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BIRMINGHAM

# **THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF OIL RESOURCE CONFLICTS: A STUDY OF OIL VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN NIGERIA**

**By**

**NDUBUISI NDUBECHUKWU NWOKOLO**

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**International Development Department  
School of Government and Society  
The University of Birmingham**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Oil resources are the mainstay of Nigeria's economy, but also a major source of affliction to the village communities in which they are located. This study uses the oil village communities in Nigeria, with particular focus on Delta state. It seeks to explore the extent to which the presence of oil fuels violent conflicts in these village communities, and how the moulding of socio-economic and political structures in local oil village communities by the presence of oil resources gives rise to economic opportunism and grievance characteristics. The research employs a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions and documentary sources to collect and analyse data for the study. It adopts structural conflict theory as the anchor theory of the research, with the support of environmental scarcity theory and greed vs. grievance theory for the analysis and interpretation of data, rather than the single theory approach adopted in many conflict studies. The research also applies micro-level analysis and non-state perspectives, which is a deviation from previous studies, which have applied macro-level analysis and state-centric perspectives in exploring oil resource conflicts.

The research demonstrates that oil resources fuel violent conflicts in oil village communities through the changes it bring to local socio-economic conditions: changes such as poverty, unemployment and land struggle; and changes from traditional power structures to new ones in which there are fierce struggles for power, arising out of the need people feel for access to oil opportunities and benefits. The literature posits that behaviours such as rent seeking, greed and the pursuit of grievances arise in many oil abundant states. However, little is known about the existence of similar characteristics in smaller village communities or the extent of the influence of oil resources on socio-economic and power relations in oil village communities and how these fuel violent conflicts. The study therefore assumes that the elimination of structural violence like social exclusion, poverty, environmental degradation will help in reducing the violent struggle for power and oil benefits in oil village communities.

## ***DEDICATION***

This work is dedicated to my family for their prayers, love and support.

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## ***ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS***

**ANNEJ**-African Network for Environment and Economic Justice

**CAST** - Community and Shell Together

**CDC** -Community Development Committee

**CSR**- Corporate Social Responsibility

**DESOPADEC**-Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission

**DPR**- Department for Petroleum Resources

**FGD**- Focus Group Discussion

**FGN** - Federal Government of Nigeria

**FNDIC** - Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities

**GMoU** - Global memorandum of understanding

**HRW**- Human Right Watch

**ICG**- International Crisis Group

**IMG**- Ijaw Monitoring Group

**JTF**- Joint Task Force

**MNCS**- Multi National Companies

**MOPOL**- Mobile Police

**MOSOP** -Movement for survival of the survival of the Ogoni people

**MOU** - Memorandum of Understanding

**NAOC**- Nigeria Agip Oil Company

**NDDC**- Niger Delta Development Commission

**NGO**- Non Governmental Organisation

**NISER** - Nigeria Institute for Social Research

**ODI**- Overseas Development Institute

**OMPADEC** – Oil and Mineral Producing Areas Commission

**OPEC**- Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries

**PSC**- Protracted Social Conflict

**SPDC**- Shell Petroleum Development Company

**SSS** - State Security Service

**TNOC**- Transnational Oil-producing Companies

**UCDP**- Uppsala Conflict Data Program

**UNDP**- United Nations Development Programme

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1 Introduction

This thesis is about how oil resources<sup>1</sup> stimulate violent conflicts<sup>2</sup> in local oil communities in Nigeria. It adopts a micro-level approach in exploring the effects of oil resources on the political and socio-economic structures of village communities<sup>3</sup>. Like Verwimp, Justino and Bruck (2009:307) state that ‘at a fundamental level, conflict originates from individuals’ behaviour and their interactions with their immediate surroundings, in other words, from the micro-foundations’. Therefore, this research looks at the causes and effects of oil resources fuelled violent conflicts at the community level. This is a deviation from major intellectual works on oil resources conflicts, which are state-centred and macro-level, based, such as Karl (1997), Ross (1999), Klare (2001). Thus, unlike the macro-level, ‘a micro-level approach advances our understanding of conflict by its ability to account for individual and group heterogeneity within one country or one conflict’ (Verwimp, Justino and Bruck, 2009:308). Therefore, this work is born out of a desire to understand the contribution of oil resources to violent conflicts in local oil village communities in Nigeria. Hence, the research is premised on the theory that oil resources create community-level economic opportunities and rent-seeking

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<sup>1</sup> Oil resources are natural resource found beneath the earth. It is also known as petroleum resources or crude oil. In this research the terms oil resources and oil resource are used interchangeably to mean the same, so also is natural resource and natural resources.

<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, unless explicitly defined otherwise, the term *violent conflict* refers to various *intrastate* armed conflicts, both state and non-state. In Forsberg (2009), intrastate armed conflict is defined as a situation where the government of a state and a non-state opposition movement (e.g. a rebel group) have a declared incompatibility and the parties use violence to achieve their goals. Intrastate armed conflict also includes non-state armed violence which involves groups or parties with declared incompatibilities who thus deploy violent means.

<sup>3</sup> The term *Oil village communities* in this thesis is mainly used to show a cluster of ‘traditional village communities in the Niger Delta who are affected by oil exploration and production activities’ (Frynas, 2000:1). It further refers to ‘the local people affected by oil operations on the ground. But the term also signifies a common identity within a village community due to a number of factors such as common residence; a shared history and heritage; cross-cutting ties of neighbourhood, friendship and kinship; a common religious creed;....Membership of a village community is defined both in terms of physical residence in a village and in terms of subscription to village social norms’ (Frynas, 2000:1).

behaviours which lead to violent struggles for power and leadership. These struggles for political, traditional or other leadership positions are very keen because of its access to oil resources opportunities and benefits. This research is concerned not only with the failure of the Nigerian state and multi-national oil companies (MNCs) to apply the right conflict handling mechanisms such as collaborating with village communities (Ibeanu, 2002), but with adopting a structural violence approach in identifying factors like social exclusion which stimulate violent conflicts in oil village communities.

Generally, there is a consensus in the literature that oil as a natural resource has become a kind of paradox for developing economies that engage in its production. This growing concern is due to the rising and persistent nature of violent conflicts experienced in most of such states. Thus, oil revenues have become a threat to the achievement of sustainable democracy, peace and development in some oil-rich developing economies like Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, Venezuela and Sudan (Le Billion, 2001; Di John, 2005; Ikelegbe, 2006). This has resulted in claim that oil exploration activities institute poverty and economic inequalities, due to their impact on the environment. Thus, oil resources production fuel environmental scarcity and competition, resulting in violent conflict as other resources, such as land and water, become scarce for other economic activities (Hagmann, 2005). Percival and Homer-Dixon (1998:279), for instance, contextualised such a situation as ‘supply-induced scarcity’<sup>4</sup>.

Ross (2001) draws attention to the effects of oil resources in fuelling and sustaining authoritarian rulers and bad governance, involving corruption and lack of transparency at state and corporate business level. According to his ideas, oil fuels grievance or greed amongst local oil communities, as they suffer from poverty in the midst of abundant resources (Cramer, 2006;

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<sup>4</sup> Supply-induced scarcity, as defined by Percival and Homer-Dixon (1998), is caused by the degradation and depletion of an environmental resource, for example the erosion of cropland.

Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Other negative social effects of oil resources are the change they bring to the political and economic situations of such areas. Therefore, changing the social relations of the affected people, pitching members of local oil village communities against each other as they fight over recognition and access to oil revenues, and pitching the oil communities against the state and the oil producing companies (Idemudia and Uwem, 2006).

The above conclusions are contrary to earlier held assumptions that oil resources would contribute positively to host communities. Mcphail (2000) offers a picture of the extensive economic developments and other potential benefits for oil host states. This, according to her, is due to the fact that extractive industries can ‘generate sizeable revenues, create jobs and business opportunities, and often bring new roads and access to water and power to isolated rural areas in which they are typically located’(Mcphail, 2000:1). This situation should bring about economic growths and developments such as reduction in poverty and infrastructural development to host states. However, in many developing states with oil resources as the main source of revenue, their cases are different, as oil resources and their revenue management have continually fuelled violent conflicts rather than having a positive impact on the lives of the people.

Oil resources-induced conflicts in many cases create two or three parties to the conflict - the government of the host state, the oil producing companies (which in most cases are MNCs) and the host local communities, which in this research are also referred to as oil village communities. The revenues from oil resources are maximized by the state and the MNCs, leaving the host oil communities in a state of alienation and deprivation. In many cases, such as in Nigeria’s Delta oil region, such negative impact easily manifests in form of environmental degradation and poverty and has been a cause for grievance by oil communities (Emeseh,

2011). However, beside the physical effects of oil resources on the host communities, there are other intense fundamental factors, such as struggles for power and leadership, and access to oil resource benefits (Ukiwo, 2011). Incidentally, the situations of struggle for power, leadership and access to the control of oil resources benefits arise out of the nature of the new relationship that exists between the parties that are directly or indirectly involved in oil production and utilisation.

In addition, recent literature suggests that oil resources in developing states with weak governance structures continues to impact negatively on the stability, growth and sustainability of such countries, as human rights abuses are continuously on the increase (Ross, 2001). Most of these situations have consequently resulted in series of conflicts which have either turned violent or resulted in full-blown civil wars. This research, therefore, seeks to examine the political economy of oil resources conflicts in the oil village communities of Nigeria.

I will also concentrate on the period 1997 to 2008. This is to cover the last two years of the military regime in the country and the outbreak of violent conflicts in Delta state and the Niger Delta region as a whole. Delta state is one of the nine states in the Niger Delta oil producing region. However, where necessary, references have been made to the period beyond 2008 to provide further support to the argument being made. Finally, an emphasis on contextuality and history or ‘historical narrative’ constitutes the strength of this study; but this can be a limitation with respect to the generalizability or transferability of the results. The results of this study can only strictly be applied to the geographical area studied. To overcome this limitation, efforts were expended in selecting 10 village communities that were typical of the state being studied.

## 1.1 Statement of the problem and research questions

The initial discovery of oil resources in Nigeria was seen as a ‘blessing’, which judging from the revenues to be generated would have led to rapid development. However, in recent years, oil resources are turning out to be a curse rather than the anticipated blessing, especially for the dwellers in the host communities (Ibeanu, 2008; Watts and Ibaba, 2011), otherwise referred to as oil village communities in this research. Human Right Watch in its January 1999 Report- *The Price of oil* wrote that:

“While the people of the Niger Delta have faced the adverse effects of oil extraction, they have in general also failed to gain from the oil wealth...[however] a minority of politicians, traditional leaders and contractors have become rich on the spoils of oil, and hence support the oil industry’s activities, the great majority of people from the minority ethnic groups of the oil producing areas have remained impoverished; at the same time, the potential benefits of links to the oil industry have exacerbated conflicts within and among the oil producing communities”(1999:8).

Nigeria, as an oil-rich country, falls among states whose discovery of oil has become a blessing for just a few people and a curse for many others. In the oil village communities, oil resources serving as an avenue for violent conflicts have changed the existing socio-economic and political structures and conditions. Therefore, this research draws on existing oil-resources-induced conflict researches, most of which focus purely on immediate causes and single factors such as environmental issues, autocracy, corruption, grievance and/or greed, lack of transparency and a *rentier* effect to pursue its findings(Boas and Dunn,2007;Rosser,2006). In this context, the study is conducted in the context of the socio-economic, political and historical development of the host country, Nigeria, and a holistic examination of the issues at stake. This will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of violent conflicts arising out of *petrobusiness*<sup>5</sup>, and determine the extent of the contribution of oil resources to violent conflicts in the host communities in Nigeria.

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<sup>5</sup>*Petrobusiness* was first conceptualized and used by Ibeanu (2000:19), when he described the entire Nigerian oil resource exploration, production, business, business environment and oil-related activities as “petrobusiness”. It



The study, therefore, within the context of the above puzzles, poses a major research question:

*To what extent have oil resources contributed to violent conflicts in oil village communities in*

*Nigeria?* In addressing this, the following sub-questions are proposed:

- I. What are the effects of oil resources on the socio-economic conditions of oil village communities and to what extent have oil resources contributed to cultures of grievance, greed and militancy in oil village communities?
- II. To what extent have oil resources influenced the nature of politics, leadership and power struggles in oil village communities?
- III. How has the style of management of oil resources, socio-economic opportunities and the interests of oil communities by the Nigerian state and oil MNCs contributed to violent conflicts in the oil village communities?

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives of the study/Purposes of the study**

This study aims to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of oil resources conflicts in oil village communities. Understanding the relationship between oil resources and violence involves the application of varying knowledge in ‘forms of linkage between oil endowment and violent conflicts’, oil and corruption or neo-patrimonialism among ruling states/elites; oil MNCs, oil states and elites. The ongoing debates also include oil resources fuelled greed, or motivation for conflict involving inequalities among groups (Obi and Rustad, 2011:9-10). Often, the discovery of oil resources in abundance is seen as blessing for economic development of the host country. However, this assumption seems to have failed many oil-rich developing states as they are often times involve in conflicts over the resources. Inequalities and social exclusion in the distribution of oil rents, opportunities and benefits in most oil resources-rich developing countries have been strongly linked with the resultant conflicts in

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means ‘all aspects of the petroleum industry, not just the oil companies that extract and sell the crude oil (e.g., oil refineries, oil services)’.

these societies. Thus, social inclusion and equitable distribution of oil rents and benefits are strongly advocated as a panacea to violent conflicts over oil resources.

In this study, we used structural violence or structural conflict theory to understand oil resources conflicts. Varying knowledge, explanations and definitions such as *petro-violence* (Watts, 1999), *petrobusinesss* (Ibeanu, 2000) have been used to characterise oil resources conflicts in the study (see detailed discussion in Chapter 2). Like the various discussion on oil resources conflicts, this research integrated environmental scarcity and greed vs. grievance assumptions into structural violence/structural conflict theory to be able to understand the oil resources conflict (see discussion in Chapter 3). This study highlights the characteristics of oil resources and oil resources conflicts in host states, as means of achieving micro-level analysis and non-state conflict understanding. Specifically, this study aims to improve the understanding of oil resources conflicts especially for host oil village communities. Therefore, the broad objectives of this study include the following:

- Identify socio-economic conditions and violent conflicts which are influenced by oil resources
- Understand how leadership and power struggles are fuelled by oil resources; and
- Explore why the style of managing these factors contributed to the violent conflicts.

### **1.3 Justification of the research Study**

The research questions stated in 1.1 of the research underlie the justification for seeking an understanding of oil resources conflicts given that oil resources conflicts like other natural resources conflicts have become a reoccurring violent conflict in many parts of the world. Elimination of structural violence is critical to reducing oil resources conflicts in societies with oil resources. This implies that structural violence fuels oil resources conflicts in oil village

communities in Nigeria. The task of the researcher is to understand how structural violence is created by presence of oil resources, which in turn triggers oil resources conflicts.

The study will generate empirical evidence on oil resources conflicts among oil village communities in Nigeria and how they are fuelled by structural violence. This will contribute to the on-going debate on oil resources conflicts in developing countries. The research may also generate evidence that is vital for Nigeria as it strives to solve the persistent problems of underdevelopment, poverty, criminality, militancy, illegal oil bunkering and, inter and intra communal violent conflicts in the oil region of the country.

## **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

This work outlines research on violent conflicts in oil village communities in Nigeria. The first chapter contains the introduction and background to the study, which offers an overall view of the research, providing an explanation of the research variables. The chapter also contains a statement of the problem and the research questions, research objectives, scope of the research, justification of the research and structure of the research.

The second chapter presents a literature review and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that will guide the study. The objectives of the chapter include identifying existing gaps in the literature on violent conflicts. The key argument of the chapter revolves around the structures and paradoxes presented by the presence of oil resources and oil-fuelled conflicts. The chapter adopts a micro-level analysis in carrying out the review, instead of the kind of macro level perspective that is mainly state-centric.

Chapter Three explains the theoretical framework of the analysis used for the study. The framework was built on structural conflict theory, drawing support from environmental scarcity theory and greed vs. grievance theory. Chapter Four explains the research methodology. The study uses single case study approach and the use of qualitative data collection methods which include in-depth, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion (FGDs), and documentary analysis. Chapter Five reviews the background to the Nigerian political economy of oil. The chapter shows the evolution of the oil economy in Nigeria and especially examines the socio-economic and political effects of oil resources on oil village communities. The main thrust of this chapter is that oil resources restructure existing social relations, socio-economic conditions and power relations in these communities.

The empirical evidence and analyses are presented in Chapters Six to Eight. Chapter Six analyses the changes in socio-economic conditions and social relations in oil communities, and the resultant violent conflicts due to inequality and exclusion. Chapter Seven deals with the analysis of power and leadership struggles, showing how the occupation of leadership or traditional governing position in oil communities guarantees access to oil resources benefits or opportunities. Chapter Eight analyses the management of developments and conflicts resulting from the presence of oil. Chapter Nine is the concluding chapter, which presents summaries of the findings and draws conclusions. It also highlighted the contributions made by the research and suggestions for future research.

## ***CHAPTER TWO***

### ***THE INTERFACE BETWEEN OIL RESOURCES, VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE***

#### **2. Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature on the concepts of conflict and violence, the paradoxes of oil resources, oil violence and conflict, with an analytical examination of existing debates and assumptions on the so-called oil resources curse. The chapter aims to understand the effects of oil resources in fuelling violent conflicts using political economy paradigms. This discussion departs from using a macro-level analysis (state-centred perspective) in examining the structures and paradoxes of oil resources, but adopts a micro-analysis perspective (community perspective). The selected literature provide a base for understanding and instituting my current research, and cumulates in the identification and filling of existing gaps as part of the academic contribution of this study.

