
			12	8	26
Sponsorship	-Self-sponsored	7	8	-	15 (31.9)
	-Ethnic Leaders	3	3	4	10 (21.3)
	-Political Leaders	8	4	8	20 (42.6)
	-Oil Syndicates	-	-	1	1 (0.2)
	-Diaspora	18	15	-	1 (0.2)
				1	-
			14	47	
Goals of the Militias	-Development	4	6	3	13 (23.6)
	-True Federalism/Resource Control	10	2	4	16 (29)
	-Regular/ethnic rights/emancipation equitable & just treatment.	2	6	4	12 (21.8)
	-Release of detained leaders	1	1	-	2 (3.6)
	-Selfish interests/aggrandizement	1	3	4	8 (14.5)
	-Others (abrogation of obnoxious business employment/better tomorrow	2	2	-	4 (7.2)
		20	20	15	55
Genuineness of the Militias	-Pursue Niger Delta struggle	8	6	4	18 (36)
	-Pursuing selfish interests/survival/livelihood	3	5	9	17 (34)
	-Admixture of regional and selfish struggle	6	7	2	15 (30)
	Total	17	18	15	50
Perception of Involvement in Communal & ethnic conflicts	-Condemnable/unhealthy beyond bounds	2	10	5	17 (40.5)
	-Misplacement of focus/objectives.	3	1	2	6 (14.3)
	-Struggles over territory and oil	4	-	1	5 (11.9)
	-Bad leadership	4	2	2	8 (19)
	-Creed/criminality/cultism sponsorship	1	-	5	6 (14.3)
	Total	14	13	15	42

**Table 18: Perceptions of Reasons for Relative Success and the challenges faced by Militias  
GS**

	<b>BAYELSA</b>	<b>DELTA</b>	<b>RIVERS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Liberation/freedom fighters Addressing Niger Delta Problem	53 (71.62%)	29 (46.03%)	17 (25.37%)	99 (48.5%)
Doing A Commendable/Good Job	10 (13.51%)	2 (3.17%)	11 (16.42%)	23 (11.3%)
Lack focus	-	1 (1.60%)	8 (11.94%)	9 (4.4%)
Fighting for Recognition and Benefits	11 (14.86%)	7 (11.11%)	8 (11.94%)	26 (12.8%)
Discipline/Well armed/Tactical	-	10 (15.87%)	5 (7.46%)	15 (7.4%)
Evil/Not Commendable	-	14 (22.22%)	13 (19.40%)	27 (13.2%)
Attracts Attention To Niger Delta	-	-	5 (7.46%)	5 (2.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>204</b>

**Table 19: Perceptions of Reasons for Relative Success and the challenges faced by Militias  
KIS**

<b>REASON FOR PROLIFERATING &amp; THRIVING OF MILITIAS</b>	<b>KIS</b>				
	-DETERMINATION, FOCUS/UNITY OF PURPOSE	2	2	2	6 (12.25)
-DEPRIVATION/SUFFERING/ UNEMPLOYMENT FRUSTRATION.	-	4	1	5 (10.20)	
-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES/FINANCIAL					
-PERSISTING NEGLECT UNDERDEVELOPMENT/MISGOVERNANCE.	-	-	4	4 (8.16)	
-SUPPORT OF PROMINENT PERSONS AND LOCALS	7	6	3	16 (32.65)	
-JUST STRUGGLE	5	4	5	14 (28.57)	
	3	1	-	4 (8.16)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>49</b>	

Reasons for Relative Success of Militias	-Support of local the people	5	3	2	10 (20.4)
	-Funds raised from kidnapping & bunkering.	4	2	4	10 (20.4)
	-Internal character (determination/focus/unity/boldness/leadership.				
	-Just cause & struggle for freedom	5	4	2	11 (22.45)
	-Traditional deities				
	-Difficult terrain	-	2	2	4 (8.16)
	-Persisting unemployment and poverty.	3	1	1	5 (10.20)
		2	1	2	5 (10.20)
	-	3	1	4 (8.16)	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>49</b>
Challenges and problems of the Militias	-Lack of understanding & betrayals by locals.	5	4	3	12 (21.81)
	-Greed/selfishness of community/militia members				
	-Funding difficulties	2	-	-	2 (3.64)
	-Military suppression				
	-Loss of lives/job hazards	2	3	3	8 (14.55)
	-Lack of proper co-ordination/leadership.	10	7	5	22 (40)
		-	3	3	6 (10.91)
	1	3	1	9.09	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>55</b>

The militias were dominantly perceived to be freedom or rights fighters by the KIS respondents (61.7 per cent) or as poor, unemployed and deprived youths (14.9 per cent) that are bold, brave and aggressive (10.6 per cent). In the GS sample, they were perceived as freedom fighters that were addressing the Niger Delta problem (48.5 per cent). They were also described as fighting for regional benefits and recognition (12.8 per cent) and as doing a commendable and good job of addressing the regions problems (11.2 per cent). Some respondents however saw them as evil and not commendable (13.2 per cent) and lacking focus (4.4 per cent).

Thus the picture of the militias in the region was that of liberation and freedom fighters. Some of our GS in Sapele, Delta State described them as a “group of able-bodied men trained in the art of warfare” and who as freedom fighters were combating through militant means all those behind the Niger Delta problem” in order to “free the region’s people from suffering” An oral interviewee in Delta State described militias as a collection of angry, unemployed, aggrieved, discontented but literate youths that have taken up arms. They are daring, fearless and brave young patriots, who are determined to emancipate the region and achieve resource control. The region is in bondage. The idea of the militia is to frustrate the Federal Government and gain freedom”. But some respondents were ready to condone the negative elements of the militia because of the larger and more noble goals of the struggle. As one KIS respondent put it “the phenomenon of militia is not the best, but we have been taken for granted for too long. (Bonny, Rivers 14/06/07).

The militias have been relatively successful in seizing and holding on to oil installations, maintaining some territorial control in terms of camps and engaging the Nigerian military. We sought explanations, and got three categories of responses. The first is persisting neglect, under-development and bad governance in the region (32.7 per cent) and support of prominent persons and locals (28.6 per cent). The relative success of the militias is also attributed to the internal character of the militia organizations (22.4 per cent). This is seen as indicating determination, focus, unity and boldness. There is also the support from the local people (20.4 per cent) and the incentive of funds raised from kidnapping and bunkering (20.4 per cent). The Niger Delta’s difficult terrain and the support of traditional deities were also identified as factors in the strength and success of the militias.

If the picture of the militias is that of liberation movements concerned with regional cum ethnic issues, why were they also the soldiers in inter-communal and ethnic wars within the region? The phenomenon was condemned by most of the respondents (Table 17), as such actions were seen as unhealthy and beyond bounds (38.6 per cent), and arising out of bad leadership, (10.2 per cent), greed, criminality, elite sponsorship and cultism (18.2 per cent) as well as a misplacement of objectives and focus by the militias (13.6 per cent).

Our KIS samplers elaborate on the figures with comments like “the entire Ijaw ethnic is in support of the militia struggles”, “they prosper because they violently take part of the Niger Delta resources through kidnapping and bunkering”; “They also prosper because their activities disturb government who later call for settlement” and because they are fighting a just cause, the gods of the land are behind them”

But a key oral interviewee revealed that

We have not recorded any success. The militants are suffering. They are only risk takers to survive. If you look at it from afar, you see them making success, but if you come closer, it is suffering upon suffering that you see. Let me tell you. For about two years, I have not spent 30 minutes with my parents and my village is no longer comfortable for me”

The militias faced numerous problems.(Table 19). These included military suppression, (40 per cent), lack of understanding and betrayal by family (21.8 per cent), funding difficulties (14.5 per cent) and job hazards like loss of lives (10.9 per cent). According to some oral interviewees, the



militias faced frequent military attacks and a sense of insecurity outside their camps. These were articulated thus;

We are often confronted by government incessant attacks and killings. When we retaliate, they call us militant's.....they burn our homes...The Federal Government is on our necks, looking for us as if we stole their property. They don't enjoy it. Security officers are after us. Even our co-ljaw (Izon) people especially politicians and other jealous people want some of us dead. Why?

## 5.6 ROLES OF ACTORS IN THE STRUGGLE

The actors in the Niger Delta conflict were identified and their roles investigated in the G.S (Table 20). The role of ethnic, political and business leaders in the conflict was investigated in the KIS (Table 21).

