

OIL, POLITICS AND CONFLICTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NIGERIA AND SOUTH SUDAN

Kareem Olawale Bestoyin*

*University of Lagos, Nigeria. E-mail: bokareem@unilag.edu.ng

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Resumen: A lo largo de los años, el África subsahariana se ha convertido en sinónimo de conflictos. De todas las causas conocidas de conflictos en África, la obtención de abundantes recursos parece ser el más prominente y letal. Nigeria y Sudán del Sur son algunos de los muchos países ricos en recursos en el África subsahariana que han experimentado conflictos endémicos cuyas consecuencias han sido el subdesarrollo y la miserable pobreza. En ambos países, el petróleo y las políticas parecen ser el hilo conductor de la mayoría de estos conflictos. Este artículo utiliza metodología de análisis de datos secundarios y cualitativos para evaluar cómo la pugna por la hegemonía de los recursos energéticos moldea las trayectorias de los conflictos en ambos países. Por tanto, este texto utiliza el estructural-funcionalismo como su marco de análisis. De esto se deduce que hasta que las estructuras de gobierno estén lo suficientemente reforzadas para aplacar las necesidades de desarrollo de la ciudadanía, ni el programa de amnistía adoptado por el gobierno nigeriano ni los acuerdos de paz adoptados por el gobierno de Sudán del Sur podrán acabar definitivamente con los conflictos.

Palabras clave: petróleo; políticas; conflicto; Nigeria; Sudán del Sur.

Abstract: Over the years, Sub-Saharan Africa has become synonymous with conflicts. And of all the known causes of conflicts in Africa, the gift of abundant resources appears to be the most prominent and lethal. Nigeria and South Sudan are some of the many resource-rich countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that have been

experiencing endemic conflicts whose consequences have been under development and abject poverty. In both countries, oil and politics seem to be the driving force of most of these conflicts. This paper uses secondary data and qualitative methodology to appraise how the struggle for the hegemony of oil resources shapes and reshapes the trajectories of conflicts in both countries. Hence this paper deploys structural functionalism as the framework of analysis. It infers that until the structures of governance are strengthened enough to tackle the developmental needs of the citizenry, neither the amnesty programme adopted by the Nigerian government nor peace agreements adopted by the government of South Sudan can permanently end the conflicts.

Keywords: Oil; Politics; Conflict; Nigeria; South Sudan.

INTRODUCTION

For several decades, the Sub-Saharan Africa has remained a theatre of conflicts and wars of different kinds and proportion. And at the heart of most of these conflicts and wars is the scramble for resource control and the accruing proceeds. This indicates that wherever there are resources there must be politics, and whenever there is politics, conflict must arise because in allocating the resources (which is politics) there must be a clash of interests. How these interests are assuaged or met determines whether the conflict will degenerate to violence or not. This lends credence

to the saying that “peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to manage conflict”.

Conflict is inevitable in all human societies. Any wonder Karl Marx described conflict as a dominant character in human relations, hence the history of human society is the history of class struggle. Supporting this view, Ayokhai¹ argued that social relations in human society are logically antagonistic and conflicting because individual interest differs. But conflict only becomes dangerous if it is allowed to degenerate into violence and war. With strong institutions and good governance, conflict can be managed and prevented from degenerating to violence and war even in a resource-rich nation. Norway and Saudi Arabia represent a good example of resource-rich nations where strong institutions and good governance have prevented the manifestation of the resource curse prophecy, or a conflict induced by gift of abundant resources. This shows that conflict only thrives in where strong institutions of governance are lacking or weak.

In most oil-rich countries in Sub-Saharan Africa for instance, oil politics usually degenerates to exploitation and violent conflicts because of the presence of weak governance structures and bad leadership. Although conflicts in Africa are also linked to other factors such as ethnic plurality, ethnicity, nepotism and religious differences, resource curse has been adduced to be the most prominent and lethal factor. Nigeria and South Sudan are two of the many countries in Africa that have been ravaged by conflicts and wars. And oil been the major resource in both countries has remained at the centre of these conflicts. In Nigeria, the oil-rich Niger Delta Region has been engulfed in conflict between the militants (who are fighting against environmental degradation and lack of development in the Niger Delta) and the Nigerian government/international oil companies. Similarly, in South Sudan, the struggle for political power and invariably the control of oil resources has resulted in a violent conflict and civil war between the various nationalities particularly the two major ethnic groups – Dinka

and Nuer. The implication of these conflicts has been the deepening crisis of development and national cohesion in both countries. This paper would examine how oil politics is shaping and reshaping the dynamics and trajectory of these conflicts. By oil politics I mean the authoritative allocation of oil resources and the struggle that emanates thereof or the conflicts it generates as every participating actor tries to foster their interest. The paper would also demonstrate how weak institutions and lack of basic infrastructure as well as job opportunities cause and deepen these conflicts more than any other factor.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework of analysis employed for this paper is structural functionalism. There are two major reasons for chosen this framework. First is that, the resource curse paradigm which over the years, has dominated academic inquiry on the causes of conflicts in resource-rich countries appears to be no longer tenable as demonstrated by many years of political tranquillity and economic prosperity in oil-rich countries like Norway and Saudi Arabia for example. Thus, recent studies have not only questioned, but also criticized the alleged linkage between resources and violence.²

The experiences of these countries have shown that the gift of abundant resources does not always lead to violent conflict. In fact, resources could be a blessing rather than a curse to a country. The second reason for employing this theory is that, violent conflicts and wars in resource-endowed countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are more often than not a function of structural failure. In other words, resource-induced conflict arises and thrives in Africa because its development structures and institutions of governance have failed to function efficiently. In this regard, Fearon & Latin³ rightly observed that, “oil producers (for instance) tend to have weaker state apparatuses than one would expect given their level of income”. Although the

¹ See, Ayokhai, E. F., “Natural resource, identity politics and violent conflict in post-independence Nigeria”, *African Journal of History and Culture*, 2013.

² See, Brunnschweiler, C. N. and Bulte, E. H., “The resource curse revisited and revised: A tale of paradoxes and red herrings”, *Economics Working Paper Series*, 6/61 (2006).

³ Fearon, J. D. and Laitin, D., “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”, *American Political Science Review*, 97 (2003), p. 81.

struggle for resource control can lead to conflict, and the proceeds from resources could serve as a catalyst for violent conflict,⁴ these scenarios are possible only if there are weak institutions of governance, ineffective development structures and lack of basic amenities. One common denominator in all countries where resources have led to conflicts and wars has been the presence of weak institutions and inefficient development structures. On the contrary, in all countries where resources have created prosperity, strong institutions and development structures are found to be present and efficient.