The chapter is about the application of political, economics and sociological scholarships on oil resources and socio-economic changes specifically within oil village communities separately from the central authorities in oil producing states. The chapter tries to point out the need to examine the role of non-state (traditional authorities, recognised and unrecognised groups such as chiefs, community development Association, Women's group and Youth Association) governance and struggle for dominance as potential causes of violent conflicts in oil village communities. Section 2.1 deals with the definition of the main concepts- violence, conflict and resource conflict. Section 2.2 discusses oil resources and their double-sided nature while section 2.3 explains resource curses and violent conflicts as the major paradoxes of oil resources in the discussion. Section 2.4 gives an insight into oil resource fuelled conflicts and violence, examining factors such as rent seeking, grievance, greed and environmental

problems. The changes in socio-economic and power structures of oil host societies are discussed in sections 2.5 and 2.6 respectively. Section 2.7 is the conclusion.

## **2.1 Defining Conflict, Violence, Violent Conflict and Resource Conflict**

The understanding and conceptualization of conflict and violence as an integral part of human existence, knowledge and development have widened considerably after the end of the Cold War (Reychler, 1999). This has consequently led to multiplicity of definitions and explanations of what really constitutes conflicts. Therefore as societies and people interact, conflicts develop, and so are definitions and explanations. Pankhurst (2003:154) explains that ‘Conflict is a word often used loosely to mean many different things despite its long history in social science. Most types of social, political, and economic changes involve conflict of some sort, and one could argue that many of the positive changes in world history have occurred as a result of conflict’. Therefore with incessant nature of conflicts in Africa and part of Asia, and most recently, the Balkans, researchers and practitioners are constantly defining and building concepts and definitions of conflicts, violence and violent conflicts, seeking to find out causes and reasons for such conflicts.

Among the main foremost ideas of conflicts is that it is an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of social change. Furthermore, it is an expression of the heterogeneity of interests, values and beliefs emerging from new formations generated by social change (Miall, *et al*, 1999). Jeong (2000:35) in providing an explanation on the source of conflict opined that “the absence of legitimised structures and policies, along with increasing inequalities of income and opportunities, serves as the primary source of conflict”. Fetherston (2000:2) stresses that conflict is about interest, and such interest extends to application of violence in order to satisfy the

interest. Violence therefore becomes an application of intent or unintended means of achieving an interest.

Therefore, in assessing the conflict resolution process; conflict ‘has an ontological base in human needs, the denial of which causes violent conflict. Therefore the objective source of conflict is interest and not need’. This assumption of interest being the objective source of interest is contentious, especially where such conflict has other contending issues like ethnicity, inequality and social exclusion. This is because conflicts and violence, just like other social processes can seldom be explained by single cause and that the primary determining cause of social change is impossible to prove; instead social change tends to represent a dynamic interaction of numerous factors over time (Responding To Conflict, 2005).

As shown by the various definitions, what constitutes a conflict situation could lead to violent situation. According to Reyhler (2001:4), “when conflicts crosses the threshold of violence, the costs and the difficulty of managing them increase significantly. Violence becomes the cause of more violence”. It therefore implies that in pursuance of different interests by parties in a relationship, conflicts arise. However, where such conflict situations breed violence, or develop into a violent conflict, there are concerns.

Consequently, the idea that the existence of different interests fuel conflicts, therefore makes the position of a ‘single cause’ in conflicts or violent conflict a contentious one, as there are indications or likelihoods that no conflict will have a single cause, but could have main or major factor supported by other minor or secondary factors. Ginty and Williams (2009:26) also provided a more robust explanation stating that “conflicts can have primary causes that take precedence over secondary causes, but the variegated nature of human politics, economics and

society means that a single factor cannot spark a conflict in a vacuum”. In many cases, causes such as economics or social exclusion may be easily be considered as violence, especially where they content less or no physical harm.

As will be explained further in chapter 3, this research understood that it is difficult to explain such violent conflict relying on a ‘single- cause factor’, or to adopt a single theory application in the explanation of oil resources conflict. This is because there may be other contributory factors that need to be explained. In other words, the ‘oil conflict’ in Nigeria is not just about oil, but a whole range of factors which may have played a role in the conflict. like Ballantine (2004:7) argues “In the case of Bougainville, perceptions of inequitable sharing of natural resource wealth was central to the eruption of violence, but resource wealth played no role in sustaining the conflict.

In examining what constitutes violence, it is pertinent to understand that violence involves more than the absence of physical violence, such as torture, killings, war etc. For instance many violent conflict situations today do not start as physical violence; rather they are less visible, before degenerating into physical violence. Thus there have been misconceptions of what constitutes violence, especially where there is the absence of physical violence. Cramer (2003:402-3) identified the ‘fragility of the conceptualization of violence and conflicts in war studies’. His finding on inequality shows that Brazil did not experience civil war but a ‘structurally persistent and pervasive daily violence. Guinea-Bissau on the other hand, experienced violent conflict in late 1990s. Thus, inequality may lead to violence and conflict but not necessary a civil war.



However with broader conceptualization of what constitutes violence today, its overall meaning and understanding brought a better and clearer link to conflict processes. In all, it is worth noting that violence is ‘a holistic, crosscutting and endemic phenomenon’ (Moser and Rodgers, 2005: 4). The oil fuelled conflict under examination in the study did not start as a physical conflict; rather the commercial exploitation of oil brought about some forms of non-violent situations. It consisted of structural, psychological, cultural and environmental violence in the oil villages, which after years degenerated into armed or physical violence. Galtung (1969:168) defined violence as “the cause of the difference between the actual, between what could have been and what is. [...]In other words, when the potential is higher than the actual, the difference is by definition avoidable, and when it is avoidable, violence is present”. This definition by Galtung gives credit to the broader meaning and representation of violence. It shows that violence is more than what is expected, known and seen. Similarly, Jacobs and Reychler (2004:5) argue that a conflict situation could be considered as violent:

when two conditions are met:(a) when the quantitative and qualitative life expectancies of a certain group within a population is significantly lower than, for instance, of the dominant group;(b) when that difference can be attributed to one or more means of violence: physical, structural, psychological, cultural violence and violence caused by bad governance.

Violent conflict on the other hand is equally known as ‘deadly conflict’, and similarity with ‘armed conflict’. Violent conflict contains ‘direct, physical violence’ which is directly different from other forms of violence including structural violence which is more indirect. (Miall, *et al*, 1999). Jeong (2000: 20) states that “mass violence such as war and revolution brings about social change and a power imbalance”. This as such has one salient meaning, that most conflict situations are first and foremost non-violent, and are most times policy issues, which remained unresolved for a long time. The non-resolution of the conflict, which is mainly in the form of structural violence gradually turns into situations leading to direct violence, and a consequent an armed conflict.

The conditions mentioned above by Jacobs and Reychler (2004), Miall, *et al*(1999) and Jeong (2000), were more than present, judging from the living conditions and the environmentally related problems the oil communities in the Niger Delta suffer, *vis-à-vis* the rents and benefits from oil revenues. Considering this submission in line with the situation in The Niger Delta region of Nigeria, violence could be said to have shown all its characteristics and nature. Physical violence became the most present and pronounced, especially in the later part of the conflict; communities are invaded by the Nigerian State using the state apparatus of coercion to suppress the people's protestation and rebellion (Ibeanu, 2000). Therefore, there is clear indication that the Nigerian state has constructed structural violence through developing a set of institutions that support oil related activities in oil village communities whilst maintaining a repressive structure in the communities.

Thus, this non-physical violence seems present at the beginning of the exploration of oil business in Nigeria. Reporting on violence in the Niger Delta, Human Rights Watch (1999 :10) reports about occasional large oil spills in the region, which destroys agricultural crops and causes water pollution, 'with serious effects for the communities and families affected'. This is further compounded by inadequate compensation for such damage. Acknowledging the existence of violence in the region, a Nigerian former Head of State, General Abdulsalam Abubakar in a national broadcast stated that:

*Genuine as these grievances may be, we cannot allow the continued reckless expression of such feelings. Disruptions of the activities of oil companies, government and private enterprises by rampaging youth, seizure of oil wells, rigs and platforms as well as hostage taking and vehicular-hijacking are totally unacceptable to this administration. We will not accept brazen challenge to the state authority under threat of violence as happened recently in the Niger-Delta region. (National Concord, January 1st, 1999, p. 1-2)*

The implication of this view is that the non-physical violence which is meted on the oil communities were not seen as urgent issues initially, but the disruption of oil activities and other physical violent activities by the communities draws immediate attention of the Nigerian state. Conflicts in the oil region of Nigeria started with non-physical violence, which metamorphosed into the people expressing their grievances through physical violent means. This situation depicts what Azer(1991:93) refers to as ‘ Protracted social conflict’, where ‘it represented the prolonged and often violent struggle by the communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political and economic participation’. One thing that stands unarguable in all the definitions, meanings and explanations given to conflict is that ‘it is an expression of the heterogeneity of interests, values and beliefs that arise as new formations generated by social change come up against inherited constraints’(Miall *et al*, 1999:5). This interest makes “violence as a possible (but not inevitable) response to specific conflict situation”. Just like in the case of oil resource conflict in the Niger Delta, violence is “deeply structured into the system of the relationship” that exist between and within the oil communities, the Nigerian state and the oil MNC who explore the oil. The ‘socio-economic and political arrangements’ is not devoid of this violence, thus making the situation a ‘systemic violence’ with oil resources as the perceived root cause of the conflict (Azar, 1991, and Miall *et al*, 1999).To structural violence exist ‘a behavioural response’ in reaction to the deep rooted violence going on in the Niger Delta, which the outcome is the present day violent conflicts (Responding To Conflict, 2000). Therefore, the structural conditions which grew out of oil activities developed as part of the structural violence in the oil village communities and were mainly to serve the oil production interest.

Examining the term resource conflict thus suggests ‘that there is something special about the general relationship between natural resources and conflict, and stirring a suspicion that this

relationship has an impact on conflict recurrence too'(Rustad and Binningsbø, 2012:533).Therefore, oil resources as exemplified while explaining violent and conflicts situations, have roles of increasing the risk of outbreak of violent conflicts as well as prolonging such situation (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Lujala, Gleditsch and Gilmore, 2005; Lujala, 2010; Ross, 2004 and 2006). As Kaldor (2007:92) explained in her “new wars” classification to which oil resource conflicts are examples, these conflicts are “characterized by a multiplicity of types of fighting units in both public and private, state and non-state, or some kind of mixture”. Other argument is that there are changes in the contemporary violent conflicts. Many inter-state wars are replaced by intra-state wars, with ethnic wars, self-determination and identity-struggles taking over the front burner on conflict issues. These changes brought about specialised fields such as conflict resolution to tackle the new global problem of Post-Cold War era development (Miall *et al*, 1999).

The violent conflict in Nigeria’s Delta region is a situation that seems to be necessitated by opposing interests in the oil resources region. The discovery of oil in this region changed the entire social relations within most of the oil village communities, amongst the oil village communities, and between the oil village communities and the Nigerian state .For instance, the Nigeria state granted ‘oil multinationals the latitude to feign ignorance and deflect allegations of negative social, economic, environmental, cultural and political impact of their operations on host communities’ (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2006). Furthermore, the oil resources production may have increased the environmental pressure and resource scarcity thereby escalating violence among the communities (Homer-Dixon, 1999). The resultant oil economy brought with it a change in interest, values and beliefs of the oil communities and the state, especially with regards to governance, leadership, power and access to oil resource

opportunities. This goes to confirm another classical idea that conflict arises from imbalances in relations, such as power relations, economic relations and social relations (Jeong, 2000).

These imbalances in relations are mostly experienced with regards to growth, changes and development, which are demonstrated in relations to issues such as unequal social status, unequal wealth and access to resources, and unequal power, leading to problems such as discrimination, unemployment, poverty, oppression among other forms of social exclusions (Responding To Conflict, 2000). These factors listed here are not different from definitions provided in the classical definitions of conflicts. In all, it is a demonstration of unequal stake in a relationship among or between parties, leading to incompatibility of goals. Therefore, every conflict such as conflicts on oil resources as experienced in the Niger Delta should first and foremost be seen from a traditional definition of conflict and violence. In this case study, it comprises of incompatibility of interests and values among parties who are directly or indirectly linked to the oil resources. Therefore, for the oil village communities, this 'perception of incompatibility shapes their attitudes and behaviour towards' themselves, fellow oil village communities, the Nigerian state and the Multinational oil companies (Barnes, 2005:11). Furthermore, conflict is equally an outward expression of imbalance relationship or relations of economic, political and socio-cultural which has cumulated into violent responses. Thus, conflicts take place within a structured framework of a relationship of dominance, resulting in an asymmetrical relationship, as one party is stronger and dominates the other. A struggle by the disadvantaged party in such a relationship for a change in its continuous dominance could result into a violent conflict. Schmid (1968:226) defines conflict as consisting of a social structure 'that one class loses what the other class wins'. The situation in the oil village communities in Nigeria does not actually involve classical economic classes as defined in Marxian teaching, but class as an organised or unorganised groups seeking better welfare

and treatment from the abundant oil resource opportunities in Nigeria. Therefore, as interests and disputes over access to such oil benefits persist among the groups, between time and space, such conflicts acquire some characteristics of a ‘new war’ (as defined by Kaldor, 2007). The conflicts develop ‘predatory social conditions’ involving grievance, greed, militancy, oil theft and illegal bunkering.

## ***2.2 Understanding the Paradoxes of Oil Resources***

The paradoxical nature of oil resources have continued to multiply as more discoveries and explorations are carried out around the globe. As oil resources production increase, it faces the challenges of dealing with various socio-political, economic and cultural conditions arising as a result of oil resources production activities or other factors around the management of oil resources activities, rents and benefits. As stated by Le Billon (2004:2) ‘resources have specific historic, geographic, and social qualities participating in shaping the patterns of conflicts and violence’. Consequently, there is a diverse and growing literature on oil resources paradoxes. These are literature on the political economy of resource curses and oil abundance (Karl, 1997; Ross, 1999; De Soysa, 2000; Watts, 2004; Di John, 2007). Others are political economy and geopolitics of resource wars (Klare, 2001; Le Billon, 2004; Richards, 2005). There are also literature on economics of civil wars (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon, 2006; Cramer, 2006; Ross, 2006) and the arguments on oil abundance, resource management and political violence (Ibeanu, 2002; Omeje, 2006; Di John, 2007). Specifically, Collier and Hoeffler (2005) in their findings, demonstrate that oil amongst all other natural resources, is found to have the highest risk of civil conflicts because of the large rent it generates and the shocks to which the government and the national economy are subjected.

However, in analysing these paradoxes of oil resources, variables identifiable in various studies and findings intertwine among themselves, thereby demonstrating the deep nature and influence of oil resources on the socio-economics, culture and politics of states which produce such resources. In many instances, oil resources and their surrounding variables/factors become noticeable for fuelling violent conflicts. Just as argued by Soares de Oliveria while examining the impact of oil resources in the Gulf of Guinea, he stated that “Whether or not one accepts the notion of a resource curse, dependence on oil revenue has contributed dramatically to the unpredictability of economic and political life in the Gulf of Guinea” (2007:56). Similarly, Le Billion (2005) also argues that resource dependence, in addition to negatively affecting economic performance, also affects politics and the quality of governance. Therefore “given the opportunity, ruling groups and communities routinely manipulate economic sectors for political and financial gain” (Le Billion, 2005:20). While referring to oil as devil’s excrement, Ibeanu (2008:16) simplifies the argument by submitting that:

[Oil resources] has been a source of wealth and poverty, security and insecurity, and development and underdevelopment in equal measures. Ironically, those from whose land it is taken are always on the negative side of its inherent paradoxes-they are poor, insecure and underdeveloped.

Ironically, the position taken by le Billion (2005) brought out the salient point that communities or groups who may not have any connection to the state could play vital roles in the nature of the conflict or continuous violence. Therefore, the asymmetrical relationship which exist in oil resources conflicts, which states and Oil MNCs are the strong parties and the oil village communities is the weak party, could also mean that within the oil village communities, there is the existence of asymmetric relationship. The relationships here are between and among members of the oil communities, as they fight over access to power, governance and oil opportunities. While some become more secured through their new economic benefits, others feel less secured. Again, others due to positions linking them to oil resources become wealthy, others face more poverty owing to the activities of oil resources within the same communities.

The various dimensional paradoxes of oil presented above have further expanded the meaning and explanation of the structures of oil resources. Nonetheless, there is still the existence of “the centralizing effect of oil and the state in relation to the oil based nation-building enterprises that are unleashed in the context of a politics that predates oil” as a common explanation (Watts, 2004:53). However, this common explanation is limited in application, as it falls short of including oil-fuelled activities taking place in local communities where the actual oil mining and production activities occur. Similarly, Michael Ross’ (2001:4) findings for Oxfam America indicate that:

- i. Overall living standards in oil and mineral dependent states are exceptionally low - lower than they should be given their per capita incomes;
- ii. Higher levels of mineral dependence are strongly correlated with higher poverty rates;
- iii. Oil and mineral dependent states tend to suffer from exceptionally high rates of child mortality and low life expectancy;
- iv. Oil dependence (though not mineral dependence) is also associated with high child malnutrition, low spending levels on health care, low enrolment rate in primary and secondary schools, and low rates of adult literacy;
- v. Mineral dependence is strongly correlated with income inequality;
- vi. Both oil and mineral dependent states are exceptionally vulnerable to economic shocks.