The traditional rulers, community leaders and elders were perceived to be playing mediatory advisory and peacemaking roles. But they were believed to use the struggle for personal gains. (26.6 per cent) and take sides with government (13.3 per cent). The business and political leaders play fairly active roles, by giving material and political support (11.8 per cent), but tended to seek and derive personal gains from the struggle (44.7 per cent). Women were seen to be supporting the struggle even though they were largely inactive (31.8 per cent). When active, the women played mediatory roles (27.7 per cent). The youth were believed to be at the vanguard of the struggle (45.60 per cent) and freedom fighters (27.9 per cent).

**Table 20: The Roles of Actors in the Niger Delta Struggles (GS)**

Roles	Bayelsa				Delta				Rivers				GROSS TOTAL			
	Traditional Leaders/Elders/chief	Business men/Political Leaders	Women	Youth	Traditional Leaders/Elders/chief	Business men/Political Leaders	Women	Youth	Traditional Leaders/Elders/chief	Business men/Political Leaders	Women	Youth				
Support/Part of the Struggle	5 (6.945)	-	24 (32.43)	-	3 (5.36%) 5.1	10 (15.38%) 18.9	11 (18.33%) 15.1	12 (24%) 63.2	11 (15.31%)	11 (15.075) 15.5	30 (41.105) 62.5	-	19 9.4	22 11.6	65 33.33	12 7.6
Play mediating/advisory/peace full roles	35 (48.61%)	-	25 (33.78%)	-	16 (28.575) 27.1	4 (6.15%) 7.5	12 (205) 16.4	-	12 (16.7)	9 (12.33%) 12.7	17 (23.295) 35.4	-	63 31.03	13 6.84	54 27.7	-
Give material/ Political Support	-	22 (33.9)	-	9 (16.075) 10.7	12 (18.46%) 20.3	-	13 (26%) 17.8	-	-	-	-	-	12 5.9	22 11.6	13 6.7	9 5.7
Use the Struggle for personal gains	15 (20.83)	27 (41.54)	-	-	14 (25%) 23.7	33 (50.72%) 62.3	-	-	25 (34.7%)	25 (34.25%) 35.2	1 2.1	-	54 26.6	85 44.73	1 0.51	-
1.Take sides with government	5 (6.94%) 6.94	-	-	-	6 (10.71%) 10.1	2 (3.085) 3.8	-	-	16 (22.22%) 22.22	16 (21.925) 22.5	-	-	27 13.3	18 9.47	-	-
2. Vanguard of the Struggle	-	-	-	36 (485) 42.86	-	-	-	2 (40%) 10.5	-	-	-	36 (53.735) 63.15	-	-	-	72 45.6
3.freedom fighter	-	-	-	39 (46.4%)	-	-	-	5 (26.3)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44 27.9
4.No active roles	12 (16.7)	16 (24.62%) 24.62	25 (33.8) 33.78	-	8 (13.6)	4 (7.5%)	37 (50.7%)	-	8 (11.11%) 11.11	10 (14.1%)	-	21 (36.8)	28 13.8	30 15.8	62 31.8	21 13.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>158</b>

**Table 21: The Role of Ethnic, Political and Business Leaders in the Niger Delta Conflicts (KIS)**

	<i>Bayelsa</i>	<i>Delta</i>	<i>Rivers</i>	<i>Total</i>	
Support resource control Advice the youth	5	2	-	7	14.29%
Seek peace and dialogue	-	3		5	10.20%
			2		
Support/sponsor militancy and crisis	1	4		14	28.57%
			9		
Involvement for their selfish ends	6	-		6	12.24%
			-		
No active Role/indifferent	6	3		12	24.49%
			3		
Handicapped.	-	5		5	10.20%
			-		
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>49</b>	

The KIS (Table 21) indicates that ethnic, political and business leaders are not generally active (24.5 per cent), but when they are, they sponsor or fund militancy (28.3 per cent) or seek peace and dialogue (10.2 per cent). Their involvement could also be for selfish ends (12.2 per cent). As some key informants presented the political elite, business ethnic and influential leaders,

Some are indifferent and some use it as profitable venture to make ends meet and prosper irrespective of the consequences. So except for a few, they betray the struggle. Yet they are always called upon to the settlement table at Abuja.

A picture of the roles of the different actors, glimpsed from the KIS is quite revealing. The elders, traditional rulers and chiefs are seen as lacking “focus, direction and commitment to the struggle, experience a “decline in the significance of their overall roles”, “selfish, opportunistic, sycophantic, corrupt and compromised”. They have “lost integrity and confidence of the people.” They are no longer representing the interests of the people” and are no longer custodians of culture”. They are “all politicians representing the interests of government and self” (Bonny & Port Harcourt June 2007).

The business, political and ethnic leaders are seen as involved in the struggle mainly to “pursue profit, contracts, appointments, personal recognition and selfish ambitions and gains”. Some of these leaders see the struggle as “business, a means of making money, a situation to be exploited. Though they perform some advisory roles and believe in peaceful agitation, they are also “responsible for the proliferation of arms and ammunitions” and use militants against their perceived enemies”. In many ways, they are “the agents and medium of the government and oil companies” and have often betrayed the people and the struggle (Bonny, Port Harcourt June 2006).

The portrait of the women is that of a largely passive and helpless segment, but which is part of the struggle, supportive and concerned. Their non active status is attributed to their socio-cultural standing and constraints. The women seek poverty alleviation and economic empowerment because their sources of “livelihoods have been more dislocated”. But more importantly, the women are seen as the “moral conscience” of the struggle, who provide “moral support and morally moderate the struggle”. It is in this role that they are engaged in advise, dialogue and peace building.

## 5.7 PERCEPTIONS OF METHODS OF CONFLICT

A critical issue in the investigation of the Niger Delta conflicts is the methodology or strategy. Since the early 1990s, the conflicts have been characterized with popular and criminal violence, state violence, militarization and repression. Our investigation here is in two parts. The first relates to violence which has become the dominant method for conducting the conflict. The second is the perception of the effectiveness of specific methods utilized in the conduct of the struggle.

The methods of the struggle have increasingly become aggressive, confrontational; combative, and violent. We sought to know why in the GS. (Table 22). The reasons elicited relate generally to the nature of governance in the region. It was believed that the government failed to act (39.3 per cent) and was insensitive to the region's agitation (20.5 per cent). Therefore the conditions that warranted the agitation had persisted (9.40 per cent). But more interesting is that, violence was seen to be more effective in obtaining results from the Nigerian State and MNOCs. (29 per cent). Thus violence is seen as a more potent instrument of struggle, a factor identified by Osaghae (2003) as explaining the recourse of ethnic nationalists to militancy. .

**Table 22: Violence and the Niger Delta Conflicts**

		GS			
REASONS FOR INCREASINGLY VIOLENT METHODS OF AGITATION		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	Leadership/Government Failures	35 (46.7%)	15 (18.29)	38 (56.72%)	88 (39.29)
	to Act				
	Insensitivity of Government/Leaders to agitation	21 (28%)	20 (24.39%)	5 (7.46%)	46 (20.54%)
	Persisting Developmental and related conditions	14 (18.7%)	7 (8.54)	-	21 (9.38%)
	Violent is more effective	5 (6.7%)	40 (48.78%)	20 (29.85%)	65 (29.01%)
	Militarization and arms proliferation	-	-	4 ((5.97%)	4 (1.78)
	Total	75	82	67	224
THE ROLE OF VIOLENCE	Conducted by Government refusal to dialogue	7 (10.29%)	13 (27.08%)	3 (9.09%)	23 (15.44%)
	Force Government to dialogue	61 (89.71%)	20 (41.67%)	10 (30.30%)	91 (61.07%)

	Dialogue and negotiation is better	-	15 (31.25%)	20 (60.61%)	35 (23.49%)
	Total	68	48	33	149
EXTENT OF POTENTIAL ACTIONS IN PURSUANCE OF THE NIGER DELTA AGENDA GS	Extent of Potential Action	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	1. Use every available action/Any extent necessary	32 (41.56%)	28 (34.57%)	20 (44.44%)	80 (39.44%)
	2. Act until government presence is felt	45 (58.44%)	25 (30.86%)	15 (33.33%)	85 (41.87%)
	3. Give material and moral Support to Militias	-	20 (24.69%)	7 (15.56%)	27 (13.30%)
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	4. follow constitutional Process and Dialogue	-	8 (9.88%)	3 (6.67%)	11 (5.42%)
	Total	77	81	45	203

Further investigation of the perception of the role of violence in the struggle is even more revealing. The purpose of violence is to force government to dialogue (61 per cent). In fact, it is itself conducted by the failure or unwillingness of government to dialogue (15.4 per cent). But violence is not totally perceived as the solution or best method for conducting the conflict as a significant proportion (23.5 per cent) saw dialogue and negotiation as better options.

