Youth Militias, Self Determination and Resource Control Struggles in the Niger-delta Region of Nigeria

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Introduction

The Niger-delta region, Nigeria's oil belt has been the site of a generalised 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 area. What began as community agitation has undoubtedly undergone several transformations. The first profound transformation was the flowering of civil society, which mobilised a popular civil struggle. In the second, the agitation was extended 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 include the political demands such as federal restructuring, 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 has elevated the scale of confrontations and violence with the multinationals and the state.

The youths presently spearhead and constitute the vanguard of Niger-delta conflict. They chart the course of methods, tactics and strategies and define the conflicts. They drive and run the conflicts and determine the very essence of its momentum, vitality, vocalisation and diction. The insurgency has involved diverse youth militias, well armed, fairly well trained and equipped, using largely speed boats and operating fairly freely in the swamps, creeks, estuaries, rivers and coastal areas of the region, who engage the Nigerian military and seize oil facilities, ships barges, workers and equipment.

Increasingly, the youth militancy has become criminalised, with the region being transformed into an arena of economic crimes, violence and wars between ethnic and communal groups.

The present youth-led collective action in the Niger-delta draws inspiration from the 1966 declaration of a Niger-delta republic by a group of educated youths led by cadet sub inspector Isaac Adaka Boro that involved an armed insurrection against the Nigerian state and the seizing of oil facilities. The 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 negative impact on local and national security and stability, and on global economic growth.

The negative impact of violence associated with youth-led self-determination struggles in the Niger-delta raises the need for an in-depth examination of the youth, militias and self-determination nexus in the Niger-delta. 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?

The objectives of the study are to examine:

a) The resource struggles and conflicts in the Niger-delta region and the role of youths in it;

b) The objectives, methods, strategies and conducts of youth engagement;

c) The youth movements and militias and their confrontations with the Nigerian state, MNCs and other ethnic groups/communities;

d) The results, ramifications and implications of the conflicts;

e) The interventions and policies, their effectiveness or otherwise and efforts at peacemaking.

1

Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse

Youths and Contentious Collective Action

In Africa, young people constitute the majority of the population and are at the centre of societal interactions and transformations. Yet, children and youths are often placed at the margins of the public sphere and major political, socio-economic and cultural processes. According to Ikelegbe (2006), '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'.

As a demographic and social category, the youth is characterised 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.... They make themselves, through inventive forms of self-realisation and an ingenious politics of identity' (DeBoeck 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 1998).

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. Youths are therefore a tension-filled, highly unstable category whose management is of crucial importance for societal stability and development as it is a stage of restlessness, anxiety and chaos for the youth and society. It is, as 'breakers of societal norms',

that youths in Africa are commonly perceived as characterised 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 that the youths as 'Breakers' have been rooted in a negative youth culture.

For Kaplan (1994), negative youth culture in Africa is socio-environmental in source: urban congestions, 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 against 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, and later the support base for violent struggles. These three researchers therefore ascribe the youth involvement in violence and crime to a disposing culture characterised by nihilism, populism, spontaneity, violence, resentments of the state and deviance from societal norms.

As pointed out by Olawale (2003) and reiterated by Ikelegbe (2006), the negative youth culture argument has several weaknesses. The first is that it generalises an all-inclusive and monolithic negative youth culture, and presents it as tending in one direction in terms of manifestations and response. The second is that negative youth culture is not specific to Africa but general to youths all over the world, with such negative youth culture not having generated a worldwide cauldron of armed rebellion. Olawale (2003) provides a contrary explanation for youth violence. He locates it, 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'.

In other words, emphasis should rather be placed 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 sped up 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, 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 transformations from boyhood to manhood and from girlhood to womanhood having lost their taken-for-granted status and social significance, youths seek new avenues for socialisation in form of gangs and their associated multiple subcultures expressed in terms of dress, music and specific modes of violence.

These subcultures, because they are different from that prescribed by society are demonised by society, with youths considered either to be at risk or to pose a risk to society. Children who are 'out of place (Connolly and 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, giving rise to a huge group of alienated youths who do not have trust in their elders, leaders and institutions.

The youth in Africa is thus described in popular and academic literature as 'a social category in crisis, excluded, marginalised, threatened, victimised, 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).

Social Movements: Instruments of Contentious Collective Action

When youth action is seen as a form of 'contentious politics', popular perception of the youths and youth revolt, as 'ill-informed, irrelevant, unstructured and largely episodic expressions of violence, become erroneous. 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.

For contentious politics to be mounted, coordinated and sustained, it needs the backing of 'a dense social network, galvanised 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 concepts.

b) Usually, in terms of slections of practices, behaviours and culture, the ideology of new social movements challenges dominant ideas.

c) They pursue goals that often relate to reforms and change (Doyle and Mceachern 2001).

d) The agitation and claims they push often 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, embracing a non-formal, non-institutional, grassroots politics or mass politics. They often comprise the popular forces of youth and women groups, poor students, artisans, etc.

f) Their methodology of pressing claims is mass mobilisation 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 organisations. Their actions involve co-operation, collaboration, complementarity and mutual support between individuals, groups and organisations in the pursuance of agenda and claims.

Briefly put, social movements, '… collective challenges mounted by relatively marginal groups against powerful elites and dominant ideologies', are 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' (Medearis 2005).

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.

For example, in Africa, the state is a strong one in terms of an over-developed capacity for violence and enforcement of its will and policies. At the same time, it has an under-developed capacity to meet the political, social and economic needs of the majority of its people. Its marginalised 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 radicalising 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 characterised 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, legitimising 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.

2

Niger-delta: Context, Issues, Actors and Dynamics

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 water-marshlands, 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, which is home to over forty minority ethnic groups, including the Ijaws, Urhobos, Itshekiris, Efiks, Ibibios, Ogonis, Ilajes, Kalabaris, Ikweres, Isokos and Ndokwas.

The second is political, the main indicator of which is the presence of crude oil 'whose exploitation has multiplied the environmental and developmental problems of the various Niger-delta communities' (Osaghae 2006) 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 refers 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'. It is such that the core Niger-delta continues to be distinguished by 'Deltans' from the wider geopolitical region, whether of minorities (south-south) or oil-bearing areas. 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 headstart in being one of the earliest parts of the country to have contact with Europeans and forces of westernisation, its terrain constituted a major obstacle to development (Osaghae 2006).

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 ruse. In other words, for Niger-deltans, the 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. In other words, Niger-deltans 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. 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.

Self Determination and Resource Control

There are two central issues and, in fact, ideological basis of the Niger-delta struggle. The first – self determination – refers to the choice of a nationality to live in its own way, determine its own political fate, preserve its own affairs and develop itself or even democratise as it may deem fit. (Okwu-Okafor 1994:89).[1] In a sense, it refers to the right or freedom of a people that are subordinated, oppressed, dominated, colonised or even marginalised to assert and constitute itself 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 and participation in their own development.

Whatever its meaning and extent, the right or freedom to self determination has driven numerous peoples all over the world, to mobilise, solidarise and build nationalism, and to organise resistance through popular movements and institu-

tions of violence. Self determination struggles have been fierce and violent and have several times manifested in inter-ethnic, religious and regional conflicts, as well as 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 the First Republic when minority groups were marginalised by the ethnic majorities in each of the regions. The struggle for the ethnic collective or minority rights and ensuing ethnic nationalism and mobilisation which began in the 1960s, and 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 struggles in the Niger-delta has taken two forms. The first is what Osaghae 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 characterised 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 characterised 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, means '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 within the Niger-delta region. 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 a Nigeria that should be restructured through a sovereign national conference of ethic nationalities.

The second ideological basis of the youth struggle is Resource Cntrol. 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 those created within its territory; and (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 be in the Kaiama Declaration of the Ijaw people proclaimed on the 11th of December 1998.

The Kaiama Declaration, coined, sharpened and popularised the term 'resource control' and set the tone for the present debate on the matter. Article 1 of the Declaration asserts 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 insists on the 'peoples and communities right to ownership and control of our lives and resources' while Article 4 advises 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.

Two other principal actors in the politics of Niger-delta, the Multi-national Oils Companies (MNCs) and the Nigerian state do not share Niger-deltans' conception of resource control. The MNCs believe that resource control agitation by the people of the Niger-delta is merely a clamour 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 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.

Stages in Niger-delta Contentious Collective Action

Contentious political action in the Niger-delta can be understood 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 – 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 the average 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 such as 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 these groups is neglect and marginalisation 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. These include the Organisation for the Restoration of Actual Rights of Oil Communities, Southern Minorities Forum,

Ethnic Minority Rights Organisation of Nigeria, Conference of Traditional Rulers of Oil Producing States, Association of Minority Oil States, 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). Older ethno-cultural movements are Niger-delta community and ethnic groups that have since the colonial era been a basis of mobilisation and organisation for 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 marginalisation, 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 a major formation for articulating and constructing claims and responding to the oil economy.

The major grievances of this segment are the absence of development, indicated mainly in 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 raising issues of environmental degradation and remediation, compensation and reparation, stakeholding 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 Rivers) in 1995 and five (Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa

Ibom, Cross Rivers and Delta), such solution has not achieved necessary 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 2006:10).

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 Abacha regime's 1994/95 Constitutional Conference, demanding a minimum of 50 per cent 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 organisations such as the Movement for the Survival of *Ogoni* People (MOSOP) drew great support from within and outside the Niger-delta and heightened the tempo of mobilisation within the region, with youths willingly engaging in the activities of the movements. The success of the movements, as expressed in the approval of the six zone formula and increased international scrutiny of the activities of oil companies in Niger-delta, resulted in a campaign by the 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.

From Contention to Violence: Youths and Niger-delta Struggle

As earlier mentioned, youth involvement in the Niger-delta struggle took a decisive turn with the repression suffered in the hands of the Abacha regime that turned Niger-delta communities into garrison enclaves, patrolled by the Nigerian military. Youth movements began to gain prominence from the mid-1990s when the youths, exasperated by unemployment, growing impoverishment and immiseration, 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 and their elite and elders. The youths regarded the latter 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 mobilising, organising 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 elite calling the shots. It took the severe repression suffered under the Abacha regime for them to be transformed into the vanguard of the 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 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 decentralisation and devolution of power on local community. They also 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 youths reconvened in the evening and systematically raided military checkpoints and police, seizing weapons and ammunition. The actions of the youths spread rapidly, spurring copy, as youths from 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 suddenly became more belligerent. For example, the Supreme Council of Eket Youths embarked on a major protest, the first of such protest in the thirty years of Mobil's presence in the town. 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 23rd 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 were arrested, tried for treason, convicted and sentenced to death in June 1966, but released from jail in August 1967. The December 11 declaration of Niger-delta youths took place in Kaiama, the hometown of Isaac Boro, and was a conscious attempt to invoke the spirit

of the Twelve Day Revolution, which can be seen as the historic antecedent of present youth militantism in Niger-delta in two broad ways:

i) Generally, it signified the beginning of a more sharply focused and narrowly defined Niger-delta identity and consciousness that is centred 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.

ii) Specifically, it marked the beginning of a generational shift in the Niger-delta struggle, as politicised, 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 mobilisations are the following features of the 12 day revolution:

a. The uprising was spearheaded by a core of educated youths such as Isaac Adaka Boro, Samuel Owonaru and Nottingham Dick;

b. The N DVS recruited volunteer youths aged 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 utilised speed-boats.