Based on these facts, structural functionalism theory is very much suitable for the analysis of conflict in oil-rich countries such as Nigeria and South Sudan. According to Gabriel Almond, one of the chief advocates of this approach in political science, every political system performs certain input and output functions and these include; interest articulation, interest aggregation, rule making, rule application and rule adjudication.⁵ The central argument of structural functionalism is that the degree at which a given political system is able to perform these functions effectively will determine not only the level of its stability, but also its prosperity. A country whose institutions are able to perform these roles effectively will achieve political stability and development, while a country whose institutions are weak and as a result could not perform these roles efficiently will experience conflicts and political instability. The utility of structural functionalism to this paper is that it would help us to understand how weak institutions and inefficient development structures have been shaping and reshaping the interplay of oil, politics and conflicts in Nigeria and South Sudan.

2. GENERAL FEATURES OF NIGERIA AND SOUTH SUDAN

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. It is a plural society with over 250 ethnic nationalities prominent among which are: Hau-

sa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. Nigeria is divided into 36 states and its capital is Abuja. It is richly endowed with many mineral resources prominent among which is crude oil. Crude oil is found in the Niger Delta Region of the country.

Originally, the Niger Delta Region was the South-South geo-political zone which is inhabited mainly by the minorities in southern Nigeria and these include; Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. However, for political reason and administrative convenience, the map of the Niger Delta was recently redrawn and expanded to include three other states and they include; Abia, Imo and Ondo. Nonetheless, the concern of this paper is the Niger Delta of the South- South geo-political zone. The Niger Delta has an estimated population of over 29 million people, many of whom live in rural fishing and farming communities. In spite of its abundant resources, poverty and underdevelopment remain widespread. 73% of the people lack access to safe drinking water, about 70% of households lack electricity, and primary school enrolment rate is still very low.⁶

In Nigeria, crude oil was first discovered in 1956 at Oloibiri in the present day Bayelsa state. Prior to and few years after Nigeria's independence in 1960, agriculture was the mainstay of its economy, hence the country produced in commercial quantities cash crops such as cotton, groundnuts, cocoa, palm oil, rubber, etc. But that changed in the 70s when oil became the mainstay of Nigeria's economy following the oil boom and the consequent neglect of agriculture. Since then oil has remained very important to Nigeria's economy which has become oil dependent. For the past four decades, oil has been dictating Nigeria's economic growth and development. For instance, oil assumed 58.1% of Nigeria's total export value in 1970. It jumped to 96.9% in 1980, 93.6% in 1990 and 95% in 2001.⁷ Today, Nigeria faces two major conflicts: militancy in the Niger Delta, and terrorism in the North. The concern of

⁴ Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A., *Greed and grievance in civil war*. Washington, DC., World Bank, 2001.

⁵ See, Enemu, F. C., "Approaches and Methods to the Study of Politics", in Anifowose, Remi and Enemu, Francis Chigbo (eds.), *Elements of Politics*. Lagos, Sam Iroanusi Publications, 1999.

⁶ See, Akinwale, A. A., "Curtailling conflicts in the resource-endowed Niger Delta communities of Nigeria", *Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences*. 1/7 (2009).

⁷ See, Akpabio, E. and Akpan, N. S., "Governance and oil politics in Nigeria's Niger Delta: The question of distributive equity", *Journal of Human Ecology*, 2/30 (2010), p. 115.

this paper is Niger Delta conflict because of its link with oil.

Also, South Sudan, like Nigeria, is a multi-ethnic society with Dinka and Nuer as the major ethnic groups. It was formally part of Sudan until 2011 when it got her independence through a United Nations backed referendum which, in conjunction with the 2005 Peace Agreement formally ended its over two decades of war with Sudan. It has 10 states and its capital is Juba. Farming is the major and traditional occupation of South Sudan. It is rich in mineral resources particularly crude oil. Its crude oil deposits are located in two key areas - the border with Sudan and the Upper Nile Region comprising three key states - Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei. With oil accounting for 98% of the government's annual operating budget and 80% of the GDP, South Sudan is the most oil dependent country in the world.⁸

Despite its huge oil resources, South Sudan is still one of the poorest countries in the world. Even though South Sudan's "petroleum laws are widely considered to reflect many aspects of good practice and provide a starting point for more extensive reforms, but as with most laws in South Sudan, they remain almost completely unimplemented". There is lack of transparency and accountability over the use of oil revenues.⁹ Apart from lack of basic infrastructure partly because of many years of neglect and marginalization by the Government of Sudan (GoS), South Sudan still suffers from high level of illiteracy, corruption and bad leadership in post-independence era. It has been engulfed in violent conflict that started barely few years after independence. Since the outbreak of violent conflict in South Sudan in December 2013, about 7 out of its 10 states have been affected by the violence.¹⁰ However, the areas affected most by the conflict are the oil-rich states and the borders with Sudan which are also rich in oil.

⁸ See, Deng, D. K., "Oil and sustainable peace in South Sudan", *A Working Paper*. Juba, South Sudan Law Society Access to Justice for All, 2015, p. 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰ For details see, USAID. "South Sudan crisis", *Fact Sheet*, 6 (2013).

3. OIL POLITICS, STRUCTURAL FAILURE AND THE CONFLICT IN NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA: THE LINK

The Niger Delta has been a theatre of agitations and conflict from pre-colonial era. First was the agitation for a separate country which was informed by the fear of political domination by the majority ethnic groups. This fear was allayed by the Willincks Commission which rejected the demand for a separate country, but instead granted a special developmental status (the Niger Delta Development Board) and constitutional guarantees in the form of fundamental rights and national police force. However, the discovery of oil in 1956 in the region and the commencement of commercial oil production in 1958 led to another form of agitation: the struggle for the control of oil resources by the indigenes, Eastern Region Government which was dominated and ruled by the Igbo – a major ethnic group, and the Federal Government which was dominated and ruled by the Hausa/Fulani – another major ethnic group. The struggle for oil resource hegemony later became more intense, hence partly contributed to the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70, though indirectly.¹¹ It is on record that part of the reason why the Aburi Accord which would have prevented the civil war was not implemented was because the Federal Government did not want to cede the Niger Delta Region to the secessionist Eastern Region Government because of its huge oil resources endowment.