There are further arguments that oil and mineral dependent states tend to suffer from unusual high rates of corruption, authoritarian government, government ineffectiveness, military spending, and civil war (Ross, 2006). While considerable evidences are presented by Ross in support of the above findings, they suffer from the problem of over-generalisation. The research approach of examining all the regions of oil producing state or country with the same



indices or as a unit, limits its ability to differentiate the extent to which oil resources individually affect each region of such state, especially the oil village regions or communities where the bulk of the oil producing activities take place. Unlike the focus of this study, most existing literature and findings paid more attentions on the extent and effects of oil resources on the state. However, among few researches which gave consideration to oil communities, findings show that the consequences of violent conflicts in oil village communities are linked mainly as an act of the state, with little or no contributions from host communities. Ukiwo (2011:26) observes that:

They include decaying community governance structures, violent and violated environments that can no longer sustain livelihoods, declining social capital and pervasive distrust of public institutions and officer-holders, and the internalization of the culture of militarism.

The above observation has clearly shown that oil resources affect oil village communities, but with little contribution on roles of the communities. Therefore assessing the effects or impacts of oil on a state as a unit, would not guarantee an in-depth finding and analysis of oil effects. In another example, a review of a research conducted by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (2006) on the effects of oil in Nigeria, further highlighted four major consequences or ‘mixed-blessings’ of oil resources. Firstly, the dominance of oil in the economy has made the state an insatiable rent-seeking entity, which seeks to maximise gains from oil resources at all cost. There is an intensive zero-sum game at the centre between and among factions and fractions of the ruling class, military and civilians.

However, the situations raised above are also commonly experienced in the local oil village communities, although they are highly under-investigated. A thorough examination of the pattern of conflicts in these oil communities indicates that oil resources greatly affect the socio-economic and political conditions of these communities. Secondly, the revenue made from oil

leads to the creation of “an elaborate and largely informal patron-client structure of incentives guaranteeing stupendous wealth to those in charge of political power,” and therefore the “concentration of power in the hands of a few elites who circulate around the corridors of power almost without end nurtures political corruption and excessive abuse of power” (Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2006:25). For example in oil village communities in Nigeria, there are high stake struggle for governance, leadership or any other form of authority which confers influence or gives access to oil resources benefits and opportunities. Therefore, in many instances, it has brewed a fierce struggle for power and authority within these oil village communities and at the same time guaranteeing personal security for those who are in control of such oil resources benefits and opportunities.

Thirdly, in a typical oil rent economy, economic development is dependent upon a steady increase of oil revenue, meaning that the government deploys any means available to achieve its oil revenue targets. Local communities also develop strategies to ‘extract’<sup>6</sup> and to keep ‘extracting’ oil benefits such as monetary benefits formally and informally from oil MNCs and other *petrobusiness* operating within their domain. These they do in the forms of compensations for land acquired for oil exploration, oil spills and other environmental hazards, and as well as rents for protection and for not providing employments for the “youths” in the communities. As will be shown further in this research finding, such a situation of struggle for opportunity often leads to fierce competition over such oil resources benefits, resulting in violent conflicts. Thus, the resultant violent conflicts stall economic developments of not only the state but also the oil village communities, especially revenues coming from oil resources which sustain the entire national economy. In the same manner, the existing local economy of such oil communities are also distorted towards a capitalist oil resources driven economy,

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<sup>6</sup> Extract is used connotatively to show the association between the acts of gaining legally or illegally oil resource benefits from oil extracting companies operating in oil village communities.

which fall short of catering for the socio-economic needs of the local inhabitants, especially in the provision of employment and other sources of livelihoods. Oil village communities are therefore left with a barrage of socio-economic problems such as poverty, underdevelopment, violent competition for access, etc.

On the basis of the foregoing arguments on the paradoxes of oil resources, it may be obvious that oil resources create similar socio-economic and political conditions at local community level, to the ones they create at the national level. The paradoxes of oil resources as explained in this section have shown that oil resources create opportunities for rent-seeking behaviours which lead to struggles for power, authority and leadership. Again, it may further be argued that such conditions as unemployment, environmental scarcity and social exclusion created by oil resources fuel violent conflicts in oil village communities. For instance, greed and grievance cultures<sup>7</sup> develop over oil resources activities, oil resources management and access to oil benefits and opportunities.

On this note, the previous explanations of the effects of oil resources on the host state seem to be asking questions that define and conceptualise the paradox of oil only from a holistic point of view. This thereby forgoes an examination of the fact that every constituent of a state (especially the region producing the resources) is affected differently by the presence of oil resources. Therefore, researching the paradoxes of oil resources at the community level, such as the effects of oil resources on violent conflicts, help in understanding the effects of oil resources on the political and economic structures of oil village communities. The next section aims to explore the manners and means by which oil resources contribute to violent conflicts using the various paradoxes it creates.

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<sup>7</sup> Culture here depicts the acceptance of such activities as a way of life or as part of an existence. To an extent, grievance and greed become accepted as a means of addressing oil resource exclusion and oil- fuelled violence.

## **2.3 Demystifying Oil “Resource Curse” and Violent Conflicts Arguments**

Having broadly situated the paradoxes of oil resources within the context of micro-analysis and community based governance in the last section; this section now delineates the link between resource curse and violent conflicts. However, even with the vast and varied nature of literature on resources and conflicts, ‘the causal links between resources and conflicts are not always clear’ (O’lear, 2004:162), thereby leading to various dimensions of what constitutes resource conflicts. For instance, resource curse is seen as a major theoretical contribution and finding in understanding the effects of oil resources on the political economy of oil producing states. These are because, firstly, natural resources abundance according to Karl (1997:44) shows that “when minerals are the key source of wealth of a state, these mining revenues alter the framework for decision making. They affect not only the actual policy environment of goal formation, the type of public institutions adopted, the prospects of building other extractive capabilities, and the locus of authority.” Thus, Sorens(2011:571) summed up resource curse as ‘a cluster of observed, cross national relationships between natural resources on the one hand and poor economic performance, state weakness, political corruption and civil conflict on the other’ These are the new assumptions which have consequently overtaken the earlier thinking in the 1950s, which saw resource abundance as a blessing. The earliest established knowledge on the importance of natural resources could be linked to the early 1950s and 60s conventional theories of natural resource abundance as a blessing, with proponents of the theories depicting natural resources as being capable of masterminding rapid development in the countries were they are located.

Proponents of this ‘natural resource as a blessing thinking’ like Rostow (1961) proposed that abundant natural resources will enable host developing economies to achieve industrial ‘take-off’ like Australia, the United States and Britain. However, an identifiable oversight in their research findings are that Karl (1997) and Rostow (1961) based their premises only on formal state authority, institutions and formal sectors. They gave little consideration to the non-formal sector, non-state institutions and non-formal authorities like subsistence farming, traditional institutions, and community leadership, which in one way or another are affected by extractive activities. Therefore, their premises provided a narrow analytical path for understanding the roles of natural resources in the entire political economy of the host state, especially where such a state is seen as a single unit. As argued in section 2.2, the narrow nature of some of the research or the generalisation approach leaves the political economy of oil resources in the local oil communities un-researched.

In assessing the profound nature of resource curse and resource abundance, Di John (2007:961) looks at the effects of oil abundance, submitting that:

While oil abundance has long been considered beneficial to economic and political development, the recent poor economic performance of oil exporters and the growing incidence of civil wars in mineral-rich economies have revived the idea that their resources abundance may be more of a curse than a blessing.

While this explanation can be considered as being more issue-specific, it still failed to include socio-economic relations and social development, especially of other non-state actors like the oil village communities affected by effects of oil abundance. However, Le Billion (2001:564) deepens this argument, submitting that:

Rents generated by narrow and mostly foreign-dominated resource industries allow ruling groups to dispense with economic diversification and popular legitimacy, often resulting in rent seeking, poor economic growth, and little social mobility outside politics and state patronage.

As we shall see, rent seeking and patronage are part of the mechanism for the continuous extraction of oil resources, as those considered as the ruling or influential groups are very adequately compensated by *petrobusiness*. Arguing in the same perspective, Rosser (2006:267) suggests that “the effect that natural resources have on a country’s conflict risk depends on how the revenues affect the rest of the economy: if new oil or diamond wealth is productively invested and leads to a substantial rise in GDP, the benefits of a higher income can offset the detriments of resource extraction.” These negative effects identified by Le Billion and Rosser could also exist outside the state, as patronage and informal rent-seeking which exist in informal settings in some oil economies are linked to the presence of oil resources. Again, oil resources have promoted local economies which exist outside the formal sector (existing in the informal sector) which are mostly not captured in the GDPs of most resources-rich developing countries like Nigeria, Sudan and Angola. Furthermore, Le Billion and Rosser neglected the struggles to control such local economies which in many instances fuel violent conflicts among local communities in the area. In exemplifying this argument further, Watts (2004:52) claims that “oil is the theatre of conflict within which Nigerian politics is currently being played”, based on an assessment of Nigeria’s political and ethnic composition. Watts further identified the growing struggle for self-determination, insecurity, intra-community crisis, local control over oil resources, and youth militancy, as factors which greatly affect such local communities. However, while making his submission, Watts failed to clearly link the violent struggles experienced in local governance and leadership tussles in the oil region to the presence and activities of oil resources.

However, further examination of some of the literature on oil resources conflicts show that the environmental impacts of oil operations on the local people have been comprehensively addressed as a major aspect of the effects of oil resources on local communities (Frynas, 2001).

As noted by Frynas, various researches have been conducted on anti-oil protests by local communities, and the repressive and concessional activities of the Nigeria state aided by ‘corporate security measures’ provided by oil MNCs(Frynas, 2001:28). While acknowledging the negative impact of oil operations on the environment as the visible chief cause of anti-oil protest in oil village communities, the literature and other findings have paid no attention to the re-structuring of socio-economic conditions of host oil communities by oil resources activities, as well as a change in the social relations of people, which could cause anti-oil protests and violence among the people. This has imposed various forms of political, economic, social, cultural and historical negative changes on oil village communities. Examples of such negative effects are found in leadership and access to power, inequalities and access to livelihoods.

Cramer (2003:409) suggests that “economic inequality is hugely important to explaining civil conflict, but only insofar as the economic is considered inseparable from the social, political, cultural and historical. This allows for greater explanatory depth...; it also allows for the significance of varying kinds of inequality to become clearer”. Similarly, in understanding resource abundance (oil abundance), resource curse (oil curse) and violent conflicts, various aspects of the effects of oil resources should be considered and not just the environment. This is because oil-fuelled conflict and violence also have political, social, cultural and economic negative effects on affected host communities. Homer-Dixon(1994:52) further clarified issues of environmental scarcity and inequality as experienced in oil resources related violent conflict, by stating that structural scarcity (a form of environmental scarcity) “is caused by unequal distribution that concentrates a resource in the hands of some groups and subjects the rest to greater than average scarcity”. This submission by Homer-Dixon was clear in establishing the

tendency of resources (natural resources like oil) creating *social exclusion*<sup>8</sup>, but fell short of linking the aftermath of such social exclusion to fierce competition for access to the new or scarce resources and opportunities by the socially excluded. However, the struggle for the reversal of the new condition is always met with opposition by those who gain or are gaining from such social exclusion, thereby fuelling violent conflicts and revolts.

However, the relationship between oil resources abundance, oil resources curse and violent conflicts and the socially excluded members of the oil village communities is that it is “a contemporary form of exploitation” (Byrne, 2005:15). According to Byrne, exclusion is not domination and has little to do with identity, but has more to do with specific economic relations (2005:15). As contentious as this submission seems, findings on oil resources activities show that they create an environment of social exclusionism, as one group is favoured over others in the society. These violence situations which are necessitated by oil related activities cuts across various ‘dimensions’ of violent conflict, which according to Goodhand (2001:18) are the “security dimension of conflict”, the “political dimension of conflict”, the “economic dimension of conflict” and the “social dimension of conflict” (Goodhand, 2001:21-40). Invariably, oil resources activities impose a form of structure that promotes socio-economic discrimination among members of oil village communities.

To further lend support to the understanding of the ‘oil resources curse and abundance argument’, Rosser (2006:268) identified the categories used in explaining resource curse and the causal mechanisms under seven perspectives. These are:

- i. *Economistic* perspectives that emphasise economic mechanisms;

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<sup>8</sup>Madanipour et al. (1998:22) defined social exclusion as “a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes. When combined, they create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhoods.”



- ii. *Behaviouralist* perspectives that emphasise emotional or irrational behaviour on the part of political actors;
- iii. *Rational actor* perspectives that emphasise self-interested behaviour on the part of the political actors;
- iv. *State-centred* perspectives that emphasise the nature of the state;
- v. *Social capital* perspectives that emphasise the degree of social cohesion in countries;
- vi. *Structural perspectives* that emphasise the role of social groups or socio-economic structure;
- vii. *Radical perspectives* that emphasise the role of foreign actors and structures of power at the global level.

Rosser's opinion on the understanding of oil resources curse and oil abundance presents wide-ranging views considering the various dimensions of the perspectives but it lacks a strong contextual and analytical explanation in linking the various perspectives to oil-fuelled conflicts.

Writing on the impact of oil wealth on economies of resource-rich countries, Humphreys, Sachs and Stieglitz (2007:4) explain that "the detachment of the oil sector from domestic, political and economic processes and the non-renewable nature of natural resources give rise to a large array of political and economic processes that produce adverse effects on an economy." This explanation is similar to the views of Ross (1999:298) who submits that states' failure to adopt measures that would change "resource abundance from a liability to an asset has become the most puzzling part of the resource curse", and could therefore create enabling environment for other forms violent conflicts. As further explained by Torvik (2002), natural resource increase may decrease productivity and income due to rent seeking. This implies that rent seeking arising out of abundance of natural resources could become a curse to national growth and productivity of the host state and host oil village communities as well. As explained in

various literatures, such situation gives rise to ‘Dutch disease’<sup>9</sup>, which crowd out all other investment and economic endeavours for *petrobusiness*.

Again, Rosser (2006:07) rather stresses the role of social forces or external political and economic environments in shaping development outcomes in resource abundant states. This demonstrates the distorting role of natural resources to the political, economic and social environment of its host state. The above explanations provide a state-centred perspective of what constitutes resource curse and resource abundance and as such neglect an interpretation of how the local environment, and the activities of local actors influence development outcomes, or how oil resources affect the activities of local actors in oil village communities. This study adopts its research findings from the resource curse and resource abundance arguments but argues from the local community perspective instead of the state-centred perspective.

It is also imperative to mention that contemporary literature on resources and conflict is vast and varied, but “yet the causal links between resources and conflict are not always clear.” (O’leary, 2004:162); for instance, there is the failure to establish the causal mechanisms that connect mineral wealth to war (Ross, 2006), notwithstanding that research on the ‘phenomenon of resource wars’ and the relationship between resource scarcity and violent conflicts have long been acknowledged (Peters, 2004:188).

Pointing in a similar direction, Watts (2004:53) acknowledges the deep problematic nature of most of resource politics literature, especially as “it elides the purported effects of oil with incumbent politics.” Watts, in contributing to oil resources-politics scholarship, examines the

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<sup>9</sup> Dutch disease refers to the poor performance of other sectors of the economy or a decline of pre-existing domestic sectors with the export of resources in commercial quantity. There is a rise in value of exported natural resources leading to appreciation of real exchange rate, and therefore the diversion of labour and materials to natural resource sector (Humphreys, Sachs and Stieglitz, 2007:5).

relationship between oil and violence, and how forms of governable space<sup>10</sup> are shaped and recreated out of authoritarian governmentality in the Niger Delta. Watts's position further demonstrates that violent contestations that take place in an existing governable space such as chieftainship, or a violent creation of a new space such as civil vigilantism or "youth" authority in the Niger Delta are due to the illegal rents which such space helps in extracting from *petrobusiness*, or the access which it provides to oil benefits. This assumption drawn from Watts's submission meant that local oil village communities and other forms of local governance could be re-shaped and recreated by oil-related activities.

Furthermore, in the midst of these academic contributions, one clear and very observable point is that natural resources wealth could be extracted independent of the political and economic processes in the state. Meaning that not only established government could extract and lay claim to such resources, but other forms of informal authorities, especially local informal authorities within where the oil activities take place, could also lay claim to it legally or illegally (Humphreys, Sachs and Stieglitz, 2007). Subsequently, complementary violence develops out of the act of laying these claims, and possessing and processing such natural resources, as government fights groups or groups fight each other in the attempt to lay claims, control and gain access to such resources. Humphreys, Sachs and Stieglitz in their 2007 book *Escaping the resource curse* further argue that:

The production of natural resources is liable to give rise to various types of political frustrations within a country and especially in the producing region. The extraction process itself may result in forced out-migration, and new in-migration, with attendant population pressure and environmental pollution or degradation. Even if such changes to local conditions are minimal, resource-rich regions may feel that they have a particular claim on resource wealth and may be aggravated if

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<sup>10</sup>Governable space is defined as the topography of overlapping, entangled governable orders with different logics imposed by violent and powerful actors. They create interplay of rules and orders within which actors in civil war navigate (Korf *et al.*, 2008).

they see the wealth leaving their region and benefiting others (2007:13).