(e) The NDVS was organised with rankings, commands and divisions

(f) The objective of the uprising was the nationalist struggle 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 4 and 5 established the vanguard role of the youths in Niger-delta collective contentious rights action. Article 4 states that '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'; while Article 5 of the declaration promises that 'Ijaw youths and peoples will promote the principle of peaceful coexistence between all Ijaw communities and with our immediate neighbours, 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'.

Ideological Basis of the Youth Struggle

The youth have been raising 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 ethnicism 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 that have disadvantaged the minority ethnic groups. Secondly, the Niger-delta, or politically the South-South, regarded as a geo-political region within a competitive regional framework, which comprises of minorities (though oil bearing), has been neglected and marginalised. There are two minority issues here: first, that of the minority ethnic groups of the region, and second, the oil rich region comprising of minorities. Both have been disadvantaged within the Nigeria state project. At both levels, 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 their mistreatment, oppression and marginalisation. It is the new generation of ethnic men that constitute the pool of ethnic militias, militants and activists. Ethnic nationalism is a key element in the Niger-delta struggle and, in fact, a binding block for regionalism and the struggle against the Nigeria state project. 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.

On the issue of nationality, the youths question the Nigeria state project, on the basis of under-representation of their ethnic groups and region (in political and administrative terms), insignificance share of national resources and even of the region's oil revenues, and insignificant development attention. In particular, the youths question the concept of 'Nigeria state' and the use to which it has been put in relation to the Niger-delta. The youths believe that it is the form that has enabled the use to which it has been put. Of major concern is the nature of federalism, which has been progressively restructured in favour of central power and resources; a centre that has been hijacked, dominated and utilised to appropriate the resources and rights of the minorities and the Niger-delta by the ethnic hegemony – Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo.

Ethnic nationalism among the Ogonis, Ijaws, Itsekiris, Ogbas and others have been constructed against the background 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.

Another main issue is the restructuring of the Nigerian state in ways that guarantee ethnic and regional autonomy, self rule, self development, resource control, fair treatment and equitable 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, the Nigerian problem and the construction of ethnic and regional nationalism as a platform for struggle, and resistance and action against the Nigeria state, all provide a prism for viewing the development of ethnic militias for fighting ethnic and regional grievances and causes. For example, the militants are in a sense ethnic nationalists, as the Ijaw militants engage in a struggle for freedom and justice, not for themselves, but for their people. According to Dokubo-Asari, an Ijaw militia is 'neither a politician nor a militants, but an Ijaw nationalist' (*Daily Independent* 18 June 2007). He says of himself:

> 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 (Obia 2007:A11).

The core issues are local autonomy, true federalism and resource control.

Conflicts in the Niger-delta

Three types of conflicts can be identified. These are conflicts between the Federal Government and the communities; between communities and the oil companies, and within and between the communities themselves:

1. 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 disagreement, first over resource allocation and later over resource control 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 local communities which engage the former 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.

2. Community–Oil Company Conflicts: These arise out of disagreements between local communities and oil companies over issues of compensation for extraction of oil and attendant degradation of the Niger-delta environment. 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 impacts or dispute the nature of the level of compensation to be made. Examples of such conflicts include those of Umuechem vs. SDPC (1990), Ijaw vs. Chevron (December 2000), Elelenwo vs. Shell (2000), and Agalabiri & Abadiorma vs. SPDC (July 2000).

3. Inter and Intra-community Conflicts: Intra- and inter-community conflicts are struggles within and between communities for control of benefits that accrue from having oil on one's land or territory. These are basically struggles over control of territory/land where oil pipes and oil wells are located. Examples include the Ogbogoro War (1998), the Obeakpu [Oyigbo] Conflict (1999), the Bille-Ke Conflict (2000), the Nembe War (2000) and the Olomoro-Oleh Conflict (2000).

3

Youth Movements, Militancy and Militias

Militancy and Militias

Militancy refers to a combative and aggressive activism or engagement in struggles for identified causes. The involvement of youths in conflicts 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 are 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 features:

- They are youths;
- They operate surreptitiously and clandestinely in cities and towns;
- They are sometimes known as activists;
- Are based in camps during the weekdays but return to towns and cities during the weekends;
- Their camps are established far from towns and cities, deep in the mangrove swamps;
- The camps are owned and controlled by bosses/commandants;
- The camps are numerous and each may comprise of 2,000 or more youth;
- The commandants obtain resources by extorting from the state and government, using security threats;

- They carry sophisticated arms such as machine guns, explosives and cluster bombs;
- They abuse alcohol (local gin) and Marijuana.

In pursuing their self-determination goals, youths in the Niger-delta have deployed two broad strategies – localised resistance involving protests; and rights seeking movements involving obstruction of access routes, petition writing, sending delegations to state governments and oil majors.

The forceful and repressive response of the Federal Government and oil companies to localised resistance by Niger-delta youths spurred the adoption of more overtly violent methods in form of attacks on state personnel and infrastructure such as police stations, army camps, government offices; attacks, blockage and shutting down of oil installations; and hostage taking. These direct action tactics create what is know as 'systems disruption'. These attacks, if properly targeted, can cause cascades of failures that sweep entire systems. The result is a paralysed economy that produces costs that far outstrip the costs of the attack. The success of systems disruption attacks has fueled the insurgency by creating economic chaos and radically decreased the legitimacy of both the Nigeria state and oil companies. The attacks are quite easy, inexpensive and safe. Almost none of infrastructure attackers have ever been caught or killed.

As pointed out above, existing side by side with militants, who are youths engaged in contentious collective rights action in the Niger-delta, are criminals who kidnap and kill for ransom. Militants have pursued their objectives through what can be described as 'anti-systemic' movements. These are groups that perceive systemic changes as virtually a *sine qua non* to their demands for structural change. They believe that the existing system is not beneficial to the lumpen 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 lumpen. They thus do not seek to advance their cause through 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. A militia is an armed, informal civilian group who are 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 are two types of militia:

i) The major ones, such as the Egbesu Boys of Africa, Niger-delta Peoples Volunteer Force, Federated Niger-delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), Niger-delta Vigilante (NDV) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-delta (MEND);

ii) Community and Warlord-based militias, such as the 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, and the Tomgbolo Boys.

Cults/Gangs

Like the militants, cults and gangs were originally formed to protest social injustice. Cults are 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 membership, methods of operation and initiation rites remain secret. Unlike the NDPVF or MEND, once an individual joins a cult, the person is in that cult for life, barring exceptional circumstances.

Cults are rigidly hierarchical. Not all cults are violent, although most of them are armed to varying degrees. Membership ranges from 20 to 3,000 persons. Some are pro-state or pro-government while some are anti-state, and there are others that have no clear political objectives. These days, cults have been taken over by criminal groups and individuals that use them to sell drugs, rig elections, and fight each other, among other activities. Many of these 'cult' groups, with names such as the Icelanders, Greenlanders, KKK, Germans, Dey Gbam, Mafia Lords and Vultures, were originally formed in the early 1990's as university fraternities, but later largely evolved into criminal gangs. 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 include criminal gangs, spiritual and politically motivated groups seeking power and control, gangs that control waterways and passages, as well as those involved in oil bunkering activities – all hiding under the guise of cultism.

The relationship between cults and ethnic militias is very close. Most 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 or Tom's armed group as the two leaders fought for the control of oil bunkering routes. Although the smaller groups retained their names and leadership structures, Asari and Tom assumed command and control responsibilities over the militant actions of these smaller groups.

Table 1: List of Cult Groups Banned Under the Secret Cult and Similar Activities Prohibition Law 2004

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

Objectives of the Militias

There is a convergence between the interests of the militia and those of the Niger-delta leaders. These, among others, are:

i) A restructing of the Nigerian state and it's federalism in such a way that will guarantee:
   a. Self determination;
   b. Political autonomy and fiscal control;
   c. True federalism;

d. Community control over development strategies;
e. Protection of land, dignity, culture, freedom, environment and natural resources of the Niger-delta people;
f. The right of states and communities to resource control.

ii) A broad based development programme to transform the region.

iii) A political autonomy that guarantees political participation, representation and community participation in resource management.

iv) Implementation of a minimum of 50 per cent derivation.

v) A halt to the development of new Oil and gas pending the complete clean up of the environment (Oderemi 2007:15)

vi) Achievement of Self determination and resource control to be addressed through a sovereign National Conference of ethnic nationalities.

Arms and their Sources

Given that the defining feature of militias and cults is their willing use of violence, the militia groups operating in Delta State – Ijaw, Itshekiri, and Urhobo – are well armed. For example, Asari stated 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). 'General Commander' of the NDPVF, British Columbus Epebada, once boasted, 'we have the GPMG [general purpose machine gun], the SLR [self loading rifle], AK-47 Kalashnikovs, MG [machine guns] and several others. We have over five thousand arms among which the GPMG alone are up to 273' (Abubakar and Bello 2004). Among the weapons in use are 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 are readily available for purchase in Warri at prices that, according to investigation, range from around N80, 000 (U.S.$570) for a shotgun or N120, 000 ($850) for a Kalashnikov rifle, to around N300, 000 ($2,150) for a 'bazooka' (Bisina 2003; Ebo 2003).

Table 2: Firearms Surrendered 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
Beretta125	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
Total	**1,675**

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 the war as part of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for resale after being redeployed into the state (Musah and Thamson 1999).

Armed group supporters within the oil industry, or political parties and even members of the state government provided weapons or the funds and required contacts to buy them. Traditional leaders seeking protection from armed groups have also supplied weapons, including a local chief from Okrika who, Ateke claims, purchased weapons for the NDV (HRW 2005).

Weapons exchanged for stolen or bunkered oil are 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 add to the armed group stockpiles. These include 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 claims that arms are available from vessels moored just off the coast of Rivers State, and can be purchased by anybody who can afford them. For example, Asari 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 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, which they then sell to their respective communities in Warri, where they are often trafficked elsewhere (Obasi 2002).

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, Awka, the Anambra State capital, appears to be Nigeria's leading small arms manufacturing centre. There are also reports of Ghanaian gunsmiths traveling to Nigeria to train local blacksmiths in gun-making skills.

Arms are sent in by smugglers across the land borders of the neighbouring 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 use speedboats to connect with ships on the high seas, and then ferry the arms back to shore. Jailed militant leader Alhaji Dokubo-Asari confirmed this method to reporters in 2005, stating, 'We are very close to international waters, and it's very easy to get weapons from ships (IRIN 2006)'.

Some of the weapons in the armed groups' stockpiles are acquired after attacks on police and military outposts. During such attacks, the militant groups break into the police or military armories and cart away arm. Corrupt security officials also sell weapons to militants. 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, 2007).

Funding of the Militias

Armed militia groups in the Niger-delta get funds for their purchase of arms 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 weapon purchases by tapping crude oil from pipelines into barges for illegal sale to tankers waiting offshore. Nigeria was estimated at one time to be losing as much as 10 per cent of its daily oil exports through such thefts, which 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 outlets. 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 licences, and forfeiture of both fixed and moveable assets, for offences. The scope of the decree covers willful, or malicious obstruction, damage, destruction, 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 of Nigeria, 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 product 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 an ethnic militia maintaining control of territory through which pipelines pass through, and making efforts to expand such territory. In other words, the 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 the oil territory and bunkering routes. A state government spokesman told Human Rights Watch that the conflict between Asari 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 fights between October 2003 and October 2004 centred around villages located on tributaries about twenty to forty kilometers southwest of Port Harcourt, including Buguma, Bukuma, Tombia and Ogbakiri. This is Asari's home area and the site of several oil wells, flow stations and gas gathering projects operated by Shell Petroleum Development Company in the Cawthorne Channel. The violence in Tombia and Bukuma (which are a few kilometers apart) escalated in October 2003 when members of the Germans 'cult' group killed a leader of the Dey Gbam 'cult'.

