



Political economy and national security implications of resource-based conflicts in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Natural resource-based conflicts continue to occur in different parts of Nigeria with negative implications. This study investigated the phenomena of natural resource conflicts *vis-à-vis* their propensities to impact political economy and national security negatively. Data for the study were sourced from theoretical and empirical evidence. Empirical data were sourced from existing studies selected on the basis of their relevance to the study and analysed based on their content. The limitation to this approach is the obsolete and subjective nature of some the literature. This limitation was, however, addressed among others through the author's knowledge of the issues under study. The study found that Nigeria is enmeshed in conflict over ownership, distribution, access to or competition over natural resources such as petroleum resources and agricultural land and these conflicts have undermined democracy, human rights, the economy and the nation's security. The paper identified poor resource governance, environmental factors and poor political leadership as the causes and drivers of these conflicts. It recommends natural resource governance among others, as a way out of the problem.

KEYWORDS

Conflict; natural resource conflict; political economy; national security

Introduction

The role of natural resources as drivers of conflict has become one of the most controversial issues in post-Cold War Africa, especially through increase in the number of armed groups exploiting natural resources to advance their desire for self-determination or pursue other centrifugal tendencies. While the quest for self-determination is not altogether new, the increase in the number of recent cases is remarkable. From Angola and Liberia to Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, armed groups have exploited the natural resources inside their territories to prosecute wars against their respective governments while central governments in some countries have used natural resources to consolidate their authorities against challenges from rebel forces.¹

In Nigeria, resource-based conflicts occur in different parts of the country. In the Niger Delta region, there is a conflict between militants and federal government over the control of petroleum resources while in the Middle Belt region and part of the northwest, conflicts have occurred between pastoralists and farmers over agricultural land. There has been increasing number of violent conflicts in Nigeria since independence especially following the end of the Cold War. Although internal violent conflict is not new to Nigeria which witnessed series of coup d'état between 1966 and 1998 and a Civil War from 1967 to 1970, post-Cold War civil

conflicts in the country have been likened to 'new wars'.² The reason is that the end of the Cold War removed the global tapestry capable of suppressing, containing and managing the undercurrents of conflicts in the respective spheres of the super powers, left Africa marginalised and made available mercenaries and weapons of destruction.³ The war in Libya for instance, has been identified as one of the factors responsible for proliferation of arms in Nigeria in recent times.⁴

Generally, armed conflicts in Nigeria have had devastating impact on the country in terms of the loss of life and destruction of property. However, none of these has had negative implications for national security as resource-based conflicts. The consequences of these conflicts have seriously undermined Nigeria's efforts to ensure long-term stability, economic prosperity, human rights and gender equality for its peoples and as a direct result, the quest for socio-economic development and strengthening of the Nigerian economy and maintaining national security has been undermined. It is in this regard, that this study x-rays the implications of natural resource conflicts for Nigeria's political economy and national security.

Resource-based conflicts and the resource curse thesis

Resource-based or natural resource conflicts are conflicts over natural resources. Natural resources are all non-artificial products (land, solid minerals, petroleum, water, water resources, and animal stock) situated on or beneath the soil, which can be extracted, harvested, or used, and whose extraction, harvest, or usage generates income or serves other functional purposes in benefiting mankind.⁵ Brown defines them thus:

Natural resources are materials and components (something that can be used) that can be found within the environment. Every man-made product is composed of natural resources (at its fundamental level). A natural resource may exist as an separate entity such as fresh water, and air, as well as a living organism such as a fish, or it may exist in an alternate form which must be processed to obtain the resource such as metal ores, oil, and most forms of energy.⁶