Meanwhile the civil war did not stop the struggle for oil resource control rather it altered the character and the *modus operandi* of the struggle. Hence, after the war, one of the actors -the Eastern Region Government was eliminated from the oil hegemony struggle following its defeat in the civil war. However, other actors soon emerged and were later compelled by circumstances to embrace violence both as a strategy of agitation and as a means of survival. It would be recalled that before the Nigerian civil war, a young police officer- Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro recruited and trained about 150 youths under the banner of the Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) and declared "the

¹¹ Ikelegbe, A., "The Economy of Conflict in the oil rich Niger Delta Region of Nigeria", *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 2/14 (2005), p. 214.

Niger Delta Republic".¹² He was arrested and imprisoned. But this marked the beginning of militancy in the Region.

It is worthy of note that after the civil war and following the emergence of oil as the mainstay of Nigeria's economy from the 70s, there were attempts by the Nigerian State to tackle the development needs of the Niger Delta, and the environmental degradation arising from oil exploration and production and the consequent oil spillage and gas flaring. Thus, special development commissions were established for the Region. Examples of such commissions include: Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBA) and Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) established in 1978 and 1992, respectively. Unfortunately, these commissions failed to surmount the developmental needs of the Region due to corruption and bad leadership by the management and political leaders.

The implication was the continuation of agitations by the oil producing communities. Ken Saro-Wiwa - a human right and environment activist, had in late 1980s formed the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and in 1990 made the famous declaration and presentation of the Ogoni Bill of Rights in which the Ogoni people wanted an end to the exploitation of their resources by the Multinational Oil Companies as well as the economic marginalization of the Ogoni People by the Nigerian State, hence they ordered the oil companies to vacate Ogoniland or face the wrath of the people. This was followed by a campaign of sabotage of oil installations in Ogoniland. In response to that, Saro-Wiwa – the pioneer founder of MOSOP and eight other Ogonis were arrested, tried, convicted and executed for treason by the then Military Head of State – Gen. Sanni Abacha.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the emergence of MOSOP and the subsequent public execution of Saro-Wiwa not only triggered more sabotage of oil facilities by the Ogoni people, but also created more awareness among other oil producing communities that were suffering same problem of environmental pollution by the oil companies through gas flaring and oil spillage, and the

¹² See, Azaiki, S., *Oil, Politics and Blood: The Niger Delta Story*. Ibadan, Y-Books, 2006.

neglect of the area by the Nigerian State despite being the major source of revenue for the entire country. For instance, Ijaw - a minority ethnic group that has many oil producing communities became sensitized and motivated by the activities of MOSOP. So, by the time the military government was using force to contain the activities of MOSOP, the Ijaw and other oil producing minorities have become fully aware of the economic exploitation and the lack of development going on in their area. As a result of this, they became aggressive and took up arms against the perceived enemies – the oil companies and the institutions of Nigerian state.

The aggression of the Ijaws against the Nigerian state witnessed its crescendo between 1998 and 1999 when the then Military Governor of Bayelsa state (a state that consists mainly of Ijaw ethnic group) acting on the order of the Military Head of State – Gen. Sani Abacha, arrested and detained an Ijaw youth leader in the Government House for purportedly allowing his followers to breach public peace. In a reaction to that, a group of youth who were said to be members of the Ijaw cult called 'Egbesu' stormed the Government House in Yenegoa, disarmed the guards and released their incarcerated leader. The Egbesu boys were said to have succeeded because they wore charms that made them invincible and bullet-proof. This ugly violent encounter between the apparatus of violence of the Nigerian state and the Ijaw Youth later became known as the First Egbesu War.¹³

The Egbesu war was essential because it provoked series of activities that aggravated the crisis in the Region. The success of Egbesu war encouraged more youth to join the struggle, hence the formation of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) which made the famous 'Kaiama Declaration' in 1998 that ordered the oil companies and expatriates operating in all Ijawland to leave or face attacks by the youth. It was the refusal of the oil companies to obey the order that made the youth to start taking them hostage and vandalizing oil facilities.¹⁴ The Nigerian

¹³ Ibeanu, O., "Our mothers' Courage silenced all Guns: Women and Conflict in the Niger Delta", *Journal of Political Economy*, 1/1 (2005).

¹⁴ Ibid.

state quickly responded with more military action. Apart from the provision of 13% derivation for the oil producing states in the 1999 Constitution, the culture of using military action to suppress the agitations for resource control by the Niger Delta continued even after Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999. Hence, at various times within the present democratic era, the military Joint Task Force (JTF) has carried out military operations in communities such as Odi, Umuchem, Kaima, Yenagoa and numerous others, resulting in huge civilian casualties.¹⁵ With these experiences, it appears the Nigerian governing class is unaware that, as Nnoli quoting Claude Ake, observed:

“democracy and the military are in a dialectical opposition. The military is the antithesis of democracy with regard to its forms, values, purpose and structure”.¹⁶

Hence, the use of military aggression as a response to the agitations of the Niger Delta youth rather than suppress the aggression, aggravated it and led to more mistrust and chaos. In the midst of this chaos, and in search for funding to enable them buy more weapons in readiness for further battle with the Nigerian military, the Niger Delta youth turned to their politicians who unfortunately are also part of the national conspiracy and structure that has been looting the resources of the oil producing communities for years. While hoping to use the violent youth to rig elections and perpetuate themselves in power, the politicians quickly capitalized on this crisis and converted the various youth movements into militant groups and this formally marked the birth of organized and well-funded militancy in the Region. This also led to the infiltration, politicization and criminalization of the militancy struggle by the new sponsors or political cabals.

The impact was the disintegration of the various youth movements into different militant factions controlled by different militant leaders. Between 1999 and 2003, there had emerged

many militant groups prominent among them were: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) led by Henry Okah and the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) led by Asari Dukubo which were highly equipped with sophisticated arms and ammunition like AK-47, Machine guns, gun-boats, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and other types of weaponry that are meant for the 21st century warfare and which could withstand any security apparatus like the Nigerian Military. According to security experts, these types of weaponry are capital intensive. For instance, 1 AK-47 gun could cost between 300,000 and 500,000 thousand naira, while 1 General Purpose Machine Gun could cost as much as 1 million naira. The militants who were mainly the unemployed youth could not have afforded these weapons on their own without the funding from their sponsors - the political cabals.

Later attempts by the Federal Government to assuage the militants through the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to tackle the development challenges facing the Region did not yield the desired result because of corruption and mismanagement. The commission like its predecessors failed. Of course, Nigeria in general and the Niger Delta in particular, has never been in short supply of development agencies.