Both sides claim that after this incident, members of their group were forced to flee Tombia and Bukuma, seeking refuge in Port Harcourt. In late 2003, Dey Gbam formed an alliance with Asari's NDPVF and the Germans formed an alliance with Tom's NDV. Although members of Dey Gbam and the Germans sought assistance to facilitate their return to their villages, Asari and Tom were most likely interested in manipulating a local dispute to gain control of Tombia and Bukuma because of their proximity to lucrative bunkering routes in the Cawthorne Channel.

According to fighters interviewed by Human Rights Watch, both Asari and Tom armed their new recruits with sophisticated weapons and speedboats in late 2003.

The Niger-delta crisis is essentially an exercise in contentious politics, as it involved a marginalised 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 agitations took a violent turn because

of the political constraints imposed by the state on the people's 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 most affected by situation of powerlessness, which state oppression aggravates. For them, violence becomes a bargaining weapon for negotiating, legitimising or violating (oppressive) public order.

The Militias and the Civil Struggle: Interfaces

Youth-elite relations in the Niger-delta is characterised by distrust and suspicion. For example, since the mid-1990s, youth groups have grown more powerful and resentful towards village chiefs. In some areas, youth groups who 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 neglect them. In 2000, at Evwreni, 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. For the Ijaw Pro-Active Leadership Council, Niger-delta elites are traitors, as:

> They went to bed with the devil ... sowed their seed with the enemy ... 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 Ijawnation and deprive Ijawnation of her rightful resources and revenue; resources that our youths gallantly gave their lives for in Kaiama and all over Ijawland. 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.

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 to the conditions of the people, commitment to the people's 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 are loyal to the ethnic leaders, and they extend elements of camp discipline to community and influential leaders. But this applies only to those acknowledged and committed leaders the Ijaw struggle.

Another issue here is how the militia groups relate to the youth movement or organizations. In Ijawland, the apex youth organisation is the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), to which the militias are affiliated in principle. The IYC membership is predominantly composed of graduates, and it denounces unnecessary self- interest

actions. The IYC is still respected and acknowledged as the co-ordinating youth body of the Ijaws, and plays the leadership role in the youth conduct of the struggle.

It should be noted too that the educated ones are in the forefront of the steering of the struggle. They are the influential links between the militias and the government and ethnic leaders. They live in the cities, relate with the town and camp, moderate and leverage over the militias, but they 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 2005–2007 Youth Insurgency

The heightened insurgency since December 2005, has been associated with the arrest, incarceration and trail of Asari Dokubo, regarded as a 'flag bearer of the Niger Delta and leading light of the Ijaw nation' in September 2005 (*Daily Independent* 13 June 2007). The militants demand his un-conditional release and have timed and targeted attacks in response to developments in the trial by a Federal High Court, for treasonable felony. His major 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, as part of a political solution on Thursday June 14 2007 (*Saturday Independent* 16 June 2007).

Since December 2005, when a more insurgent phase of the struggle began, about 200 foreign nationals have been kidnapped but released, while numerous foreigners have fled the region. About a quarter of national oil production has been closed (see Apendix 1).

A major strategy of the insurgents, since the late 1990s, is the directive to foreign oil workers and the oil companies to leave the region. Kidnapping and abduction of oil workers is calculated to force the oil companies and staff to leave the region. That the current spate of kidnapping is linked to the directive to leave the region was recently succinctly put by Dokubo Asari: '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 June 2007).

Therefore in a sense, kidnapping is a reprisal against the foreign oil workers for failing to heed militia directives and warmings. Apart from kidnapping, there have been attacks on pipelines, such as the Soku-Buguma-Alakiri pipeline between May and June 2007.

Most militias are involved in bunkering. They use the money to run the camps and purchase arms. Bunkering by freedom fighters is for sustaining the struggle. Bunkering by criminal militias/militia leaders is for self enrichment.

Table 3: Selected Cases of 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. - Bomb Forcados loading plat form. - Mili	Willbros Shell NNPC Shell	- 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 militant release 6 of the hostages kidnapped February 18: 1 American, 2 Egyptians, 2 Thais ad 1 Filipino 2 Americans and 1 Briton
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 workers taken hostage	Agip	-	Hostages released and 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 15th, 2006

Table 3: Selected Cases of Major Attacks on Nigerian Oil Industry in 2006 and 2007 (Cont'd.)

August 10, 2006	- A Belgain and a Moroccan contractors kidnapped in Port Harcourt	-	-	Both released August 14th
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	A British and an American employees 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, 2006	- Gunmen invade the Nun river logistics base in Bayelsa state and hold 5 people hostage.	Royal Dutch Shell	-	-
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 Obigi filed facility in rivers state, killing 3 people.	Total	-	-

Table 3: Selected Cases of Major Attacks on Nigerian Oil Industry in 2006 and 2007 (Cont'd.)

January 5, 2007	Gunmen kidnap 5 Chinese telecom worker. - Militants plant a car bomb in an oil company residential compound in Port Harcourt	Shell	-	- Shell evacutes 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	South Korean firm Hyundai	-	-

Shell experienced a decline by about 457,00 bpd production in the western Delta in 2006. Several of its employees were kidnapped, pipeline destroyed, facilities seized. About 20 – 25 per cent of Nigeria's oil output has been cut since 2006. Shell sacked 1,500 staff in 2004 and was planning to lay off 3,500 in mid-2007, as a result of high operational costs and worsening security and production short of over 500,000 bpd in the western Delta alone, as a result of the crisis (Adebayo 2007:11).

The development of the region has been affected, as projects executed by foreign contractors such as road construction in the eastern Delta, drainage projects and Mile One Market in Port Harcourt have been abandoned for fear of kidnapping (*Sunday Independent* 17 June 2007). Foreign countries such as the USA, UK and Philippines have asked their citizens to leave the region (*Daily Independent* 17 June 2007), such is the magnitude of the crises, that the then president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua declared its resolution as a major agenda.

The Obasanjo administration adopted a three-pronged approach: military action, accelerated development of the region, and engagement. The Yar'Adua administration, on the other hand, planned to redress the developmental and environmental challenges. The Federal Government was alleged to have approved USD 2 billion, for the purchase of arms to quell the Niger Delta Crisis in January 2007 (*The Punch* 31 June 2007).

There have been extensive and intensive military deployments since the late 1990s, co-ordainated 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 overpowered 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 in June 2007, between the military and the militants. The military had flagged down a militant boat that defied a river check point. In the ensuing clash, nine militants were killed and their guns and ammunitions confiscated (*Daily Independent* 14 June 2007). But the militias retaliated on 17th June 2007. They stormed and took over AGIP oil facility in Ogoinbiri and chased the military away and held twelf workers hostage (*Daily Independent* 18 June 2007).

The military, according to the former Chief of Defence staff, General Agwai, is capable of crushing the militant uprising, but for restraints and mandates which have included dialogue rather than all-out force (*Daily Independent* 9 June 2007).

The state governments and political leaders in the region have been the major actors in the resolution of local conflicts. Even since the present administration began on 29 May 2007, the Bayelsa State Government has for example, negotiated and secured the release of twelf expatriate hostages and one Nigerian, after between fourteen and thirty-eight days of kidnap, in Ijaw South LGA (*Daily Independent* 14 June 2007). Similarly, the Rivers State governor secured the release of two hostages after being held for twenty-four days. Another nineteen hostages were released to him on 16 June 2007.

These releases are based on dialogue or negotiation and payment of ransoms. 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). The state governments have also put in place several programmes to address the insurgency. These among others are the new Rivers State Government's 3E Approach: Engagement, Education and Empowerment (*Daily Independent* 14 June 2007). In Bayelsa State, the government is seeking re-orientation, skills acquisition and employment.

4

Research Methodology

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

Questionnaires, oral interviews and focused group discussion 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 Niger-delta. 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 – Yenagoa, Southern Ijaw, Ekeremor and Kolokumo. In Delta State, three local governments were sampled – Burutu, Sapele and Warri-South; and in Rivers State, five local governments were sampled – Obiakpor, Port Harcourt, Khana, Bonny and Gokana (Table 5).

There were two open-ended questionnaires. They were deployed to elicit two types of information about the conflict. The first, the General Sample (GS) questionnaire had, as its objective, the elicitation of general information about the conflict 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 State, 20 in Delta State and 15 in Rivers State). Oral interviews were also conducted. The objective was detailed information from youth and political leaders. About eight interviews were conducted in Bayelsa and Delta

States. For the focus group discussions, three (3) were conducted each in Bayelsa, Yenagoa, Delta and River States, with sample sizes of 12, 8 and 8 respectively (Table 4).

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 are public servants, private sector employees, business men and traders or self employed. Their income status was between low and middle class. They were mainly Ijaws, with a sprinkle of Ikweres, Ogonis, Urhobos and Itsekiris. The key informant sample comprised largely of those in the age sets 25-34 and 35-44, male, Christian, married and have secondary or post secondary education. They were mostly public servants and private sector employees, and within the low and middle income groups.

Table 4: Research Instrument, Target Samples and Sample Sizes

Instruments	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 Southern Ijaw Ekeremor Kolokumo	Yenagoa Oporoma Aleibiri Kaiama
Delta	Burutu Sapele Warri-South	Burutu Sapele Warri
Rivers	Obikpor Port Harcourt Khana Bonny Gokana	Zakpai Finima - Port Harcourt Bomu Bonny 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 analysed in the open-ended questionnaires by a question by question content analysis of responses. These were then categorised, and frequency counts and computation of percentages undertaken. These are presented in tables. The focus group and oral interviews were transcribed from tapes. Content analysis was then done to derive insightful comments. 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: Général Sample (GS)

	BAYELSA	**Total**
Age	15-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55- 12.5 53.75 27.5 6.25 -	80
Sex	Male Female 64 16	80
Religion	Christian Muslim Traditional 7.6 - 0.4	80
Marital Status	Married Not Married 3.9 4.1	80
Education	None Pri. Secondary Post Secon. 0.25 13.5 3.25 2.25	80
Occupation	Bus/ Trading Govt/ Public Private employed Self/ Servant 13 18 -- 11	
Income	Low Middle High 6.25 0.3 0.6	80
Ethnic Group	Ijaw Others 2 34	100
LG	Southern/Ijaw Yenogoa Ekeremor Brass 16 33 20 3	
??	Egbema Others 3 5	80

Table 6: Social Characteristics of Respondents: Général Sample (Cont'd.)

	DELTA	**Total**
Age	15-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55- 11 48 28 11	100
Sex	Male Female 7.8 2.2	100
Religion	Christian Muslim Traditional 9.5 0.5 -	100
Marital Status	Married Not Married 4.7 5.3	100
Education	None Pri. Secondary Post Secon. - 0.7 0.3 6.3	100
Occupation	Bus/ Trading Govt/ Public Private employed Self/ Servant 8 49 17 7	100
Income	Low Middle High 4.7 4.9 0.4	100
Ethnic Group	Ijaw Urhobo Itsekiri	
LG	Bomadi Sapele Burutu Warri 5 43 44	100
??	Others 2	

Table 6: Social Characteristics of Respondents: Général Sample (Cont'd.)

