



NIGER DELTA AVENGERS AND NIGER DELTA QUESTION: WHAT WAY FORWARD?

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Abstract: *The resurgence of militants' activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has brought to the fore the failure of amnesty programme and other palliative measures to address the Niger Delta imbroglio. This paper investigates the new militant group known as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), spearheading the current wave of violence in the Niger Delta. It examines its emergence, demands and the impacts of its activities on both the region and the country. The paper contends that the failure to address the root causes of the conflict are responsible for the current violence perpetrated by the Niger Delta Avengers and unless these underlying or root causes are addressed, peace will remain a mirage in the region. It suggests, among others, provision of social amenities, employment, political restructuring of the polity. The paper relies on secondary sources of data.*

Keywords: *Niger Delta Avengers, Niger Delta Question, Niger Delta, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

The oil belt of Nigeria known as the Niger Delta is the largest delta in Africa continent and one of the largest wetlands in the world (Etekpe, & Ibaba, 2013; Watts & Ibaba, 2011). It covers an area of about 75 000 km² and is situated in the southern part of Nigeria. The region is home to over 30 million people who live in about 13 400 aboriginal communities, mainly farmers and coastal fishermen, and belong to over 40 ethnic groups (Adebanjoko, & Ojua, 2013; Obi, & Rustad, 2011; Sampson, 2009). The region housed Nigeria oil and gas industry, which accounts for 80 percent of government revenue, 95 percent of export receipts, and 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings. Oil from the region has generated over \$600 billion to the country (Ajayi, 2013; Etekpe & Ibaba, 2013; Watts & Ibaba, 2011).



Besides, oil exploration statistics indicates that the region has 6,000 oil wells, 606 oil fields, 355 onshore gas facilities, 10 gas plants, 275 flow stations, 15 export terminals, 7000 kilometres of pipelines and two modern refineries (Ajayi,2013 p. 35). It has an estimated 40 billion barrels of oil reserves in addition to its huge wealth of forest and water resources (Sampson, 2009). Moreover, its natural gas reserves are 160 trillion cubic feet (Omotola, 2009).

Despite the region abundant natural resources, it lacks basic infrastructures and social amenities. For instance, it has two (2) percent of federal roads, less than 30-40% of the settlements have electricity; educational facilities are inadequate (Olusola, 2013). Indeed, the region is the least developed of the six geo-political zones into which the country is divided. According to the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 52percent of the total population of 33,616,000 of the region in 2010 lived in abject poverty (cited in Etekpe & Ibaba, 2013). Below is the map of Niger Delta showing the states that make up the region.



Figure I: Map of Niger Delta showing the states that make up the region

Source: <http://www.nddc.gov.ng> Accessed on 15/10/15



The successive governments neglect of the region and poor corporate social responsibility by the multi-national oil corporations operating in the region necessitated the youth from the region, to take- up arms against the Nigerian state and the multi-national oil companies. According to Oyefusi(2014), between 2003 and 2009 the country experienced a violent uprising in the Niger Delta between the militia groups and the nation's armed forces over issues related to the ownership, exploration, and production of oil resources and the sharing of its proceeds. By the same token, Abraham (2009), argues that marginalisation and structural underdevelopment of the region are the causes of the militancy in the Niger Delta.

Similarly, Idowu (2012), contended that the neglect and deprivation of the region had contributed to the emergence of the militia whose activities had led to decline in oil production and threaten the security of the nation. In the same vein, Akinola(2011), argues that the neglect of the region and environmental degradation and its social impacts brought about by oil production caused frustration and fuelled the Niger Delta conflict.

Osaghae, Ikelegbe, Olarinmoye and Okhonmina (2007), asserted that government and multi-national oil companies' high handedness, as well as militarisation of the region, are the driving forces for militancy in the region.