Resources mean life and are a source of pride and wealth. Conflict over natural resources can thus be understood from the perspective that resources are integral part of society with half of the world's population, particularly in Africa, depending on them while a developing country's ability to modernise economically is often tied to access to them.⁷ Natural resources serve a local as well as international commodity and as a result, the people from whose land these resources are exploited expect maximal benefits. When the Cold War ended and new ones erupted, political analysts and economic researchers began to look at non-ideological factors, such as ethnic and economic competition and as a result detected a strong correlation between the outbreak of armed conflict and a country's dependence on one or two readily exploitable natural resources, such as diamonds, gold or oil. According to a study conducted in 2003, a country that has primary commodity exports around 5% of GDP has a 6% risk of conflict, but when exports are 25% of GDP the chance of conflict rises to 33%.⁸ In another study in 2016, it was found that ethno-political groups are more likely to resort to rebellion rather than using nonviolent means or becoming terrorists when representing regions rich in oil.⁹ Conflicts can occur over the control and exploitation of resources and the allocation of their revenues while access to resource revenues by belligerents can prolong conflicts.¹⁰ A 2004 study found that oil makes the onset of war more likely and that lootable resources lengthen existing conflicts while another study found that the mere discovery of petroleum resources increases the risk of conflict, as oil revenues have the potential to alter the

balance of power between regimes and their opponents, rendering bargains in the present obsolete in the future.¹¹

Natural resources have been linked to conflicts in Africa in three ways: cases in which natural resources constitute a direct or remote cause of conflict, situations in which natural resources fuel and/or sustain conflicts; and instances in which resources have come into consideration in efforts to resolve conflicts.¹² As a cause of conflict, natural resource considerations have become easily identifiable in many conflicts in Nigeria, especially over the ownership and control of agricultural land and petroleum resources. The presence of profitable resources is, however, seen as a factor in the spread of high-level corruption, a further source of conflict and public resentment. This gave rise to the resource curse thesis or argument that the very presence of valuable natural resources often serves as a 'curse' that generates conflict, and that insurgent forces frequently are motivated less by genuine grievances than by 'greed' for money from the control of natural wealth.¹³

The resource curse, a term also known as the paradox of plenty credited to Richard Auty described how countries rich in mineral resources were unable to use that wealth to boost their economies and how, counter-intuitively, these countries had lower economic growth than countries without an abundance of natural resources.¹⁴ A study by Jeffrey Sachs found a strong correlation between natural resource abundance and poor economic growth. Thereafter other studies by other researchers followed suit establishing the linkage between natural resource wealth and socio-economic and political challenges.¹⁵ The reason for this paradox, political scientists and economists argue is that oil, mineral and gas wealth is distinct from other types of wealth because of its large upfront costs, long production timeline, site-specific nature, scale (sometimes referred to as large *rents*), price and production volatility, non-renewable nature, and the secrecy of the industry.¹⁶

The resource curse also refers to the paradox that, countries with an abundance of natural resources, specifically non-renewable resources like minerals and fuels face because of the significant social, economic and political challenges that are unique to such countries.¹⁷ It has been observed that such countries tend to have less economic growth, less democracy, and worse development outcomes than countries with fewer natural resources.¹⁸ This is attested to by the fact that natural resource-rich countries have failed to reach their full potential as a result of their natural resource wealth and are also more authoritarian, more prone to conflict, and less economically stable than countries without these resources. Examples are resource-rich countries such as Nigeria, Angola, Liberia, Libya, Serra Leone, DRC and South Sudan which have common characteristics such as extreme dependence on resource wealth for fiscal revenues, export sales, or both, low saving rates, poor growth performance; and highly volatile resource revenues.¹⁹

Despite its usefulness to the study, the resource-curse thesis as it relates to Nigeria has been a subject of criticisms by various scholars. According to Rosser, the available evidence on the existence of a 'resource curse' is far from conclusive.²⁰ First of all, it is unclear whether these studies have appropriately measured natural resource abundance. In most cases, they have measured it either in terms of the ratio of countries' natural resource exports to GDP, or the ratio of countries' natural resource exports to total exports. Authors who use different measurement strategies – for instance, indicators of resource abundance that estimate natural capital in USD per capita – have found less support for the existence of a resource curse.²¹ There are also questions surrounding the proposed direct causal relationship between resource abundance and negative development outcomes such as corruption, authoritarianism, and clientelism. Further, a substantial part of the literature on the resource

course is focused only at the level of the nation-state. Different regions within the same country often experience significant disparities in terms of natural resource endowments and give different results so development outcomes should also be examined at the sub-national level.²² Also, in most cases, the surveyed studies on the resource curse adopt a purely macro-level approach. Their primary goal is to examine large-scale trends at the political and economic level; they are less concerned with describing dynamics at the micro-level of society. Consequently, there is little information on how various aspects of the resource curse have affected different groups of end-users within the country. By relying on resource wealth per capita, the authors also neglected differences within the population and the possible consequences for disputes at the local level.