	RIVERS	**Total**
Age	15-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55- 0.4 4.5 2.2 0.4	75
Sex	Male Female 4.5 0.3	75
Religion	Christian Muslim Traditional 75 2 -	75
Marital Status	Married Not Married 3.8 3.7	75
Education	None Pri. Secondary Post Secon. - 0.5 1.6 5.4	75
Occupation	Bus/ Trading Govt/ Public Private employed Self/ Servant 17 19 12 4	75
Income	Low Middle High 41 29 5	75
Ethnic Group	Ijaw Olwere Ogoni Urhobo Others	75
LG	Port Harcourt Phalga Khana Bunny 19 3 12 30	75
??	Gokana 11	

Table 7: Social Characteristics of Key Informants (KIS)

	BAYELSA					Total
Age 1	15-24 2	25-34 10	35-44 5	45-55 3		20
Sex 2	Male 17	Female 3				20
Religion 3	Christian 16	Muslim -	Traditional Religion 4			20
Marital Status 4	Married 13	7				20
Educational qualification 5	None -	Primary -	Secondary 7	Post Secondary 13		20
Occupation 6	Business Trading 2	Civil/Public Servant 7	Private Sector 4	Self Employed 2	Unem ployed 5	20
Income Level 7	Low 5	Middle 15	High -			20
Ethnic Group 8	Ijaw 20	-	-	Kolokumo		20
Local Govt. Areas 9	Venagoa 11	Southern Ijaw 5	Ekeremor 2	Opokuma 2		20

Table 7: Social Characteristics of Key Informants (Cont'd.)

	DELTA					Total
Age 1	15-24 2 0.1	25-34 5 0.3	35-44 8 0.4	45-54 5 0.3	55- -	20
Sex 2	Male 15	Female 5				20
Religion 3	Christian 19	-	Muslim --	Traditional 1 0.1		20
Marital Status 4	Married 14	Not Married 6				20
Educational qualification 5	None -	Primary 1	Secondary 5	Post Secondary 14 0.7		20
Occupation 6	Business Trading -	Civil/Public Servant 9	Private Company 3	Self Employed 2 0.1	Not Employed 6 0.3	20
Income Level 7	Low 8	Middle Income 10	High Income 2	- 		20
Ethnic Group 8	Ijaw 14	Urhobo 2	Itsekiri 2	Ukuam 1 0.1	Isoko 1 0.1	20
Local Govt. Areas 9	Burutu 9	Warri South 2	Patan 1	Sapele 8 0.4		20

Table 7: Social Characteristics of Key Informants (Cont'd.)

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

Data Presentation

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

Perception of 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 actualisation 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 that is dominantly failed and 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. But this situation is largely attributed to a leadership that is corrupt, greedy, visionless, weak, insincere, ethnocentric, insensitive and that disregards the constitution and rule of law.

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 misgovernance, as indicated by poor resource inflow, bad leadership and domination by majority ethnic groups. The neglect, scarce development and poor development attention to 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 8: Perception of the Nigerian state (GS)

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

Table 9: Grievances against the Nigerian State by Niger Delta People

GRIEVANCES	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Failure to Develop the Region	45 (58.44%)	44 (44.4%)	12 (23.53)	101(44.49%)
Mis-government/Bad leadership towards the Region/poor resource inflow	10 (12.99%)	29 (29.29)	2 (3.92)	41(18.06)
Majority Ethnic Domination	3 (3.90%)	15 (15.15%)	7 (13.73)	25 (11.01%)
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)
Un-democratic	1 (1.30%)	-	- -	1 (04.44)
No effective Youth programme	-	- -	12 (16%) 23.53	12 (5.29)
	77	99	51	227

Table 9: Grievances against the Nigerian State by Niger Delta People, (KIS) (Cont'd.)

GRIEVANCES	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL	
Failure to Develop the Region	10 50%	12 60%	6 40%	28	50.91
Mis-government/Bad leadership towards the Region/poor resource inflow	3 15%	5 25%	6 40%	14	25.45
Majority Ethnic Domination	4 20%	3 15%	3 20%	10	18.18
Corruption					
Unemployment					
Faulty Constitution/laws	3 15%			3	5.45/
Un-democratic	-				
No effective Youth programme	-				
	20	20	15	55	

The grievances indicate an ethnic minority underpinning of the under-developed, marginalised Niger Delta people. According to several 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-dDelta people'. In other words, undergirding state misgovernance and under-development in the region is the attitude of the majority ethnic group towards their minority counterparts in the region. 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 been against the region in terms of laws and polices that disinherit and appropriate their oil and gas resources and oppress them.

In spite of the sensitive grievances, there is a huge faith in the Nigerian tate. About 62.4 per cent of the GS and 74.5 per cent 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 such 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 and fairness is enthroned'; or with hopes such as 'the wrong can still be made right', 'one day, good leaders will emerge and get there in spite of problems' (Interviews in Bayelsa and Delta States June 2006).

Quite intriguing is the large proportion of those who have 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', and 'they have made us slaves in the country' indicate the feelings of the interviewees about the viability, performance, partiality and utility of the Nigerian 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' 'near anarchy' (Port-Harcourt).

The youth problematic is manifested in the expression or non-expression of faith in the Nigerian state. Some of the respondents have lost faith because, according to them 'the state does not consider the youths in her programmes' (Gokang), 'it does not consider their future and has no vision for them' (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 to their assessment of whether their aspirations could possibly be realised within Nigeria. About 81.4 per cent of the GS believe that their aspirations would be realised 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. The reasons given for this are failed promises, corruption and marginalization.

These responses on the perceptions, faith in, grievances and realisation 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 realisation 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. There is also a further suggestion that self determination, as generally conceived, is not separate existence but political autonomy within a reconfigured nation state.

The issues of what needs to be done to Nigeria were 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. From 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, as well as 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)

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
National Conference/New Constitution	16 (23.5)	8 (6.61)	25 (37.88)	49 (19.22)
True Federalism/Resource Control	4 (5.88%)	67 (55.3)	14 (21.21)	85 (33.33)
Good governance		3 (2.48)	4 (6.06)	7 (2.75)
Equitable and fair treatment of region	46 (67.65)	35 (28.93)	17(25.76)	98 (38.43)
Others	2 (2.94)	8 (6.61)	6 (9.09)	16 (6.27)
	68	121	66	255

Table 10: Recommendations of Issues for Re-constituting/ Re-configuring the Nigerian State (KIS) (Cont'd.)

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
National Conference/New Constitution	3 (18.75)	3 (15%)	8 (53.33)	14 27.5
True Federalism/Resource Control	5 (31.25)	10 (50%)	3 (20%)	18 35.2
Good governance	7 (43.75)	6 (30%)	1 (6.67%)	14 27.5
Equitable and fair treatment of region	1 (6.25)	1 (5%)	2 (13.33)	4 7.84
Others	-	-	1 (6.67)	1 1.96
	16	20	15	51

Two of our interviewees in Warri, Delta State, express succinctly these views. According to them, 'if Nigeria must remain, give every region autonomy and let them control their resources' (Warri 13th June 2007); 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 19th June 2007).

Perception 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 in terms of controlling and managing 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', and to control our God given resource to better the lot of the down trodden people'. 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 is 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 is in terms of greater participation and greater sharing of oil resources. As one respondent put it, he wants to be a major stakeholder in the resources of the Niger Delta.

Table 11: Conception 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%) is perceived in a federal state, by some 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 is a complete reversal of the current situation.

To define, more specifically, the kinds 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. Our investigation in the KIS, reveal that in Bayelsa State, the respondents want 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 prefer a share of between 31 and 50 per cent.

The other thing to note is that resource control is associated with the perceptions of equity and fairness. To several of them, it means equitable distribution and reward of the region, which is seen to derive from true federalism. According to one respondent (GS), 'there will never be equity, neither justice nor fairness except there is first resource control and true federalism'.

Perception 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 area, what the goals of the struggle are and what the ethnic groups want from the struggle.

The investigation in the GS (Table 12) of the problems that undergird the struggle reveal that the main problems, are a poor status of development (infrastructures, social services) that is seen to be contingent on neglect and lack of developmental attention (29.88%), economic deprivation and exploitation that is related to the externalities of oil exploitation (degraded environments, endangered ecosystems, environmental hazards and destroyed sources of livelihood), poor revenue and benefits in flow (23.1%) and the absence of oil resource ownership, management and control (13.55%).

As one GS respondent put it, the Niger-delta people are not even recognised 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)
Total	**77**	**85**	**89**	**251**

The other problems mentioned, marginalisation (8.76%) and ill treatment arising from their minority group status (9.56%), relate to issues of political representation, inclusion, resource distribution, equity, justice and fairness within the Nigerian State project. 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 inflow, and benefits to the region, which are identified as undergirding the conflict.

The investigation of the goals of the struggle should add to our understanding of the conflicts (Table 13). The goals are identified as resource control (30.9%), equitable and just treatment (24.7%), developmental attention (16.6%) and inclusion and adequate representation (11.6%). These goals flow from the problems identified earlier. In sum, the region is seeking adequate attention, recognition and participation in its oil resource matters, adequate development and representation and fair, just and equitable treatment of the region and its citizens, as minority groups. All 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%)
Total	**69**	**81**	**44**	**194**

The study further investigated in the KIS what the Ijaws, the largest ethnic group in the region and the hotbed of the youth insurgency, and the other groups – Urhobo, Isoko, Itsekiris, Ogoni, Ogbas, Ikwerres, Ilajes, Ndokwas, and others seek through the struggle. The results (Table 14) indicate the main demands as development, resource control or adequate derivation based funds within a better federal framework, equitable, fair and just treatment, freedom and self determination. These are congruent with the identified problems and goals. One of our key informants (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 Izons'.

Of particular interest is the demand for self determination (11.8%) and secession (2.7%). Self determination was identified earlier as one of the goals (5.8%) of the struggle (Table 13). It is also interesting to note that the above goal and the demands for self determination and secession is more dominant among the Ijaws. This is perhaps attributable to the fact that the Ijaws are the largest ethnic minority in the region and currently the most agitating and militant group. It is perhaps the most aggrieved as a large minority group with the greatest oil resource endowments. It typifies most the situation of the Niger-delta in terms of low resource in flow, poor development, low political representation and inclusion, poverty, unemployment and economic deprivation contigent to economic decline and negative oil externalities.

The demand for self determination was put this way by a key informant (Bayelsa State): 'We want equity, fairness and justice. But since it is seemingly unattainable. We want a republic of our own. I mean, we want a country of our own'. However, we should note that self determination is largely equated to regional autonomy, self rule and self development. Secession is an extremist and minority conception in the region.

Youths and the Conflict

The conflict is essentially youth driven, in terms of the 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 conflict, the perception of youth roles in the conflict, youth perception of the conflict and the perception of what the youths want from the conflict.

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%), and more specifically, the failure of the elders to secure much needed development from the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies (18.7%). Then the youth as a vibrant segment of the population (17.2%) began to seek greater involvement (6.4%) in a struggle for rights and entitlement (6.4%). There is also the factor of politics and particularly youth involvement in elections and campaigns, thereby tending towards engagement in the conflict (11.8%) (Table 15).