The problem however has been the inability of these agencies to fulfil the objectives for which they were created. The subsequent excessive deployment of force by the Nigerian state against the militants enraged the militants more, thus they declared full war against the oil companies as well as the Nigerian state and its instruments of violence – the Joint Task Force (JTF). This, coupled with the infiltration of the Niger Delta Struggle by some politicians and traditional rulers who wanted to make huge and quick money, brought a new dimension to militancy in the Region.

Apart from engaging in the vandalisation of oil installations, oil bunkering, and hostage taking of expatriates, the militants began to kidnap local oil workers and top government officials and wealthy individuals while demanding millions of naira as ransom. Seeing that militancy had become a very lucrative business, the large army of unemployed youth in the Niger Delta

¹⁵ Douglas, O., Okonta, I., Kemedi, D. V. and Watts, M., “Oil and Militancy in the Niger Delta: Terrorist Threat or another Colombia? Niger Delta Economies of Violence”, *Working Paper*, 4 (2004).

¹⁶ See, Nnoli, O., *National security in Africa: A Radical New Perspective*. Enugu, SNAAP Press Ltd., 2006, p. 185

joined in, hence the increased multiplication of militant camps all over the Region. It was then that the crisis in the Region exploded like a volcano. The militants engaged the JTF in open confrontations, and consistently attacked oil platforms and pipelines. As a result of this, oil production decreased dramatically while oil bunkering increased astronomically and this led to a significant reduction in government revenues. This threatened the Nigerian Economy which was and is, still dependent on earnings from crude oil. See figure 1 below for the key actors in the Niger Delta conflict.

Figure 1. Key actors in the niger delta conflict

ACTOR	NATURE
Niger Delta Militants (notable among them are; Henry Okah, Asari Dokubo, Tom Polo, Atake Tom and Boy-Loaf)	Internal
Federal Government of Nigeria/JTF	Internal
Niger Delta Elites (state governors, local government chairmen, traditional rulers)	Internal
Local oil contractors/oil-well owners)	Internal
Multinational Oil Companies (Shell, Total, Chevron, Agip, Elf)	External

Source: Adapted from Ibeanu, 2005; Gusau, 2012.

Faced with these disturbing realities and seeing that the use of force by the Federal government over the years has worsened the situation, when the late president – Umar Musa Yar’dua came to power in 2007, one of his Seven-Point Agenda was to resolve the Niger Delta crisis through rapid development of the Region. In order to achieve this, he created the Ministry of the Niger Delta in 2008 and incorporated NDDC as one of the Departments of the Ministry. In a major move to end the conflict, the President also introduced the Amnesty Programme through which the militants were persuaded to shun violence, surrender their arms and embrace peace and dialogue in exchange for mouth-watering incentives like monthly allowances, education scholarship and local/international skills acquisition training.¹⁷ Of course, most of the militant leaders and their groups like Ateke Tom, Boyloaf, Chief Govern-

¹⁷ Gusau, I. U., “Jonathan and Politics of Fresh Militancy in Niger Delta”, *Daily Trust*, February 10. 2012.

ment Ekpemupolo (aka Tompolo) and their numerous militant fighters embraced the Amnesty programme. From Bayelsa State alone, 520 rifles, 95,970,000 rounds of ammunition and 14 gun boats and 200 Ak-47 were turned in by the 14 militant camps operating in the area. Much bigger quantity of weaponry was turned in from other states like Rivers, Delta, etc, during the Amnesty Arms Submission Programme. President Goodluck Jonathan who succeeded Late President Umar Yar’dua continued with the Amnesty programme. Today, the Amnesty policy has reduced militancy and achieved relative peace in the Niger Delta Region, however, there are still isolated cases of sabotage of the oil pipelines, hostage taking and oil bunkering. This shows that amnesty policy alone cannot solve the Niger Delta conflict permanently.

It is important to note that why oil politics and its resultant violent conflicts are thriving in Nigeria is because fifty years after the discovery of crude oil, the country still lacks not only strong institutions, but also basic infrastructure especially in the oil host communities. In the words of Ayokhai, Nigeria is still a country:

“Where all known social infrastructures are at the peak of decay. Things like water, electricity, health, education, employment, etc which are taken for granted by most countries of the world are luxuries in Nigeria. The citizens, who live in one of the world’s most naturally endowed regions, are among the most wretched of the earth’s poor. Its government is also rated one of the world’s most corrupt”.¹⁸

Also, the struggle for resource control and the resultant violent conflicts are not only limited to the conduct of relations between the Niger Delta Region and the Federal Government. There are also intra and inter community conflicts between some of the various ethnic groups within the Niger Delta Region, hence oil politics in the Region has been both vertical and horizontal. While inter-community conflicts arise when two or more communities claim ownership of an oil-well, intra-community clashes usually arise when there is a disagreement between the various interests within the

¹⁸ Ayokhai, E. F., “Natural resource, identity politics and violent conflict in post-independence Nigeria”, *African Journal of History and Culture*. 2013, p. 38.

host community with regards to how to share oil rent or perks given to the community by the oil companies or government.¹⁹

Oil politics is still prevalent in Nigerian polity today and it is having a lot of negative consequences on the economy. For instance, it is hindering the effective implementation of the Nigerian Local Content Policy that was introduced about one and a half decades ago and which was aimed at increased participation of local indigenous firms in the oil and gas industry so as to bolster in-country capacity and indigenous manpower development, job creation and wealth re-distribution. Oil political has also stalled the passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) which has remained in the National Assembly for over a decade now. The bill is being delayed by the vested interests such the International Oil Companies, local oil contractors, and politicians who think that if the bill is passed into law, it would introduce due process and efficiency, and curb corruption and illicit wealth accumulation that have characterized the industry over the years.

From the foregoing analysis, it could be extrapolated that the Niger Delta conflict has four major dimensions and they all have link to oil politics and lack of development. First is the struggle for resource control between the oil host communities and the Federal Government. The Federal government through constitutional provision has given 13% derivation to the oil producing states of the Niger Delta, but this is short of 50% derivation they have been demanding.

Second is the hostility between the oil host communities and the International Oil Companies as well as the Federal Government over oil exploration and the resultant environmental degradation. The international oil companies operating in the Niger Delta have abused the environment through gas flaring and oil spillage. These abuses have polluted the lands and waters of the Niger Delta people. This is affecting negatively the traditional occupation of the people which is farming and fishing. This, coupled with lack of basic amenities and development in the area, has compelled the people to resort to sabotage of the facilities of the oil

companies. This sabotage like vandalizing oil pipelines has even led to further environmental degradation.