On the other hand, Onuoha(2015), contends that constitutional and political issues are the causes of Niger conflict and not socio-economic or environmental factors. Ikelegbe (2011), attributes the violence in the region to the co-optation of the militia groups by the elites of the region. This, according to him occurred during the build up to the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections. For Emeseh(2011), the failure of the state to provide effective access to justice through the legal system to address the legitimate demands of the people accounted for the uprising.

In the same vein, Ibaba(2005), Omeje(2004;2005; 2006), Müller(2010) and Madubuko, (2014) ascribed the conflict to the problem of obnoxious laws that governed the oil industry. Other scholars attributed the problems to the Nigerian federalism and politics of revenue allocation in the country (Aaron, 2015; Ajayi, 2013; Aworawo, 2013; Esikot, & Akpan, 2013; Ikunga & Wilson, 2013; Ebegbulem, 2011; Omotosho, 2010; Ibaba, 2005; Orobator, Ifowodo, & Edosa, 2005; Ikporukpo, 1996).



The successive administrations in Nigeria tried to address the conflict in the Niger Delta through various board and commissions such as Niger Delta Development Board, Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission, Niger Delta Development Commission, Ministry of Niger Delta, and Amnesty Programme but these policies seemed to have failed. A pointer to this, is the resurgence of militancy in the region.

In recent times, different militant groups have emerged; spearheading the emancipation of the region and the Niger Delta Avengers is one of these groups. It attacked the nation's oil infrastructure and its activities have led to a decline in oil production. Who are the Niger Delta Avengers? Who are their sponsors? What are their grievances? How have its activities affected the region and the country? These questions are addressed in the course of this work.

This paper is structured into seven segments, including the introduction. The second segment examines the concepts that are germane to this study and this is closely followed by theoretical framework guiding the study. The fourth part examines a brief historical account of Niger Delta conflict. The next section analyses the Niger Delta Avengers, its emergence, sponsors, and demands. The sixth part discusses the impact of the group activities in the region and the country. The last segment is the conclusion and recommendation.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

According to Chafe (1994) cited in Ojo, (2009, p.10), "the primary requirement for debating anything is to understand first and foremost the actual thing being talked about". Similarly, Osumah & Ikelegbe (2009), argue that the essence of conceptual clarification is to give operational definitions to some important concepts used in a discourse. Therefore, the three concepts namely: Niger Delta, Niger Delta Avengers and Niger Delta Question that are germane to this study would be explained.

THE CONCEPT OF NIGER DELTA

There are different definitions of the concept. As Saka, Azizuddin, and Omede, (2014), rightly note, there are different definitions of what constitutes Niger Delta. According to Saka et.al (2014), there are two definitions of Niger Delta namely geographical and political. The first definition defines Niger Delta from the geographical or cartographical point of view and sees Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States as constituting the Niger Delta. This is based on the fact that the geographical word delta refers to the routes of the waterways which the



River Niger created to empty its content into the South Atlantic Ocean, forming a delta from where the name Niger Delta was derived and the above mentioned states are the channels through which it is done (Omonisa, 2015).

The second definition of Niger Delta sees it as one of the six geo-political zones into which the country is divided. This is the South-South geo-political zone and it comprises of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States.

The last definition is the legal one which is based on the Act establishing the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and which is also known as political Niger Delta (Saka, et.al, 2014; Etekpe, 2007; Naneen, 2007; Omotola, 2006). And going by that definition, Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross- River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers States constitute the Niger Delta. The map below shows the states that make up the Niger Delta.

NIGER DELTA AVENGERS

This refers to one of the numerous militia groups in the region fighting for the emancipation of the Niger Delta because of decades of neglect by successive administrations in Nigeria and underdevelopment of the region. According to the Niger Delta Avengers (cited in Onukwugha, 2016), it defines itself as a group of Niger Deltans voted to start a “revolution to free Nigeria from wicked administration”.