Table 14: Perceptions of What the Ijaws and other Groups in the Niger-delta Want

	Bayelsa		Delta		Rivers		TOTAL	
	Ijaws %	Others	Ijaws	Others	Ijaws	Others		%
Development	7	7	5	12	4	5	40	36.36
Resources control/true	5	5	8	3	4	2	27	24.55
Federalism/Adequate derivation	-	-	2	2	1	4	9	8..18
Inclusion/belonging/Political Representation	1	5	3	3	1	2	15	13.63
Freedom/Equity/Fairness/justice	4	2	2	-	3	2	13	11.82
Self Determination	2	-	-	-	1	-	3	2.73
Secession Abrogation of obnoxious laws	1	1	-	-	1	-	3	2.73
Total	20	20	20	20	15	15	110	

The content analysis of the responses here is quite instructive. It is presented as follows:

- The youth were disappointed with the elite and elders. The elite utilised methods (accommodation and incorporation) that failed to yield concrete results. The state and oil companies did not listen to them. The elders were not seen as active, committed and willing to fight the cause. They took things too easy. They were seen as weak, docile, corrupt and betraying the cause of the struggle.
- The elders could not accomplish the mission because they have taken enough money from the government and oil companies. The elders failed in their duties. Their ideas were no longer seen as the solution or capable of addressing the issues involved.
- The youths become frustrated, angry and discontented. They were increasingly hungry, miserable, suffering, idle and unemployed. Their future was bleak and probabilities of realising their aspirations narrow. They were at the receiving end of the deprivation in the region.
- The youth then emerged in the scene. They forced their way into the whole situation when they discovered that the nation does not hold any future for them. They could not allow their tomorrow to be completely destroyed before they could help it. They had to act, take over the struggle, forcefully. They had to pick up arms and fight for their rights.

Table 15: The Youth 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)
	Total	**65**	**81**	**60**	**206**
Perception of What the youths want from the Niger Delta Struggle	What The Youth Want	**BAYELSA**	**DELTA**	**RIVERS**	**TOTAL**
	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)
	Total	**74**	**94**	**69**	**237**

The investigation of the perception of youth roles in the struggle reveals that the youths are seen as vanguards (53.8%) and freedom fighters (38%). Some respondents see the youths driving the struggle as an active, brave, courageous, articulate and determined segment. Some respondents also see them as having raised awareness about the struggle, as having been instruments of change and development and as struggling for a better tomorrow in the region. They are seen also as the strength of society, as fighting for their possessions, and as having the courage and boldness to deliver the region. However, a few respondents see the youth as criminal and violent (3.3%) and unfocused (2.7%). Some respondents noted that the activities of the youths are becoming uncivilised, terrorist and criminal (Interviewees Sapele 15th June 2007; Yenagoa 8th June 2007).

The responses reveal that first; youth role is seeing in as a right, focused and purposeful struggle (41.3%), a struggle against injustice (29.6%) and a fight for rights (8.7%). These indicate that the struggle is perceived as right, just, purposeful and as directed against injustice, deprivation, abuse, exploitation and oppression. Quite interestingly, the struggle is further seen as possibly long, but that it would be contained until their aspirations are met (13.1%) (Table15). Besides these however, there is a self interest tinge. It is a struggle for survival and livelihood (17.3%).

The content analysis of our respondents in the GS Sample, oral interviews and FGDs, lends more credence to the responses. First the youths see the struggle as 'fighting for the people'. It is to liberate the people, to compel development and employment, to bring about desired changes, and particularly a better life for the region. Second, the struggle is seen as a just, sincere and genuine cause, a good fight, a noble struggle, a cause worth fighting for. It is a struggle for freedom and equal treatment. Third, the struggle is seen as necessary for claiming the right of the youth, a right that they and no one else could fight for. It is their time to fight. The struggle is their life. The youth, it is claimed, have a right to fight for what belongs to them. Fourth, the struggle is seen as the only way, the only choice and the best option in the circumstance, in order to redress the poverty, deprivation, underdevelopment, frustration and other hazards confronting the region. The people have been pushed to the wall. Fifth, the struggle is seen as a task that must be done, or accomplished, a fight that will go on until the desired goals are achieved, a 'do or die' affair, a struggle that must be sustained, completed and pursued to its logical conclusion. Finally, the struggle is seen as that which is capable of yielding the desired returns for the people.

The responses as to what the youths want from the struggle indicate that what the youth need are development (36.3%), resource control (21.9%), employment (19.8%) and adequate attention and pride of place (14.3%) (Table 15). These responses reflect what the ethnic groups in the region want: massive development and a fair or reasonable share, or total control of the region's oil resources.

What is more poignant concerning what the youths want and which is more relevant to the youth can be discerned from the content analysis of responses. The youth want 'a better life and the eradicating of poverty' (Port Harcourt 18th June 2007), 'good education, scholarships, skills development opportunities, massive employment, employment opportunities, social and economic empowerment' (Port Harcourt 12th June 2007) 'a guarantee or some protection of their future life or of better life, living conditions, economic wellbeing, and meaningful living' (Ekeremor, Bayelsa 17th June 2007).

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 being genuine 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 loss of confidence in the Nigerian state (19.3%) (Table 16), and regional/ethnic leaders that sought more accommodationist approaches. But apart from these, the militia phenomenon is founded on poverty and unemployment (17.9%), frustration and sense of oppression (14.5%) and persisting feelings of neglect and exploitation of the region (14%). Some of these poor, unemployed and frustrated youths have fallen prey to manipulation of political leaders, particularly in Rivers State (7.3%).

Table 16: Reasons for the Emergence of Youth Militias GS

	BAYELSA	**DELTA**	**RIVERS**	**TOTAL**
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%)
Total	**73**	**68**	**66**	**207**

The issue of loss of confidence in the elders and leaders has been considerably raised earlier. The elders are seen to have betrayed the struggle, too ready to sell off the struggle to satisfy self and family, and have only obtained 'paltry benefits' from their so-called 'peaceful negotiation and consultation'. Though the youths have been 'chesting out and taking the fight of the struggle' and 'realised that except you fight, nobody would fight for you', there is a base of degenerating poverty, mass unemployment, deprivation, long suffering and a rising mass of anger, frustration and discontentment that has pushed the youth towards militancy. It is also these conditions that has made the youths amenable to elite manipulation and use. The loss of confidence in the state arises from the persisting 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 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 perhaps led to loss of hope and confidence in the state. Second, political and ethnic/community leaders and state governments fund, arm, sponsor and use militias and cult groups, particularly during elections, but dump 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 supports during the elections, oriented the armed bands into not just political roles, but also the struggle 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. A respondent in Bonny put this succinctly: '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 profile, and what are their categories? Answers to these questions can be found in Table 17.

The study found that militia groups are fairly hierarchically organised, command based (30%) and disciplined organisations (20%) that are also fairly enlightened, purposeful and focused (14%). However, they are violent and brutal (10%), self-centred and greedy (12%), and cultist (10%). They are not easily amenable to categorisation. They are numerous in categories (38.5%). But they are mainly in camps, armed bands and cults (23.1%). Some are however ethnic and community based militias (19.2%), sponsored (11.5%), or self sponsored (7.8%). There are also militias that are freedom fighters and others that are not.

The ethnic militias are larger groups. So also are militias that are freedom fighters, which are wider ethnically. Non-freedom fighters or those more permanently associated with non-Niger-delta interests are associated with bands and cults usually built around individuals. There are the ones that are more involved in piracy, bunkering and ransom taking. The sponsored militias are constructed around politicians and ethnic leaders and are devoted more to self centred objectives than the regional struggle. The non-sponsored militias are built around prominent militia men and activists of the struggle.

The militias are dominantly sponsored by political leaders (42.6%) and ethnic leaders (21.3%). But a considerable proportion is self sponsored (31.9%). There is a strong element of self sponsorship in terms of motivation, management and control. Diverse militia and camp leaders have groups that are trained, armed and funded by them through diverse sources, including security threats. The ethnic/community and political leaders component of sponsorship seems to relate to the arming and funding support that is linked to manipulation, teleguiding and utilisation of the militia groups for political and personal reasons. 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 they pay us. I don't think that is sponsorship. We work and they pay us.' There may then be a sense in the remarks of a Delta State key informant who said that the militia groups '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, Delta), 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 organised 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 constituting the largest segment. Those that are not educated are the Field Marshall. The Egbesu is the general name for the militias, but there are 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 been resource control and true federalism (29%), development (23.6%), equitable, fair and just treatment and respect for the collective rights of the ethnic groups (21.8%). Besides these altruistic goals however are selfish interests and personal aggrandisement (14.5%).

The genuineness of the motives and struggle of the militias was also investigated. It revealed three categories. There are the genuine militias who pursue the pure objectives of the Niger-delta struggle (36%), those that combine regional objectives with selfish struggles (30%), and then those that pursue selfish interests and survival and take the struggle as a struggle for livelihood (34%). 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 seen or 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. As Tables 17,18 and 19 reveal, the militants are youths, they mingle with the people and operate surreptitiously and clandestinely in the cities and towns. They are usually around in the towns and villages on weekends but return to their camps (office) during week days. They are often seen as activists or even as non-governmental organisation members, but Ijaw activists know them. The level of support and unity among the Ijaws is such that the militants are not seen as betrayers in any way. 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 the bosses or commandants. Each camp may com-

prise of as many as 2,000 youth militia 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 through extortion from state and local government councils, multinational oil companies and oil servicing companies (using security threats), 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 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. Then genuine militia groups are more subject to the influence and co-ordination of the apex Ijaw Youth Movement and the Ijaw Youth Council. Criminal bands, cults and militia groups 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 who perpetrate criminal activities without the knowledge, and outside the control, of the camp commandants. There has been more proliferation of the groups since 1999, and particularly since 2004. The main ethnic nationalistic and liberation driven militia leaders are losing control to others who are less driven by altruistic motives. With such proliferation, there have emerged criminal bands, cults and cliques, particularly in Rivers and Bayelsa States.

Most militants are initiates of the Egbesu deity. The initiation is done at Egbesu shrines and are presided over by Egbesu priests. The chief priest is usually also the head of the Supreme Egbesu Assembly. The militias believe in the invincibility of Egbesu and therefore take initiation baths or sprinkles before militant actions. Casualties are attributed to defilement due to disobedience of the codes of behaviour (for example, an Egbesu militant should not steal rape or desecrate sacred places).

The militia groups control territories in the water ways and creeks. Inter-militia fights are sometimes over control of territory. Territory is important because of the bunkering, access to multinational oil companies and even access to political leaders. The prominent militant groups in the western Delta are the Membutu Boys and Ijaw Liberation Heroes. The Niger-delta Vigilante and Niger-delta Volunteer Force Operate more in the eastern axis.

The popular support for the militants was quite high initially. Except for the criminal aspect, the militias were hailed, and a core militia was a kind of hero. However, the social acceptability is declining. Some are no more easily in social circles, unlike before when it was a thing of pride to be associated with the militias. Secondly, those involved in piracy and related crimes are not accepted, are resisted or even fought by community members, such as happened to some militant pirates who attempted to steal local government funds in Ekeremor. Thirdly, the open use and celebration of guns and militancy is not encouraged by IYC.