The third dimension is the antagonism between the Niger Delta militants and the oil companies/Federal troops. Militancy emerged in the Niger Delta as a response to the environmental degradation, the lack of basic necessities of life and the dearth of economic development and job opportunities in the Region despite been the goose that laid the golden egg for Nigeria's economy. However, the various militant groups that emerged to fight this marginalization and injustice were infiltrated, politicized and criminalized by politicians, traditional rulers and other interests. Also, the Nigerian State, mindful of the centrality and essential role of oil resources in the national economy usually intervenes on behalf of the international oil companies using favourable legislations, oil policies, and sometimes, military aggression to suppress protests by the host communities against the international oil companies that are operating in the region. From unilateral and statutory transfer of the ownership of oil and all mineral resources to the Federal Government to the deployment of military task force to quench agitations of the Niger Delta people, the Nigerian state has demonstrated its readiness to remove any barrier that can hinder its access to oil resources.

The fourth dimension is the struggle between and within the oil host communities arising from internal disagreements over ownership of oil wells and, or sharing formula of oil rents and, or location of development projects by the government or oil companies. This aspect of the conflict occurs because there are numerous needs and interests in the Niger Delta, but the resources to meet them are limited. Hence there is always the scramble for perks and developmental projects by the various groups and interests. This scramble sometimes results in inter-group crisis and, or inter-communal conflicts. And at times, two or more communities may lay claim to an oil-well so as to enjoy any benefits that may accrue from it.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 38.

4. OIL POLITICS, STRUCTURAL FAILURE AND THE CONFLICT IN SOUTH SUDAN: THE LINK

At independence South Sudan inherited not only crude oil deposit from Sudan, but also a culture of dictatorship, corruption, bad governance, weak institutions and armed rebellion. With these as the prevailing features of South Sudan, it is not surprising that barely two years after its independence internal conflicts between various armed groups erupted and rocked the very foundation of the country by degenerating into a full-blown war. Hence, the crude oil that was supposed and expected to be a blessing to the people of South Sudan has become a curse and a resource that is being used to fuel conflict and war. Although there were strong indications of the fragile process of state-building at the point of the country's independence, there was also optimism that the creation of South Sudan would usher in new opportunities for the citizens of this new state to build and rebuild their legitimate homes in a place that so many had called "home" while in exile for decades.²⁰

Arguably, the conflict in South Sudan is a function of numerous factors. However, one major factor that has been shaping and reshaping the dynamics and trajectories of the South Sudan's conflict is oil politics which has become parasitic because of the presence of weak institutions and inefficient infrastructure. The history of oil exploration and production in South Sudan is a history of violent conflict. Oil was first discovered by Chevron in Sudan in 1978 at Bentiu in the present day South Sudan's Unity State. Soon after the discovery of oil in the late 70s, the second Sudanese civil war broke out in 1983 and lasted for over two decades (1983-2005). And because of the civil war, Chevron left the country in 1984. Thus, paving the way for Chinese and Malaysian owned multinational oil companies who came in and continued oil exploration and production. But it was not until 1999 that the first Sudanese oil was shipped to the international market.²¹ The 2005 Compre-

hensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005) was brokered by the regional organization - the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and it was negotiated between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) - the leading southern movement and armed group, and Sudan's ruling National Congress Party - NCP.²²

However, neither the CPA that ended Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005) nor South Sudan's independence in 2011 brought socio-political stability and economic development. Since independence, the relationship between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and Government of South Sudan (GoSS) has been that of a brief cooperation, border conflict and then oil production shutdown followed by a new phase of civil war in South Sudan in which Sudan is increasingly an active key player.²³ And oil is the reason for Sudan's active participation in the conflict. It is on record that over 70% of Sudan's crude oil is located in Southern Sudan. However, the major refinery, export pipelines and seaport are all located in Sudan.

The implication of this uneven distribution is that even after the South Sudan's independence, Sudan would still remain its only export route via a pipeline that connects to the seaport in Port Sudan at the Red Sea. This has the potential of causing another set of conflict and deepening the already sour relationship between the two Sudans. However, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 had envisaged this scenario playing out and in order to prevent that, it stated that oil revenues from South Sudan should be shared 50:50 ratio with the Government of Sudan. But this still has negative implication for the economy of Sudan because the independence of South Sudan meant that Sudan would henceforth lose 70% of oil reserves and 50% of oil revenues to the newly independent state. Moreover, soon after the secession, the two countries breached the agreement on oil revenues sharing formula and

²⁰ Hovil, L., "Conflict in South Sudan: Refugees Seek Protection in Uganda and a Way Home", *International Refugee Rights Initiative*, 2014.

²¹ Grawert, E. and Andrä, C., "Oil Investment and Conflict in Upper Nile State, South Sudan", *Germany: Bonn International Center of Conversion (BICC) Brief*, 48 (2013).

²² International Crisis Group, "South Sudan: A Civil War by any other name", *Africa Report*, 217 (10 April. 2014).

²³ International Crisis Group, "Sudan and South Sudan's merging conflicts". *Africa Report*, 223 (29 January. 2015).

this partly led to the conflict which has been destabilizing oil production.²⁴

In addition to this Sudan-South Sudan struggle for resource control is the internal struggle among the key political actors in South Sudan for political power as well as the control of oil resources. The ongoing internal conflict in South Sudan started in December 2013, barely three years after the country gained independence from Sudan through a referendum supported by the international community. Since then, there have been long-standing tensions and intrigues within the South Sudan's ruling party - the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) which later degenerated into armed conflict in the nation's capital - Juba.

The conflict started following the purported attempted coup to overthrow the government of President Salva Kiir in which the president fingered his vice – Riek Machar to be the sponsor. This divided the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) between forces loyal to the Government and forces loyal to former Vice-President, and the resultant effect was a violent conflict and summary arrest, detention, and dismissal of senior political figures within the SPLA and South Sudan's political leadership. Machar, who had been dismissed by President Kiir escaped from Juba and denied there was an attempted coup and his involvement in any coup. But he soon declared himself the leader of an armed opposition movement that later became known as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). The crisis rapidly spread amongst security forces in the country's capital city - Juba and later engulfed the whole neighbourhoods causing many civilian deaths, looting and destruction of property within days.²⁵

Although the political intrigues and dispute that triggered this crisis was not originally based on ethnic identity, the key players in the crisis exploited the pre-existing ethnic and political fault lines and this led to targeted ethnic killings in

the capital - Juba, and then beyond. The fighting was initially between forces loyal to the President and forces loyal to the former Vice President. But when reports from Juba gave ethnic coloration to the fighting, armed civilians joined in and engaged in retaliatory attacks which further deepened and complicated the conflict.²⁶

The struggle for the control of oil resources and the accruing revenues (oil politics) has pitched not only the two Sudans against each other, but also the elites against one another as well as the host communities against the oil companies. In fact, oil politics is not just a mere cause of the conflict, but the driving force which has continued to escalate and elongate it. There are four dimensions of oil politics in South Sudan's conflict.