Cases and causes of resource-based conflicts in Nigeria

Nigeria has been characterised by high levels of resource-related conflict, and has experienced a markedly higher number of these conflicts relative to other African countries since 1997. Resource-related conflicts in Nigeria revolve around crude oil and agricultural land and about 95% of violent conflict in Nigeria since 1999 has been resource-related.²³ Nigeria is Africa's largest producer of crude oil, the 12th largest producer of petroleum worldwide, and 8th largest exporter.²⁴ For decades, Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region has been embroiled in repeated armed clashes between militant groups and the federal government over the control of crude oil. Beginning with the Ogoni crisis in the early 1990s, the fighting in the region took a new dimension in the 2000s and has claimed many lives and sporadically disrupted the country's main export sector.²⁵ These conflicts have been fuelled by ownership of land/oil bearing sites, resource control and compensation for environmental degradation. Different groups in the region lay claim to the land where oil has been discovered or is being explored. This is because of the belief that ownership of such a land will attract the attention and interest of the central government, and consequently result in greater developmental benefits for the community but when this does not happen, there is recourse to violence. Also, the people of the Niger Delta believe they should have dominant control over crude oil resources because it is being sourced from their soil and they therefore demand for increase in derivation or sharing formula. Furthermore, communities that have lost their lands as a result of oil exploration without due compensations by Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs) resort to violence when peaceful protests are ignored.

The struggle in the region is further compounded by the fact that the people of the Niger Delta live in poverty in the midst of plenty as the area's 'vast oil wealth has barely touched people's lives', noted the UN Development Programme.²⁶ Besides, youth unemployment is high and the availability of idle youths has led to restiveness in the region. There is also a widespread belief among the people of the region that government and people from other parts of the country are united in their (the Niger Delta people's) marginalisation. These factors resulted in the emergence of militant groups such as Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Liberation Front (NDLF), Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) among others who took hostage foreign oil workers and bombed oil installations. As a result of the attacks on oil companies and abduction of their staff, it became imperative for the federal government to deploy the military to protect such companies, their staff and their families. Military deployments began in the early 1990s with a special military task force constituted to maintain security in the Ogoni region and in the late 1990s, following increased restiveness and protests, Operations Hakuri 1 and 11

were established comprising massive deployments of the army and navy and heavy armaments.²⁷ After this, there was the Joint Task Force created by President Olusegun Obasanjo and other militant efforts such as Operation Crocodile Smiles, Operation Scorpion Sting and Octopus. Military deployments in the region have, however, come under sharp criticism because of the human rights abuses associated with these. For instance, the deployment of the military in 1999 by former President Olusegun Obasanjo to Odi, an oil-bearing community in Bayelsa State led to the death of an estimated 2,483 persons (mainly women and children).²⁸ Having failed to resolve the conflict, amnesty was put in place by the federal government in 2009 to address the crisis. The programme was proposed under President Yar'adua with the aim of granting national and unconditional pardon to all armed militants in the Niger Delta region with the hope that this would usher in enduring peace, security, stability and development to the region.²⁹ So far, about 30,000 ex-militants have been trained under the amnesty programmes but despite this, new militant groups emerge from time to time and threaten the government with bombing of oil installations. The reason adduced for this is that the issues that gave rise to the conflict such as injustice, neglect, marginalisation, poverty, underdevelopment and resource control have not been addressed by the amnesty programme.

While oil drives resource-related conflict in the Niger Delta, in other parts of the country such as Benue, Kogi, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara States, resource-related conflict is primarily fuelled by struggle over agricultural land between farmers and pastoralists. Although Nigeria chiefly is known for its oil and gas production, agriculture employs about 70% of its labour force where small-holders in the country's centre and south harvest most of the country's tuber and vegetable crops while pastoralists in the north raise most of its grains and livestock.³⁰ Since 1999, herdsmen and farmers' clashes have resulted in the death of thousands and entire population being expelled from villages in addition to loss of property and farmlands which are the people's means of livelihood. In 2011 to 2016 more than 2,500 people were said to have been killed in 549 across 14 states while in 2018 alone, more than 2000 thousand have been killed with Benue and Plateau States recording the highest number of deaths.³¹ The resultant insecurity and violence amidst inadequate policing and state security arrangements have led many populations to create self-defence forces and ethnic militias, which have engaged in further violence, thereby worsening the security landscape.