Table 17: Profiling the Militia (KIS)

		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	%
Perception	-Political Thugs	-		1	1 (2.2)
	-Right/Freedom Fighters	3	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 (100)
	-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)
Totals		20	20	15	55
Genuiness of the litias	-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: Perception of Reasons for Relative Success and the Challenges Faced by Militias (GS)

	BAYELSA	**DELTA**	**RIVERS**	**TOTAL**
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%)
Total	**74**	**63**	**67**	**204**

Table 19: Perception of Reasons for Relative Success and the ChallengesFaced by Militias (KIS)

REASON FOR PROLIFERATING & THRIVING OF MILITIAS	-DETERMINATION, FOCUS/UNITY OF PURPOSE	2	2	2	6 (12.25)
	-DEPRIVATION/SUFFERING/ UNEMPLOYMENT FRUSTRATION.	-	4	1	5 (10.20)
	-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES/FINANCIAL	-	-	4	4 (8.16)
	-PERSISTING NEGLECT UNDERDEVELOPMENT/MISGOVERNANCE.	7	6	3	16 (32.65)
	-SUPPORT OF PROMINENT PERSONS AND LOCALS	5	4	5	14 (28.57)
	-JUST STRUGGLE	3	1	-	4 (8.16)
	Total	**17**	**17**	**15**	**49**
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.	5	4	2	11 (22.45)
	-Just cause & struggle for freedom	-	2	2	4 (8.16)
	-Traditional deities	3	1	1	5 (10.20)
	-Difficult terrain	2	1	2	5 (10.20)
	-Persisting unemployment and poverty.	-	3	1	4 (8.16)
	Total	**19**	**16**	**14**	**49**
Challenges and problems of the Militias	-Lack of understanding & betrayals by locals.	5	4	3	12 (21.81)
	-Greed/selfishness of community/militia members	2	-	-	2 (3.64)
	-Funding difficulties	2	3	3	8 (14.55)
	-Military suppression	10	7	5	22 (40)
	-Loss of lives/job hazards	-	3	3	6 (10.91)
	-Lack of proper co-ordination/leadership.	1	3	1	9.09
	Total	**20**	**20**	**15**	**55**

The militias are perceived dominantly by our KIS sample as freedom or rights fighters (61.7%) or as poor, unemployed and deprived youths (14.9%) that are bold, brave and aggressive (10.6%). In the GS sample, they are perceived as freedom fighters that are addressing the Niger-delta problem (48.5%). They are also described as fighting for regional benefits and recognition (12.8%) and as doing a commendable and good job of addressing the region's problems (11.2%). Some however see then as evil and not commendable (13.%0 and lacking focus (4.4%).

Thus, the general picture of the militias in the region is that of liberation and freedom fighters. Some of our GS in Sapele, Delta State, describe them as a 'group of able bodied men trained in the art of warfare and who, as freedom fighters, are 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 from bondage and achieve resource control. The idea of the militia is to frustrate the Federal Government and gain freedom'. But some respondents tend to condone the negative aspects of the militia because of the problems and goals of the struggle. As one KIS respondents put it, 'the phenomenon of militia is not the best, but we have been taken for granted for too long (Bonny, Rivers 14th June 2007).

The militias have been relatively successful in seizing and holding on to oil installations, maintaining some territorial control in terms of camps and fairly successfully engaging the Nigerian military. We sought explanations as to what made this possible. There were three categories of responses here. The first is persisting neglect, under-development and misgovernance of the region (32.7%) and support of prominent persons and locals (28.6%). The relative success of the militias is also attributed to the internal character of the militia groups (22.4%). This is seen as indicating determination, focus, unity and boldness. There is also the support from the local people (20.4%) and funds raised from kidnapping and bunkering (20.4%). The Niger-delta's difficult terrain and the support of traditional deities are also factors that contributed to the strength of the militias.

If the picture of the militias is that of a liberation movement, concerned with regional and ethnic issues, why then have they been the soldiers in inter-communal and ethnic wars within the region?

The phenomenon is condemned by most of the respondents (Table 17). Such actions are seen as unhealthy and beyond bounds (38.6%), and arising out of bad leadership (10.2%), greed, criminality, elite sponsorship and cultism (18.2%) as

well as a misplacement of objectives and focus by the militias (13.6%). Our KIS samplers elaborate on the figures, and their comments include 'the entire Ijaw ethnic is in support of the militia struggles' and 'because they are fighting a just cause, the gods of the land are behind them'. But contrarywise, a key oral interviewee reveals: 'We have not recorded any success. The militants are suffering. They are only taking risks to survive. If you look at it from afar, you think they are 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 face numerous problems (Table 9). These major problems are military suppression, (40%), lack of understanding and betrayals by family (21.8%), funding difficulties (14.5%) and job hazards such as loss of lives (10.9%).

According to some oral interviewees, the militias experience frequent military attacks and a sense of insecurity outside their camps. These are expressed thus:

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

Roles of Actors in the Struggle

The actors in the Niger-delta conflict were identified and their roles investigated in the GS (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 are seen as playing mediating advisory and peaceful roles. But they use the struggle for personal gains (26.6%) and take sides with the government (13.3%). The business and political leaders play fairly active roles, by giving material and political support (11.8%), but they tend to seek and derive personal gains from the struggle (44.7%). Women are seen as supporting the struggle, but they are largely inactive (31.8%). When active, the women only play mediating roles (27.7%). The youth are seen as vanguards of the struggle (45.60%) and freedom fighters (27.9%).

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

Roles	Bayelsa				Delta Rivers											
	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	Elders/Leaders	Business	Women	Youths
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
TOTAL	**72**	**65**	**74**	**84**	**59**	**53**	**73**	**19**	**72**	**71**	**48**	**57**	**203**	**190**	**195**	**158**

The KIS (Table 21) indicate that ethnic, political and business leaders are not generally active (24.5%); but when they are, they sponsor or fund militancy (28.3%) or seek peace and dialogue (10.2%), and this could be for selfish ends (12.2%). As some key informants presented the political elite, business, ethnic and influential leaders, 'some are indifferent and some use it as aprofitable 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'.

Table: 21: The Role of Ethnic, Political and Business Leaders in the Niger-delta Conflict (KIS)

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

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', experiencing 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' nor are they custodians of culture'. They are 'all politicians representing the interests of government and self' (Bonny, Port Harcourt, June 2007).

The businesses, 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 a '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 they use militants against their perceived enemies'. In many ways, they are 'the agents and mediums 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 but supportive and concerned segment. Their non-active status is attributed to their socio-cultu-

ral standing and restraints. The women seek poverty alleviation and economic empowerment because their sources of livelihood have been more dislocated. But more importantly, the women are seen as the 'moral conscience' of the struggle. They provide moral support and morally moderate the struggle. It is in this role that they are engaged in dialogue and peace building.

Perception of Methods of Conflict

A critical issue in the investigation of the Niger-delta conflicts is the methodology for its conduct. The conflict has since the early 1990s been characterised by popular and criminal violence, state violence, militarisation and repression. Our investigation here is in two parts. The first relates to violence which has become the dominant method for conducting conflict. The second is the perception of the effectiveness of specific methods utilised in the conduct of the struggle. The methods of the struggle have increased, become aggressive, confrontational, combative and violent. We sought to know why in the GS (Table 22).

The reasons as expressed relate generally to the nature of state governance in the region. The government has failed to act (39.3%) and has been insensitive to the region's agitation (20.5%). Therefore, the conditions that warranted the agitation has persisted (9.40%). But more interesting is the fact that violence is seen to be more effective in obtaining results from the Nigerian state and MNCs (29%). Thus, violence is seen as a more potent instrument of struggle.

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%). In fact, it is initialised by the failure or unwillingness of government to dialogue (15.4%). But violence is not totally perceived as the solution or best method for conducting the conflict. Dialogue and negotiation is seen by a sizeable proportion (23.5%) as a better option.

The investigation of these issues in the other research instruments (FGD and oral interviews) and samplers from the GS respondents reveal a better 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 inattentive to the issues, nor yielded to the petitions and protests from 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 'mere noise' according to some GS respondents in Yenagoa (1st June 2007 and Burutu (21st June 2007)/. When the petitions, protests and dialogues are not yielding better results, it is then 'not 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.

Table 22: Violence and the Niger Delta Conflict (GS)

		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Reasons For Increasingly Violent Methods Of Agitation	Leadership/Government Failures to Act	35 (46.7%)	15 (18.29)	38 (56.72%)	88 (39.29)
	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 In The Resolution Of The Conflict	Conduced 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 Pursuancof 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

Finally, we tried to determine the potential for further violent acts of confrontation through the extent of potential actions that respondents are ready to undertake in pursuance of the struggle, in the GS and KIS. The results are disturbing. Only (4.9%) of GS respondents are ready to follow constitutional proceeds and dialogue in pursuance of the struggle, while 42.9 per cent are ready to continue actions and measures until government responds adequately through development. Furthermore, 38.4 per cent are ready to use every available option while 13.8 per cent are even ready to give material and moral support to the militias. In the KIS, about 24 per cent are ready to utilise constitutional means and dialogue in pursuance of the struggle. Another 24 per cent would continue or sustain present actions until government's positive response is felt. But the majority (52%) is ready to use every available means and go to any extent to achieve the objectives of the struggle.

These responses indicate that a considerable proportion of the respondents are willing to undertake any measures, including violence, sabotage and even secession in pursuance of the struggle. This spells a dangerous omen, as it means that the conflict may be prolonged, protracted and could escalate into a civil war or secession. The views expressed by our KIS and GIS respondents, further reveal this danger. 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, 12th June 2007); 'I will push the struggle up to the level of proclaiming a sovereign state for the Niger Delta' (Yenegoa, 14th June 2007). 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 taken over by the younger generation. Until all is well with us, we will not relent. We will continue to use whatever strength that is available to use against the Nigeria State.

A critical analysis of the responses indicate that violence is seen first as a response to state refusal to dialogue and its intimidation, excessive force and violence against the communities which tonghened the youths and caused them to match violence for violence. Violence is therefore a last option and as a respondent in Sapele, Delta States put it, 'results from the Niger-delta being pushed to the wall' or as another in Warri (Delta State) 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, and therefore 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, kidnapping and pipeline vandalisation instead of dialogue, peaceful and constitutional methods are seen as being more effective. Particularly, hostage taking and abduction are perceived as the most effective methods.

We investigated 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 assess it from the moral plank. To them, it is bad (24.5%) though it is the only option and it is criminal and illegal (21.5%).

An 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 and Gokhana). But it is alright as long as it is

Table 23: Perceptions of Methods of Youth Struggle

	PERCEPTION	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Perception of effectiveness	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	**67**	**66**	**67**	**200**
Perception of what has triggered the current phase of hostage taking	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%)
	Total	**67**	**60**	**66**	**193**
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	-	-	-	-
	Total	**66**	**65**	**65**	**196**

'targeted at the government and MNOCs' and it is '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 of its very effects. In fact, it is seen as 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. What emerges (Table 23) is that hostage taking and kidnapping is first a form of protest against the arrest and brutalisation of leaders of the struggle such as Dokubo-Asari and D.S.P. Alamesieha (29%). It is also meant to

embarrass the Federal Government and draw its attention to the persisting and unresolved demands and problems (23.3%). It is also meant to draw the attention of the international community to the plight of the Niger-deltans (23.3%) and to demonstrate the seriousness of Niger-deltans about their grievances and demands (7.3%). 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.

Effects of the Conflicts

What is fairly well known as the effects of the conflicts are those relating to shortfalls 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, have to be investigated.