The first is the struggle between the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan over the control of oilfields in the border between the two countries, and how to share oil revenues emanating from crude oil that are exported through the pipelines and Red Sea Port which are all located in Sudan. In the oil politics that ensued following the secession of South Sudan, each country has deployed its strategic assets to its advantage. While the government of South Sudan uses its large crude oil reserves, the government of Sudan always deploys its oil pipelines and seaports which are critical to South Sudan's export. But beyond that, the government of Sudan employs other strategies. It is worthy to note that following the discovery of oil and its emergence as the mainstay of Sudan's economy, the government of Sudan has used oil resources in many ways.

As with all dictatorships, President Omar al Bashir has been deploying revenues from oil to curry continuous support with fellow national elites in order to consolidate his stay in power. He uses the proceeds from oil to buy over strong opposition leaders and to sponsor rebel group in order to counter other rebels groups that threaten his rule. He also uses oil revenues to provide social services that would make him popular and douse the likelihood of popular

²⁴ For details see, Nour, S. S. M., "Assessment of the Impact of Oil: Opportunities and Challenges for Economic Development in Sudan", *African Review of Economics and Finance*, 2/2 (2011), p. 141.

²⁵ International Crisis Group, "South Sudan: A Civil War by any other name", *Africa Report*, 217 (10 April. 2014).

²⁶ See, Blanchard, L. P., "The crisis in South Sudan", *Congressional Research Service*, 7/5700 (2014). Available from <<http://www.crs.gov>> [Accessed 2nd June, 2015]

revolt against him. It is worthy to note that the international oil companies involved in Sudan's oil sector are mainly from Asia and they operate under the consortium of the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Companies (GNPC) led by the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), which owns the largest single share of 40%; followed by Malaysia's PETRONAS which has 30% shares and India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation which has 25% shares. The Government of Sudan (GoS) through its national oil company - Sudanese Petroleum SudaPet, owns only 5% shares in GNPC.²⁷

However, when South Sudan seceded with over 70 percent of the oil reserves, President Al Bashir quickly re-strategized. First, he negotiated 50:50 sharing formula of South Sudan's oil revenues. But he understood that this agreement might be breached and even if it was not breached, that alone was not enough since South Sudan could shun Sudan's oil pipelines and export terminals and rather chose to export its crude through another country by building new pipelines (though this option would be capital intensive and time consuming) or decide to stop production at any slightest provocation by Khartoum. In fact, South Sudan deployed the latter strategy in 2012 and halted oil production but resumed in 2013. This not only affected the Sudanese economy negatively, but also nearly cost President Al Bashir his political power by reducing his financial muscle to curry elite support and buy over dissenting voices of the opposition. The second strategy of the president was the deployment of the Sudanese Military to take over the oil rich border.

Since the outbreak of war in South Sudan, the primary aim of the Government of Sudan (GoS) has been to use all possible means to ensure the continuous production and flow of oil from oilfields in South Sudan. Hence, following the violence that resulted in shutdown of some oil installations, it quickly suggested and deployed joint military force to protect the oilfields. However, the GoS also wants to elongate the instability in South Sudan, hence it is secretly arming the SPLM-IO.

²⁷ Nour, S. S. M., "Assessment of the Impact of Oil: Opportunities and Challenges for Economic Development in Sudan", *African Review of Economics and Finance*, 2/2 (2011), p. 126.

And there are indications that the leader of SPLM-IO has entered into a secret agreement to share oil revenues with the Government in Khartoum in exchange of its military support in the war. Both the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) and SPLM-IO are trying hard to get the support of the Government in Khartoum. Although both sides also hate and consider the Government in Khartoum as enemy, they have no other option than to seek its support. The Government in Khartoum on the other hand is exploiting the situation to its advantage. While Khartoum is demanding the ceding of disputed border areas like Abyei which is rich in oil resources as the condition for its military support to GoSS, it also secretly demands from SPLM/A-IO the lion's share of oil revenues as a condition for its support.²⁸ The GoS has been deploying every strategy including the use of militia groups in an attempt to elongate the conflict in South Sudan. For instance, the GoS has drawn the notorious Janjaweed militia into the conflict. And it is on record that the GoS had used this same militia to unleash maximum violence on Darfur people between 2003 and 2006 which prompted the International Criminal Court (ICC) in March 2009, to issue arrest warrants for President Omar Al Bashir on charges of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. The involvement of non-South Sudanese fighters, including the Darfur-based militia - Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) from Sudan, has exacerbated the conflict.²⁹ Even China supplies arms and ammunition to the Region and this affects the dynamics of the conflict too.³⁰ See Figure 2 for the key actors in the South Sudan's conflicts. Meanwhile by playing this double and exploitative oil politics, the Government in Khartoum has been benefitting from both sides in the conflict. Hence, as much as it wants an end to the conflict, it equally wants the conflict to continue. The continuation of the conflict affords Khartoum the opportuni-

²⁸ International Crisis Group, "South Sudan: A Civil War by any other name", *Africa Report*, 217 (10 April. 2014).

²⁹ See, Ottaway, M. and El-Sadany, M., "Sudan: From Conflict to Conflict", *Massachusetts: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2012. Available from: <www.CarnegieEndowment.org/pubs> [Accessed on 2nd June, 2015]

³⁰ See, Attree, L., *China and conflict-affected states - Between principle and pragmatism: Sudan and South Sudan case study*. 2012.

ty to commandeer oil resources from both the Government in Juba and SPLM/A-IO.

The second dimension is the struggle by the South Sudan's elites within and outside the government as well as the SPLM/A for political power and invariably the control of oil resources. As the elites sought political relevance and dominance with access to the oil resources been their final aim and the ultimate end, they reverted back to their various ethnic groups where they have strong base and support. While some formed new ethnic militias, others resuscitated and regrouped the ex-militia groups with which they had waged war with Sudan before 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The elites capitalized on the existing ethnic fault lines and pitched the various ethnic groups against one another particularly the two major ethnic groups – Dinka against Nuer.