While the argument presented in the above explanation is relatively straightforward, there is also the need not to directly link all struggles over resources as the causes of violent conflict. As pointed out by Le Billion (2007) this may amount to reducing conflicts over resources to a single factor and therefore risking the problem of oversimplification. Therefore in re-examining the resource abundance, resource curse and violent conflicts arguments, I apply a multidimensional perspective with no specific or direct link between conflicts and oil resources, but rather looking at how oil resources generate other conditions that may fuel violent conflicts. These conditions could be political, economic or social, and, as further argued by Le Billion such “political dimensions of resources include the social practices involved in resource exploitation, circulation, transformation and consumption...[and the involvement of] potential interplay of resource related social processes, including identity formation and territorialities at various scales.” (2007:2).

On the basis of the foregoing arguments, various recent studies have demonstrated the effects of natural resources on violent conflicts in many natural resources rich-states. This has prompted the need and urgency to re-examine the effect of natural resources in fuelling such violent conflicts, especially in local oil communities. Ngomba-Roth (2007:106) opines that “the effects (long term and short) of oil...are many and controversial”; it fuels exploitation<sup>11</sup>. For example, for “most Nigerians, especially those living in the Niger Delta, Nigeria’s oil wealth is actually ‘oil of poverty’ or a curse, because it has produced only poverty, underdevelopment and conflicts since its commercial exploitation began in the late 1950s.” (Olarinmoye, 2005:22). Like in the case of Nigeria, benefit from oil resources which accrue to

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<sup>11</sup> Robert E. Goodin (1987:168) claims that “Exploitation is an act which, if successful, confers certain perceived benefits upon the exploiter. (‘Perceived’, because people may of course think they are benefitting, when they are not really at all.) To succeed... exploiters must not only successfully seize the advantages but also successfully transform them into real advantages.”

individuals, groups or communities are based on their positions and influence nationally or locally within the oil economy.

The divergent views in literature notwithstanding, what stands as a major point of convergence in understanding resources and conflict arguments is that “resources have specific historic, geographic, and social qualities participating in shaping the pattern of conflicts and violence” (Le Billion, 2004:2). Disappointingly, levels of poverty and destitution are found to be high particularly in the areas that harbour such natural resources or where the mining occurs.

## ***2.4 Conceptualising Resource Conflicts and Violence in Oil States***

In analysing conflicts and violence in oil states, it is pertinent to point out that there is the continuous presence of conflicts and violence in most oil rich states, especially in developing states. Such conflicts arise out of the conflict handling styles like competing, avoiding etc., and as well as the disposition of most of such states to the resources coming from oil. Such conflicts and violence have widened and transformed considerably into violent conflicts, and stalling economic development for such states (Klare, 2004). However, even with the resultant violent conflicts that seems to be rising due to the presence, valuation and activities of oil resources, the global demand for oil remains very high. For instance, 2010 consumption exceeded production by over 5m barrels per day for the first year ever, as world oil stocks were in high demand with China’s consumption rising “by over 4m barrels per day in the past decade, accounting for two-fifths of the global rise” (The Economist: June, 2011). Klare (2001:15) provides further insight by submitting that the “global demand for many key materials is growing at an unsustainable rate. As the human population grows, societies require more of everything (food, water, energy, timber, minerals, fibres and so on) to satisfy the basic material requirements of their members” Again, as explained by Klare, petroleum stands out

among other natural resources as the major resource that drives the global economy. Thus “no highly industrialized society can survive at present without substantial supplies of oil, and so any significant threat to the continued availability of this resource will prove a cause for crisis and, in extreme cases, provoke the use of military force” (Klare,2001:27). This implies how much oil resources are valued and the extent to which groups both state and non-state actor could go in order to maintain the production, especially because of the benefits which it brings.

These arguments lay the foundation for understanding the importance of oil resources to the global economy, both for the producing states and the demanding states, even though it does not provide an explanation for other forms of ‘threats’ to oil supply which cannot be dealt with militarily. Initial explanations of the use of military force makes oil- fuelled conflict a *one-sided violence*<sup>12</sup> only prosecuted by the state. However in many situations, organised armed groups engage in various non-state violent conflicts over natural resources such as oil. This is contrary to such analyses which look at violent conflicts and violence from a macro level, especially where the state is assumed to be the custodian of natural resources in any given territory. However, the growing nature of violent conflicts fuelled by oil resources activities involves both ‘armed conflicts’ and ‘non- state conflicts’, meaning that it may involve other ‘formally organised groups’ or ‘organised group’<sup>13</sup> other than the state. Thus, oil resources, like other “natural resources have played a conspicuous role in the history of armed conflicts”

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<sup>12</sup> According to Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) *One- sided Violence* is defined as “the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organised group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths.” Or, in simpler terms, it is defined as more or less violence aimed directly at unarmed civilians that during one year reaches a certain level of intensity. This shows the extent to which states can go to maintain oil production or groups can go to gain from oil resource.

<sup>13</sup> *Non-state conflict* is defined by UCDP as “The use of armed force between two organised armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state, which results in at least 25 battle related deaths in a year.” *Formally organised group* is defined as “Any non-governmental group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force.” It could be state based, non-state or one-sided. *Organised group* is defined as “Any group who does not have an announced name, but who uses armed force and whose violent activity meets at least one of the following organisational requirements: there must be a clear pattern of incidents which are connected, or there must be evidence that violence was planned in advance. It is mostly non-state based

in various forms, interstate, intrastate, ethnic, local and communal (Le Billion, 2001:562). Therefore, the idea of the studying the link between natural resources and conflicts arises from the fact that many economies with abundant endowments of such resources have experienced violent internal conflicts, such as civil wars, although not in all cases (Tadjoeddin, 2007). Incidentally, where such studies are between the state and groups or regions in which such resources are extracted, there is also the tendency that non-state conflicts and violence are subsumed inside the entire study.

Consequently, the issues of resource conflicts and violence in oil states are commonly examined by scholars using either the resource scarcity argument or the resource abundance argument or both. According to Homer-Dixon (1999:48), resource scarcities come in the forms of *supply-induced*, *demand induced* and *structural* scarcities arising “in three ways: through a drop in the supply of a key resource, through an increase in demand, and through a change in the relative access of different groups to the resource”. These could be a threat to availability of oil resources and a driver for violence and conflicts in oil resource states. Brunnschweiler and Bultey while writing on *Natural resources and violent conflict* submitted that:

Scarcity is linked to conflict via two mechanisms: it may trigger marginalization of powerless groups by elite scrambling for resource, and it could have a debilitating effect on processes of social and economic innovation (resulting in an ‘ingenuity gap’). (2009:654)

This argument provides a contextual view of assessing how oil resources fuel conflicts and violence. Using Environmental *scarcity*<sup>14</sup> as the underlying factor causing violent conflicts, especially in resource-rich developing economics, Homer-Dixon (1999) further submitted that such states depend much on their “environmental goods and services for their economic

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Homer-Dixon in his 1999 book *Environment, scarcity and violence* described *Environmental scarcity* as scarcity of renewable resources, such as cropland, forests, river water and fish stocks. This scarcity can arise from... depletion, degradation of the resource, from increased demand on it, and from unequal distribution (1999:8).

wellbeing, with environmental scarcities as consequence of such activities". When this happens, there is a tendency for any of these five types of violent conflicts to befall such states, these are:

1. Disputes arising directly from local environmental degradation caused, for instance, by factory emissions, logging or dam construction
2. Ethnic clashes arising from population migration and deepened social cleavages due to environmental scarcity
3. Civil strife(including insurgency, banditry, and coups d'état) caused by environmental scarcity that affects economic productivity and, in turn, people's livelihoods, the behaviour of elite groups, and the ability of states to meet these changing demands
4. Scarcity-induced interstate war over, for example, water
5. North-South conflicts(i.e., conflicts between the developed and developing worlds) over mitigation of, adaptation to, and compensation for global environmental problems like global warming, ozone depletion, threats to biodiversity, and decreases in fish stocks.

Although these arguments were able to establish the linkage between environmental scarcity and violent conflict, they cannot escape the challenge of using environmental scarcity as the main pivot of resource scarcity which fuels violent conflicts and violence. Again, the consequences listed by Homer-Dixon do not include the politics and economics of resource ownership, which are mainly experienced in local resource-bearing communities, as the clashes may not be fuelled by ethnic colouration but by economic gains and access to resource benefits. In the same way, Hauge and Ellingsen (1998) argue that the environmental scarcity argument fails to include factors such as 'maldistribution of land' and income inequality as a cause of conflict in its structural scarcity, as it concerns 'unequal distribution of resources' (especially land), which is a consequence of politics and not economic. But rather, the politics of resource distribution has been submerged into the environmental scarcity concept. Welch and Miewald (1983:10) argued that "Scarcity seldom exists as an absolute fact...scarcity as a



social or political problem is largely defined by people's perceptions of the lack of resource in terms of their image of the good life."

Watts (2004a) in providing an explanation for *resource conflicts and violence in oil states* adopted the 'oil complex'<sup>15</sup>, 'Petro-violence'<sup>16</sup> and 'Petrol state'<sup>17</sup> perspectives. The 'oil complex' means that the current political economy of the oil industry breeds violence and human rights violation through the 'petro-structure'<sup>18</sup> it has imposed on the oil-rich developing countries. Citing an example of such 'oil complex Petro-violence', Watts explained that:

The complex relations between oil and violence mean that many extractive industries operate in conditions of deep enmity and conflict, and occasionally civil war and insurgency [...] The human rights concerns stem from the fact that continued oil operations can become the basis for continued or expanded military action – and companies' profits may in part reflect the benefits conferred by state violence (displacement, scorched earth policies, suppression of dissent). The Indonesian state imposed martial law and terrorized Aceh in the 1990s, and gave the military a large role in both the planning and execution of the gas and oil installations. The role of a number of oil companies in Afghanistan in relation to the rise of Taliban rule and the civil war has been exposed as deeply unethical (2004a:15).

Watts' submission was clear in establishing the nature and manner of petro-violence which a petro-state is ready to inflict on citizens in order to carry on with oil production. Furthermore Klare, in his 2001 work *Resource wars*, argued boldly that, "conflict over valuable resources – and the power and wealth they confer- has become an increasingly prominent feature of global

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<sup>15</sup>Watts (2004a:7) describes *The oil complex* as "a sort of corporate enclave economy and in this sense harkens back to dependency theory and the enclave character of 'modernization' – but its character and dynamics are quite specific to the oil sector and the historical moment in which oil is a strategic assets...It is a configuration of community, Oil Company, and the state and local government institutions generative of conflict."

<sup>16</sup> Petro-violence is conceptualised in the study to depict the joint security carried out by the Nigerian military and the oil MNCs as part of policing oil installations, and curbing the communities of social unrest surrounding petroleum extraction (Peluso, N and M. Watts, 2001)

<sup>17</sup> Petro-state means a rentier state with oil resource revenue accounting for a significant proportion of its GDP, and over 80% of both Government and export revenues. Examples of such states are Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela (Watts, 2004a:10)

<sup>18</sup> Watts (2004a:5) this is the configuration of social, political and economic forces around the oil complex in most developing states with abundance oil resource like Venezuela or Gabon, Nigeria.

landscape. Often intermixed with ethnic, religious, tribal antagonisms, such conflict has posed a significant and growing threat to peace and stability in many areas of the world” (2001:1). However, Richards (2001:66) disagrees with the notion of resource wars, citing Western Africa as an example of having a distinctive feature, with the resources in question(oil, diamonds, uranium) not being of immediate local utility to them but rather being of ‘strategic significance’ to the industrial countries. As precise as Richard’s submission is in identifying the non-utility value of these natural resources to local societies or communities where they are mined, his assessment of the values of the resources purely from the direct utility of the resources falls short of recognising other forms of values such as socio-economic and political values, and access to benefits due to the office one occupies, which the mining of such natural resources could confer on a few people from such a local community.

Again, resource abundance, just like resource scarcity, has been linked to the prevalence of violence in oil producing states. In some cases, the nature and extent of violence instituted by oil abundance may differ in various part of the state. Especially among the oil –village communities, it may not just be ‘armed or physical violence’ but ‘psychological violence’, ‘structural violence’ and/or ‘cultural violence. To that effect, a resource such as oil with its high-rent nature sustains corrosion of the political economy and entrenching a predatory political state, thereby eliciting “military challenge from disenchanted groups” (Auty, 2004:46). This predatory nature created by oil abundance does not only involve the formal authorities, like the state, who benefit from the high rent, but also other informal authorities or other forms of governance who are linked in one way or another to such oil resources.

Arguing in this context, oil resources in whichever way they are perceived (either as a case of abundance or scarcity) have a social relation which is built around the political economy of its

management, or rightly put, in the ways and manners of the distribution of the oil resources benefits. Considering Obi's submission that:

There should be no inevitability in the relationship between oil, corruption, and violent conflict. The reality is that oil alone does not lead to violence or corruption. Conflict occurs only as a result of the politicisation of the oil factor, in ways that make the exclusive control of oil and its distribution, the exclusive preserve of 'a few' to the exclusion of others. (2007:9)

The above submission took cognisance of the mixed nature of the conflicts and causes of violence necessitated not just by oil resources alone but activities surrounding whom and how such oil resources and benefits are distributed. Obi's argument like the previous ones fell short of acknowledging that these politicised oil factors could also be in the form of 'local politics' or local influences in oil village communities. This is because, as local leadership positions such as traditional authorities become part of the politicised factor of oil production, the struggle for such positions becomes fierce, owing to the access to oil resources opportunities and benefits which they provide.

It is therefore evident that the understanding and conceptualisation of oil resources-related violent conflicts in the oil states are drawn from all the available theses: the 'oil resource curse', the oil resource abundance and oil scarcity theses. It further means that to have a clear understanding of the contribution of these theses in line with the nature of conflict and violence which exist in oil states, the conceptualisation should capture every level of governance, authority and social relations (whether formal or informal, state or non-state) associated with oil resources distribution and management. Especially as it affects the local oil village communities, unlike previous researches which dwell on a macro analysis of 'resource curse', 'resource abundance' and 'resource scarcity', and forgoes the importance of the micro-level analysis represented by local activities (struggle for power, access to control of handouts from oil resources). Incidentally, many violent conflicts in the oil village communities are non-state

conflicts and violence with evidence showing effects of ‘oil curse’, ‘environmental scarcity’ and ‘oil abundance’ at the local level. Therefore, it is evident that oil resources, like other natural resources, have “played a conspicuous role in the history of armed conflicts” (Le Billion, 2001:562), but more obviously, they have continued to fuel violent conflicts (mostly non-state conflicts) in the communities or areas of their production activities.

### **2.4.1 Examining Oil rent, Rent-seeking and Oil Resources Conflicts**

The explanation below by Watts (2007) depicts a picture of a typical petro- state, accordingly:

The heart of the petro-state state is unearned income, and its central dynamic is the fiscal sociology of the distribution of and access to oil rents. The oil revenue distribution question – whether in a federal system like Nigeria or in an autocratic monarchy like Saudi Arabia – is an indispensable part of understanding the combustible politics of imperial oil. (Watts, 2007:642)

As noted in Section 2.2, oil resources, like other natural resources, are considered by some scholars and leaders of resource-rich countries as new avenues which could provide the resources necessary for oil producing states to achieve a level of development like the countries classified as developed. However, the inability of many natural resource-rich countries, especially those with abundant oil resources, with high external earnings from oil to transform their countries into appreciably, visibly and sustainably developed economies, has remained a puzzle. There have been questions as to why these states are experiencing violent conflicts and wars in the midst of such oil wealth.

Just as it is described as “the devil’s excrement”<sup>19</sup>, oil is today often linked to the economic and political failures of these petro-states (Karl, 1997). Such reliance on oil revenue, which is

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<sup>19</sup> Karl’s (1997:4) nickname for Petroleum to show its double sided nature, especially its negative aspect.

referred to as 'oil rent'<sup>20</sup>, has today broadened out the issue of 'rentierism'<sup>21</sup>. Ross (1999:312) opines that "theories of rentier state centered on the fact that when governments gain most of their revenue from external sources such as resource rents ... they are freed from need to levy domestic taxes and become less accountable to the societies they govern." This explanation lends support to one of the famous theses on *The paradox of oil resources, Petro-state and oil rent* by Terry L.Karl. Here, Karl (1997) putting in perspective the nature of oil revenue argued that:

Dependence on petroleum revenue produces a distinctive type of institutional setting, the petrol-state, which encourages the distribution of rents. Such a state is characterized by fiscal reliance on petro-dollars, which expands state jurisdiction and weakens authority as other extractive capabilities. As a result, when faced with competing pressures, state officials become habituated by relying on the statecraft, thereby further weakening state capability. (Karl, 1999:16)

Much of the researches by Karl and Ross were able to identify the inhibiting nature of oil rent on an oil producing state, especially on the institutions, authority, capacity and capability of the producing state. Again, beside the interpretation and the linkage between oil rent and oil resources abundance and resource curse which have been acknowledged and accepted, there is the negligence of other non-state actors, whose activities may in one way or another have been affected by the oil rent and oil rent seeking behaviour. Omeje (2005:322), in giving further explanation on what constitutes a rentier state, posits that:

A rentier state is a state reliant not on the surplus production of the domestic economy or population but externally generated revenues or rents, usually derived from the extractive industry such as oil. A rentier state generally lacks a productive outlook in the sense that revenues from natural resources rents contribute a significant proportion of the

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<sup>20</sup>Beblawi(1990:85) explained that rents are "exports earned or income derived from a gift of nature," thus Omeje (2005:1) sees oil rent as oil mining rents, taxes, returns from equity stakes on joint oil investments and royalties paid by transnational oil-producing companies(TNOCs) on which such a country largely depends.