The investigation of these issues in the other research instruments (FGD, and oral interviews) and samplers from the GS respondents reveal a fleshier portrait of the perception of and underlying factors in the dominance of violence in the conduct of the conflict. Violence has become more salient, because the Federal Government has been non responsive, insensitive and has not paid attention to the issues, nor yielded to the petitions and protests in the region. The problems of the region therefore persist. The people having "waited for so long without a change", have become disappointed and frustrated. The Federal Government considers "protests as a mere noise". As some G.S respondents in Burutu (21/06/07) and Yenagoa (01/06/07) argued, when the petitions, protests and dialogue are not yielding better result, it is not then out of place to try militancy". Besides, "a situation which cannot be changed by constitutional means invites the use of violent measures". Violence then was foisted on the struggle by the nature of state response and management of the conflict.

Finally, we sought to determine the potential for further violent and confrontational measures by interrogating the extent of potential actions that respondents were ready to undertake in pursuance of the struggle, in the GS and KIS. The results were disturbing. Only 4.9 per cent of the GS respondents were ready to follow constitutional process and dialogue in pursuance of the struggle. Rather, 42.9 per cent were ready to continue violent actions and measures until government responds adequately through development. Another 38.4 per cent was ready to use every available option while 13.8 per cent were even ready to give material and moral support to the militias.

In the KIS, about 24 per cent was ready to utilize constitutional means and dialogue in pursuance of the struggle. Another 24 per cent would continue or sustain present actions until government's presence is felt. But the majority (52 per cent) was ready to use every available means and go to

any extent necessary to achieve the objectives of the struggle. These responses indicate that a considerable proportion of the respondents was willing to undertake any measures, including violence, sabotage and even secession in pursuance of the struggle. This spells a dangerous portend, as it means that the conflict may be prolonged, protracted and could escalate into civil war or succession if not adequately addressed..

The views expressed by our KIS and GIS respondents further reveal this dangerous portend. According to some of them "They will push the struggle through constitutional and any available options", "I will fight this cause till we break up", "I will not hold my peace until the Niger Delta area is developed" (Yenegoa 12/06/07); "I will push the struggle up to the level of proclaiming a sovereign state for the Niger Delta" (Yenegoa 14/06/07). A key informant in Bayelsa tied the issue of extent of potential actions to time and generational shift. According to him, "We can't tell the extent we will go, because as we grow old, the idea of the struggle will be take over by the younger generation. Until all is well with us, we will not relent. We will continue to use whatever strength is available to use against the Nigeria State"

A critical analysis of the responses indicates that violence is seen first as a response to state refusal to dialogue and its intimidation, excessive force and violence against the communities "which toughened the youths and made them to match violence with violence" Violence then is a last option, which, according to a respondent in Sapele, Delta States, results from "the Niger Delta being pushed to the wall" or, as another in Warri (Delta) put it, "we never believed in violence but the government did". Second, violence is assessed in terms of the results it achieves. It is seen as having compelled government responses and attention. Therefore, it is the only method that works. Thirdly, violence is assessed in terms of the target. It is alright for example if it is directed at the state or MNOCs.

The second part of the analysis of methods of conflicts is the assessment of specific methods used, in terms of reasons, perceptions and effectiveness. Violent methods such as hostage taking and kidnapping, pipeline vandalisation and violence generally, instead of dialogue, peaceful and constitutional methods are seen as being more effective. Hostage taking and abduction in particular, were perceived as the most effective methods.

**Table 23: Perceptions of Methods of Youth Struggle**

Perception of effectiveness	PERCEPTION	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	Seizure of Oil Facilities	2 (2.99%)	3 (4.55%)	1 (1.49%)	6 (3%)
Hostage taking/abduction	35 (52.24%)	45 (68.18%)	45 (67.16%)	125 (62.5%)	
Pipeline vandalism	8 (11.94%)	9 (13.64%)		17 (8.5%)	
Violence	22 (32.84%)		6 (8.96%)	28 (14%)	
Constitutional Peaceful Dialogue methods	-	9 (13.64%)	3 (4.5%)	12 (6%)	
None	-	-	12 (17.9%)	12 (6%)	
Total	<b>67</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>200</b>	
Perception of what has triggered the current phase	To demonstrate seriousness.	12 (17.91%)	2 (3.33%)	-	14 (7.25%)
	To embarrass/draw government attention	25 (37.31%)	6 (10%)	14 (21.21%)	45 (23.32%)
	To draw International attention	20 (29.85%)	24 (40%)	1 (1.52%)	45 (23.32%)
	To protest the arrest/brutality of leaders	5 (7.46%)	21 (35%)	30 (45.45%)	56 (29.02%)

	To protest non-adherence of MOUs by MNOCS	5 (7.46%)	1 (1.67%)	3 (4.55%)	9 (4.66%)
	Monetary gains	-	2 (3.33%)	8 (12.12%)	10 (5.2%)
	As a protest against persisting poor regional conditions	-	=	5 (7.58%)	5 (2.6%)
	Unemployment	-	4 (6.67%)	5 (7.58%)	9 (4.7%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>193</b>
Perception of Hostage Taking and kidnapping as an instrument of struggle	1. Effective in drawing government/International attention	42 (63.64%)	25 (38.46%)	8 (12.31%)	33 (16.84%)
	2. Good	-	9 (13.85%)	4 (6.15%)	55 (28.06%)
	3. Bad but only option	12 (18.18%)	15 (23.08%)	21 (32.31%)	48 (24.49%)
	4. Obtains quick attention of government	9 (13.64%)	2 (3.07%)	7 (10.77%)	18 (9.18%)
	5. Criminal/Illegal	3 (4.55%)	14 (21.54%)	25 (38.46%)	42 (21.43%)
	6. self rewarding	-	-	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>196</b>

we sought the perception of hostage taking and kidnapping as a tool of struggle. About 38 per cent saw it as quite effective in drawing government and international attention. Another 9.2 per cent saw it as obtaining quick response from the government. But besides the issue of effectiveness, some others assessed it from the moral plank. To them, it was bad (24.5 per cent) though it was the only option and was criminal and illegal (21.5 per cent).

The analysis of the details of the responses, reveal that it is seen by some as “inhuman, barbaric, criminal, wicked, and a cheap and easy money making venture” (Respondents Sapele, Bonny; Gokhana). But it was alright as long as it was “targeted at the government and MNOCS” and was “achieving its goal which is to cripple the economy”. In a sense, some see kidnapping and ransom taking “as a good thing for now” because by its very effects, it is an appropriate measure and it is for a good or genuine cause” (Respondent Bonny, Sapele).

Finally, we investigated, the factors that may have triggered the current phase of hostage taking (Table 23). What emerged was that hostage taking and kidnapping are first a form of protest against the arrest and brutalization of leaders of the struggle such as Asari-Dokubo- and D.S.P. Alamesiegha, former Governor of Bayelsa state (29 per cent). They were also meant to embarrass the Federal Government and draw its attention to the persisting and unresolved demands and problems (23.3 per cent), to draw the attention of the international community to the plight of the Niger Deltans (23.3 per cent) and to demonstrate the seriousness of Niger Deltans about the demands and grievances (7.3 per cent). Hostage taking then is a strategy to create public and international awareness to draw attention to the persisting plight and to demonstrate the seriousness of the youths in the pursuance of the goals of the struggle.

## 5.8 EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICTS

What is fairly well known as the effects of the conflicts are those relating to shortfalls or shutdowns of oil production, the fluctuations of market prices, the deficits in Nigeria’s revenues and the violence and deaths in the region. While these can be presented through secondary data, the more broad effects on communities, youths, inter-communal and inter-ethnic relations, crime and security and living conditions are some times less obvious and have to be investigated.



The investigation of the effects on the communities reveal that the youth driven conflicts have disarticulated communal social values and order (32.7 per cent), intensified violence, insecurity and destructions (30.9 per cent), created a regime of disrespect for elders, traditional institutions and governance systems (20 per cent), paralyzed social and economic activities (7.3 per cent) and restricted movements (9.1 per cent). As some of our respondents in Bayelsa State put it, "The peace and stability of community life is badly affected", lawlessness and lack of respect for elder and leaders", and "general decay of social ethics are now the hallmark in our communities. Communities have been turned into battlefields of cult wars. There is increased rancor, acrimony and disunity within and between communities.