Poor leadership and the sinister political and economic interests of the political elites are blamed for the increase in the conflicts. Poor governance is a major problem in Nigeria where leaders serve their personal parochial interests rather than the interest of the people they are called to serve. Generally, corruption is perceived as being one of the major problems in the Niger Delta in particular and in Nigeria in general. Nigeria's economic development continues to be held back by corruption and political instability. The country has traditionally been ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption has robbed the people of potential benefits from the oil and gas industry as the bulk of revenues have been looted or mismanaged by public office holders at all levels of government with more than N1.4 trillion was stolen from the treasury by Nigeria's leaders between 1960 and 1999.³² Former World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz observed that at least N3.6 million of the N2 trillion in oil revenues that accrued since 1960 have simply 'gone missing' while a former Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Chairman, Nuhu Ribadu, alleged that in 2003 70% of the country's oil wealth was stolen or wasted and by 2005 it was 'only' 40%.³³ This figure has increased astronomically since then. Political elites under both military and civilian governments in Nigerian

have been corrupt. General Sani Abacha's loot alone was put at between N1-2 trillion while the issue of disappearance of N4 trillion Gulf War oil windfall under General Ibrahim Babangida and his cronies remains an unresolved mystery.³⁴ Under Goodluck Jonathan's administration, Nigeria was said to have lost N9.6 trillion, about 16% of the government's resources to corruption according to the United Kingdoms' Department for International Development (DFID). Between 29 May 2015 and 25 May 2016 a total of N115.7 billion funds looted by cabinet members of the Jonathan's administration were recovered and the assets and cash seized under interim forfeiture was N1.9 billion while funds awaiting repatriation from foreign Jurisdictions totalled N1.3 billion.³⁵ According to Ibrahim Magu, Acting Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Commission recovered over N473 billion in 2017 in addition to funds recovered in foreign currencies which totalled 1.2 billion.³⁶ Some of the loot was recovered from abandoned buildings, airport, forests, farms, cemeteries, septic tanks among others. The Buhari administration is not free with cabinet members alleged to have collectively looted about N1 trillion from the national treasury.³⁷ While government at the centre could be blamed for acts of corruption and looting of the public treasury which have contributed to the underdevelopment of the region, Niger Delta leaders at the state and local government levels are also corrupt. For instance, a former governor in the region was jailed in the United Kingdom for money laundering and is alleged to own several multi-million dollar properties in the United Kingdom, as well seven British bank accounts, a yacht, more than N1 billion in foreign currencies while another former governor in the region owns two private jets, a helicopter, and a host of private properties.³⁸ At the local government level, a former chairman of one of the local governments in the region was said to have consistently withdrawn council funds which he deposited in private company account, awarded several contracts to himself between 2005 and 2006 to the tune of N12 m while a former chairman of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was accused in 2008 of embezzling billions of naira belonging to the Commission in addition to N8 m which he gave to a witch doctor to aid his continued stay in the Commission.³⁹

The neglect of the people by the leaders, corruption and mismanagement of the commonwealth required for development and wellbeing of the people often lead to poverty and frustration which result in conflicts. The economic hardship faced in the country in recent times often leads to transfer of aggression by various groups against one another. In the Niger Delta, frustration resulting from poverty, hunger and underdevelopment have been at the root of militancy in the region while peasant farmers transfer aggression on pastoralists who encroach on the former's farms without due regard for their means of livelihood.

Resource-based conflicts are also blamed on the political class who use these conflicts to further their political interests. In many instances, militant groups have been hired by the political elite to cause mayhem in the community in a bid to win elections. In the Niger Delta, politicians use unemployed youths as thugs during elections and after these elections, such idle youths who now have nothing to do, pour their frustrations on MNOCs and in their grievance bomb oil installations. In the case of pastoralists and farmers, the crisis has been perpetuated by politicians who are also accused of arming ethnic militia groups. These militia groups who are dominant in the various states are used to disrupt elections and many of them contribute to crisis between farmers and pastoralists through acts of criminality and banditry such as cattle rustling.