The oilfields in Upper Nile and Unity states contain 80% and 20%, respectively, of South Sudan's total crude oil production. Thus, in the current conflict, the forces loyal to Riek Machar have severally attempted to take control of these states where the oilfields are located mainly because of their strategic importance which could be leveraged upon during negotiations. Also, having access to the oilfields would enable the opposition to raise revenues from the sale of oil and use such proceeds to buy weapons and support for the war.³¹ Similarly, the state of Jonglei, which is believed to have significant untapped oil reserves, has been one of the major flashpoints for inter-ethnic fighting. At various times, there have been clashes between Nuer and Murle, Dinka and Murle, as well as between Nuer and Dinka. Any wonder the Jonglei capital: Bor, was among the first areas where fighting quickly spread to in the outset of the current crisis (Blanchard 2014).³² The presence of crude oil in these states has made them the theatre of the ongoing war in South Sudan. All attempts by the United Nations to broker peace between the

warring parties including the current UN Peace Mission, have failed to end the conflict.

The third dimension is the intervention by one of the regional actors – the Ugandan Government/Army which was attracted to the conflict by economic interest (oil proceeds) rather than humanitarian sympathy or the quest to prevent the conflict from destabilizing the entire sub-region. Uganda is not a resource rich nation though it has little quantity of crude oil deposit. It shares border with South Sudan which is very rich in oil resources. The Ugandan Government/Army is playing double game in the conflict. While it openly supports the Government of South Sudan which in turn gives it huge financial compensation from the oil earnings, it secretly supports the SPLM/A-in Opposition. The Government in Juba has used crude oil earnings and oil-backed loans cum agreements to arm and rearm its army and allied forces such as the Ugandan troops while spending relatively little on the welfare of its war-affected citizens. The heavy spending on the war is believed to have mortgaged South Sudan's future such that it might lack the resources in future to perform core state functions such as provision of infrastructure and payment of salaries to state workers.³³ The Ugandan Army's secret support for the Machar-led opposition is intended to make the SPLM/A-IO look very strong and capable of capturing Juba, and to instil perpetual fear and keep pressure on the government in Juba to continuously appreciate the presence of the Ugandan Army as a necessary option. Through these military conspiracy and political intrigues, the Ugandan Army helps in elongating the South Sudanese conflict while reaping part of the proceeds from South Sudan's oil as a result of its unending participation in the conflict.

The fourth dimension is the antagonism between the host communities and international oil companies over the former's forceful evacuation from their land in order to make way for oil exploration and production, and the resultant environmental degradation emanating from the activities of the oil companies. It is worthy of note that following the discovery of oil and

³¹ Patey, L. P., "South Sudan: Fighting could Cripple Oil Industry for Decades", *African Arguments*, January 10, 2014.

³² Blanchard, L. P., "The crisis in South Sudan", *Congressional Research Service*, 7/5700 (2014). Available from: <<http://www.crs.gov>> [Accessed 2nd June, 2015]

³³ International Crisis Group, "Sudan and South Sudan's merging conflicts", *Africa Report*, 223 (29 January, 2015).

its subsequent emergence as the mainstay of Sudanese economy, the Government of Sudan (GoS) began a violent campaign intended to systematically and forcefully wipe-out or drive away the original inhabitants of those South Sudanese areas where International Oil Companies had discovered oil or expected to find oil in future.

During the 21 years of Sudan's civil war, crude oil was first explored and then produced by the international oil companies in the borders between Southern part and Northern part of Sudan and also in the Upper Nile areas in Southern part of Sudan. The GoS also used proceeds from oil to fund the war. In reaction to the GoS campaign to force out the inhabitants of oil-rich communities from their lands so as to make way for oil exploration and exploitation, some of the inhabitants fled to escape the violence been perpetrated by the GoS, while others decided to stay behind and defend their lands. Some of those that stayed behind formed militant resistance groups or militias and engaged the Sudan Armed Forces.³⁴

By the time the war ended after over two decades following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 between GoS and SPLM/A, it had created many victims. Many able-bodied persons before the war had become disabled. Many families had broken up or disconnected. Cultural values and social cohesion were eroded. Homes, farms, livestock, and other unquantifiable crucial assets were lost to the war. However, when the war ended and the dislocated population gradually returned to their areas of origin, they discovered that oil companies have taken over not only their lands, but also have polluted their environment with oil spillage and production waste. As a result, their lands could no longer support agriculture and livestock production which were the traditional occupations of the people. Attempts by the people to seek redress for the damages were suppressed violently by the government of Sudan (GoS) which was the ultimate beneficiary of the proceeds from oil production.

This created hostility between the crude oil host communities and GoS on one hand, and on

³⁴ For details see, Grawert, E, and Andrä, C., *Oil Investment and Conflict in Upper Nile State, South Sudan*. 2013.

the other hand, the oil companies which the host communities believed, conspired with the GoS to abuse, exploit and under-develop their environment. The result of this was armed resistance conflicts which have continued to occur in the oil rich areas even after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the first war and led to the independence of South Sudan (Bol, 2012).³⁵

Figure 2. Key actors in south sudan's conflict

ACTORS	NATURE
President Salva Kiir/SPLM/A	Internal
Ex Vice President; Riek Machar/SPLM/A-IO	Internal
Government of Sudan	External
Ugandan Army	External
International Oil Companies (e.g. CNPC, PETRONAS, IONGC)	External
Chinese Government	External
United Nations	External

Source: Adapted from Shankleman, 2011;³⁶ UNMISS 2014;³⁷ The Sudd Institute, 2014.³⁸

The outbreak of civil war at a time crude oil was discovered in Sudan was not a coincidence. Apart from ethnic and religious differences, the scramble for crude oil and its proceeds was among the major factors that fuelled the war. Similarly, the eruption of another war in the newly independent South Sudan points to oil politics too. It would be recalled that even after the independence of South Sudan, the oil companies are still operating in lands dispossessed from the people. Environment degradation is still going on. But because the new Government of South Sudan (GoSS) needs the proceeds from oil, it has not reversed the policy of the old regime on forceful dispossession of the people's land for oil production. It has also failed to stop

³⁵ See, Bol, M. B., "Oil Industry's Impact on Land Use. Patterns in Northern Upper Nile State, South Sudan.", Presentation on the occasion of the Workshop "Social Dimensions of Oil Exploitation in South Sudan" in Juba, 27-28 November, 2012.

³⁶ Shankleman, J., "Oil and State Building in South Sudan: New country, Old Industry", *United States Institute of Peace Special Report*, 2011.

³⁷ For details see, UNMISS, *Conflict in South Sudan: A Human Rights Report*, May 2014.