**Table 24: EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICTS KIS**

		Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total	%
<b>Effects on Communities</b>	Disrespect for Traditional Institutions/Elders destruction of community	4	4	3	11	20%
	Values and Social Order.	8	5	5	18	32.7%
	Intensified violence and destruction	6	8	3	17	30.9%
	Restricted movements	2	1	2	5	9.1%
	Paralyzed socio-economic activities.	-	2	2	4	7.3%
	Not much	20	20	15	55	
	Total					
<b>Effects on Youths</b>	Made youths aggressive/violent/militancy/lawless	6	6	5	17	30.9%
	Untimely deaths	2	2	1	5	9.1%
	Less Schooling/more School dropouts.	1	2	3	6	10.9%
	Loss of jobs	2	4	1	7	12.7%
	Increases youth restiveness	4	3	2	9	16.4
	Made youth lazy	5	3	3	11	20%
	Total	20	20	15	55	
<b>Effects on intercommunities &amp; ethnic Relations</b>	Increase suspicion/unfriendly relations.	9	4	7	20	36.4%
	Increased tension and violence in relations.	6	10	5	21	38.2%
	Integrated/United them.	1	3	-	4	7.3%
	Restricted movements and trade	1	2	2	5	9.1%
	Cordial/friendly	3	1	1	5	9.1%
	Total	20	20	15	55	

<b>Effects on Crime &amp; Security</b>	Increased crime and violence	12	10	9	31	56.4%
	Increased insecurity of life and property	4	6	5	15	27.3%
	Increased cultism	3	-	-	3	5.5%
	Made arms available	1	4	1	6	10.9%
	Total	20	20	15	55	
<b>Effects on living Conditions &amp; livelihood</b>	Worsened living conditions	4	8	5	17	37.8%
	Slowed economic activities.	3	5	4	12	26.7%
	Increased cost of living.	2	1	2	5	11.1%
	Increased insecurity and destruction of life and property	4	1	3	8	17.8%
	Homelessness	1	1	1	3	6.7%
	Increased illegitimate sources of income	14	16	15	45	
	Total					

The effect on the youth is also socially and economically pronounced. The conflicts have increased youth restiveness and made them lazy, aggressive, violent and lawless (30.9 per cent). According to one KIS respondent in Bayelsa “the youths no longer believe in hard work as a virtue. They seek easy means to wealth”. Apart from these, the youths have lost jobs because of paralyzed economic activities and have become victims of untimely deaths. The effects on inter communal and ethnic group relations have also been adverse. The conflicts have increased tensions and violence in relations (38.2 per cent) apart from increased suspicion and unfriendly relations (36.4 per cent). One respondent in Delta put it this way: “sadly enough, this good cause has caused a lot of pains and tension in the region because the stronger ethnic group fight the weaker ones to gain government attention”. Another respondent in Bayelsa State stated that the “internal crisis within us is over who controls the major cities like Warri, who would Shell pay compensations? Who collects the rents?”

The crisis has affected security and criminality in the region. There has been a phenomenal increase in crime and violence (56.4 per cent) and insecurity of lives and property (27.3 per cent). There is also easy access to arms (10.9 per cent) and increased presence and activities of cults, and armed bands (5.5 per cent) which are sometimes connected to crime and insecurity. The people now live in fear. The effects on the living conditions of the citizens of the region are also very adverse. The conflicts have worsened living conditions (37.8 per cent), slowed down economic activities (26.7 per cent), increased insecurity of life and property (17.8 per cent) and increased the cost of living (11.1 per cent).

More specifically, the effects of militia activities on the region were investigated in the G.S. (Table 25).

**Table 25: Perceptions of Effects of Militia Activities on the Niger Delta**

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Insecurity and Crime	9 (11.54%)	8 (11.94%)	15 (21.13%)	32 (14.8%)
Economic decline	25 (32.05%)	27 (40.30%)	21 (28.17%)	72 (33.3%)
Paralysis of Social and Economic Activities	35 (44.87%)	24 (36.82%)	13 (18.31%)	72 (33.3%)
Creates Fear and Grief	3 (3.855)	6 (8.96%)	12 (16.90%)	21 (9.7%)
Created Political Awareness	6 (7.69%)	2 (2.96%)	6 (8.45%)	14 (6.5)
Attracting Government infrastructures	-	-	65 (7.04%)	5 (2.34)
	<b>78</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>216</b>

The findings indicate that more importantly, there is economic decline (33.3 per cent) and paralysis of social and economic activities (33.3 per cent). The content analysis of responses reveals that there have been social and economic disruptions, collapse of businesses and closure of shops. As a result, there is economic decline. Socio-economic services, infrastructures and development have crumbled in some towns and communities. There is also growing insecurity and crime (14.8 per cent) which has occasioned grief and fear in the region (9.7 per cent).

By contrast to the foregoing, there seem to have been some gains on the political front. Political awareness has been raised (6.5 per cent), and militia activities have also raised hopes and expectations, in the light of governmental attention through the establishment of commissions and ad-hoc agencies and measures to address the problems. Nevertheless, the conflicts have had disastrous consequences for the communities, the youths, intra and inter group relations, the security and stability of the region, living conditions, commerce and the economy of the region. But some respondents see these effects as temporary. According to a Khana (Rivers) respondent " I agree that their impact is negative for now. With this struggle, we shall be liberated one day.... It shall be positive".

## 5.9 ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF THE CONFLICTS

We identified from the literature certain variables that have been implicated in several conflicts in Africa. These are environmental degradation, youth bulge, poverty, unemployment, elite manipulation, access to arms, traditional/cultural factors, state governance and corporate governance. The responses in the KIS reveal that the most important causal factors are poverty (78.2 per cent), unemployment (71 per cent), environmental pollution and scarcity (70.9 per cent), and elite manipulation (50.9 per cent). The least important variables were traditional religion and empowerment, youth bulge, and accessibility to arms.

Table 26: Perceptions of Causes of the Niger Delta Conflicts

		Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total	% Yes & No	Yes Ranking in Order of importance
Environmental Pollution	Yes	13	15	11	39	70.9	3
	No	7	5	4	6	29.1	
Poverty	Yes	16	13	14	43	78.2	1
	No	4	7	1	12	21.8	
Youth Bulge	Yes	4	8	4	16	29	6
	No	16	12	1	39	71	
Unemployment	Yes	15	12	14	42	76.4	2
	No	5	7	1	13	23.6	
Elite Manipulation	Yes	9	6	13	28	50.9	4
	No	11	14	2	27	50.1	
Accessibility to arms	Yes	6	5	10	21	38.2	5
	No	14	15	5	34	61.8	
Traditional Empowerment	Yes	6	5	4	15	27.3	7
	No	14	15	11	40	72.7	

In the G.S. sample, the most important factors were poor and unemployed youths (78.9 per cent), corporate bad governance (78.2 per cent), governmental bad governance (69.3 per cent), and the struggle for resource opportunities and benefits (57.8 per cent). Least important is traditional culture and religion (47.6 per cent).

**Table 27: Perceptions of Predisposing and Trigger Factors of Conflicts GS**

		<b>BAYELSA</b>	<b>DELTA</b>	<b>RIVERS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Poor Unemployed youths	Yes	78 (35.94%)	66 (30.41%)	73 (33.64%)	217	78.9	1
	No	22	34	2	58	21.1	
Governmental bad governance	Yes	79 (40.51%)	43 (22.05%)	70 (35.90%)	192 (95.46%)	69.82	3
	No	21	57	5	83 (1.54%)	30.18	
Struggle for resource benefits opportunities	Yes	50 (27.93%)	48 (26.82%)	61 (34.08%)	(11.17%)	57.82	4
	No	50	52	14	115	42.18	
Corporate (MNOG) bad Governance	Yes	79 (36.74%)	64 (29.77%)	72 (33.49%)	215(100%)	78.2	2
	No	21	36	3	60	21.82	
Culture and Traditional Religion	Yes	50 (24.04%)	35 (16.83%)	46 (22.12%)	131 (37.10%)	47.64	5
	No	50	56	29	144	52.36	

The critical factors indicated as the causes of the conflicts are poverty, unemployment, corporate and governmental bad governance and environmental pollution. That poverty and unemployment are seen as central to the frustration, discontent and anger that provoke violent agitations is not surprising. As some of our respondents indicated, the youths are “denied the opportunity of decent living” and “deprived of productive sources of livelihood”. The youths are jobless, idle, hungry, miserable and frustrated. “The youths are idle and easy to mobilize” and “even being a militant is like an employment “as the “youths are paid to partake in militant activities” Some others claimed that “the youths are ready to do “anything that comes their way because of idleness and poverty”. The social discontent, frustration and anger has fed into social vices, restiveness and violence. One GS respondent in Sapele, asked rhetorically” do you think rich youths would take up arms?”.