<sup>21</sup> Okruhlik (1999:295) sees rentierism as the intellectual debates that have been generated on the relationship between oil and politics, of which a number of propositions concern the nature of the developmental process necessitated by the oil rent.

gross domestic product and dominate national income distribution, usually at the expense of the real productive sectors of the economy.

The above definition is able to demonstrate the nature of oil rent in becoming a dominant feature in the economy of a rentier state. However, just like other classical state-centred perspectives, it gives major consideration to the national economy, thus terms such as “the productive sector of the economy” and the gross domestic product are considered as the major conditions in determining the impact of oil rent in such economy. There is less or no consideration of the impact of oil rent on local economy that exists in some local communities where such oil activities take place. Even with explanations that “oil revenues increase to the point at which they dominate a government’s revenue sources,” and the government evolving from an extractive state into a distributive one (Smith, 2004:233), there is no emphasis on oil-related revenues dominating the income of agents other than the government of the state. Following this nature of analysis, scholars characteristically fail to link oil rent or rent seeking to the non-state or intra-communal conflicts that often take place in oil village communities.

In furtherance of the notion of ‘rent-seeking’, Di John (2007:964) notes that;

Rent seeking can be conceptualized as *influencing* activities, which range from bribing, political lobbying and advertising to taking up arms. The greed based theories of war make two implicit assumptions: the first is that the existence of oil rents will induce greater rent-seeking generally, the second that the violent forms of rent-seeking are more likely to occur when oil rents exist.

Di John’s insertion of *informal patron-client networks* and *illegal forms of rent-seeking or corruption* as mechanisms of influencing rent seeking in a state is very inclusive. Thus, in line with his argument, it could be suggested that illegal rent-seeking may become accepted as a “legal and formal mechanism” in local oil village communities, which are marginalised from oil rent by the state. Consequently, such a situation may breed stiff competition and violent

conflicts among parties in the communities interested in or participating in such forms of illegal rent-seeking. Therefore, just as rent-seeking weakens state institutions (Omeje, 2005), it also weakens existing non-state institutions like traditional authorities, by creating new governable spaces (see section 2.3)

### **2.4.2 Oil Resources and the Cultures of Greed and Grievance**

In the literature, various perspectives have been raised regarding the causes and natures of natural resources- fuelled violent conflicts. Berdal and Malone (2000:2) were driven by the circumstances of these war economies and violent conflicts into questioning “the complex web of motives and interactions...of the political economy of civil wars.” Consequently, the major divide is between “the conventional wisdom that civil wars and insurgencies originate in perceptions of relative deprivation and social justice... and that people rebel not because of the opportunities available for them to do well out of war.” (Ukiwo, 2007:589). In many instances, it becomes very difficult to differentiate, especially where one party is using violence meted on them as basis for their reaction which is seen as opportunistic.

This has raised various questions among scholars about why and what constitutes the motives behind oil resources driven violent conflicts, and whether such conflicts are singularly motivated by economic opportunity. The situation commonly referred to in literature as ‘greed and grievance’ is today considered to have led to many oil- related civil wars, civil conflicts, non-state conflicts and insurgency. While grievance is regarded as part and parcel of traditional conflict, greed is seen as a new introduction to conflict issues, and mostly associated with economic resources. However, if conflicts are intrinsically linked to human existence and relations in all societies (Isard, 1992:1), this therefore means that grievances could arise out of such social relations and, in combination with other factors, could result in conflict. Therefore,

issues such as income inequality and social exclusion are major causes of economic grievances in many societies and have in most cases fuelled violence spearheaded by a disadvantaged group (Gurr, 1970; Alesina and Perotti, 1996).

Similarly, in providing an explanation for grievance fuelled conflicts over resources, Cramer (2006:124) argued that:

The two contrasting arguments about resource and conflict, one about scarcity and the other about abundance, capture two basic ideas of the material dimensions of what drives political violence and conflict. One stresses desperation and inequality, the other calculation and opportunity.

Therefore “grievance...is rooted in a behavioral paradigm, and emphasizes relative deprivation, social exclusion and inequality” (Brunnschweiler and Bultey, 2009:3). This could be exacerbated by factors such as democracy, ethnic or religious fractionalisation and ethnic dominance (Ward, Greenhill and Bakke, 2010) and, in the case of resource-rich societies, by factors such as environmental degradation, poverty, land and unemployment (Rosser, 2006).

However, proponents of ‘greed’ assumption and theory like Paul Collier consider economic opportunity as the driving force behind violent conflicts such as civil wars. Collier and Hoeffler argued that oil abundance can increase the incidence of civil conflicts and war. To Collier and Hoeffler, primary commodities such as oil provide opportunities for extortion “making rebellion feasible and perhaps even attractive” (2004). Again, Collier (2000:110) had previously argued that “the objective factors that might contribute to grievance, such as income, asset inequality, ethnic and religious divisions, and political repression, do not seem to increase the risks of conflict”. Rather than economic factors are the main drivers of conflict, with small identifiable groups doing well out of the conflict. In continuance of the greed theory, Collier further pointed out that, “grievance rebellions are not suppressed by effective government: they are crowded out by other types of rebellion...A rebellion started by idealists



in the context of valuable resources becomes swamped by opportunists as it expands” (2005:626). Subsequently, to the rebels involved in such a war, it is not just about “a breakdown in a particular system, rather...the emergence of an alternative system of profit, power, and even protection,” which creates a war economy situation and a favourable environment for looting and plundering existing natural resources(Keen,2000:22). Interestingly, greed in many occasions develop into warlordism, with the main actor or actors challenging the state in the arena of monopoly of violence, control of resource wealth, and thus becoming ‘competitor for economic resources and local, or indeed regional, political influence’ (Beswick, 2009:338).

Although these arguments setting greed and opportunity as the main motivation for war, insurgency and other forms of violent conflict cannot be totally refuted, they have been criticised for being “less assertive of the causal link between economic incentives and the outbreak of insurgency and civil war” (Ukiwo, 2007:589). Again, the economics of violence thesis neglects the context-specific nature of conflicts, using a ‘one cap fits all’ theory in examining all cases. It focuses most of its analysis around the state and around armed conflicts, with little consideration for non-state conflicts that occur over resource ownership.

Again, with the specific case study of oil village communities, the war economy thesis does not consider issues of inequality, social exclusion, economic and political marginalisation as important in fuelling violent conflicts, especially where one group is favoured by the state over and above other groups in gaining benefits from such resources. Oluwaniyi (2011:150) submitted that:

Women in the Niger Delta struggle simultaneously against the state-partnership as well as oppressive gender relations. This party finds expression in the collaboration between the local male elites, the state and oil MNCs, which conspire to exclude women from the

distribution of the benefits of the oil industry, resulting in their impoverishment and disempowerment’.

As Anugwom (2007:62) explained, women from such oil communities ‘suffer a double jeopardy of relative deprivation’. First, they are excluded from internal or domestic politics, decision making and external bargaining or negotiation with oil firms by the male dominated leadership and secondly, they suffer more socio-economic deprivation than average women from other parts of the country due to the destruction of their environment through oil extraction activities. Looking at women’s social and economic exclusion from benefits of oil in Niger Delta, it is worth noting that although there was an existing oppressive gender relation; *petrobusiness* helped to further worsen the situation by excluding women in the distribution of the new benefit, while degrading their environment, thereby fuelling violent protests and struggle from women.

Ross (2008) observed that new minerals increase inequality leading to an inequality trap and a resultant violent conflict. In situations where an existing socio-economic condition has been adversely affected by the activities of a new mineral resource, in this case oil resources, the tendency arises that, after a prolonged period of grievance, with no considerable improvement, a situation of ‘self-help’ could emerge and may not be over-ruled. Jackson (2007:275) further explained that “in African wars, politics and economics are frequently difficult to separate. There are a number of different reasons for this, not least that there is confusion over whether or not the desire to better one’s self is tantamount to greed. Whilst there are a number of different drivers behind conflicts across the continent, economics do play some part in almost all African insurgencies.” This submission tries to solidify the interwoven nature of violent conflicts, in which it may seem difficult to distinguish one factor as the cause of the conflict,

especially where it has a lot to do with inequality and livelihood, and in which a critical trace analysis does not rule out the role of politics and influence of governance on the situation.

Therefore, the greed or grievance situation in the oil village communities is about “the context over resources and the resultant conflict between groups” which is depicted by the [in] ability or otherwise of the state to meet the minimum expectations of the citizens (Anugwom, 2005).

Ikelegbe (2005:214), putting into perspective a period of grievance in the oil village communities, noted that “the minorities of the Niger Delta region have been agitating since the 1950s. First it was against marginalisation, neglect and the politics of exclusion by the ethnic majority based ruling political parties and governments of the then Eastern and Western regions.” And by the 1990s, it has degenerated into large pockets of oil resources fuelled violent conflicts within and among the various oil village communities that make up the Niger Delta. The dichotomy between greed and grievance seems blurred; demonstrating that the transformation from grievance to greed cannot always be equated in economic terms or is examined using quantitative values. In case studies involving local oil village communities, activities seen as greedy, such as illegal oil bunkering, could be a survival strategy for people long denied of their source of livelihoods, therefore, “this is a classic survival strategy for someone living in poverty in an insecure environment.” (Jackson, 2007:276).

Despite this explanation, there is wide disagreement about what really constitutes greed or grievance, but one main undisputable fact is that they exist within the same continuum. In many cases, the socio-economic dispositions of a group at a period of time determine their reactions and relations to an existing or newly discovered natural resources within their domain. As explained by Ikelegbe, a proponent of the economy of war thesis:

Economic opportunism may therefore be incidental to and a perversion of resistance. The nexus between economics and

conflict environment is therefore much more than the issues of causality. It may relate to the actual dynamics of conflict and resistance; the funding of both the state and rebel movements, the exploitation of opportunities that emerge from disorder and violence, the multiplication of violence and violence institutions, the proliferation of arms and the intervention of metropolitan centres bent on maintaining supplies of critical minerals, and how all these underpin the prolongation of conflicts in resource rich regions. (2005:213)

However, given the nature of the conflict under study and considering the application of the greed or grievance arguments within the context of the case study, the economy of war thesis focuses so much more on full scale wars than on other types of small-scale violence or revolts that occur in these societies. In most cases, armed conflict cases are *state centric* in nature; such parameters leave out some other issues that could be found at the micro level or as part of non-state violence among non-state actors.

### **2.4.3 Oil Resources, Environmental Degradation and Scarcity**

With the continual rise in the nature and volume of oil resources' activities, the environment is considered to be the worst hit by the effects of oil processes and production. However, environmental concerns, which in most current literature are discussed as environmental security, face a 'tug of war of concepts', with groups either wishing to "elevate- or prevent the elevation of- environmental concerns to the same status as military ones" (Diehl, 1998:275). Even with "these numerous pronouncements on the relationship between conflict and the environment, there is no consensus on the causal mechanism" (Gleditsch, 1998:383). Reuveny and Maxwell (2001:721) explain that, "due to its tendency to describe specific episodes of conflict, the extant literature on conflict over renewable resources in political science has generally neglected the complex dynamic interplay between population, natural resources, and conflict". Again, even where such literature has taken an economic approach in examining

resultant conflicts and linking them to political violence or conflict, there is this adoption of a 'single approach' linkage and one-level macro-level analysis with little or no consideration for the complexity of such an environment as is under examination.

Therefore in trying to give a clear picture of what constitutes 'environment fuelled violence', Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts, in their edited book *Violent environment*, wrote that "*violent environments* accounts for ways that specific resources (tropical forest or oil reserves) and environmental processes (deforestation, conservation, or resource amelioration) are constituted by, and in part constitute, the political economy of access to and control over resources" (2001:5). A major point which is obvious from the submission by Peluso and Watts is the existing of cultural, social, economic and power relations, which could be further classified as the existence of a 'political economy of environmental concerns', within which issues such as power relations, access, conflicts, control and livelihoods exist.

Homer-Dixon (1994) makes a distinction on conflicts caused by natural resources. Natural resources, according to the author, create a condition of 'simple scarcity', 'group identity' and 'deprivation'. This description covers the underlining factors behind most conflicts which are experienced in oil-rich developing states or natural resource-rich developing states in general. This, to a large extent also implies that, first and foremost, oil resources conflicts contain characteristics and nature of every known conflict. Providing further insight into the nature of various conflicts we encounter in oil resources-rich developing states, Libiszewski (1992:5) argues that:

The extraction of oil for example, does not mean by itself an environmental degradation. Even the total depletion of oil stocks would not cause any destabilization of the ecosystem; but would, of course, represent a serious economic problem. Therefore, conflicts over the possession of or the access to oil can be regarded as environmental conflicts. They are originally

economic or social conflicts. Only the consequences of the combustion of oil derivatives, for example the green house effects, or damages caused by its production and transport may lead to environmental degradation.

The argument posed by Libiszewski further shows that oil resources have different conflict dimensions. As such, there is an interdependence of factors which contribute to oil resources conflict. Thus, there are multi-dimensional approaches to understanding environmental or natural resources driven conflicts. It further implies the existence of linkages across levels of analysis of the subject matter. In this, the relationships that exist between the parties who benefit and those who feel excluded from the benefits of such resources also form part of the conflict.

Therefore, these could equally be seen in the increasing struggle over oil resources: its control, acceptance, availability and production. Subsequently, to a large extent, the effect of oil as a natural resource has brought intensive and extensive violent conflicts which greatly affect local inhabitants. This incidentally does include the environment, which suffers from the oil activities. As summarised by Obi (1997:1), environmental conflicts in the oil-producing areas thus becomes a terrain for contesting not just political space and access to resources, but resisting authoritarian forms of state rule and accumulation. Lending support to Obi's argument, Ukeje, while explaining 'Oil and environment fuelled political violence' in oil communities in Nigeria, historically explained that:

Since fossil oil was discovered in large quantities in 1958, oil-producing communities in the riverine Niger Delta basin have persistently expressed exasperation over the unsustainable manner in which their fragile aquatic environment is being despoiled, while socio-economic opportunities and active participation in national political processes are simultaneously undermined. (Ukeje, 2001:16).

The above explanations show that the effects of oil resources on the environment come with not just physical degradation but also socio-economic and political effects. In situations like

this, such effects create a new socio-economic condition, social and power relations. Therefore the affected people especially in the oil village communities, struggle not to lose out totally from such effects. With such effects creating situations such as scarcity, socio-economic and political effects, they could trigger violent conflict, especially when dashed expectations are involved. Writing on oil resource in Chad, Massey and May (2005) explained that such an oil project engendered negative environmental and social impacts, which were far off the imagination and expectation of the ordinary people, and more that what their 'anticipated development goods' were; this could result in various kinds of frustration and violent conflicts .

However, in the case of Nigeria in 1991, for example, its oil operation exceeded the world average for gas flares by 72%, as against an OPEC average of 18%. Pollution and oil spillages destroyed marine life and crops, making the water unsuitable for fishing as well as rendering many hectares of farmland unusable. Such oil activities consequently changed the socio-economic situation of the people, especially in institutionalising poverty in the area (Ibeanu, 2008:18). As further explained by Ibeanu (2008:20), such ecological damage in the Niger Delta goes "hand in hand with resource scarcity. Consequently, local communities have come to associate the two, sometimes unjustifiably". Interestingly, Hauge and Ellingsen (1998:313) also agreed that the severity of environmental scarcity in igniting incidences of domestic armed conflicts might be attributed to other factors. As simplistic and reductionist as some of the considered literature may be, especially with environmental security and environmental conflicts centering only around environmental degradation and scarcity, there is still no denying that some of the evidence and analyses are valid, although having little consideration for micro-level analysis, and being mainly factored around armed conflicts and state-linked environmental violence.

## 2.5 Oil Resources and Changes in Socio-economic Structures

A major way to explain the effects of violence and conflicts fuelled by oil resources is to first establish the nature of changes oil resources has brought to people's socio-economic structures, social structures and relations, and political structures. Obi (2007:106) explained that:

Oil pollution, extreme poverty, high levels of youth unemployment, pollution perceived discriminatory employment practices against locals by oil companies and socioeconomic and political marginalisation and neglect by successive administrations constitute the main grievances against the oil companies and the government.

Above description shows the level of changes oil resources can institute in a society. Writing on "Nigeria's Oil Sector and the Poor", Ross (2001) listed negative changes by oil resources against the poor to include: economic volatility, crowding out agriculture and manufacturing, fostering of inequality, undermining democracy, sparking off violent conflicts. Moser and Rodgers (2005) argue that, although proponents of natural resource-related conflicts like Paul Collier have been able to document such violence in a war context, "these are equally applicable in non-conflict situations, and may well be a precondition or underlying causal factor in the deterioration into conflict itself"(2007:14 ).In the case of oil resources, their manner of operation and utilisation of other natural resources brings about a change in the production system of the host community, and could thereby increase the chances of violence. As suggested by Moser and Rodger (2005) in their executive summary, such could be "associated with increasing inequality in access to natural resources, particularly land. Here, violence is often a hidden dimension of poverty itself. For instance, in rural areas where land, water and forests are all critical resources for livelihood strategies, unequal power relationships relating to land ownership and exclusionary agrarian systems are exacerbated when this becomes more exaggerated". However, the broad and elaborate classification of the socio-economic changes by the literature discussed above make it difficult to properly understand



and situate the nature of social changes in the oil village communities. For example, an aggregate submission of incidences of poverty in Nigeria, as used in Ross' work, will not enable one to understand the changes that have taken place in rural oil village communities since the inception of oil resources activities.