Absence of an effective natural resource governance structure has also been identified as one of the factors that account for conflicts over natural resources. Resource governance is the effective, accountable, and transparent management of oil, gas, and mineral resources.⁴⁰

This implies the enactment of rules to promote the use of natural resources to improve public welfare and as well as strengthening public institutions, like the justice system and oversight bodies, to enforce these rules. In most cases, it also requires political will to transform subsoil assets into tangible benefits for citizens. Transparency can improve public accountability. A well-informed public with the capacity to act can engage in a constructive discussion around policy formulation and government oversight of resource governance. Through public scrutiny, officials can be deterred from acting unethically and held accountable for abuses of power for private gain. Accountability, in turn, is critical to ensuring the sustainability of fiscal terms, revenue management systems, and budget decisions because it encourages adherence to rules and principles of efficient economic policy-making and effective management of public resources on timelines beyond officials' own tenure in power. The failure of the Nigerian state to effectively integrate all the contents of natural resource governance is a case in point.⁴¹ In most African countries, Nigeria not an exception, the nature of natural resource governance is either completely defective or is just selectively efficient, with no efforts being made to align many of the structures to other aspects of socioeconomic and political governance. Furthermore, many of the laws governing the management of these resources are sometimes contradictory, while institutions designed to handle the dichotomy between local claims and national interest have been bedeviled with absence of transparency, accountability ineffectiveness and corruption.⁴² The Nigerian government is often at a disadvantage relative to companies in negotiating contracts. Oil and mining companies often know more about the value of the resource, the geology, and the terms of international contracts, putting them in strong bargaining positions relative to governments.⁴³ In many cases, they also have better access to economic and legal expertise, not to mention strong industry associations working hard to tout the benefits of favourable fiscal terms. This can result in countries collecting a negligible share of resource revenues. A fiscal regime that fails to distribute enough revenue to the host country can fail to effectively compensate the state and communities for the value of its depleting resources, and can foster citizen dissatisfaction and national instability. A lack of revenue can also starve the state of necessary funding for domestic investment and set the stage for conflict.

Natural factors have also been found to contribute to resource-based conflicts. Declining availability of renewable natural resources for instance are found to result into competition over scarce resources thereby engendering violent conflict.⁴⁴ Explaining the causal relationship between scarcity of natural resource and the outbreak of violent conflict, Homer-Dixon (1999) argues that:

Decrease in the quality and quantity of renewable resources act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of vegetation, farmland, water, forests etc. This scarcity of ecological resources can reduce economic productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. Consequently, the affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts.⁴⁵

The increase of farmer-herder conflicts for instance, has been linked to an expansion of agricuturist population and cultivated land at the expense of pasturelands; urbanisation which has led to the closure of grazing routes, deteriorating environmental conditions, climate change, desertification and soil degradation, land and water disputes among others.⁴⁶ Climate change for instance, has been identified as a driver of conflicts in developing countries particularly, Nigeria and there is global concern that this poses a threat to sustainability of the

livelihoods of the majority of the population living in the developing countries, particularly the sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon described the war in Darfur, Sudan as the world's first climate change conflict, caused in part by the fighting over scarce water resources.⁴⁷ Furthermore, frequent natural disasters such as droughts and floods have affected agricultural productivity and the scarcity of natural resources leading to poverty, and as a result triggering conflicts. As wetlands are increasingly turned to staple production and horticulture, traditional grazing patterns have been overturned often without consultation or any coherent resource planning and pastoralists in their search for greener pastures are forced to migrate and in the process destroy crops.⁴⁸ In some cases, they settle in certain communities and seek to lay claims to ownership of the land when they are not recognised as 'sons of the soil' as the case of Jos North in Plateau State has shown. This creates the problem of indigenisation and conflicts as we have in different parts of Nigeria particularly in the Middle Belt.

Another factor is environmental degradation. According to the Environment and Conflicts Project, resource-based conflicts are traditional conflicts induced by environmental degradation.⁴⁹ Environmental conflicts are usually complex in structure and history and impact public interests and goods, including non-represented interests (e.g. future generations) and although rarely the only cause of conflicts, when interwoven with such elements as population growth, poverty and injustice, environmental problems increasingly contribute to existing and future political tensions and their escalation to violent conflicts. In the Niger Delta region, one of the factors that led to crisis has been environmental degradation resulting from the activities of MNOCs such as oil spills and gas flares and lack of compensations for the negative effects of these activities.