NIGER DELTA QUESTION

According to Amuwo (2009, p.239), the NDQ is “the most complex of all the elements underlying the highly fractured Nigerian federal system”. It revolves around issues of self-determination or autonomy, development, resource control, security, political inclusiveness, corporate social responsibility of the transnational oil companies and so on (Amuwo, 2009).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A study of this nature needs to be guided by a theory. The theoretical position of this study derives from the frustration-aggression theory. The theory is credited to John Dollard (a psychologist) and his partners namely Doob, Miller, Mowrer and Sears (cited in Berkowitz, 1989) in their spearheading work on the subject and in the later research led by Leonard Berkowitz (1962). Eminent political scientists such as James Davies (1962), Ted Gur, (1970) Ivo and Rosalind Feierabend (Feierabend, & Feierabend, 1966), have applied this theory to the study of political violence.



The nitty-gritty of this theory is that aggression is the result of frustration and that in a circumstance where the genuine yearning of an individual is denied either directly or indirectly by the outcomes of the way the society is organised, the feeling of disillusionment may lead such a person to express his displeasure through violence that will be targeted at those he /she considers to be responsible for his/her predicament (Faleti, 2007). The revolts in the Niger Delta zone by the different militias against the government and the oil companies working in the area can be seen in this light.

This theory has come under the hammer of critics. It has been criticised on the ground that it fails to account for the evidence made available by the experimental psychologists about the operation and occurrence of frustration and aggression. Psychologists have debunked the assumption by political scientists that frustration always leads to aggression. According to them, frustration does not necessarily lead to aggression and that aggression can occur without the accompanying necessity of a frustrating situation.

Secondly, the frustration - aggression explanation concentrates only on the internal or individual mechanism, thereby discouraging the systematic investigation of fundamental questions about the social milieu that shape the situation of the individual.

Moreover, the difficulty of operationalising and testing of notions such as relative deprivation and rising expectation is another limitation of this theory. It is difficult to measure the level of actual satisfaction of individuals. It has been established, for example, that the satisfactions priorities of individuals vary. One man's utility function may be a disutility for another. Besides, one man's capability may be another man's expectation (Anifowose, 2011).

Despite these criticisms of this theory, it is useful in the understanding the driving forces for militancy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

NIGER DELTA CONFLICT: AN OVERVIEW

Nigeria, since the 1990s has been battling with violence and revolt in the region with a renewed call for self-determination and resource control. It is imperative at this juncture to examine how the violence crisis in the region started.

The Niger Delta conflict dates back to the early 19th Century. According to Nwankwo(2015), it dates back to the Akassa Raid of 1895 when the people of the area fought economic domination by British merchants. In the same vein Ekumaoko(2013), contends that the



conflict precedes formal colonisation of the country by the British and crude oil discovery. The conflict during this period was against British dominance and control of oil palm trade. However, the current crisis can be traced to the 1990s and it arose because of tension between multi-national petroleum companies and the Niger Delta's minority ethnic groups who felt cheated or short-changed. Since then, competition for oil has resulted in violence in the area contributing to the militarisation of the area by both the ethnic militias and the Nigerian armed forces.

The current crisis was ignited by the Ogoni uprising of the 1990s. The Ken Saro- Wiwa led Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) demanded compensation from the oil companies for the environment debasement and presented to the government a list of their demands. The Bill expressed the agony of the masses because of petroleum exploration, neglect by both federal and state, lack of social amenities as well as political marginalisation. Consequently, they demanded to be allowed to manage their resources.

A thirty-day ultimatum was issued to all oil multi-national companies operating in the communities to pay the sum of US\$10 billion in arrears as royalties and damages for the destruction of the environment as well as putting an end to gas flaring in oil producing communities in Ogoni land (Adebajoko & Ojua,2013).

The federal government reacted by banning all public gatherings and declared disturbance that prevent the free flow of oil production as treasonable and punishable by death. Subsequent revolts among the Ogonis led to the death of four prominent chiefs from the area and the later hanging of the "Ogoni nine" including Saro-Wiwa by the military administration of Late General Sani Abacha. The hanging of Saro-Wiwa marked a new phase in the politics of the Niger Delta struggle. This new phase is characterised by violence, the bombing of oil installations, hostage taking, kidnapping and many more(Esikot, & Akpan, 2013).