Again, these traditional societies (oil village communities) had "subsistence farming and fishing as their two main dominant economic activities. With such economic activities, land is 'the most important source of economic power and social prestige...' for the local communities (Okonta, 2008:32), so also for the oil companies who "are dependent on access to land because they derive their wealth primarily and directly from below the earth's surface" (Frynas, 2000:170). Both authors here have been able to establish the linkage between oil resources, inequality, livelihoods, and land, social and economic status in oil producing societies. This is because, as more land and fishing waters are taken for oil activities, the smaller the size of farming land and fishing waters that is available for local dwellers to eke out their living. However, what the authors did not establish or demonstrate, is a direct and primary role/or effects for oil resources in fuelling non-state violence and conflicts, such as inter-community and intra-community conflicts, which ensue over the available land and waters. Establishing the linkage between oil resources, farming land and fishing water, and the subsequent non-state conflict makes it easy to appreciate the change in socio-economic conditions and relations imposed on these oil village communities by the change in their means and access of livelihood.

Human Rights Watch (2005:6) explained that oil MNCs, as demanded by law, are expected to make statutory or customary payments to oil village communities (often referred to as host communities or oil-bearing communities by human right activists) whose land or fishing waters

the oil exploration or production activities like drilling are carried out. As lamented by Human Right Watch:

Designation as a host community thus brings significant benefits in the form of compensation, community development funds and promises of labor and security contracts. The oil companies negotiate such agreements and contracts with individuals whom they identify as community representatives, notably the top traditional leaders or chiefs. These policies have fuelled inter-communal conflict by funneling large quantities of money to the tribal leaders, many of whom fail to share the benefits with their community. (2005:7)

It is therefore pertinent to note that the oil dominance of Nigeria's political economy invokes a 'high stake rentier politics'<sup>22</sup> involving not only the state and the hegemonic elites as principal architects but also the "grassroots communities(oil and non-oil)...High stake rentier politics underlies and complicates the oil conflicts" (Omeje,2006:6).Oil resources reproduce the same high stake rentier politics in local oil village communities ( just as in the national economy), as well as producing entirely new socio-political relations and conditions which institutionalise poverty, inequality, the struggle for access to oil benefits and opportunities, and unemployment in the oil village community. Consequently, in the bid to make the oil economy works, there is a creation of high stake local politics within traditional and village community authorities. This in turn fuels violent conflicts among members of the community, as various parties seek to position themselves within the position of "rent seeking".

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<sup>22</sup> To Kenneth Omeje (2006) high stake politics converges and interlinks the rentier features of the economy with neo-patrimonial traditions of the post-colonial state and society to produce a convoluted political culture, marked by clientelistic desperation in both oil-related accumulation and state-society relations. The various stakeholders, clients and partisans of the political economy are disposed to pursue, fast track, protect and defend oil-related accumulation by desperate measures, including the use of violence or threat of it, as well as placatory trade-offs and rewards

## 2.6 Oil Resources, Power Struggle and Violent Conflict

The discourses around politics and the struggle for power as a cause of oil fuelled violence and violent conflicts in the oil village communities have recently been categorised into many perspectives. Using Nigeria as a case study, Gore and Pratten (2003:212) submitted that:

Nigeria's 'political economy of predation' is manifest in an apparent institutional monopoly of violence and rampant prebendalism which reflects the extractive nature of the state and the accumulative base of ethno-regional commercial and bureaucratic classes. (Gore and Pratten, 2003:212)

The discourses around politics and the struggle for power as a cause of oil fuelled violence and violent conflicts in the oil village communities have recently been categorised into many perspectives. Of note in these discourses are “prebendal, neopatrimonial and high stake rentier discourses,” in which decisive politics in Nigeria are rooted (Omeje, 2006:6). These discourses hinge upon the ‘understanding’ that “routine relationships between state and society in Nigeria are currently dominated by...the illegitimacy of instrumentalised distribution and disorder. It is this very illegitimacy which shapes individual and collective local responses. On the one axis, the politics of distribution, people are organising themselves within familiar frameworks to ‘capture’ the state” (Gore and Pratten, 2003:212). Therefore, “the heart of the Nigerian petro-state state is unearned income, and its central dynamic is the fiscal sociology of the distribution of and access to oil rents,” which is what projects these acts of capturing the state through politics (Watts,2007b:642). Interestingly, as at the centre,“the local system is liable to be high jacked by local strongmen seeking political influence or may neglect vulnerable groups and minorities,” (Baker and Scheye, 2007:508), with the sole aim of monopolising oil rents and opportunities, thereby fuelling fierce violence.

These discourses have been able to throw some light onto the nature of politics in Nigeria. However, understanding politics alone will not provide enough insight and knowledge about

other forms of power struggles or forms of authority in many oil village communities or at the local community level. Distribution and access to oil rent can also be routed outside the formal authorities and power, or outside the state.

Again, it is worth noting that neo-patrimonial or patrimonial cultures re-enforce informal structures, making them serve as legitimate access to power and in-turn access to oil rents and benefits. According to Ohlson and Soderberg, in “a patrimonial system rulers base their claim to power, their authority and legitimacy on powerful, but informal structures of vertical patron-client relationships, with rewards going top-down and support going bottom-up in the system,” (2002: 9). Hence where the environment is ripe for informal governance and is supported by illegal rent seeking and oil resources benefits and opportunities, it creates room for violent struggle for such informal power and authority.

For instance, Human Rights Watch in their article “Rivers and Blood: Guns, Oil and Power in Nigeria’s Rivers State” wrote that:

As traditional leadership positions became more lucrative and the tribal elders more powerful, the competition to occupy them intensified. Beginning in the mid-1990s, prominent local leaders competing to assume top chieftaincy positions in an area recruited youth leaders and provided them with money and weapons to assist in their often violent struggles to control villages. Such violent clashes occurred in several villages. (2005:7)

Therefore if occupying any traditional or informal forms of leadership guarantees access to oil benefits and opportunities, it subsequently could often fuel violent struggles for such positions, as they know that “patronage is a selective activity benefiting specific groups,[therefore] those excluded are pushed to use violence to demand for and access their own share of the rents” (Olarinmoye,2005:30). In the case of oil village communities, as selective patronages become

the basis for determining who benefits from opportunities from oil resources, the outcome are the negative impacts they bestow on the existing socio-economic conditions, social relations, governance, power and leadership roles. Thus leading to fierce struggle(s) for the control and occupation of such positions, as such positions is synonymous to getting patronage from oil resource. Based on this assumption, the result is the use of violence to reach the position that gives access to such patronage. In this case study, it is mainly between groups within the same oil village community or between oil village communities, and not necessarily between the state and the oil village communities or between oil communities and oil MNCs.

## **2.7 Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the state of knowledge regarding oil resources fuelled conflicts. Based on the introduction to the concepts of violent conflicts and paradoxes of oil resources which form the logic of oil resources conflicts, this chapter reviews two sets of literature which examine respectively whether oil resources conflicts take place in oil village communities and exploring the underlying reasons for the occurrence of the conflict. While the review agrees with the various assumptions posited by the literature reviewed, it criticises the holistic nature of the various contributions, as oil village communities were under- researched due to the use of state centric approach by the previous research. Arguing from micro-level analysis perspective, the review sees oil resources paradoxes as having different effects on the various parts of an oil producing state. Thus, in this case, oil village communities are affected differently by the presence of oil resources than the other parts of the Nigerian states.

Reviewing oil resources curse and abundance, and environmental scarcity and degradation literature, it argues that oil resources have specific effects on informal sectors like subsistent farming; on-state institutions and non-formal authorities like traditional institutions and community leadership. Oil resource curse and abundance create a new socio-economic

relations and social relations such as denial of sources of livelihoods, social exclusion and power struggles in oil village communities, thereby fuelling violent conflicts as groups and actors struggle for local control due to the new conditions. Based on this, it challenges the existing knowledge which focuses on oil resource-fuelled conflicts and violence linked only to the state and oil MNCs. It agreed with the submissions on environmental scarcity and violent conflicts, but criticizes the *one-sided violence* and conflict analysis approach applied, by arguing that individuals, groups, local and informal authorities operating outside the state are not investigated and their activities and contributions like rent-seeking, greed, grievance and other economic opportunities linked to oil resources conflicts are not researched. This chapter also points out the limitation of the existing literature in linking the analysis of oil resources activities to the nature of changes on socio-economic and power structures in oil village communities. This set of literature has the limitation that its argument covers only state sponsored violence and no linkage with non-state violence as covered in this study.

#### *What conclusions and gaps?*

This review of the contributions and limitations of the existing literature provides a basis for developing the main proposition of the thesis. The review agrees with the argument on the interface between oil resources and violent conflicts arising out of paradoxes of oil resources, which fuels oil resource conflict. However, it points out the limitation of not understudying the influence of oil resources on local oil village communities. In the case of Nigeria's oil village communities, the research is mainly concerned with structural violence. Structural violence in Nigeria is not just about the state but the constellation of different governance mechanisms beyond the central state who are allied to the central state.

More limited are studies that sought to bridge the structural conflict theory and natural resource conflicts theory streams of literature like environmental scarcity, Greed vs. Grievance. Research with an integrating framework of Structural conflicts and Natural resources theories to study oil resources conflicts, in oil village communities are generally absent.

Oil produces a particularly centralising tendency internationally due to the levels of investment, the need for access to international markets and the large size of the contracts. This means that a relatively small elite benefit from oil, but they benefit hugely. At the same time, there is not much for the local communities unless the central elite decide to give the wealth away. In reality, the state and the oil MNCs tend to ally themselves with those who can maintain the security of the oil installations, so at a local level some chiefs and some influential members of communities might benefit while then majority will not benefit. The real dilemma is therefore about inclusion versus exclusion and where the boundaries of that are. At a local level they are between and within specific communities. The case study is in oil village communities which aim to contribute to the analysis in oil resource conflicts in Nigeria. The propositions and the analytical framework for carrying out the analysis and achieving these aims are set up in chapter three.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3 Introduction**

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks of analysis used in the study. The research involves the study of multiple and inter-linked factors in oil resource fuelled conflicts. The complex nature of the study warranted an integration of environmental scarcity theory and greed versus grievance theory into structural conflict theory (structural violence) to form a framework for analysing the research. This therefore helps structural conflict theory in providing a strong explanation for the research. This is because, ‘conflicts have multiple causes that interact in highly specific ways according to the context’ (Ginty and Williams, 2009:26). Hence in this study, apart from the explanation for power relations and socio-economic structures or conditions, structural conflict theory may not adequately provide strong explanation for other variables such as environmental violence and criminality. As explained by Kaldor, Karl and Said (2007:3), there is ‘the prevalence of several competing explanations of the exact causal linkages between oil and war, or involving oil and violent conflict’. It therefore means that Structural conflict theory may not sufficiently provide every explanation. Therefore, the “integrated” structural conflict theory was adopted because it goes beyond providing a strong anchor for this study, but helps in the analysis and interpretation of data collected in this research. Jeong (2000:32) opines that “structural conditions for the emergence of serious social conflict are related to unequal access to political power” and by extension economic power and social relations. Not surprisingly, conflict is said to be “a generic phenomenon” (Jabri, 1996:11). Structural conflict theory therefore offers sufficient explanations for explaining violent conflicts in relation unequal access to socio-economic conditions and power relations. This would be explained in the other sections.



### **3.1 Structural Conflict Theory**

The study adopts Structural conflict theory (which is also known as Structural violence) as the theoretical approach for situating the research questions and propositions in the research. This is because of the dominant nature of power relations, social economic conditions and inequality among groups involve in the conflict in oil village communities in Nigeria. This means that all variables and explanations employed for the study of the research are anchored in structural conflict theory. Therefore in this research, structural conflict theory and structural violence are used as one theoretical approach and the names are used interchangeably; I also use structural violence to represent the whole conditions of structural violence and structural conflict as defined by the approach.

This theory emphasises that behaviours of people are affected or influenced by the unequal distribution of advantages in their society. The theory's basic orientation originated first from the radical structural theory developed by the Marxist dialectical school which had the likes of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels as its major exponents. The second orientation is from liberal structuralism with Ross Marc and Johan Galtung as the main exponents (Faleti, 2006). Galtung in his 1969 classic work “violence, peace and peace research” first used the term structural violence to explain the indirect nature of the violence, as it “is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances”(1969:171). The theory therefore demonstrates that “serious conflict is embedded in an inequitable social and economic system, reflecting prolonged exploitation supported by coercion”, which inherently creates a situation of disadvantaged and advantaged, as such re-defining a new relation which breeds a conflict situation (Jeong:2000:31). According to Saith (2011:71) ‘inequality has come to carry an intensifying salience in socio-political terms; there is a rising tide of informed

opinion that inequality has powerful, often cataclysmic implications within countries'. Therefore when people experience unequal access to public goods within their societies, the tendency to revolt against the existing inequalities in their societies becomes imminent.

Faleti (2006:41) submits that "the main argument of the structural conflict theory is that conflict is built into the particular ways societies are structured and organised." This is a clear interpretation of Karl Marx's structuralist's position, to which he contends 'that structures, particularly economic structures, determine the action of agents' (Marsh, 2002:155). In the same perspective, Galtung (1969) used the "conflict triangle" to show that conflict is a dynamic process involving structures, attitude and behaviour which constantly change and influence one another. As the existing structures change, one group gains an advantage while another group is disadvantaged; the new structure could be oppressive in nature with each party's interests remaining paramount. This will in turn lead to conflictual behaviour which subsequently grows and becomes violent.

Thus, structural conflict theory demonstrates the effects of inequality in societies, and how changes in existing structures could lead to conflict. In the oil village communities in Nigeria, oil resources changed the structures of these oil village communities. It empowered some people economically and disempowered others at the same time. As argued by Cramer (2006:112), 'inequality between categorical pairings is sustained by social mechanisms: exploitation is at its core; where there is exploitation there is typically opportunity hoarding by one group (of access to jobs, of control of certain markets, of political positions etc.)'. In the case under study, oil resources influence the change in the economic structures of relatively peaceful rural communities in favour of a particular group. This brought about changes in perceptions of human relations, thereby leading to suspicion, conflictual behaviour and then

violent conflict. The oil resources define the new structure and relationships which exist in these oil village communities (Watts, 2004).

Secondly, the discovery and subsequent production of oil created a three structure relationship which has oil resource at the centre of the relationship. A typical relationship structure consists of the oil village community, which acts as the host community for the oil; the Nigerian state, which by virtue of the Land Use decree of 1976(later changed to Land Use ACT of 1979) owns the land and the natural resources; and the multi-national oil companies operating in the oil village community in the *petrobusiness* (Ibeanu, 2000).

Although previous research have studied the structure of the relationship between oil village communities, the Nigerian state and oil MNCs, especially with regard to environmental degradation, social and economic neglect on the part of the Nigerian state, and the failure of oil MNCs to engage in CSR(Zalik,2004;Watts,2004; Ibeanu,2008).There are no direct discussions of the re-structuring of the socio-economic relations of the oil village communities by the presence of the oil resources activities. Oil resources introduce a structural material divide within oil village communities, leading to structural conflicts or violence as the oil resource has favoured and enriched some members of the community leaving the others out. As noted by Obi (2009:111), “where there is a sense of inequality in access to power and resources, the disadvantage group are likely to be mobilized to challenge an unsatisfactory status quo”, in order to also gain access to such power and resources. In the case of oil village communities, those who benefit from the oil resources windfall are either those who perpetuated violence against the oil MNCs, or the educated or influential group which negotiates on behalf of its various communities (Okonta, 2008; Okonta and Douglas, 2003). In many situations, these groups within the oil village communities easily benefit from the oil resources especially from

oil MNCs contracts, thereby creating a new structure in these communities which is a direct result of the production of oil resource in the community (Ukiwo, 2011).

However, Structural conflict theory has been criticised for focusing more on the material interests of the parties in conflict, because the conflict may well have been instituted by other non-material factors (faleti, 2006:44). Again, it is pertinent to point out that the gap between the period in which the socio-economic re-structure occurs and the period when the actual violent conflict sets in could be long, depending upon the point at which the disadvantaged or unfavoured groups perceive their position. As long as the disadvantaged group remains ignorant of their socio-economic exploitation or gains being made by their fellow oil village community dwellers, negative peace will continue to exist within the particular oil village community and among the people, as they continue to still see the Nigerian state and the Oil MNCs as their only common enemies. However, this theoretical perspective is adopted in this study because of its strong explanation of unevenly distribution of resources, as well as unevenly distribution of the power to influence such distribution (Galtung, 1969) as shown in the analysis chapters. Thus, the theory demonstrates how ‘the competing interests of group tie conflict directly into the social, economic, and political organisation of society as well as nature and strength of social networks within and between community groups(Faleti,2006:42).