Political economy and national security implications of resource-based conflicts in Nigeria

Resource conflicts have implications for the political economy and national security of a nation. This is because threats to human life emanate not only from situation of violent conflicts but other non-conflict sources of threats such as poverty, infectious diseases, and environmental degradation among others.⁵⁰

Research shows that oil wealth lowers levels of democracy and strengthens autocratic rule and it has been observed that natural resource wealth, particularly oil wealth, has made it more likely for governments to become or remain authoritarian over the past 30 years.⁵¹ It further shows that oil strengthens authoritarian regimes, making transitions to democracy less likely while oil wealth weakens democracies. Under the military regimes in Nigeria, oil wealth was used to perpetuate authoritarianism particularly under General Sani Abacha's regime where demand for accountability was met by the brutal killing of environmental activist Ken Saro Wiwa and eight of his kinsmen. To date, Nigerians do not have a clear sense of how oil revenues are expended. In the past administration of Goodluck Jonathan, windfall from crude oil was said to have been corruptly given to cronies of the president for electio-neering purpose instead of the good of the generality of the citizens.

Natural resources-based conflict has contributed to the weakening of the Nigerian state. In some cases, the inability of the state to cope with the security problems emanating from conflicts has forced the government to cede away some of its responsibilities, most especially its exclusive monopoly of force, to the private sector; the result being the burgeoning of private security organisations (PSOs) to meet growing demands.⁵² This is exemplified in the

owning and keeping of arms by MNOCs in the Niger Delta region and ethnic militia groups in states affected by pastoralists' and farmers' conflicts. This has led to the emergence of warlords who exploit the prevailing political situation and the weakness of states to assert themselves and acquire political power and material wealth, as happened in the Niger Delta where militants were given cash awards by the federal government. For instance, Asari Dokubo received an annual cash payment of US\$ 10 million a year from the government as part of the federal pipeline security fee to protect the River State pipelines and creeks in oil areas where militants bombed, kidnapped and killed the workers and guards.⁵³

The instability, uncertainty as well as violent conflict stemming from frustrations associated with resource mismanagement, has implied higher costs and price volatility for energy consumers around the world.⁵⁴ As such, energy crisis has threatened global energy supplies. Because of the strategic importance of the Niger Delta region to the global supply of oil and energy, attacks on pipelines and industry facilities since the beginning of crisis in the region led to the volatility in global energy prices and tighter supplies. For instance, an attack by gunmen on a boat carrying oil workers to an offshore rig in the delta on Friday 8 June 2007, pushed up oil prices by more than \$1.50 to \$63.38 a barrel.⁵⁵

Resource-based conflicts in the country have also affected intergroup relations among local communities within the states. A study conducted in 2007 revealed that armed conflict in the Niger Delta had disarticulated communal social values and order, intensified violence, insecurity and destructions, created a regime of disrespect for elders, traditional institutions and governance systems and paralysed social and economic activities and restricted movements.⁵⁶

There is also the spill-over effect of these conflicts as states engaged in these conflicts have spread the consequences of these conflicts to their neighbours.⁵⁷ In this instance, the conflict is either moved beyond borders or the neighbours have interfered for reasons ranging from altruism to selfishness as the case of violent cross-border contacts among communities in the Middle Belt and Niger Delta regions has shown.

The nature and extent of human rights concerns raised by these conflicts, which have come in different forms is another serious issue. With the collapse of state structures comes wanton destruction of life and property.⁵⁸ Innocent civilians are killed in conflicts conducted by actors who do not respect laws governing armed conflicts. It has been estimated that between 1990 and 2016, more than 300,000 deaths occurred in the Niger Delta and in the Middle Belt and Northwest, pastoralists' and farmers' clashes have led to the death of over 6,000 people since 1999.⁵⁹

Patriarchy and gender-based violence constitute another negative impact of natural resource conflicts. Like other forms of conflict, women are the major victims of resource-based conflict as they are often killed, maimed and sexually assaulted during such conflicts. During clashes between pastoralists and farmers, the relatives of men killed during such clashes evict widows from the farmlands while post-conflict economic and social disenfranchisement renders women and girls vulnerable to sexual and economic exploitation.⁶⁰

The prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases in these areas is another case in point. Studies have shown that women in resource-rich regions often have higher rates of HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening diseases because of the large influx of men to oil communities and the high rate of transmission resulting from sexual molestation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees during conflicts.⁶¹ According to Global Fund, Nigeria ranks second in the number of countries that have Aids globally.⁶² The incidence of HIV/AIDS in the Niger Delta for instance is among the highest in the country and higher than the

average for Nigeria, with the region having an average prevalence rate of 5.3%, compared to the national average of 5%.⁶³

Natural resource conflict has also resulted in social and economic disruptions and the collapse of businesses, crumbling of socio-economic services and infrastructure which has also led to economic decline. Oil bunkering in the Niger Delta for instance led to a reduction in oil production leading to reduction in external reserves. It is estimated that Nigeria lost between 70,000 to 300,000 barrels per day to illegal bunkering which is between 3% and 12% of the country's total oil production.⁶⁴ In the heydays of conflict in the region, attacks on oil installations reduced the country's output per day by 50% and led to a fall in Nigeria's foreign reserves. As at January 2006, Nigeria lost 211,000 barrels of crude oil daily which equals 8.4% of Nigeria export of 2.6 m while Shell Nigeria shut in 455,000 bpd by March 2006 due to militant attack and by April, of the same year, it got to 650,000 bpd.⁶⁵ Shell's annual report in August 2006 showed that an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 barrels per day was lost to illegal oil bunkering in 2005 down from 40,000 to 60,000 in 2004. Another report by the International Crisis Group in 2006 revealed that Nigeria lost from 70,000 to 30,000 barrels per day to illegal oil bunkering, the equivalent output of a small oil producing country while the Washington Council on Foreign Relation Independent Task Force calculated that a loss of 70,000 barrels a day at a price of \$60 a barrel would generate over \$1.5 billion per year.⁶⁶ At the height of the crisis in 2008, unrest in the region reduced Nigeria's oil output by a quarter, causing it to lose its position as Africa's biggest oil producer to Angola according to April 2008 figure from the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The shortfall in oil production also affected Nigeria's income and budget. For instance, when Shell withdrew from Ogoni area in 1993, the company was unable to produce any crude oil and during the period, Nigeria lost about US\$133 million per year in oil revenues from the area. Also, the bombing of Bonga Oil Fields in June 2008 cut Nigeria's crude oil export by 225,000 barrels per day making her to lose about N1.8 billion daily. The government at the time lamented that the country lost about 30% of her oil revenue to the crisis which affected the national budget. There was also a \$52 billion fall in Nigeria's foreign reserves between May and July 2008, not unconnected with crisis in the region and in 2009, Nigeria's output dropped to an estimated 1.740 million barrels per day. The loss to the Nigerian economy from illegal oil bunkering between 2003 and 2008 totals approximately US\$100 billion and as at 2016 it was estimated that the country lost over N1.8 billion daily to oil bunkering and attacks on oil installations.⁶⁷

Capital flight resulting from political instability is one of the economic impacts of conflict. Conflict leads to an unstable environment where policies are often unimplemented. In times of war, government is unable to perform its constitutional duties as it is faced with the challenges of ensuring stability. Apart from this, political instability is injurious to an economy, as it induces capital flight. Individuals and businesses in the society beginning to perceive the crisis as a serious threat to their investments and savings sell off their assets and buy assets in other politically secure and stable societies.⁶⁸ Hostage-taking in the Niger Delta led to many countries recalling their nationals from Nigeria. Also several foreign firms including French Tyre Company, Michelin left while countries like Britain turned to the Middle East for their oil supplies. Shell (SPCD) recently lamented the decline of the confidence private investors in the investment environment of Nigeria and oil and gas sector which has become shaky. Jos Plateau, which is a tourist city because of its clement weather all through the year, continues to be shunned by local and foreign investors because of persistent conflict.