That environmental degradation is seen as a major cause of the conflict reveals the depth of the oil based environmental crises and its linkage to land/water depletion, scarcity, unemployment, poverty and dislocated livelihoods in the region. This is quite glaring when some of the responses such as the following are highlighted: “our sources of livelihood are polluted and degraded daily, hence fishing does not make meaning”, “there is now an acute scarcity of productive fertile lands”.

Corporate and governmental bad governance are strongly indicated in the GS. Further investigation of the phenomenon, provides details as to how the Nigerian State and the oil companies are perceived to source the conflicts

**Table 28: State and Corporate Governance and the Crisis**

		<b>BAYELSA</b>	<b>DELTA</b>	<b>RIVERS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
State Governance and Management of the Conflict	No concessions to agitation	-	2 (4.88%)	3 (4.84%)	5 (2.25%)
	Insensitive and Insincere	25 (21.01%)	10 (24.39%)	29 (46.77%)	64 (28.83%)
	Military suppression	15 (12.61%)	3 (7.32%)	15 (24.19%)	33 (14.9%)
	Persisting neglect and marginalization	-	12 (29.27%)	13 (20.97%)	25 (11.26%)
	Failure to keep promises	59 (49.58%)	9 (21.95%)	2 (3.23%)	70 (31.53%)
	Lack of dialogue	-	1 (2.44%)	-	1 (0.45%)
	Incorporation of regions elite	-	4 (9.76%)	-	4 (1.80%)
	Lack of Recognition of Minority rights	20 (16.81%)	-	-	20 (9%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>222</b>
	MNOC, contribution to violent conflicts	Divide and rule Strategies	3 (4.55%)	3 (4.84%)	20 (31.74%)
None-implementation of agreement with communities		8 (12.12%)	2 (3.23%)	5 (7.94)	15 (7.8)
Cause contentions over benefits and compensation		22 (33.33)	3 (4.84)	-	25 (13.1%)
Inadequate/Uneven development		33 (50%)	40 (64.52%)	16 (25.4%)	89 (46.6%)
None-employment of indigenes		-	12 (19.355)	9 (14.29)	19 (11%)
Invitation of security agencies		-	-	4 (6.35%)	4 (2.1%)
None Compensation		-	2 (3.23)	5 (7.94%)	7 (3.66%)
Oppression of citizens		-	-	4 (6.35%)	4 (2.1%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>66</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>191</b>

The State is seen as insensitive and insincere in its response to the region's problems (28.8 per cent). It has not listened to the plight of the people, their yearnings and aspirations and has not given the people their due. Then, even more importantly, the state is accused of failing to keep promises and meet expectations (31.5 per cent). As a result, there is persisting neglect and marginalization (11.3 per cent), and military suppression of the youths (14.9 per cent), which are also seen as escalating the crisis.

The oil companies have not contributed significantly to the development of the region (46.6 per cent). Yet they have caused conflicts between and within communities through divide and rule strategies (13.6 per cent) and raising contentions over resources, compensation and other oil based benefits (13.1 per cent). More specifically, they are seen to "support one group against the other" and to "play the communities against each other due to unequal rewards and benefits" (KIS Respondent, Bonny 15/06/07). Besides they have not employed indigenes of the region (11 per cent), and therefore have not addressed the issue of huge unemployment.

In fact, the perception of the oil companies is largely negative as they are seen to be inconsiderate and insensitive (23.5 per cent), give poor development attention (20.8 per cent), collaborate with the Nigerian State (13.7 per cent), cause environmental degradation (13.6 per cent), do not adhere to agreements (12.6 per cent) and do not pay adequate and timely compensation (9.3 per cent).. Besides, the oil companies are not seen to have benefited the region, because of scanty development efforts (50.30 per cent), poor benefits (22.2 per cent) and poor employment of indigenes (20 per cent). They do not show "full understanding of the communities" that they operate in, sometimes "bribe the traditional rulers and chiefs", "sponsor youths to revolt against communal governance systems", and contribute to the militarization and repression of the region through the use of military personal in their facilities" (Respondents; Burutu, Yenagoa, Anassoa Camp, and Osokoma (07/06/07, 15/06/07). However, the state is seen as the greater culprit in bad governance. It is believed to be creating an unhealthy political environment and executing bad laws and policies" that set the framework for the bad governance of the oil companies (KIS Respondent, Bayelsa).

## **5.10 MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICTS**

A critical issue in this study is conflict resolution and peace building. Given the intensity of the conflicts and the consequences for the country, the region and its minority peoples, and world energy supply and prices, the early resolution and particularly the path to resolution should attract immense scholarly, national and international concerns.

The main state instrument for managing the conflict since the early 1990s has been heavy military and police deployments, excessive force, confrontations, and repression. The first issue we investigated was the perception of the military and security agencies and their roles in the region (GS). In terms of roles, the military sent to keep the peace (9.6 per cent) and resolve the conflict (6 per cent) have actually escalated the crisis (82.4 per cent). The military and security agencies, are perceived quite negatively. They are seen to be provoking the people (30.1 per cent) and oppressing them (27.4 per cent).

**Table 29: The Role of Military/Security Agencies in the Conflicts**

Perception of Nigerian security/Military Agencies Management of the conflict		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	Protecting oil companies	-	2 (2.86%)	4 (5.71%)	6 (2.71%)
	Provokes the people	27 (34.185)	34 (48.57%)	5 (7.14%)	66 (30.11%)
	Biased Against the people	5 (6.35%)	1 (1.43%)	3 (4.29%)	9 (4.1%)
	Used to oppress the people	47 (59.495)	8 (11.43%)	5 (7.14%)	60 (27.4)
	Ineffective	-	9 (12.865)	12 (17.14%)	21 (9.6%)
	Aggravating Crisis	-	-	12 (17.14%)	12 (5.5)
	Fighting militias on behalf of government	-	-	13 (18.57%)	13 (5.94%)
	Criminals	-	-	4 (5.715)	4 (1.8%)
	Mediating the Conflict/keeping the peace	-	-	12 (17.14%)	28 (12.8%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>219</b>
Perception of the Role of the Military/Security agencies in the conflict		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
	Keeping Peace	7 (10.455)	8 (13.56%)	4 (5.48%)	19 (9.6%)
	Escalating the crisis	60 (89.555)	39 (66.10%)	65 (89.04%)	164 (82.45)
	Resolving the problems	-	8 (13.56%)	4 (5.48%)	12 (6.%)
	None/Acting on orders	4 (6.78%)		4 (2.01%)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>199</b>	



The content analysis of the responses indicate that the negative perceptions are because first, the military has not been “a disciplined force”; rather it is seen as “reckless, criminalized and irresponsible, having been implicated in cases of “extortion, looting and rape” They have been “intimidating, oppressive and hostile”,and been involved in “indiscriminate shooting”. They have also benefitted from the oil companies and fed fat from the struggle”. As a result of these, the military and security agencies have been ineffective (9.6 per cent).

The efforts of the Obasanjo administration to resolve the conflict were investigated. His Administration had promised at inception to address the conflict as a priority. The responses indicate that the respondents see the administration as having used autocratic style (33.3 per cent) not having done much (20.6 per cent) but rather paid more of lip service to the resolution of the conflict (19.4 per cent). Though it instituted the derivation principle, and the Niger Delta development Commission (5.5 per cent), the administration was seen to have aggravated the conflict (12.7 per cent) or failed (5.5 per cent).

**Table 30: Perceptions of the Obasanjo Administration’s Efforts in the Resolution of the Conflicts**

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Made considerable effort	-	7 (8.335)	-	7 (3%)
Aggravated the Conflict	21 (26.58%)	3 (3.575)	6 (8.11%)	30 (12.7%)
Did not do much	5 (6.335)	20 (23.8%)	24 (32.43%)	49 (20.7%)
Used autocratic style	25 (31.65%)	33 (39.29%)	21 (28.38%)	79 (33.3%)
Lip Service to the resolution of the conflict	28 (35.44/5)	8 (9.52%)	10 (13.51%)	46 (19.4%)
Established NDDC and instituted 13% Derivation	-	3 (3.57%)	10 (13.51%)	13 (5.45%)
Total Failure	-	10 (11.90%)	3 94.055)	13 (5.5%)
	<b>79</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>237</b>

According to some of our respondents, the Obasanjo administration did not “show enough commitment and political will to resolve the conflict” and the “communities have nothing to show” as dividends” (Ekeremor, Bayelsa G.S respondents). There were “mere promises and plans” that were not fulfilled or implemented”. Thus government efforts were seen as feeble, scanty, weak, slow and disappointing.