### **3.1.1 The Environmental Scarcity Theory**

This theory is built on complex causes which could move ‘from the most local to the most global’ types of causes. Thomas Homer-Dixon is one of the proponents of this theory, which proposes that environmental scarcity could produce violent conflicts. Such conflicts range from local environmental degradation, to ethnic clashes, to civil strife (insurgencies), scarcity

induced wars out of a loss of sources of livelihoods and the negligent behaviour of the state and elite class (Homer-Dixon, 1999). Lending support to the environment and conflict argument, Brunborg and Urdal (2005:371) specified that “demographic factors may, however, also be potential causes of conflict”, with factors like “high population pressure” making negative impact on scarce resources such as arable land and fresh waters which could lead to violent conflicts. Although, Galtung (1990) uses the term ‘ecological balance’ to depict environmental violence, which I subsume as part of structural violence, but environmental scarcity approach provides a stronger and wider explanation for conditions such as oil spills, struggle for land and fishing waters in oil village communities. This will be explained in section 3. 4.

Environmental scarcity has “a variety of critical social effects, including declining food production, general economic stagnation or decline, displacement of population, and the disruption of institutions and traditional social relations among people and groups” (Homer-Dixon, 1998:346). In his own contribution, Benjaminsen (2008:819) argues that “scarcity is believed to be rapidly increasing in many marginal environments, in particular, owing to ongoing processes of environmental degradation primarily by escalating population growth’. Arguing differently but within the environmental scarcity debate, Gleditsch’s critique of the literature on armed conflict and the environment claims that “all conflicts of interest derive from scarcity. However, not all resource conflicts lead to overt conflict behaviour, and even fewer to the use of force. Environmental degradation may exacerbate resource conflicts because it reduces the quantity or quality of the resource in question” (1998:387). Implicitly, environmental degradation and resultant conflict may not at onset take physical violent approach, but rather a structural violent approach such as environmental violence, before becoming an armed and violent conflict.

Accordingly, the environmental scarcity theory has three main dimensions: Supply-induced scarcity, demand-induced scarcity, and structural scarcity (Homer-Dixon, 1994). Supply-induced scarcity emerges when resources are reduced and degraded faster than they are replenished. Demand-induced scarcity arises out of population growth as against its source of livelihood, while structural scarcity exists because of inequitable distribution of resources due to their concentration in the hands of a few, while the rest of the population suffers from resource inadequacy (Homer-Dixon, 1999). Supporting the Environmental scarcity theory, Midlarsky noted that:

Theoretically, an important intervening variable between environmental scarcity and civil conflict is inequality. The greater the scarcity, the greater the likelihood that some people will possess more of the scarce resource than others. Such inequality at least would exacerbate civil conflict, if not constitute a necessary condition for its existence (1998:341)

Hauge and Ellingsen agreed that “increased environmental scarcity caused by one or more of these factors is assumed to have several consequences, which in turn may lead to domestic armed conflict,” with intervening variables such as decreased agricultural production, decreased economic activity, migration and a weakened state helping to build up the environmental scarcity and violent conflict (1998:301). As people’s quality of life diminishes due to decrease in environmental resources such as fertile land, there is the tendency that competition may ensue over the scarce resources, such competition if unchecked could turn fierce, may result into violent conflict.

This theory is adopted by this research to provide support to structural conflict theory because of diverse meanings and explanations it brings to environmentally linked- resource conflicts which ‘ecological balance’ in Galtung’s structural violence could not sufficiently do. Unlike ecological balance which is linked directly to ecological degradation, resulting to human degradation as structural violence. Environmental scarcity in the case of oil village

communities shows how oil resources fuel scarcity of critical environmental resources especially land and fishing waters. Such environmental scarcity generates 'severe social stresses within countries, helping to stimulate subnational insurgencies, ethnic clashes and urban unrest' (Homer-Dixon, 1999:12). This assumption helps the research to demonstrate how and why oil village communities who depend mainly on these environmental resources such as fishing water and farming land fight to control the left-over waters and farming land. It also provides explanation on the structural violent nature of environmental scarcity, as the social crises it causes consequently fuels non-state conflict among affected oil communities.

However, this theory was criticised for ignoring the more direct linkage between economic and political factors and domestic armed conflict, thereby reducing the understanding of the causal pathway to domestic armed conflict. For instance, 'Structural scarcity, which concerns unequal distribution of resources (especially land), is mainly a consequence of politics' (Hauge and Ellingsen, 1998:302). Again, notwithstanding the initial acceptance given to the theory and its findings, but like other environmental security literature, its 'environmental and resource-related issues are connected to conflict in a state-centric sense' (O'leary, 2003:129). Furthermore, Salehyan argues that 'while environmental degradation is certainly not a necessary condition for armed conflicts, neither is it a sufficient one, since states play a key role in containing or aggravating violence' (2008:317). This flaw in the theory has been noted and is complemented by structural conflict theory, in order to build a direct linkage between economic and political factors, and domestic armed conflict. This is one of the reasons why this theory is not adopted as a single theory but as a component of the structural conflict theory.

### **3.1.2 The Greed versus Grievances Theory**

Collier and Hoeffler (2001) advanced this theory using statistical representation to establish some linkage of causes for internally generated wars in some states. In one of his initial studies, Collier (2000a) opined that some people (referred to in conflict literature as ‘conflict entrepreneurs’) actually benefit from violent conflict; while the overwhelming majority of the populace are affected negatively by the conflicts, the leaders of those armed groups that perpetuate the violence more often than not profit from the situation. For the insurgent group, the incentive gained from the rebellion constitutes the major reason for their action. Collier (2001:146-162) further argues that motivation for conflict is less important, as lust for power and perceived grievance are common issues. The main issue lies in how a rebel group can maintain itself, as war involves a great deal of financial resources. Based on this, rebellion to Collier (2001) is a form of organised crime, with rebels engaging in it as a business through which their activities maintain the group. He further submits that the likelihood of armed conflict is higher in a country with high dependency on primary commodities, as rebellion finds its activities profitable in such an environment.

However, this theory has been seriously contested, for what some theorists believe to be its misapplication. Ballentine (2003) refutes Collier’s arguments that armed conflict is basically a function of rebels’ predatory activities. Ballentine argues that socio-economic and political grievances, inter-group disputes, and security dilemmas are the primary factors which could lead to violent conflict. She acknowledges the existence of economic predation and opportunities for greed in fuelling a violent conflict, but she claims that they are not the



primary cause or causes of war. She further explains that only a few wars can be explained as 'resource wars' or be linked to a 'loot seeking' assumption as presented in Collier's research. Ballentine's submission brings out salient points that must be recognised before branding a violent conflict as being fuelled by greed or grievance. However, I feel that she missed an important point, which is that structural violence in natural resource conflicts does not deteriorate into armed conflict on the same day such structural violence is initiated. In essence, violent conflicts go through various stages, and like Collier, Ballentine did not give prominence to these stages. My further submission is that the causes highlighted by Ballentine occur during the protracted non-violent era. If after the period of non-violence, and the socio-economic position does not match their perception, a disaffected party may develop a means for solving their problem or to change their position which in most cases may involve greed.

This study draws support from this theory to demonstrate that greed and economic opportunism occurs in oil resources conflict. However, the study does not conform to Collier's group's submission that "the incidence of rebellion is not explained by motive, but by the atypical circumstances that generate profitable opportunities" (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004:564). Rather, the study sees grievance as "justice-seeking motives grounded in political, ethnic, or social grievance" (Ballantine, 2004:3), thus, grievance is a reaction against structural conditions such as inequality and marginalization .

In this study, as the oil village communities suffer from various forms of environmental degradation and scarcity, they initially resulted to complaints and protests to demonstrate their grievances. Consequently, as opportunity structures of the structural conflict changes without an improvement in the socio-economic conditions of these oil communities, some members of the communities opted for economic and criminal opportunities which exist within the new oil resources economy. This shows the importance of time scale in conflicts which is omitted by

proponents of 'resource war' arguments. Oil activities affecting oil communities' environment, livelihoods and social relations are considered primarily as structural violence, even though they could be classified differently as environmental conflict, environmental scarcity and relative deprivation, which produce other effects in oil communities. Thus, many years of neglects, inequalities, changes in socio-economic conditions and social relations, developed into struggle for power and leadership as means for control of oil opportunities. The result of such change is direct conflicts within and among oil village communities for oil resources benefits. In some cases, greed overtake genuine grievance as visible seen in some instances, like kidnapping for ransom which were widespread in Nigeria's oil region at the period of this field research and the plundering of oil resources by militant groups for personal gains (Reno, 2000; Collier, 2003).

Again, within the context of this argument, this study contends that the 'criminal ventures' in oil village communities started as grievances. There is a mixture of grievance and greed in most cases, with grievance often the starting point. Ikelegbe (2006) argues that in the case of the Niger Delta regions in Nigeria, where the oil village communities are situated, most militant activities were not motivated by economic opportunities but primarily by grievance, but the opportunities to plunder the oil resources that exist within their environment was too tempting to be resisted. This situation has created a grievance-greed mixture that has exacerbated the violent conflicts in the oil village communities in Nigeria, and continues to create opportunities and incentives for conflict perpetuation. This thereby means that that the study internalises the existence and applicability of grievance and 'opportunities' variables in this research. Therefore both grievance and greed as a mixture are important for analysing natural resource conflicts.

### **3.2 Explanation and Application of the Framework**

The main propositions submitted by this framework are the following:

Firstly in this research, oil resources conflicts in Nigeria's oil village communities were considered primarily as structural violence. Like every structural conflict, structural violence creates 'structural conditions for the emergence of serious social conflicts' and fuels conditions such as environmental scarcity, struggle for leadership, grievance, greed and criminality in oil village communities (Jeong, 2000:32). Based on the nature of the conflict as well as the study, the research developed an integrated structural violence framework, which involves the integration of environmental scarcity theory and greed vs. grievance theory into the structural violence theory in order to provide a strong and sufficient explanation for analysis of findings.

As an integrated structural violence framework, it demonstrates that oil resources produce a particular form of structural violence which influences power and economic relations within oil village communities. As discussed in sections 2.4 and 2.5, with explanatory viewpoints in sections 3.1 to 3.1.2. Oil resources impose structural conditions or indirect violence which gradually led to armed violent conflict. As discussed in section 2.2, oil resources fuel both negative and positive changes in oil village communities, such changes includes changes in socio-economic conditions. The framework adopted environmental scarcity theory as part of the integrated analytical framework to demonstrate how oil resources fuel environmental scarcity over time resulting in violent struggles and violent conflicts over scarce natural resources like farming land and fishing waters. Again, the adoption of greed vs. grievance theory as part of the integrated analytical frame provides explanation on how structural violence fuelled by oil resources could over time lead to rebellion, economic opportunism or criminality. Therefore as an integrated framework, any part of the theories which make up the framework could be used to provide an explanation.

Secondly, the framework demonstrates that the new socio-economic condition created by oil resources and activities form part of the structural violence, as well as fierce struggle for power and leadership. New wealthy, influential and dominant groups are created by oil resources, as gaining access to power and leadership positions means gaining access to the oil resources opportunities. Therefore, having access to oil resources opportunities create a new fierce struggle for power, leadership and authority in oil village communities (Francis *et al*, 2011).

As documented in the literature, the Structural conflict theory framework assumes that oil resources build structural violence into the system in the form of environmental scarcity (structural induced scarcity [discrimination and alienation], demand induced scarcity [poverty] and supply induced scarcity [environmental degradation], and arise out of oil resources activities). As will be discussed in the analysis chapters, the framework demonstrates how factors such as poverty and loss of livelihoods arising out of oil activities could fuel grievance or greed (as exemplify in the framework), thus fuelling violent conflicts. As Obi (2011:7) explained, “in the Niger Delta, with its high population density, it has meant a loss of power over ‘scarce’ (oil-rich) land for local people, and loss of compensation for the full value of appropriated land, save for compensation for trees/crops or property on the surface of such land”. The study as supported by the structural violence framework assumes that such changes produce structural violence leading to violent conflict over a period. The changes produced by oil resources presence and activities consequently re-define access to socio-economic conditions.

The framework also assumes that power and leadership struggles are fallouts of changes in socio-economic conditions and relations arising out of oil activities, especially in the

distribution of benefits. For instance, HRW (2005:7) wrote that “as traditional leadership positions became more lucrative and the tribal elders more powerful, the competition to occupy them intensified”. As discussed in Section 2.5, the struggle for power or leadership/ authority may be due to the benefits and opportunities oil resources provide. This argument within the structural violence framework establishes the link between oil resources and the struggle for power in oil village communities. It provides the basis for understanding the second research question. The framework has a radical cluster<sup>23</sup> shape but denotes a relationship which oil resources at the top of the cluster fuels structural conflicts. However, it is pertinent to note that oil resources activities, benefits and opportunities are the centre-piece of the conflict (HRW, 1999 and 2005). Structural conflicts in turn produce elements of environmental scarcity, greed or grievance. Again, within the framework, environment scarcity can reinforce greed or grievance and verse versa, as well as environmental scarcity and greed or grievance reinforcing structural violence.

The application of this framework is conducted under the premise that structural conflict theory provided the best analysis for this research, while drawing support from environmental scarcity theory and greed vs. grievance approach, thus the integration of the other theories into it. It is argued in this study that oil resources to a large extent change the socio-economic conditions of the oil village communities thereby institutionalising discrimination and alienation from the new economy, poverty and environmental degradation, leading to either a struggle for power to aid resource appropriation or violent conflict out of grievance or greed (see the explanation of the theory in section 3.1.). Oil resources also changed the nature of power and/or traditional authority structures and the local economy, thereby linking such structures directly to oil

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<sup>23</sup> The radical cluster as adopted in this framework shows that the three theories relates to a central idea or theme of the research. However, the research adapted the framework to show more direct relationship between the central idea represented by oil resources and structural conflict theory, with environmental conflict and greed vs. grievance theories as other clusters supporting structural conflict theory.

resources opportunities. In examining the role played by struggle for power and leadership in fuelling oil resources conflict in oil village communities, it is important to state how ‘rationalization’ of corruption, mismanagement of community wealth and conflicts within these oil village communities fuel the fierce competitions for positions which give access to oil resources opportunities. Gaining power and leadership position is then pursued at all cost, as described by Chabal and Daloz (1999; 2006). These factors of disorder such as conflict, corruption and misrule are ‘instrumentalized’ as part of the societal culture in order to promote patrimonial and personal gains of those in power or in leadership positions. Therefore, a further insight From HRW (1999) sees oil resource opportunities as “spoils” to the communities and more especially to those whose positions in the communities’ enables them to either negotiate or represent the oil communities. In the words of Theobald (1982:550) “these spoils are apportioned to the leaders of various groups or factions who then transit to their followers such resources as a necessity to retain their support”. In the oil village communities, the positions of transmitting oil spoils are heavily contested by elders, “youth” association and women group because of the probabilities of personalising such spoils without been seen as corrupt.

As stated in chapter two, oil resources conflict is first and foremost to be understood from the broader perspective of violent conflict, which like every other conflict could occur. Like every conflict, is about competing interests, while the State uses the Land Use Act of 1978/9 to acquire land in the communities for *petrobusiness*, the oil communities are asking for the repeal of the legislation as well as the Petroleum Act of 1969, which dispossess them of their land (ICG, 2006). However the peculiarity of oil resources conflict is that it distorts and influences a cycle of structural violence that may eventual result to physical violence through factors such as environmental degradation, relative deprivation and Dutch diseases. Other aspects of conflict shows that conflict is also further exacerbated by the activities of the

Nigerian state and oil MNCs in distributing oil rent to various oil communities. This is because, instead of the “triangular relationship” which existed in the oil industry in Nigeria, between the MNCs, the local Nigerian businessmen also referred to as middlemen or comprador and the Nigerian state (Turner, 1982:64); oil village communities have emerged as partners in seeking oil rent, thereby making oil resources and oil resources benefits and opportunities as shown in the framework the centre-piece of the conflict, but sitting at the top of the cluster. HRW(1999:96) argued that just as at the federal level, corruption “feeds down into each community in the delta, where oil money flows into the hands of local elites in the same way as it does to national elites(1999.96).

In the framework, Structural conflict theory drawing support from environmental scarcity theory made major contribution by defining and explaining the socio-economic changes. A relatively peaceful 'poor' fishing community with the discovery and production of oil resources in its domain suddenly has its socio-economic structures distorted, with some members of the community becoming rich, leaving the others further down the poverty web, because their collective source of livelihood is been degraded by *petrobusiness*. Describing the oil resources and the production scenario, Ibeanu (2008:16) writes that:

The Devil's Excrement [referring to oil resources] has been a source of wealth and poverty, security and insecurity, and development and underdevelopment in equal measures. Ironically, those from whose land it is taken are always on the negative side of its inherent paradoxes-they are poor, insecure and underdeveloped.

Although Ibeanu was referring to the relationship between the oil village communities and the rest of the Nigerian state, the study believes that the same situation exists within each oil village community, as some groups within each community benefit from the resources, while the rest suffer in poverty. Thus the framework acknowledges that this situation brings about a

change in the way the communities are structured and organised. Oil resources instantly introduce socio-economic exclusion and political supremacy in these oil village communities. As most structuralists agree, the change in the economic structures and social institutions leads to conflict because new factors of class domination, exclusionism, and exploitation have been introduced. In addition, those who benefit from oil resources benefits do so because 'there is a persistent structural inequality that is reflected in access to money, knowledge and power; and these are the key resources used in the struggle for political influence' (Marsh, 2002:170). Oil resources have brought class divisions in most oil village communities, enriching some and further deprived the majority. Oil resources have created class inequality, economic and political discrimination and weakened the kinship ties in the communities (Ross, 1993:4). As Faleti (2006:43) says, "when social, political, economic and cultural processes are monopolised by a group, it creates the conditions that make people to adopt adversarial approaches to conflict." This situation gives room for violent conflict, especially when the position of the deprived group becomes very obvious to them.