NIGER DELTA AVENGERS: EMERGENCE AND DEMANDS

The Niger Delta Avengers is one of the current militia groups fighting for the emancipation of the Niger Delta. It came into being in February 2016 and proclaimed that they were group of educated and well-travelled individuals that were ready to take the Niger Delta struggle to another level that has never been seen in the annals of the country. They claimed to possess both the equipment and human resources to accomplish this goal (Ewokor, 2016).In



addition, they claimed to have support from Northern, Eastern and Western part of the Country. To show that the membership of the group cut-across the different ethnic groups in the region, the group stated that the commander of the strike team nine of the group is from the Eastern part of the country; strike team six leader from Itsekiri and the elite strike team one leader from Akwa Ibom (Agbinibo, 2016).

The emergence of the group has been linked to the present administration cancellation of the juicy pipeline security contracts awarded to the ex-warlords by the previous administration. For instance, a pipeline security protection contract worth \$103 million a year was awarded to Global West Vessels Specialist Ltd owned by Government Ekpemupolo alias Tompolo (Ezugwu, 2016). The prosecution of ex-militant leader Tompolo for alleged corruption. He is being tried in connection with \$231million missing government fund (Ewokor, 2016). Also, the cut in the budget of the Amnesty Programme from N 60 billion to N20 billion which resulted in the reduction in stipend pay to the ex-militants (Ezugwu, 2016).

As regards the sponsors of the group, a break- away faction of the group called the Reformed Niger Delta Avengers through its spokesperson Cynthia Whyte listed the following as sponsors of the group.

- Goodluck Jonathan, immediate past president of Nigeria as grand patron of the NDA
- Nyesom Wike, governor of Rivers state
- Seiaki Dickson, governor of Bayelsa state
- Godswill Akpabio, immediate past governor of Akwa-Ibom state now a Senator of the federal republic of Nigeria
- Government Ekpemupolo alias Tompolo, ex-militant warlord turned contractor
- Raymond Dokpesi, founder of African Independent Television (AIT).
- Patrick Akpobolokemi, immediate past director-general of NIMASA
- Kingsley Kuku, onetime head of Amnesty Programme
- Kimi Angozi
- The Indigenous People of Biafra

Others named as sympathizers of the group include:

- ❖ Edwin Clark, a prominent Ijaw leader
- ❖ Daniel Alabrah



- ❖ Tony Uranta
- ❖ Olisa Metuh, former spokesman of the Peoples Democratic Party
- ❖ Annkio Briggs

The group's militants operatives named include:

- Oyege Nimi Brown
- Paul Bebenimibo
- VIP Timothy
- Joshua Macaiver

The former Ijaw Youth Council interim president, Udengs Eradiri is Brigadier -General Murdoch Agbinibo chief spokesperson of Niger Delta Avengers (TheHerald, Monday 15 August 2016).

All the aforementioned people named by the Reformed Niger Delta Avengers have denied their association with the Niger Delta Avengers.

DEMANDS

The demands of the group are stated below:

- ✓ Implementation of the report of 2014 National Constitutional Conference. Otherwise, the country will break-up forcefully.
- ✓ Apology by the President Muhammadu Buhari, Director of State Security Service and Timipre Sylva to the family of DSP Alamieyesegha for killing him with intimidation and harassment because of its party affiliation.
- ✓ Ownership of oil blocks must be in ratio 60: 40. Sixty percent for the oil producing people and forty percent for others (non- oil producing people).
- ✓ Commencement of academic programme at the Nigerian Maritime University, Okerenkoko.
- ✓ Apology by Mr Rotimi Amechi to the Ijaws and the Niger Delta people for his comment on the location of the Nigerian Maritime University.
- ✓ Cleaning up of Ogoniland and other oil polluted areas in the Niger Delta as well as payment of compensation to them.
- ✓ Unconditional release of Mr Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra
- ✓ Funding and continuation of the Amnesty Programme
- ✓ Anti-corruption fight should be extended to members of the ruling party(APC).