We sought to know what, in the perception of the respondents, could resolve the conflicts, from the GS.

**Table 31: Perceptions of what can Resolve the Niger Delta Conflicts**

	GS				KIS			
	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL	Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total
National Conference	18 (24.66%)	2 (2.53%)	3 (4.23%)	23 (10.31%)	-	-	-	-
Massive Accelerated Development	3 (4.11%)	25 (31.65%)	3 (4.23%)	31 (13.90%)	8	10	3	46.7%
Resource Control & True Federal	28 (38.36%)	13 (13.92%)	28 (33.80%)	69 (28.25%)	10	4	6	44.4%
Affirmative Action/Marshall Plan	22 (30.14%)	23 (29.11%)	5 (7.04%)	50 (22.42%)	-	-	-	-
Dialogue and agreements	2 (2.745)	10 (12.66%)	26 (36.62%)	38 (17.04%)	-	-	-	-
Equity, Fairness and Justice	-	-	5 (7.04%)	5 ( )	-	2	2	8.9%
Political Representation	-	-	1 (1.415)	1 (0.45%)				
Meet the People Demand: Employment, education/release of detainees/abolition of obnoxious laws.	-	6 (7.59%)	-	6 (2.695)	-	-	-	-
	<b>73</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>45</b>

In the GIS responses, what is perceived as capable of resolving the conflict is resource control and true federalism (28.3 per cent), affirmative action, Marshall plan or emergency and special efforts (22.4 per cent), and massive development efforts (13.9 per cent). The strategy for achieving some of these is preferably dialogue and agreements (17 per cent) and possibly a national conference (10.3 per cent). In the KIS, massive and accelerated development (46.7 per cent) and resource control and true federalism (44.4 per cent) are seen as the solutions to the conflict.

## **6.0 FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 OVERVIEW OF THE CONFLICT**

The Niger Delta conflict began as an agitation of ethnic minorities in the Western and Eastern Niger Delta, by political society and ethnic activists, against marginalization and exclusion in the then Eastern and Western Regions. With the commercial exploration of oil and growing significance of the commodity to the national economy, the agitation assumed a wider dimension through more agitated demands for developmental attention. The conflict was first assumed the character of youth insurgency in 1966, when some youths, under the aegis of the Niger Delta Volunteer service led by Isaac Adaka Boro, declared a Niger Delta Republic and took over and held on to some territory and oil installations. They were crushed.

The creation of Rivers and Cross River States and the Midwest Region earlier and later State doused the initial agitation and insurgency, although it has been argued that, contrary to popular belief, the creation of states did not resolve the problem of minorities (Osaghae, 1986). The region wide agitation was replaced with local agitations for resource benefits and particularly community development until the late 1980s. There were series of uncoordinated community conflicts, largely peaceful protests throughout the 1970s. By the early 1980s, the agitation for increased revenue flow to the region began. The Ogoni's began the new wave of ethnic wide challenge for environmental remediation, resource control and ethnic autonomy in the early 1990s (Osaghae, 1995). By the mid 1990s, the agitation had become pan ethnic and regional. Since the late 1990s, the region has been a melting pot of war-like contestations and confrontations between the region's citizens and the oil companies and the Nigeria State. There have been different vanguards of the struggle. Initially, there was a flowering and concert of civil society and non governmental organizations. By 2000, political society engaged the state in struggles for resource control and true federalism. A women's uprising emerged in 2002. But the more consistent and visible segment in the struggle has been the youth, which took over from the late 1990s as the major platform and vanguard.

### **6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

The study was divided into two major sections. The first presented the research, problem, questions and objectives, and conceptual and theoretical framework of analysis. The youth problematic in Africa and the concepts of new social movements and contentions politics were interrogated as a conceptual and theoretical hinges for the study. The concepts of self determination and resource control, which are also key to the study were also elaborated upon. The second segment of the first section addressed the terrain of conflicts from a secondary data base. The role of ethnic-cultural movements and ethnic and regional elites which conducted the early stages of the struggle and the native and results of the struggle at this stage were highlighted. The entry of youths and how this transformed the conflict into violent contentions was also examined. Then the study focused on youth militancy, militias, cults and gangs, their objections sources of arms and funding. The interfaces with the civil struggles and youth insurgency which escalated since 2005 were also addressed.

The second section presented analysis based on primary data. The study investigated and drew insights from the perceptions of the self determination, resource control, the problems and goals of the struggle, the roles and perceptions of the youth, the profile and perceptions of youth militias, the roles of elders, elite, women and youth, the effects of the conflict, the causes of the conflict and how it has been managed..

### 6.3 FINDINGS

The study found that though there are chronic grievances, and discontent relating to scant development, marginalization, poor resource inflow and majority ethnic domination, there was still faith in the Nigerian State. There was evidence in the core Ijaw, Bayelsa State, however that this could no longer be taken for granted and had actually started to decline. Nigeria also remains the nation-state framework for the realization of nationalist aspirations. What they want is a re-configured nation state that is more equitable, fair and just and that is founded on true federalism and resource control. Thus self determination as is generally conceived is not separate existence but regional, political and developmental autonomy through a re-configured nation-state project. The conflict is centered on a struggle for resources. The region seeks control and management, and greater participation and stakeholdership in its oil resources. What is specifically sought ranges from an increased derivation based share to unfettered or exclusive control.

The struggle is perceived as one for development attention, resource benefits, inclusion and representation and fight against economic deprivation, neglect and negative oil externalities. The region is seeking adequate attention, recognition and participation in the management or control of the benefits of its oil resources and fair, just and equitable treatment as minority groups. The ethnic groups in the region want massive development, resource control or at least adequate derivation based share, and a better federal framework that guarantees equitable, fair and just treatment and regional autonomy.

The youth movement emerged from a displacement of the regional elders and elite by youths who were growingly poor, unemployed, discontented and frustrated, and angry at their predicaments in spite of their region's resource endowments and contributions. They lost confidence in their elders and leaders, asserted themselves and constructed a youth platform of struggle through militant agitation and engagement. The youth vanguard and direction of the conflict seemed to have been understood and accepted. Hence the youths and youth militants are seen as a determined, articulate, bold and courageous group and as freedom fighters. The youth role is mostly seen as purposeful, just, as directed against injustice, exploitation and deprivation and to compel development. The youth are seeking in and through the struggle, development and resource control at the general level and in relation to the youth; employment and guarantees of a better future or better life.

The youth militia phenomenon arose from 'a loss of confidence in the Nigerian State and the regional and ethnic leaders'. But it is frustration founded on degenerating poverty, mass unemployment, deprivation, long suffering and a rising mass of anger, frustration and discontentment. The militias appear as community and ethnic militias, and as armed bands and cults. They are in camps. They have fairly organized hierarchical commands, are commanded by camp commandants and have mechanisms for disciplining erring members. A considerable chunk of the militias, units and bands are self sponsored and built around commandants. However there is some element of sponsorship support by ethnic and political leaders and communities. These also do business with the groups, which provide funds and sustain relevance. There are two broad segments, the genuine militias that pursue altruistic regional and ethnic objectives and the criminalized militias that pursue self interests and livelihood. The latter are small cults and bands that operate less under broad ethnic and regional youth platforms such as the youth council. Criminal militia groups have also resulted from proliferation and loss of control by major ethnic nationalistic and liberation driven militia leaders.

The militia phenomenon does not however appear to be sustainable. In fact, there is evidence of declining popularity, acceptability and support, as is especially to be seen in the resentment of the increased criminality, cult wars and horrendous violence associated with some militia groups.

Apart from the youths, traditional rulers, chiefs and elders, business and political elite and women have also played significant roles. The elite dominated the struggle until the 1980s, and still play active roles in the civil realm and particularly in the mediatory, advisory and peaceful engagements. The women support the struggle but have lacked continuity in its activism. They are however the moral conscience in terms of moral support, moderation and peace building. The traditional and political and business elite are however de-legitimated, and are seen as using the struggle for personal gains. The decline of confidence and integrity and the overall significance of roles of these groups are in part responsible for the emergence of youth militancy, escalating violence and criminality.

Violence is the preferred method of struggle, because of its seeming – and somewhat proven – effectiveness. Violence in itself is conducted by the failure of government to dialogue or to respond to peaceful agitation, and its use of excessive force and violence against the communities. Within the violent methods already utilized, hostage taking is seen as most effective particularly in terms of drawing national and international attention and compelling quick response from the government. Furthermore, and this is quite disturbing, many of the region's "citizens are ready to continue or utilize every available actions and measures including violence, sabotage and support for militias, in pursuance of the struggle and to persist until there is a solution to the region's problems. This denotes a probability of a prolonged, protracted and escalating struggle.