Low income, low growth, and dependence upon natural resources are high risk economic characteristics of a poor country that is ever steeped in conflict. Nigeria is largely underdeveloped despite its natural endowments. The current situation of the country shows that the abundance of natural resources has not led to development but instead poverty. Though Nigeria is one of the world's largest producers of oil, over half of the country's population lives below the poverty line. In Niger Delta region where crude oil is sourced, poverty in contrast with the wealth generated by oil has become one of the world's starkest and most disturbing examples of the 'resource curse'.⁶⁹

Social and environmental problems constitute another impact of resource conflicts in Nigeria. Findings have shown that environmental degradation negatively impacts global security and prosperity and this is why many countries are giving attention environmental security in their foreign policies. Environmental issues from resource-based conflicts include a host of problems, such as noise from process operation, oil spills, gas flaring (causing health problems and wasteful CO₂ emissions), seismic disturbances and loss of and for agriculture.⁷⁰

Resource-based conflicts in Nigeria do not only affect the states where such conflicts are ongoing but have the potential to affect other states and neighbouring countries. Northcentral Nigeria, where the pastoralists' and farmers' crisis is currently at its peak, is critical to the country because of its strategic location and composition as the producer of the bulk of Nigeria's food.⁷¹ The strategic location of the zone provides a vital link between the north and the south and by implication, a buffer for unity and stability of the country. Insecurity and instability in the area will no doubt affect the security, stability and unity of neighbouring zones, the entire country and a neighbouring country like Cameroon. The crisis also has the potential to exacerbate food crisis in a country which loses N450 billion annually to food deficiency.

Furthermore, the intensity, scope and frequency of pastoralists and farmers conflicts have shown the fragility of unity of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria and the tendency to maintain a 'no retreat and no surrender' stance by all parties in the conflict, indicating the porosity of Nigeria's national security.⁷² The spread of conflict into southern states is aggravating already fragile relations among the country's major regional, ethnic and religious groups. The south's majority Christian communities resent the influx of predominantly Muslim herders, portrayed in some narratives as an 'Islamisation force'.⁷³ This is because pastoralists are mostly Fulani, lending an ethnic dimension to the strife. In addition, Fulani ethnic group is found across many West and Central African countries, as such, any major confrontation between them and other Nigerian groups could have regional repercussions, drawing in fighters from neighbouring countries.⁷⁴

These conflicts have also led to deepening humanitarian crisis resulting in several Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees as a result of the tens of thousands that have been forcibly displaced. The problem of IDPs and refugees poses a security challenge to a country that is already reeling from humanitarian crisis resulting from terrorist activities in the northeast.

Another implication is the emergence of various militia groups. Insecurity and violence and the slow response by security forces have led many communities to create self-defence forces and ethnic militias, which have engaged in further violence. Many of the states affected by conflict attribute the emergence of these groups to the failure of the government to secure the lives and property of the citizens. The proliferation of illicit firearms worsens an already complex situation characterised by bloodshed and security of lives and property.

Conclusion

Nigeria is naturally endowed with resources which if utilised optimally would lead to the development of the country. However, owing to mismanagement of the proceeds from such resources, lack of transparency on the part of her leaders and absence of resource governance, conflict and low economic growth have been the result.

Several initiatives designed to combat resource conflicts such as the establishment of developmental agencies, occasional increment in revenue allocations to the Niger Delta and transitional justice, constitutional conferences, promulgation of military decrees criminalising local protest groups and passing of anti-grazing laws have aided in reducing conflict but have not been able to end it altogether. To this end, there is need for natural resource governance to prevent or mitigate conflicts that result from poor management of natural resources. Natural resource governance in this sense deals with the internal and external considerations that come to play in the management of natural resources which include domestic laws, constitutional provisions, cultural practices, customary laws, neo-patrimonial practices, and all the international treaties and obligations that govern issues such as the ownership, management, extraction, revenue sharing, enforcement capacity and the procedures for addressing concerns and grievances over natural resources.⁷⁵

There is also need to address environmental factors that are driving herders' migration to the south by stepping up implementation of programmes under the Great Green Wall Initiative for the Sahara and the Sahel, a trans-African project designed to restore drought-and-desert degraded environments and livelihoods including in Nigeria's far northern belt; and developing strategies for mitigating climate change impact in the far northern states.⁷⁶

Lastly, the Nigerian government should give attention to conflict resolution, reconciliation and post conflict reconstruction in the areas affected by the conflict and conflict prevention and early warning mechanisms in areas that are not already affected.

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