- ✓ Release of Sambo Dasuki, erstwhile National Security Adviser to immediate past president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan.
- ✓ MNOC and foreign investors must adherence to its ultimatum (Durden, 2016).

An examination of these demands show that some of the items listed have nothing to do with the region and this is an evidence that the group was formed to destabilise the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari by some politicians whose present administration anti-corruption policy did not go down well it. It behoves on this administration to ensure that the root causes of the militancy such as poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, underdevelopment, resource control and political restructuring of the polity are quickly address in order not to give room in future for another group to emerge and claim, its fighting for the cause of the people of the region.

Before the expiration of the ultimatum given to government to look into its demands, the group carried out its bombing of oil installations. Below are the time lines of the Niger Delta Avengers violence activities.

Table I: Timelines of Niger Delta Avengers Violence Activities in the Niger Delta

S/No	Date	Nature and location of Attack
1	14/ 1/2016	Several gas pipelines and oil installations in Warri south-west were blown-up.
2	10/2/ 2016	The group blew up the Bonny-Soku Gas Export Line.
3	14/2/2016	Militants from the group destroyed Shell's underwater Forcados 48-inch Export Pipline at the Forcados Export Terminal
4	19/2/2016	They blew up Eni's Clough Creek-Tebidaba Pipeline in Bayelsa State
5	4/5/2016	They attacked and heavily damaged the Chevron Valve Platform located at Abiteye, Warri South. This platform serves as a connecting point where all of Chevron's other Niger Delta platforms link-up.
6	4/5/2016	The militants blew up Shell's underwater Forcados 48-inch Export Pipeline shortly after repairs commenced following the February 14 attack.
7	5/5/2016	The Escravos-Lagos Pipeline System, linking Warri to Lagos was destroyed by the militants.
8	5/5/2016	The group attacked several Chevron oil installations situated in Abiteye, causing the destruction of Chevron Well D25 and several other major pipelines in the area.
9	6/5/2016	The crude oil pipeline linking Warri to Kaduna was blown up by the group as well as a gas line that supplies both Lagos and Abuja with electricity.
10	6/5/2016	The militants blew up oil pipelines located near the villages of Alero, Dibi, Otunana, and Makaraba.
11	9/5/2016	Three Nigerian soldiers were killed during a shootout with NDA militants in the village of Foropa, Southern Ijaw LGA, Bayelsa
12	13/5/2016	The Chevron pipeline at Makaraba was blown up for a second time in