³⁸ For details see, *The Sudd Institute Special Report. South Sudan's Crisis: Its drivers, key players, and post-conflict prospects*. Juba, South Sudan, 2014.

the oil companies from degrading the environment of the host communities. Although some measures have been taken by GoSS to develop the oil producing states and the country at large using proceeds from oil, corruption and bad governance have not allowed these measures to succeed. Examples are: the establishment of Future Generation Fund and Oil Revenue Stabilization Account; and the allocation of 2% and 3% of the total revenues from oil to the oil producing states and oil producing communities, respectively.³⁹

The failure of these measures is reflected in the inability of GoSS to provide essential infrastructure like good roads, clean water, electricity, basic education and health care for its teeming population especially the inhabitants of oil producing communities. The oil companies have also not provided these basic amenities for the host communities because providing them would reduce their profit margin thus affect their quest for profit maximization. The response of the oil producing communities to this continuous neglect and lack of development has been to violently resist the operations of the oil companies. Hence the story of South Sudan today is that of an oil-rich country that has been impoverished by oil politics and the attendant violent conflict.

5. NIGERIA AND SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICTS: SIMILARITIES AND IMPACTS

From the preceding analysis, it is deducible that oil politics plays negative role in the conflicts in Nigeria's Niger Delta and South Sudan. In both conflicts, the quest for the control of oil resources is the driving factor. And just as the Nigerian state and the international oil companies in conjunction with the political elites have exploited and underdeveloped the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta, the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan as well as the international oil companies cum the national elites not only exploited and underdeveloped the oil-rich areas, but have also systematically ejected the original inhabitants of these areas in order to make way for oil exploration and production. Poor and helpless, the oil producing communi-

ties resorted to violence as a strategy of protest cum resistance against exploitation, and also as a means of survival.

The political elites in both countries capitalized on the economic vulnerability and violent disposition of the youth in the oil rich regions to groom and fractionalize them into militia groups with which they consolidate their political power and crass accumulation of the commonwealth. In the case of Nigeria, for instance, the youth acceptance of financial sponsorship from politicians was mainly aimed at enabling them buy sophisticated weapons with which they could continue the war against the state and other perceived enemies. But the irony is that this sponsorship creates a partnership between the oppressed and the oppressor. In other words, the oppressed - the people 'represented' by the militias in the oil producing communities are sponsored by one of the oppressors - the political elites who are the most parasitic element of the exploitation structure they are waging war against.

This political and economic partnership that exists between the oppressed and the oppressor creates unending dialectics that elongate and make the conflicts to be increasingly interminable. In the case of South Sudan, the politicians have divided the country and created militia groups along ethnic lines. The SPLM/A controlled by the President Kiir is no longer a national army but has been turned into an ethnic militia for the Dinka ethnic group and its allies. In the same vein, the SPLM/A-IO led by the former Vice-President -Dr. Machar, has become a militia outfit for the Nuer ethnic group and its allies. The militias in both sides of the conflicts owe allegiance to the politicians who sponsor them. The sponsorship and the resultant allegiance are equally a form of partnership between the oppressor and the oppressed because the politicians (sponsors) are the biggest exploiter and enemy of the people of South Sudan.

Eliminating this type of partnership is necessary for ending the conflicts in both countries. And to eliminate this relationship and its resultant consequences, the fundamentals of the conflicts must be addressed first. That is to say those challenges that made the oil producing communities and the society at large to be eco-

³⁹ Deng, D. K., "Oil and sustainable peace in South Sudan". *A Working Paper*. Juba, South Sudan Law Society Access to Justice for All, 2015, p. 4.

nomically vulnerable and violence prone which in turn compelled their youth to embrace violence and to accept to work for politicians must be rectified.

Moreover, in terms of impact, the conflicts have affected both countries negatively. In Nigeria, and before the amnesty, apart from the wanton destruction of lives and property, the Niger Delta conflict led to incessant attacks on oil facilities which in turn led to a dramatic reduction in oil production, and this nearly crumbled the Nigerian economy. Oil production reduced from its pre-conflict peak of 2 million/bpd to less than 1 million/bpd. It led to the decrease in foreign investment especially in the oil and gas sectors as many foreign investors ran away from the country at the climax of the conflict. Nigeria is yet to fully recover from the damage and economic impact caused by the conflict even many years after the introduction of amnesty. In South Sudan, according to Oxfam International (2014) and Deng (2015),⁴⁰ the conflict has also brought humanitarian crises which include: acute shortage of food resulting in hunger, malnutrition and dead; human displacement; disruption of markets; lack of investment in infrastructure; and destruction of millions of lives and unquantifiable property. The failure of the GoSS to prioritize much-needed investment in agriculture and infrastructure has led to shortages in basic services. The conflict is consuming bulk of the country's annual budget, hence in 2013, about 55% was spent on security. The conflict is also affecting oil production. In 2014 for instance, Oil production fell to 50% of pre-conflict level.

CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, this paper submits that the struggle for the hegemony of oil resources is at the centre of the conflicts in South Sudan and Nigeria's Niger Delta, hence the oil-rich regions in both countries are the major theatres of the conflicts. And that in both countries, oil is being used to fuel the conflicts as the various players deploy its proceeds to curry support from different quarters, and to create and arm their

agents of violence and allied militias. It is also oil interests that have attracted external players such as Uganda, oil pirates, etc, to the conflicts. Meanwhile, these conflicts are thriving in both countries because they lack strong institutions of governance and basic infrastructure especially in the oil host communities. Based on these facts, the paper infers that there is a causal correlation between oil politics, exploitation, environmental degradation, structural failure, lack of development and the lingering violent conflicts in South Sudan and Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta. Therefore, finding a lasting solution to these conflicts would require factoring in these fundamental variables. This would entail strengthening the existing institutions of governance and providing basic amenities as well as job opportunities especially in the oil producing communities whose traditional means of livelihood – fishing and farming have been altered by environmental pollution caused by oil production. When the institutions of governance are strengthened, they would function effectively and end the culture of corruption and exploitation been perpetrated by the national elites and international oil companies operating in these countries. Also, when basic infrastructure and job opportunities are provided, the youth would be employed hence they will not be readily available for recruitment by the militants and various militia groups. However, granting amnesty and signing peace agreement between the warring parties, which are the current measures adopted by the Nigerian Government and South Sudanese Government, respectively, can only bring relative and temporary peace, but cannot permanently end the conflicts because such mechanisms do not tackle the nitty-gritty of the problem.

⁴⁰ For details see, Oxfam International, "From crisis to catastrophe: South Sudan's man-made crisis – and how the world must act now to prevent catastrophe in 2015", *Joint Agency Briefing Note*, 2014.