The investigation of effects on the communities reveal that the youth driven conflicts have disarticulated communal social values and order (32.7%), intensified violence, insecurity and destructions (30.9%), created a regime of disrespect for elders, traditional institutions and governance systems, (20%), paralysed social and economic activities (7.3%) and restricted movements (9.1%). 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 is now the hallmark in our communities. Communities have been turned into battlefields of cult wars. There is increased rancour, acrimony and disunity within and between communities'.

Table 24: Effects of the Conflicts (KIS)

		Bayelsa	Delta	Rivers	Total	%
Effects on Communities	Disrespect for Traditional Institutions/Elders	4	4	3	11	20%
	destruction of community	8	5	5	18	32.7%
	Values and Social Order.	6	8	3	17	30.9%
	Intensified violence and destruction	2	1	2	5	9.1%
	Restricted movements	-	2	2	4	7.3%
	Paralyzed socio-economic activities.	20	20	15	55	
	Not much					
	Total					

Table 24: Effects of the Conflicts (KIS), Cont'd.

Effects on Youths	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	
Effects on intercommunities & ethnic Relations	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	
Effects on Crime & Security	Increased crime and violence	12	10		31	56.4%
	Increased insecurity of life and property	4	6	9	15	27.3%
	Increased cultism	3	-	5 -	3	5.5%
	Made arms available	1	4	1	6	10.9%
	Total	20	20	15	55	
Effects on living Conditions & livelihood	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 Homelessness	4	1	3	8	17.8%
	Increased illegitimate sources of income	1	1	1	3	6.7%
	Total	14	16	15	45	

The effects on the youth are as socially and economically pronounced. The conflicts have increased youth restiveness and made them lazy, aggressive, violent and lawless (30.9%). 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 paralysed economic activities and have become victims of untimely deaths. The effects on inter-communal and ethnic group relations have been very adverse. The conflicts have increased tensions and violence in relations (38.2). This is apart from increased suspicion and unfriendly relations (36.4%). 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 groups fight the weaker ones to gain government attention.

Another respondents in Bayelsa State stated that the 'internal crisis within us is over who controls the major cities like Warri, to whom would SHELL pay compensations? Who collects the rents?'.

The crisis has affected security and criminality in the region. There is increased crime and violence (56.4%) and the insecurity of lives and property (27.3%). There is also easy access to arms (10.9%) and increased presence and activities of cults and armed bands (5.5%) 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 very adverse. The conflicts have worsened living conditions (37.8%), slowed down economic activities (26.7%) increased insecurity of life and property (17.8%) and cost of living (11.1%).

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

Table 25: Perception 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)
	78	**67**	**71**	**216**

The findings indicate that more importantly, there is economic decline (33.3%) and paralysis of social and economic activities (33.3%). A 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 hardship. Socio-economic services, infrastructures and development are crumbling in most towns and communities. There is also growing insecurity and crime (14.8%) which has occasioned grief and fear (9.7%) in the region. In the political front however, there seem to have been some gains. Political awareness has been raised (6.5%). The militia activities have also raised hopes and expectations, because of increased government attention through the set up of commissions and ad hoc agencies and measures to address the problems.

Thus in sum, the conflicts, apart from compelling state attention and raising awareness, have had disastrous consequences on the communities, the youths, intra- and inter- group relations, security and stability, living conditions, commerce and the economy of the region. But some respondents see these effects as temporary. A Khana (Rivers) respondent, for example, said 'I agree that their impact is negative for now. With this struggle, we shall be liberated one day…. It shall be positive'.

Analyses of the Causes of the Conflicts

We identified, from the literature, certain variables that have been indicated in several conflicts in Africa. These are environmental degradation, youth bulge, poverty, unemployment, elite manipulation, access to arms, tradition-nal and cultural factors, state governance and corporate governance.

Table 26: Perception of Causes of the Niger Delta Conflict

		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	
	No	11	14	2	27	50.1	4
Accessibility to arms	Yes	6	5	10	21	38.2	
	No	14	15	5	34	61.8	5
Traditional Empowerment	Yes	6	5	4	15	27.3	
	No	14	15	11	40	72.7	7

The responses in the KIS reveal that the most important causal factors are poverty (78.2%) unemployment (71%) environmental pollution and scarcity (70.9%) and elite manipulation (50.9%).

The least important variables were traditional religion and empowerment, youth bulge, and accessibility to arms. In the GS sample, the most important factors were poor and unemployed youths (78.9%), corporate misgovernance (78.2%) governmental misgovernance (69.3%) and the struggle for resource opportunities and benefits (57.8%), The least important is traditional culture and religion (47.6%).

Table 27: Perception of Whether the Under-listed Factors Cause or Fuel the Conflict (GS)

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL	%	Ranking
Poor Unemployed youths Yes No	78 (35.94%) 22	66 (30.41%) 34	73 (33.64%) 2	17 58	78.9 21.1	1
Governmental Misgovernance Yes No	79 40.51%) 21	43 (22.05%) 57	70 (35.90%) 5	192 (95.46%) 83 (1.54%)	69.82 30.18	3
Struggle for resource benefits opportunities Yes No	50 27.93%) 50	48 (26.82%) 52	61 34.08%) 14	159 (11.17%) 160 115	57.82 42.18	4
Corporate (MNOC) Mis-Governance Yes No	79 (36.74%) 21	64 (29.77%) 36	72 (33.49%) 3	215(100%) 60	78.2 21.82	2
Culture and Traditional Religion Yes No	50 24.04%) 50	35 (16.83%) 56	46 (22.12%) 29	131 (37.10%) 144	47.64 52.36	5

The critical factors indicated then as the causes of the conflict are poverty, unemployment, corporate and governmental misgovernance and environmental pollution. That poverty and unemployment are seen as central to the frustration, discontent and anger that undergird violent agitations is not surprising. As some of our respondents indicated, the youths are 'denied the opportunity of descent 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 ways 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 those 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, and there is now lack of productive fertile lands'. Corporate and governmental misgovernance is strongly indicated in the GS. Further investigation of the phenomenon provides details as to how the Nigerian state and the oil companies are seen to source the conflicts.

Table 28: State and Corporate Governance and the Crisis

		BAYELSA	**DELTA**	**RIVERS**	**TOTAL**
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%)
	Total	**119**	**41**	**62**	**222**
MNOC, contribution to violent conflicts	Divide and rule Strategies	3 (4.55%)	3 (4.84%)	20 (31.74%)	26 (13.61)
	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%)
	Total	**66**	**62**	**63**	**191**

The state is seen as insensitive and insincere in its response to the region's problems (28.8%). 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 has failed to keep its promises and meet the expectations of the people of the region (31.5%). As a result, there is persisting neglect and marginalisation (11.3%), and military suppression of the youths (14.9%) is also seen as escalating the crisis.

The oil companies have not contributed significantly to the development of the region (46.6%). Yet, they have caused conflicts between and within communities through divide-and-rule strategies (13.6%) and raising contentions over resources, compensation and other oil based benefits (13.1%). 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 15th June 2007). Besides, they have not employed substantially the region's indigenes (11%), and therefore have not addressed the issue of huge unemployment.

In fact, the perception of the oil companies is fairly negative as they are seen to be inconsiderate and insensitive (23.5%), giving poor development attention (20.8%), collaborating with the Nigerian state, (13.7%), causing environmental degradation (13.6%), not adhering to agreements (12.6%) and not paying adequate and timely compensation (9.3%). Besides, the oil companies are not seen to have benefited the region, because of scanty development efforts (50.30%), poor benefits (22.2%) and poor employment of indigenes (20%). Also, they do not show 'full understanding of the communities' that they operate in. They sometimes 'bribe the traditional rulers and chiefs', 'sponsor youths to revolt against communal governance systems, and contribute to the militarisation and repression of the region through the use of military personnel in their facilities' (Respondents; Burutu, Yenogoa, Anassoa Camp, and Osokoma (7th & 15th June 2007).

However, the state is seen as the greater culprit in misgovernance, by creating an unhealthy political environment and executing bad laws and policies that set the framework for the misgovernance of the oil companies (KIS Respondent, Bayelsa).

Management and Resolution of the Conflicts

A critical issue in this study is conflict resolution and peace building. Given the intensity of the conflict and the consequences for the nation, 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 is heavy military and police deployments, excessive force, confrontations and repression. The first issue we investigated is the perception of the military and security agencies and their roles in the region (GS).

In terms of roles, the military, though sent in to keep peace (9.6%) and resolve the conflict (6%) have actually escalated the crisis (82.4%). The military and security agencies are perceived quite negatively. They are seen as provoking the people (30.1%) and oppressing them (27.4%).

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

		BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
Perception of Nigerian security/Military Agencies Management of the conflict	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%)
	Total	**79**	**70**	**70**	**219**
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%)	
	Total	**67**	**59**	**73**	**199**

As details from the content analysis of the responses indicate, this is because first, the military has not been 'a disciplined force'. They are seen as 'reckless, criminalized and irresponsible'. They have been involved in 'extortation, looting and rape'. They have been 'intimidating, oppressive and hostile'. They have been involved in 'indiscriminate shooting'. They have rather been 'benefiting from the oil companies and feeding fat from the struggle'. As a result of these, the military and security agencies have been ineffective (9.6%).

The efforts of the Obasanjo administration to resolve the conflict was 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%), did not do much (20.6%) but rather paid more of lip service to the resolution of the conflict (19.4%). Though it instituted the derivation principle, and the Niger-delta development Commission (5.5%), the administration is rather seen as having aggravated the conflict (12.7%) or failed (5.5%).

Table 30: Perception of the Obasanjo's Administration Efforts in the Resolution of the Conflict

	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%)
	79	**84**	**74**	**237**

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 GS respondents). There were 'mere promises and plans that were not fulfilled or implemented'. Thus, government efforts are seen as feeble, scanty, weak, slow and disappointing.

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

Table 31: Perception of What can Resolve the Niger-delta Conflicts (GS)

	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%)
Resource Control & True Federal	28 (38.36%)	13 (13.92%)	28 (33.80%)	69 (28.25%)
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 (
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)
	73	**79**	**71**	**223**

Table 31: Perception of What can Resolve the Niger-delta Conflicts (KIS), (Cont'd.)

	BAYELSA	DELTA	RIVERS	TOTAL
National Conference	-	-	-	-
Massive Accelerated Development	8	10	3	46.7%
Resource Control & True Federal	10	4	6	44.4%
Affirmative Action/Marshall Plan	-	-	-	-
Dialogue and agreements	-	-	-	-
Equity, Fairness and Justice	-	2	2	8.9%
Political Representation				
Meet the People Demand: Employment, education/release of detainees/abolition of obnoxious laws.	-	-	-	-
	18	**16**	**11**	**45**

The responses indicate that in the GS, what is perceived that can resolve the conflict is resource control and federalism (28.3%), an affirmative action or Marshall plan or emergency and special efforts (22.4%), and massive development efforts (13.9%). The methodology for achieving some of these is preferably dialogue and agreements (17%) and possibly a national conference (10.3%). In the KIS, massive and accelerated development (46.7%) and resource control and true federalism (44.4%) are seen as the solutions to the conflict.