		7 days following repairs done by Chevron.
13	20/5/2016	The Escravos-Lagos Pipeline System was once again blown up by NDA militants following the commencement of repairs being done on the pipeline following the May 5 attack
14	25/5/2016	NDA militants blew up Chevron's main electricity feed pipeline, located at the Escravos Tank Farm at Ciera Creek.
15	27/5/2016	NDA militants blew Eni and Shell's pipelines 1, 2, and 3 located at Nembe, Bayelsa State
16	27/5/2016	The group militants blew up several gas and oil pipelines belong to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation located near Warri
17	30/5/2016	NDA militants were forced to retreat from the villages of Gulobokri and Eweleso, Brass following a series of clashes with Nigerian soldiers, resulting in the deaths of approximately 20 civilians, 2 police officers, and an unknown number of militants/Nigerian soldiers.
18	31/5/2016	The group militants blew up Chevron's Oil Wells RMP23 and RMP24 located near the village of Dibi, Warri South-West, Chevron's highest producing wells in the Niger Delta.
19	2/6/2016	NDA militants blew up the Ogboinbiri-Tebidaba and Cough Creek-Tebidaba pipelines, belonging to Eni, in Bayelsa State.
20	3/6/2016	NDA militants blew up Shell's Forcados 48-inch Export Pipeline for a third time following a series of repairs done by Royal Dutch Shell.
21	3/6/2016	The group militants blew up Eni's Brass-Tebidaba oil pipeline in Bayelsa State.
22	8/6/2016	They blew up Chevron's Well RMP20, located 20 meters from the Dibi Flow Station in Warri North LGA.
23	9/6/2016	NDA militants blew up the Chanomi Creek oil facility, belonging to Royal Dutch Shell, near the village of Ogidigben, Warri South-West.
24	10/6/2016	They blew up the Obi Obi Brass trunk line, belonging to Eni. It is one of Eni's most significant crude oil pipelines in Bayelsa State.
25	16/6/2016	The group's militants blew up a crude oil pipeline belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation in Oruk Anam LGA, Akwa-Ibom State.
26	1/7/2016	The group blew up a crude oil trunk line belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation linked to the Warri refinery.
27	2/7/2016	NDA militants blew up two major crude oil trunk lines belonging to the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company, located near the Batan flow station in Delta State.
28	3/7/2016	The group blew up Chevron Wells 7 and 8, located near the Abiteye flow station in Warri South West LGA.
29	5/7/2016	NDA militants blew up Chevron Well 10, located near the Otunana flow station.
30	5/7/2016	The militia group blew up a manifold belonging to the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company, located near Banta, as well as two crude oil trunk lines belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Company
31	6/7/2016	The group blew up Chevron manifolds RMP 22, 23 and 24 in Delta State. These manifolds are major convergence points for numerous crude oil pipelines operated by Chevron Corp.
32	8/7/2016	The militants group blew up Nembe pipelines 1, 2, and 3, belonging to Shell and Eni, in Bayelsa State while simultaneously blowing up



		the Brass-Tebidaba trunk line in Rivers State
33	11/7/2016	NDA militants blew up Exxon Mobile's "Qua Iboe 48" crude oil pipeline
34	12/7/2016	The group blew up a natural gas pipeline belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation located in Ogijo, Ogun State.
35	18/7/2016	NDA militants blew up a crude oil trunk line belonging to Shell located near the Batan Flow Station in Warri South West LGA.
36	24/7/2016	The group blew up a natural gas pipeline belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation located in Nsit-Ibom LGA, Akwa-Ibom State.
37	31/7/2016	NDA militants blew up the <i>Trans Ramos</i> crude oil pipeline, owned by Royal Dutch Shell, located near the village of Odimodi, Burutu, LGA, Delta State.

Source: Adapted from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta_Avengers

Accessed on 19/8/2016

IMPACT OF NIGER DELTA AVENGERS VIOLENCE ACTIVITIES ON NIGER DELTA AND NIGERIA

The bombing of pipelines, oil infrastructure and well by the Niger Delta Avengers has serious consequences on both the region and the nation at large.

For the region, the activities of the Niger Delta Avengers further worsened the environmental degradation confronting the region. The bombing of oil pipelines which results in oil spills affects the means of livelihood of the people as well as their health. A recent study conducted by scientists from Norway and the United States showed that the people of the region are at risk of cancer. This is as a result of oil spillage caused by the activities of the militants. According to the findings by 2025, the level of cancer and other deadly diseases would increase in the region (See <https://www.naij.com/9261178-due-militants-attack-something-terrible-happen-niger-delta-2025.htm>. Accessed on 18/8/2016).

The revenue accrued to the states in the region has been affected by the activities of Niger Delta Avengers. States shared of the 13 per cent derivation is based on quantum of oil gotten from the state. The reduction in oil production as a result of the militants activities as well as the decline in oil price in the global market, has affected the budget of the state in the region and this has serious consequences on provision of social amenities. According to Okowa (Onabu & Iroegbu, 2016), the governor of Delta state, the state was losing financially, environmentally and economically as a result of pipeline bombing by the Niger Delta militants. In his words: "The pipeline vandalism that is going on is very bad for Delta



State. We are suffering from pollution, our communities are affected, we are the greatest losers; our communities are impacted negatively”.