The conflict has had severe consequences, on the economy, the nation's revenue profile, the communities, youth, stability and security, inter-ethnic and communal relations and living conditions and livelihoods. There is growing disrespect of traditional institutions and governance systems, general degeneration of social values and order, increased restiveness, laziness, aggression and violence among the youths pervading violence, destruction, insecurity, lawlessness, and increased suspicion, rancor, acrimony and disunity. There is paralysis of social and economic activities and commerce, restriction of movements and worsening cost of living and living conditions.

Indicated in the analysis of the causes of the conflict are poverty, unemployment, environmental devastation and resource scarcity, and the nature of state and corporate governance. Poverty and unemployment brewed discontent, frustration and anger. Environmental pollution exacerbated poverty and unemployment. The nature of corporate and state governance particularly in relation to scanty developmental efforts, insensitivity, failure to keep promises and agreements, and military suppression and repression, were seen as catalyzing or provoking greater frustration and agitation.

The military and suppressive strategies of management of the conflict were associated with excessive force, extortion, abuse of rights and intimidation. The military is seen as escalating the crisis and ineffective. The developmental efforts of the Obasanjo Administration were considered weak, feeble, slow, ineffective and disappointing. The Niger Delta people are still hopeful of the resolution of the conflict by the institution of a true federal framework that guarantees regional autonomy, resource control and massive and accelerated development through a kind of Marshall Plan or affirmative action. They hope to achieve this through dialogue and preferably through a conference of ethnic nationalities or national conference.

## 6.4 CONCLUSION

The Niger Delta conflict unravelled in 1966, and has been escalating since 1990. It has shifted from a dominantly peaceful agitation to violent challenges conducted by the youth. It shifted from an ethnic cum regional agitation between the 1950s and 1960s, to local conflicts conducted by communities in the 1970s and 1980s. Since the 1990s, it has become an ethnic and regional conflict conducted by civil society, political society, youth and women.

The focus and extent of engagement have been growing and shifting between the Nigerian State in the 1950s and 1960s, to the oil companies in the 1970s and 1980s and then the state and oil companies since the late 1980s. Increasingly, the conflict has become national in its engagements, confrontations and militarization and international in concerns and effects on world energy supplies and stability. The conflict has also increasingly become an insurrection or insurgency since 1998. Since 2000, it has also been internationalized with the interests and sometimes intervention of the United States of America and its European command. The security and stability of the Gulf of Guinea and its oil have become a major international security issue.

Just as its conflict base has been shifting, so has the conflict extent. From a broad extent in the 1950s and 1960s, it became Ijaw based in the 1960s. Then, it became largely Ogoni in the early 1990s. By the mid 1990s, there was a region wide cauldron, as the Ijaw, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ilaje, Ikwerre, Isoko, Ogba and others began to engage the state and oil companies in violent protests. However, although militancy has been widespread, the militia phenomenon has been predominantly an Ijaw affair. We have noted the changes in the evolution of the conflict and its methods. Violent engagements have become the norm. From petitions and protests, the region's youth have since the 1990s targeted the dislocation or devastation of the oil industry, the forceful evacuation of oil industry personnel and the compelling of resource benefits from the oil companies. The conflict has further involved the acquisition by force of oil resources through participation in the theft and sale of crude oil. It has meant a militarization and brutalization of the region and a counterforce in the militias. It has been military actions and militia attacks. To all intents and purposes, it was the nature of state and corporate responses, treatment and governance that made violence the only option. They pushed the region into violence, insurrection and insurgency.

A question that arises, is how did the conflict get here? It is the perceived insensitivity of the Nigerian State and oil companies and the persisting challenges of under-development, negative externalities of the oil industry, poverty and unemployment. These brewed frustration and discontent which began to manifest in growing protests. Then rather than accede or dialogue, government and the oil companies resorted to force, suppression and repression. The youths chose to chest out and challenge the state with counter violence. The proliferation of youth groups and militants and the emergence of numerous militant leaders soon led to loss of control and focus. Then criminal elements emerged. The elections of 1999, 2003 and 2007 further proliferated militant groups and leaders and arms and soon there emerged cults and bands. Then to some the struggle, became that of enrichment through an illegal economy. The continued militarization and military occupation and actions since the early 1990s, have meant persisting violent confrontation between militias and the military and has turned the core states of the region ; Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta into perennial battle grounds.

There is the issue of what has underpinned the mobilization, transformations and persistence of the conflict: The answer is the deep grievances that border on ethnic domination, marginalization and mistreatment. This fostered ethnic and regional nationalism and a sense of siege or threats to survival. Further economic decline has brought to the fore, the externalities of oil and scanty benefits which have grown the struggle for resource control and participation for self development. The key drivers of the conflict since the 1990s have been the persisting problems and the nature of state and corporate responses. The illegal oil economy has also

sustained the conflict by creating internal incoherence, factionalization and inter militia and cult wars. The access to arms, the relevance created by activities in elections and elite funding are also sustainants.

The conflict project has as objective state and corporate reform. Since the 1950s, the region has sought inclusion in representation and developmental attention. In the 1970s and 1980s, the communities sought more sensitive and socially responsible oil companies. This persists. Since the 1990s, the struggle for state reform has intensified as the region is seeking regional autonomy, a reverse to the 1963 constitution, the abrogation of obnoxious decrees, increased resource inflow through derivation and resource control, true federalism through restructuring of the existing centralized state, constitutional and state reform through a conference of ethnic nationalities, demilitarization and minority rights.

The conflict is essentially a struggle for resources. Individuals, groups, communities, ethnic groups, the states in the region, the youth, political society and traditional elite are struggling for access to oil resources and benefits from the oil companies and the Nigerian State. Resource control then is a struggle at different levels, and with different methods. The communities organize protests and the elite manipulate the youth so as to derive benefits from the oil companies. The militias and armed bands utilize force to compel benefits from the state and oil companies. The militias also use force to appropriate oil resources through oil theft and sale.

The youth movement and in fact the activism of communities, and women has transformed the conflict into a popular, mass based uprising anchored on the youth. Furthermore, the proliferation, activism and the concert of forces and networks that has emerged from communal, ethnic, gender, environmental, rights, youths, civil and non governmental organizations and groups, have transformed the conflict, particularly since the late 1980s into a mass movement based conflict. Significantly, there has been a considerable coherence and synergy in the conduct of the conflict. The perception of problems and goals and the operating methods of conduct have largely been the same. There is considerable support for the agitation. There have been common platforms among political society since the 1950s. The youth movement was across the entire ethnic groupings and had considerable networking and linkages.

Even among the youth militias, there are relations, joint operations, and networks. All the militia groups have been involved in the current insurgency, which began in 2005, and was catalyzed by the arrest of the leader of the Niger Delta Volunteer Force, Asari Dokubo. Several of the militia groups relate to the Ijaw Youth Council, which is the coordinating body of the Ijaw Youth Movement. Among the core altruist militias, there is considerable synergy, commonality of goals and operating methods. Certain social and cultural processes and factors have underlay youth responses and methods. First there is the issue of role perception and occupation. The youths merely assumed traditional roles of aggressive and combative reactions to communal and ethnic mistreatment and dominance in the militant and violent engagements as foot soldiers. We noted that youths displaced the elders and communal and ethnic leaders and asserted dominance in liaison with oil companies and the conduct of conflict. This resulted from a de-legitimization of the traditional governance institutions and personnel and the elite.

We then had to examine the implication of this delegitimization on the youth conduct of conflict and the conflict itself. It basically had to do with a growing criminalization, lawlessness, youth restiveness, aggression, violence, insecurity, as well as destruction and breakdown of social values, fabric and order. The loss of focus, the internal incoherence of the youth militant groups, the inter militia and inter armed band and cult wars were possible fallouts of the absence of the relatively more mature, moderating, mediatory, dialogic and orderly, roles normally associated with the elders and elite that had integrity and the people's confidence.

The youth appropriated social cultural symbols and practices. The first was the Ogele, a traditional form of peaceful protests which began from the village square. The youth action in the late 1990s began with the Ogele. They sang and moved in peaceful protests. Second, the youths resuscitated the egbesu rites, and initiation to provide some traditional religious and cultural empowerment and sense of invincibility. The egbesu became the common mobilizational platform and identity for the militants.

We noted that the general perception of the altruistic militia is that of a freedom fighter and hero. The question that arises is what is the implication of this for the conflict, its escalation and resolution? The perception evidently emanated from the populist and mass movement base, the deep grievances, the persisting problems and the poor status of State and corporate governance. But it means that the conflict can be prolonged, sustained and continue to escalate if the state does not change its tactics from military suppression to dialogue. But dialogue must go beyond the de-legitimated elite, to the leaders of the youth movements, militias, women leaders and civil society.