5

Findings, Summary and Conclusion

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 marginalisation and exclusion in the then Eastern and Western Regions. With the commercial exploration of oil and growing significance of oil in the national economy, the agitation assumed a wider dimension through more demands for developmental attention. The conflict was first transformed into a youth insurgency in 1966, when some youths, under the aegis of the Niger Delta Volunteer Service, declared a Niger-delta Republic and took over and held on to some territory and oil installations. This was crushed.

The creation of Rivers and Cross River States and the Mid-west Region earlier, and later State, doused the initial agitation and insurgence. 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 Ogonis began the new wave of ethnic wide challenge for environmental remediation, resource control and ethnic autonomy in the early 1990s. By the mid 1990s, the agitation had become pan-ethnic and regional. Since the late 1990s, the region has been a melting pot of aggressive violent 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 of and concert of civil society and non-governmental organisations. By 2000, political society engaged the state in struggles for resource control and true federalism. A women uprising emerged in 2002. But the more consistent, combative and visible segment has been the youth, which has emerged rigorously since the late 1990s as the major platform and vanguard.

Overview of the Study

The study is divided into two sections. In the first, the research problem, questions and objectives, and conceptual and theoretical framework for analysis are presented. Here, we present the youth problematic in Africa and the concepts of new social movements and contentious politics as a conceptual and theoretical framework for analysis. Furthermore, we elaborate on two concepts, self determination and resource control, as important to our study.

In the second segment of the first section, we address the conflict, from a secondary data base. The role of ethnic-cultural movements and ethnic and regional elites which dominated the early stages of the struggle and the native, and results of the struggle at this stage are highlighted. The entry of youths and how this transformed the conflict into violent contentions was identified. Then the study focuses directly on youth militancy, militias, cults and gangs, their objections, sources of arms and funding. The interfaces with the civil struggles and the current youth insurgency which have escalated since 2005 are also addressed. This section was based on primary data. The study investigated and drew insights from the perceptions of the self termination, resource control, the problems and goals of the struggle, the roles and perception of the youth, the profile and perceptions of youth militias, the roles of elders, elites, women and youths, the causes of the conflict, its effects, and how it has been managed..

Findings

The study found that, though there are huge grievances and discontent, as a result of scanty development, marginalisation, poor resource inflow and majority ethnic domination. There is still a huge faith in the Nigerian state. But this is declining, particularly in the core Ijaw, Bayelsa State. Nigeria also remains the nation-state framework for the realisation of their aspirations. What they want is a re-configured nation-state that is more equitable, fair and just and founded on true Federalism and resource control. Thus, self determination is generally conceived as a 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 a 100 per cent control.

The perception of the struggle is that it is 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 its oil resources, and fair, just and equitable treatment as minority groups. The ethnic group in the region wants massive development, resource control or at least adequate derivation based share, and a better federal framework that guarantees equitable, fair and just treatment as well as regional autonomy.

The youth movement emerged from a displacement of the regional elders and elite by the 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 of freedom fighters. The youths' role is seen considerably as purposeful, just as directed against injustice, exploitation and deprivation and to compel development. The youths are seeking in and through the struggle, development and resource control at the general level and, in relation to the youth themselves, employment and guarantee 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 and discontentment. The militias appear as community and ethnic militias, armed bands and cults. They are in camps. They have fairly organised 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 by ethnic and political ,leaders and communities. These also do business with the groups, which provide funds and sustains 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 and 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 phenomena are on the decline. This is in terms of the dwindling popular support, acceptability and condemnation of some militia behaviour. A central factor is the increasing criminality, cult wars and horrendous violence associated with some militia groups.

Apart from the youth, traditional rulers, chiefs and elders, business and political elite and women have played some 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 their activism. They are however the moral conscience in terms of moral support, moderation and peace building. The traditional, political and business elite are however de-legitimated and are seen as using the struggle for their personal gains. The decline of confidence and integrity and the overall significance of roles of these groups is, in part, responsible for the emergence of youth militancy, escalating violence and criminality.

Violence is the preferred method of struggle, because of its seeming effectiveness. Violence in itself is conduced by the failure of government to dialogue with the youths and the communities at large or respond to peaceful agitation, and its use of excessive force and violence against the communities. Within the violent methods already utilised, 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 using every available actions and measures, including violence, sabotage and support for militias, in pursuance of the struggle and to persist until there is solution to the region's problems. This denotes the probability of a prolonged, protracted and escalating struggle.

The conflict has had terrible consequence 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 for 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, rancour, acrimony and disunity. There is a 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 catalysing or provoking greater frustration and agitation.

The military and suppressive strategy of management of the conflict is said to be associated with excessive force, extortion, abuse of rights and intimidation. The military is seen as escalating the crisis and is ineffective. The effort of the Obasanjo administration towards resolving the crisis is seen as having been weak, feeble, slow, ineffective and disappointing. The Niger-delta people are still hoping for the resolution of the conflict through the institution of a true federal framework that guarantees regional autonomy, resource control, massive and accelerated development, and a kind of Marshall Plan or affirmative action. They hope to achieve this through dialogue and preferably through a conference of ethnic nationalities or a national conference.

Conclusion

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

The focus and extent of engagement has 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 militarisation and international in concerns and effects on world energy supplies. The conflict has also increasingly become an insurrection or insurgency since 1998. Since 2000, it has become internationalised 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 has become a major international security issue.

Just as the conflict base has been shifting, so has the 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 Ijaws, Itsekiris, Ilajes, Ikweres, Isokos, Ogbas and others began to engage the state and oil companies in violent protests. While militancy has been widespread, the militia phenomenon is largely within the Ijaws.

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 youths 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 militarisation and brutalisation of the region and a counterforce in the militias. It has been military actions and militia attacks. It has to be noted that the nature of state and corporate responses, treatment and governance made violence the only option. They pushed the region into violence, insurrection and insurgency.

A question that arises is what brought about the conflict? 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 youth 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 and 2003 further proliferated militant groups, 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 militarisation and military occupation and actions since the early 1990s has 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 mobilisation, transformation and persistence of the conflict. The answer is the deep grievances that border on ethnic domination, marginalisation 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 has fueled the struggle for resource control and participation for self development. The key drivers of the conflict since the 1990s are the persisting problems and the nature of state and corporate responses. The illegal oil economy is sustaining the conflict. It is also creating internal incoherence, fractionalisation 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 been state and corporate reform. From the 1950s, the region has been seeking inclusion in representation and developmental attention. In the 1970s and 1980s, the communities sought more sensitive and socially responsible oil companies, but this has not been realised. 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 centralised state, constitutional and state reform through a conference of ethnic nationalities, demilitarisation 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 organise protests and the elite manipulate the youth so as to derive benefits from the oil companies. The militias and armed bands utilise 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 have emerged from communal, ethnic, gender, environmental, rights, youths, civil and non governmental organisations and groups, have

transformed the conflict, particularly since the late 1980s, into a mass movement based conflict. It is to be noted that 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 societies 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 which was catalysed 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 altruistic militias, there is considerable synergy, commonality of goals and operating methods. Certain social and cultural processes and factors have undergirded 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 the liaison with oil companies and the conduct of conflict. This resulted from a de-legitimation of the traditional governance institutions and personnel and the elite.

A critical issue is the examination of the implication of this de-legitimation on the youth conduct of conflict and the conflict itself. We noted earlier in the examination of effects of the conflict, a growing criminalisation, lawlessness, youth restiveness, aggression, violence, insecurity, destruction and breakdown of social values, fabric and order. The loss of focus, internal incoherence of the youth militant groups, inter-militia and inter-armed band and cult wars are possible fallouts of the absence of the matured, moderating, mediating, dialogic roles and the ensuing absence of social control, order and coherence that could have emerged from elders and elite that had integrity and the people's confidence.

The youth appropriated soci-cultural symbols and practices. The first is the Ogele which is a form of traditional peaceful protests which began from the village square. The youth action in the late 1990s began with the Ogele. The youth sang and moved in peaceful protests. Secondly, the youth resuscitated the Egbesu rites and initiation to provide some traditional religious and cultural empowerment and sense of invincibility. The Egbesu became the common mobilisation and identity platform 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? We think that this has arisen 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 aggravated. The state would have to 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 groups 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 pushed the youths towards militant actions, when confronted with state and corporate insensitivity, abuse, intimidation, violence and militarisation. The mass of angry and frustrated youths became also amenable to elite manipulation, particularly during the 1999 and 2003 elections, and empowerment with arms. Militancy, militant movements, militias, cults and armed bands then emerged.

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Appendix

Militia Actions in Niger-delta

Below is a chronology of major attacks on Nigerian oil industry in 2006 and 2007 by the 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 on 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 on 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 on February 18 – 2 Americans and a Briton.
7. May 10, 2006: An oil executive of Baker Hughes (an American company) employee is killed by unidentified gunmen in Port Harcourt. MEND denies responsibility.
8. May 11, 2006: 3 workers of Italian oil contractor, Saipem, were kidnapped.
9. June 2, 2006: 6 Britons, 1 Canadian and an American were abducted from Bulford Dolphin oil rig owned by Norwegian oilfield services group, Fred. Olsen Energy. Hostages were released two days later.

10. June 7, 2006: Militants attacked 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 were kidnapped in Port Harcourt but freed 5 days later.

12. July 6, 2006: Gunmen kidnap Michael Los, a Dutch oil worker in Bayelsa State. He was released 4 days later.

13. July 25, 2006: Niger-delta mob seized 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 was 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 were released 10 days later.

16. August 9, 2006: 2 Norwegian and 2 Ukrainian oil workers were kidnapped.

17. August 10, 2006: A Belgian and a Moroccan contractors were 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) were 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 were kidnapped on August 9 freed.

20. August 16, 2006: A Lebanese man was kidnapped.

21. August 19, 2006: German oil worker, Guido Schiffarth, was 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 was 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 were released two days later.

24. October 3, 2006: 7 foreign oil workers (four Britons, one Indonesian, one Malaysian and a Romanian) werekidnapped 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 were released.

26. November 2, 2006: A British and an American employees of Petroleum Geo-Services (PGS) were 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 were freed.

28, November 22, 2006: A British oil worker was killed during an attempt by Nigerian soldiers to free 7 hostages abducted by militants earlier the same day.

29. December 7, 2006: Gunmen kidnapped 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 invaded the Nun River logistics base in Bayelsa State operated by Royal Dutch Shell and held 5 people hostage.

31. December 18, 2006: 2 car bombs exploded 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 planted a car bomb in the Shell residential compound in Port Harcourt. Shell evacuated 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 Bayelsa State, kidnapping 9 South Korean and one Nigerian oil workers.

35. January 12, 2007: 9 South Korean workers and one Nigerian were 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 January 10.

36. January 16, 2007: 3 people, including a Dutch oil worker, were 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 freed 5 Chinese telecom workers, kidnapped on January 5. An Italian was also released in Bayelsa State. 3 foreign hostages remained in captivity.

38. January 20, 2007: Militants seized 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 kidnapped 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 were kidnapped.

41. February 4, 2007: 9 employees of Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) kidnapped on January 25 were released.

42. February 6, 2007: Gunmen kidnapped a Filipino oil worker on Port Harcourt-Owerri road.

43. February 7, 2007: A Filipina woman was 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 Company, identified as Gerard Laporal), married to a Nigerian woman was kidnapped by gunmen as he returned home around 9:00 pm.

44. February 13, 2007: Militants released 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 were abducted from their apartment in Port Harcourt.

46. February 18, 2007: 3 Croatian oil workers of Hydro drive Nigeria were abducted in Port Harcourt.