For the central government, the impact of the activities of the Niger Delta Avengers can be seen in the areas of loss in revenue, decline in oil production, threat to national security and loss of first spot as the leading producer of oil in the African continent.

The activities of the Niger Delta Avenger have reduced the revenue of the federal government of Nigeria. The government is losing N1.3billion (\$6.72million) daily to Niger Delta Avengers oil pipelines bombing and other critical oil infrastructure and this has affected the implementation of the 2016 budget of N6.07 trillion (Eziukwu, 2016)). According to the Secretary to Government of the federation of Nigeria, Mr Babachir Lawal, the government’s revenue had dropped by 80 per cent to 60 per cent. This he attributed to the attacks on oil facilities by the NDA (The Nation July 14, 2016).

Moreover, the activity of the group also affected maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. There have been cases of pirate attacks coming from the Niger Delta region. In fact, 70 per cent of piracy related cases in the Gulf of Guinea are from Nigeria criminal gangs operating in the Niger Delta. In the 12 attacks recorded in the Gulf of Guinea in the first quarter of 2016, nine were from Nigeria, one from Cote d Ivoire and the remaining two within the territorial waters of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Onuoha, 2016).

Furthermore, Nigeria has lost its first spot position as the leading oil producing nation in the African continent to Angola. According to Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Country (OPEC), in its monthly market report for April, Nigeria produced 1.677million barrels per day(bpd) in March which was a decline compared with the month of February production of 1.744 million bpd. While Angola oil output increased from 1.767 million bpd to 1.782 million bpd thereby displacing Nigeria as African’s leading oil producing state. This is the second time that Angola displaced Nigeria. The first time was in November, 2015(Thompson, 2016). The implication of this is that Angola would attract more investments from western countries and this may affect Nigeria’s revenue from oil (Thompson, 2016).

The militants activity in the Niger Delta has also affected electricity in Nigeria. The bombing of gas pipelines that supplied gas to power plant stations has led to a decline in electricity generation in the country from about 4,800 megawatts in August 2015 to 1,000 megawatts



in May, 2016. This has affected productivity and service delivery in the nation's economy (Onuoha, 2016).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper examined the new militant group making waves in the Niger Delta known as Niger Delta Avengers. It began by examining the extant literature view on the causes of militancy in the region. A review of the literature identified some of these factors as the causes of militancy in the region and they are environmental degradation, poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, resource control/ revenue allocation and nature of Nigerian federal system. The relevant concepts that are germane to the discourse were analysed and frustration-aggression theory which is the underlying theory for this paper was critically examined. The paper also discussed the emergence, sponsors, demands and impacts of the Niger Delta Avengers activities on the Niger Delta in particular and Nigeria as a whole.

The paper argued that until the root causes of Niger Delta imbroglio such as environmental degradation, poverty, unemployment, land ownership and resource control are addressed, there would be no light at the end of the tunnel for militancy in the region as more groups would emerge claiming to be championing the cause of Niger Delta.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The military option pursued by the present administration would not address the militancy in the region. This is because it would worsen the already bad situation. Therefore, government has to look at other options available to address this perennial conflict. That's brings us to the way forward and they are:

- ❖ The federal government of Nigeria should dialogue with the group. They should look into their demands and see those that are feasible and can be addressed within the limited state resources.
- ❖ The different tiers of government especially the Niger Delta states and local governments should pursue populist programmes that would alleviate the suffering of the people of the region by providing employment to the teeming youths of the region through empowering them by skills acquisitions, entrepreneurship training and so on. Through this, they can become self-employed and not constituting a threat to the security of the state.



- ❖ There is need for political restructuring of the nation. The states should be allowed to own and control their resources. They should only pay taxes to the federal government. Put differently, there is need for true federalism—a situation where states in the country rely on handouts coming from the central government would not augur well for the country's development. Therefore, the federal government should look into the report of the 2014 national dialogue and implements its recommendation.

If the above mentioned recommendations are implemented, it would go a long way in putting an end to the Niger Delta conflict.

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