We attempted to construct a causality thesis or more humbly, a portrait of causality. We fingered a poor and unemployed youth, amidst a growing negative oil externalities and economic decline. The ensuing frustration, discontent and anger tended the youth towards militant action, when confronted with state and corporate insensitivity, abuse, intimidation, violence and militarization. The mass of angry and frustrated youths became also amenable to elite manipulation particularly during the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections, and the empowerment from arms. Militancy, militant movements, militias, cults and armed bands then emerged and may persist for as long as the responses by the state and oil majors fail to address the key demands and frustrations.



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## APPENDIX 1

### Militia Actions in Niger-Delta

Below is a chronology of major attacks on the Nigerian oil industry in 2006 and 2007 by militants.

- 1) January 10, 2006: Militants kidnap 4 foreign oil workers from Shell's offshore E.A. oilfield. Shell shuts 115,000 bpd E.A. platform. They also blow up crude oil pipelines, cutting supplies to Forcados export terminal by 100,000 bpd.
- 2) January 30, 2006: Militants free all hostages kidnapped January 10, but threaten wave of new attacks.
- 3) February 18, 2006: Militants attack a barge operated by US oil services company Willbros in speedboats and abduct 9 oil workers. The militants also blow up a Shell crude oil pipeline and a gas pipeline operated by Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), and bomb Shell's Forcados tanker loading platform, forcing the company to suspend exports from the 380,000 bpd facility. Closure of Forcados affects other companies, cutting further 100,000 bpd output. Shell shuts 115,000 bpd E.A. platform as precaution.
- 4) March 1, 2006: Militants release 6 of the hostages kidnapped February 18; they include 1 American, 2 Egyptians, 2 Thais and a Filipino.
- 5) March 18, 2006: Militants blow up oil pipeline operated by Italian oil company Agip, shutting down 75,000 bpd.
- 6) March 27, 2006: Militants release remaining three hostages kidnapped February 18 - 2 Americans and a Briton.
- 7) May 10, 2006: An oil executive of Baker Hughes (an American Co.) employee is killed by unidentified gunmen in Port Harcourt. MEND denies responsibility.
- 8) May 11, 2006: 3 workers of Italian oil contractor Saipem are kidnapped.
- 9) June 2, 2006: 6 Britons, 1 Canadian and an American are abducted from Bulford Dolphin oil rig owned by Norwegian oilfield services group Fred. Olsen Energy. Hostages are released two days later.
- 10) June 7, 2006: Militants attack a Shell-operated natural gas facility in the Niger Delta, killing 6 soldiers and kidnapping 5 South Korean contractors.
- 11) June 20, 2006: 2 Filipinos with Beaufort International kidnapped in Port Harcourt and freed 5 days later.
- 12) July 6, 2006: Gunmen kidnap Michael Los, a Dutch oil worker in Bayelsa State. He is released 4 days later.
- 13) July 25, 2006: Niger Delta mob seize Agip Ogbainbiri flow station, taking 24 workers hostage. Hostages released and flow station abandoned July 31 after paid-off by Nigerian government.
- 14) August 3, 2006: German oil worker, Guido Schiffarth, a 62-year-old employee of Bilfinger and Berger snatched from his car in Port Harcourt by armed men dressed as soldiers.
- 15) August 4, 2006: Gunmen abduct 3 Filipino oil workers from a bus near Port Harcourt. They are released 10 days later.
- 16) August 9, 2006: 2 Norwegian and 2 Ukrainian oil workers kidnapped.
- 17) August 10, 2006: A Belgian and Moroccan contractors kidnapped in Port Harcourt. Both released on August 14.
- 18) August 13, 2006: 5 foreign oil workers (2 Britons, a German, an Irish and a Pole.) kidnapped from a nightclub in Port Harcourt. An American also kidnapped earlier the same day.
- 19) August 15, 2006: 2 Norwegian and 2 Ukrainian oil workers kidnapped on August 9 freed.
- 20) August 16, 2006: Lebanese man kidnapped.
- 21) August 19, 2006: German oil worker, Guido Schiffarth is released. Nigerian army launch crackdown on militants. Soldiers fired in the air, sending men and women screaming through the streets of Port Harcourt.
- 22) August 24: An Italian oil worker employed by Saipem is kidnapped by gunmen in Port Harcourt. He is freed after five days.
- 23) October 2, 2006: 25 Nigerian employees of a Royal Dutch Shell contractor seized after an ambush of boats carrying supplies to Shell facilities in the Cawthorne Channel. They are released two days later.
- 24) October 3, 2006: 7 foreign oil workers (four Britons, one Indonesian, one Malaysian and a Romanian)

kidnapped in a raid on a compound for expatriate contractors working for Exxon Mobil. The 3 British among the released 7 foreign oil workers arrived back in Scotland October 23, to tell of their hostage ordeal in the hands of Nigerian delta militants. One of the men, Graeme Buchan, revealed how he was beaten and forced to call the chief executive of his employers to falsely say that his colleague Paul Smith was dead. Speaking on behalf of his colleagues, Mr Buchan described how they were beaten with sticks, slapped with machetes and feared they might never see their families again.

- 25) October 21, 2006: 7 foreign oil workers kidnapped October 3 are released.
- 26) November 2, 2006: A British and an American employees of Petroleum Geo-Services(PGS) are kidnapped from a survey ship off the coast of Bayelsa.
- 27) November 7, 2006: British and American employees of Petroleum Geo-Services(PGS) kidnapped on November 2 freed.
- 28) November 22, 2006: A British oil worker is killed during an attempt by Nigerian soldiers to free 7 hostages abducted by militants earlier the same day.
- 29) December 7, 2006: Gunmen kidnap three Italians and one Lebanese from a residential facility. Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) claims responsibility.
- 30) December 14, 2006: Gunmen invade the Nun River logistics base in Bayelsa State operated by Royal Dutch Shell and hold 5 people hostage
- 31) December 18, 2006: 2 car bombs explode in Port Harcourt, one near Agip compound and the other in Shell residential compound. There were no casualties.
- 32) December 21, 2006: Militants storm the Obagi field facility in Rivers State, operated by Total, killing 3 people.
- 33) January 5, 2007: Gunmen kidnapped 5 Chinese telecom workers. Militants plant a car bomb in the Shell residential compound in Port Harcourt. Shell evacuates some staff from compounds in Port Harcourt, Bonny Island and Warri.
- 34) January 10, 2007: Gunmen attacked a base operated by South Korea's Daewoo Engineering and Construction in the Bayelsa state kidnapping 9 South Korean and one Nigerian oil workers.
- 35) January 12, 2007: 9 South Korean workers and one Nigerian are freed after being kidnapped when gunmen attacked a base operated by South Korea's Daewoo Engineering and Construction in the Bayelsa state capital Yenagoa on Jan. 10.
- 36) January 16, 2007: 3 people including a Dutch oil worker are killed when their boat, operated by South Korean firm Hyundai, was attacked by gunmen on its way to the Bonny Island export terminal.
- 37) January 18, 2007: Gunmen free 5 Chinese telecom workers, kidnapped January 5. An Italian is also released in Bayelsa state. 3 foreign hostages remain in captivity.
- 38) January 20, 2007: Militants seize German shipping line Baco-Liner cargo ship on its way to Warri port taking all 24 Filipino crew members hostage.
- 39) January 23, 2007: Gunmen kidnap 2 engineers, an American and a Briton, in Port Harcourt, on their way to work.
- 40) January 25, 2007: 9 employees of Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) working in Bayelsa state under contract with Shell are kidnapped.
- 41) February 4, 2007: 9 employees of Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) kidnapped on January 25 released.
- 42) February 6, 2007: Gunmen kidnap a Filipino oil worker on Port Harcourt - Owerri road.
- 43) February 7, 2007: A Filipina woman is kidnapped by gunmen in Port Harcourt. This apparently is the first abduction of a woman in the region. The same day, a French oil worker( an employee of Total Oil Co ), identified as Gerard Laporal, married to a Nigerian woman is kidnapped by gunmen as he returned home around 9:00 pm.
- 44) February 13, 2007: Militants release 24 Filipinos kidnapped on January 20.
- 45) February 17, 2007: 4 young Nigerian men serving as missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints abducted from their apartment in Port Harcourt.

46) February 18, 2007: 3 Croatian oil workers of Hydrodrive Nigeria abducted in Port Harcourt.