The framework drawing from greed vs. grievance approach in support of structural violence shows that grievance driven-conflict could become greed or economic opportunity-driven. Ramsbotham (2005:115) opines that, unlike interests, needs are 'ontological' and non-negotiable, so that, if conflict comes, it is likely to be intense, vicious, and, from a traditional Clausewitzian perspective, 'irrational'. Once the needs of these oil village communities have gone unfulfilled over a long period of time, they are more likely to turn to violent conflict to gain attention. Furthermore, Using Luc Reyhler's phases of conflict transformation, it is important to note that at the inception of oil production, 'incipient conflict' was introduced, meaning that the oil village communities were "not aware of the existing structural,



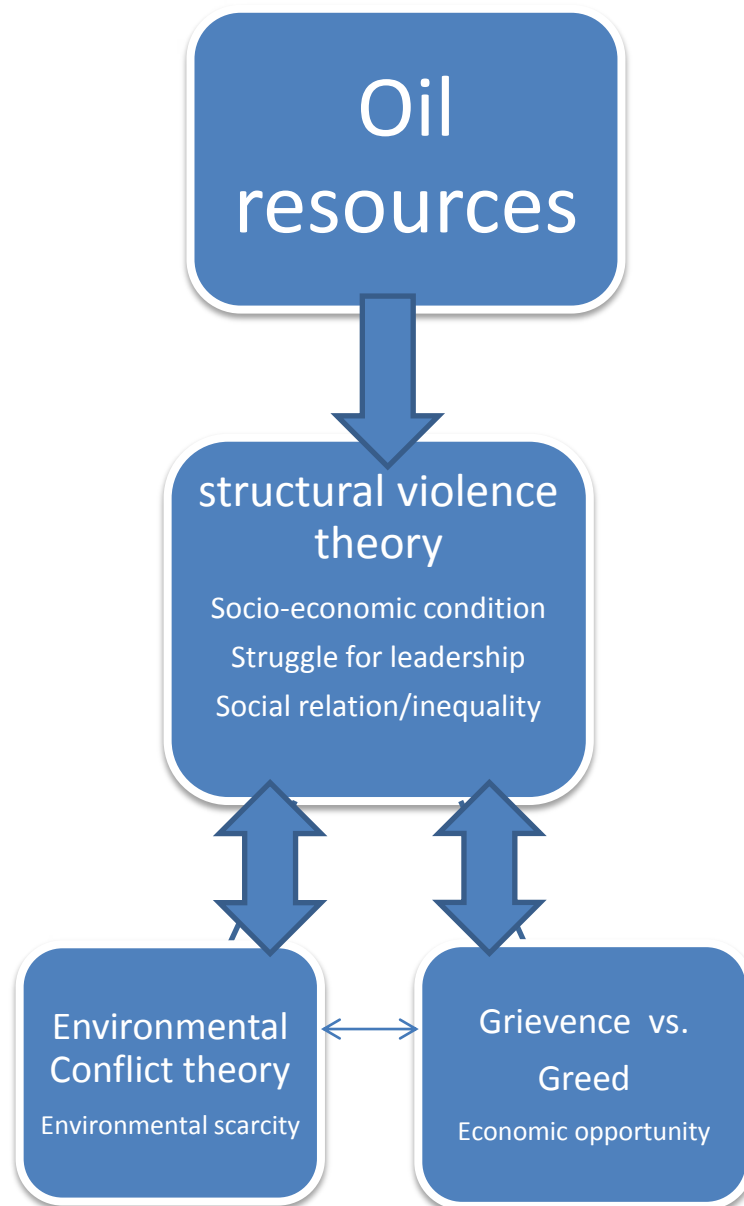
psychological or cultural violence,” (Reychler, 1999:17), at this stage, the structural conflict has altered their existing socio-economic relations.

Finally, knowing which conflict theory to apply has always been a major issue that confronts most researchers in peace and conflict studies, and this becomes more difficult when it involves natural resources. According to Klare (2001:190), “conflicts of this sort are interwoven with long-standing ethnic, political, and regional antagonisms. In most cases, a sought after resource is concentrated in an area that is occupied by – or coveted by- an ethnic or religious group that seeks to increase its political power or to break away from the existing state”. The vast and dynamic nature of the conflict in the oil village communities make it imperative that I take a firm stand on which area of the conflict to focus on, thereby eliminating any chance of clashes of *knowledge claims*<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Knowledge claim, according to Creswell (2003:7), could be seen as assumptions researchers adopt on starting a project, about how they will learn and what they will learn during the inquiry, otherwise called paradigms.

**Fig.3.1 The theoretical framework: The “Integrated” Structural conflict theory or structural violence (Explaining oil resources conflicts using Structural conflict theory, drawing support from Environmental scarcity and Greed vs. Grievance theories)**



**The core model of the causal links between oil resources and violent conflict**

### 3.3 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework considered appropriate for examining and analysing the extent to which and how oil resources contributes to violent conflicts in the oil village communities in Nigeria. As earlier explained, the nature of the conflict warrants the need for a multi-faceted theoretical framework that explains structural violence. The “integrated” Structural violence analytical framework was chosen for this study to accommodate various forms of structural violence, environmental scarcity, economic opportunism and rebellion arising out of oil resources activities. Based on the need to provide a strong explanation to why oil resources conflicts occur in oil village communities, the conflict theories that were adopted to form the analytical framework are the structural conflict theory/structural violence, environmental scarcity theory and greed vs. grievance theory.

Structural conflict theory or structural violence as part of the framework provides explanation on how oil resources create structural conditions that fuels conflicts. These forms of structural violence created by oil resources include socio-economic conditions such as poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Environmental scarcity theory as part of the integrated analytical framework provides explanation on how oil resources fuel environmental scarcity over time resulting in fierce competition over scarce natural resources like farming land and fishing waters. The adoption of greed vs. grievance theory as part of the integrated analytical frame gives explanation on how structural violence fuelled by oil resources could over time lead to rebellion, economic opportunism or criminality as experience in many natural resources conflicts like oil resources conflicts in Nigeria.

This study therefore considers the “integrated” structural conflict theory or structural violence as providing a robust and sufficient explanation for oil resource conflicts. The theories that formed the framework provide support for the entire framework and are generally interwoven. This is because it is difficult to have a single factor that could be solely responsible for the emergence, escalation, and protraction of violence or violent conflict. Therefore, the importance of this framework is in showing that oil resources are not important in isolation, but rather through the changes it brings to the socio-economic and political structures of local oil village communities.

Drawing on the discussion above, it is suggested that oil resource conflicts have not been given adequate attention in oil resources literature. Based on the research questions which were built under the proposition, the analysis of the study of Nigeria’s oil village communities using the “integrated” structural conflict theory/structural violence will add to the debate and the existing knowledge in this area of oil resources research. To do this, the methods used in data collection are discussed in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4 Introduction

This chapter explains the philosophical positions of the research, the methodology of the study and the methods employed in the collection and analysis of data for the study.

#### 4.1 Philosophical Assumptions

Before the discussion of the research methods used in this research, it is useful to set out the philosophical worldviews, in other words, the epistemological and ontological bases of the research. According to Blaikie (1993), assumptions and choices are made in response to research questions which, overtly or covertly, have significant consequences for conducting social enquiry, as well as the research results. In this study, the philosophical assumptions that guided my approach to this study are interpretivism and critical theory (Blaikie, 1993:1). These philosophical positions helped me to form the critical element in the design of my research, especially the specification of the questions which I answered (Blaikie, 1993). Consequently, the research's paradigms<sup>25</sup> are driven by three fundamental questions; (a) the ontological question (b) the epistemological question and (c) the methodological question. These three questions are interconnected in such a manner that any answer given to any one question influences the answers we obtain from the other questions. Based on the interrelatedness of the basic belief systems on whose assumptions paradigms are established, as well as my conviction that there is no way to establish ultimate truthfulness for the basic beliefs that inform any paradigm, the study employs these two philosophical positions as the dominant paradigm for

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<sup>25</sup>Guba and Lincoln (2004), define paradigms as sets of basic beliefs, which reflect the worldview of the holders, the range of possible relationships which are not open to proof in any conventional sense. Therefore, paradigms are also human constructions. Holloway (1997:114) defines a paradigm as "a philosophical model or framework originating in a world view and belief system based on a particular ontology and shared by a scientific community."

the research. However, this research notes that qualitative research is an inclusive method with its approaches not always wholly separate but possibly overlapping (Holloway, 1997).

I adopted interpretivism<sup>26</sup> because it enabled me to understand social phenomena and the existing ‘constructed’ social world and its interpretation by people in oil village communities in Nigeria (Holloway, 1997; Blaikie, 1993). Even though I acknowledge the existences of multiple ‘understandings’ as people in the oil village communities differently construct and interpret their relationship to the oil resources, there is relative consensus in the knowledge that exist within them (Guba and Lincoln, 2004). The construction, interpretation and understanding of their world changes as situation in their oil communities changes.

I interpreted these social realities from their stances and constructions. This I did by giving primary data such as interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) and observations from the field, meanings and explanations by seeking for clarification and probing for confirmation to ensure a better understanding of oil resource conflicts in the communities visited. I acknowledge the difficulty of achieving complete objectivity and neutrality in social science research, as “social reality is a product of its inhabitants” (Blaikie, 1993:48). However, the use of triangulation in the research as would be explained in section 4.6 helped me in achieving reliability and validity.

I also adopted Critical theory as the second and complementary philosophical assumption based “on the idea that *reason* is the highest potentiality of human beings. As well, through its usage, it is possible to criticise and challenge the nature of existing societies” (Blaikie, 1993:52). Through Critical theory, I was able to critique the social, political, cultural, economic

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<sup>26</sup>Interpretivism situates cultural and historical interpretations of the social life-world. By this, it thereby asserts the existing differences between various social realities (Gray, 2004:20)

and gender structures in oil village communities (Guba and Lincoln, 2004). In essence, the two philosophical approaches adopted in this research were considered as appropriate as interpretivism helped me to understand the world constructed by participants or the documentary evidence I gathered while the critical theory helped me to question subjective reality constructed and interpreted by my respondents or contained in documentary evidence.

## **4.2 The Case study Design.**

The section justifies my choice of the case study design for this study. To Yin (2003), case study has two critical definitions. First, the technical definition begins with the scope of a case study: A case study is an empirical inquiry that: Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The second definition looks at the case study inquiry, which copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result. It relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result. It also benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2003).

Accordingly, this research adopts a case study approach out of the “desire to understand the complex social phenomena” presented by the study, i.e. greed, grievance, environmental degradation, environmental scarcity, power struggles, oil benefits, etc. Furthermore, owing to the complexity of the independent, dependent and antecedent variables involved, the study thus retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events for achieving good data collection and analysis of violent conflicts that exist within Nigerian oil producing village communities (Yin, 2003:2; Burns, 2000:460). With a layout of a case study approach, an attempt is made to relate the findings to theoretical framework derived generally from

structural conflict theory. The deployment of theories is essential both during pre-data collection as well as providing a framework for interpreting the case study findings. The theoretical ideas that were developed tend to influence the research questions, the propositions, units of analysis and provide the logic for linking the data to the research propositions: “the complete research design embodies a “theory” of what is being studied (Yin, 2003:29).

The study’s approach in that this study focused on village communities, which were investigated as a unit because of their shared socio-political, economic and cultural features. Yin (2003:13-14) argues that a case study ‘relies on multiple sources of evidence’ and a ‘prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.’

Delta State’s oil village communities are selected from many other oil producing village communities in Nigeria, such as those in Rivers, Edo, Ondo, Abia, Imo, Akwa Ibo, Cross River and Bayelsa States. Delta state was purposely selected for this research based on the volume of crude oil produced in the state, which was the highest among the oil-producing states in Nigeria during the period of the research. The state has a high number of intra-and inter-community oil-related violent conflicts in Nigeria (Imobighe *et al*, 2002). At the period of the research, it had the highest number of kidnapping of oil workers, militant activities and pipeline vandalism in the region.

However, data from these selected communities as explained in the sampling section were analysed together without using a *comparative case method*<sup>27</sup>. The study employs a single narrative as the basic unit of the collective study, thereby allowing data collected from participants selected from various oil village communities to be analysed as a single study

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<sup>27</sup> The comparative case method is a distinctive form of multiple–case study mainly used in the field of political science and public administration (Yin, 2003:14).



(Shkedi, 2005:21). I opted for this because of these reasons: Considering that most Delta state's oil village communities are small hamlets with few population sharing similarities of single economic activities like fishing or farming and with an overlapping neighbourhood. Therefore adopting a collective case study/single narrative allows for a "thick holistic description," thereby leading to an "achievement of a level of understanding and interpretation" (Shkedi, 2005:21). Further, the collective case or single narrative provided me with the opportunity to capture conditions with the same similarity in the oil village communities such as struggle for oil benefits among communities and struggle for leadership. Therefore, I adopted collective/single case study design because collective or single case study provided me the opportunity of studying social phenomenon such as oil resources fuelled violent conflicts 'through a thorough analysis of an individual case. The case may be a person, group, episode, process, community, society or any other unit of social life...[and] opportunity for intensive analysis of many specific details often overlooked by other methods(Kumar,2005:113).

#### **4.3 Qualitative Approach as a Research Method for the Study**

I adopted qualitative research because of its phenomenological position, unlike Quantitative research which is based on positivism (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). This phenomenological position allowed me to gain insight into reality of oil resource conflicts in oil village communities such as their social relations (Flick, 2002). As a general theme, Brockington and Sullivan (2003:57) maintain that qualitative research first tries to "understand the world through interacting with, empathizing with and interpreting the actions and perceptions of its actors." Berg (1995:7), while contributing to the explanation and understanding of the qualitative method, writes that "qualitative research properly seek answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings". Another reason for employing a qualitative data collection method is because of complexity that

underlines oil resources-linked violent conflicts. Thus, the qualitative method was considered as it helped in order to obtain in-depth knowledge and gather relevant information to the study

Black (2002) argues that the researcher's question determines the research approach. My research tools were chosen based on the research questions and the aim of my research. The nature of the research equally warranted me to make some changes while in the field. My understanding that "qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured" informed these changes as other aspects of the research evolved (Creswell, 2003:181). I had previously set out with the view of conducting my fieldwork based on the existence of environmental degradation and poverty in the oil village communities. However the consideration of these variables alone would not have provided a solid explanation for the cause of violent conflicts in oil village communities in Nigeria. As factors such as struggle for power, leadership and social exclusion may also have major roles in fuelling the violent conflicts. In addition, during my first week in the field, I discovered that my pre-fieldwork scope of study, which was the Warri metropolitan area in Delta State, the hub of violent conflicts in Delta State, is not really an oil village community but a metropolitan area. It mainly houses administrative and operation offices of the *petrobusiness* in Delta State, while the real oil activities take place outside the geographical area called Warri. This led to the expansion of the research's scope to include the entire Delta State, which means selecting one out of the nine oil producing states (where the oil village communities are based) in Nigeria.

It is important to note that this study is embedded in *logico-deductive research*<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, from the beginning of the research there were clear ideas of the research questions and theories

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<sup>28</sup>Logico-deductive research is a traditional research design that is theory-driven from extant theories. The research design requires the researcher pre-structuring each phase of the research process to verify or refute these extant theories. It works on preconceived steps that guide the processes (Charmez, 2001). It is equally referred to

to test. This to a large extent helped in determining the appropriateness of the chosen research methodology, as the method that will help answering the questions. Invariably, it impacted on the conceptualisation of the research design, the fieldwork, selection of case studies, and the data collection.

#### **4.4 Data Gathering Process**

This section discusses the forms of data collection instruments, the challenges, opportunities and decisions made while on the field in Nigeria between November 2007 and March, 2008. Data collection for this research started at the early period of my decision to study for a PhD, with collection of secondary data. The primary data collection (by means of interview, focus group discussion and observation) which came at later date as stated above, were used to empirically to explore the research questions. During this period of field research, interviews and focus group discussions were held with people who have in-depth knowledge and understanding of oil resources conflict in oil village communities in Nigeria (sampling discussion below).

Within the same period of time, documents such as reports, government white papers, publications (books, policy papers and journals) and other relevant documents relating to the research topic were sought from universities, research centres, government offices and oil companies' offices in Nigeria. These documents aided a critical exploration and analysis of the discourse(s) on power struggle, socio-economic changes that shape the nature of the violent conflicts in the oil village communities and the Niger delta region.

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as "hypothetico-deductive or the falsification approach, or the method of conjecture and refutation" (Blaikie, 1993:143-144).

#### 4.4.1 Sample and Sampling Strategies

The major target groups for the study are people from the oil village communities, especially those who live in these communities. Others are participants from governmental development agencies, Non-Governmental bodies and oil companies whose activities in these oil communities impact on the conflicts. In doing this, I adopted a purposeful sampling strategy which should allow me to carefully select individuals who have direct bearing on the topic of my research. As suggested by Kumar (2005:179), ‘this type of sampling is extremely useful when you want to construct a historical reality, describe a phenomenon or develop something about which only a little is known’. However, I could not fully utilize this sampling strategy, as I find it difficult to interview up to 20 community chiefs/elders as I had intended. Rather I met more willing “youths” and women who participated both in the interviews and FGDs, providing me with enough information. It is worth noting that the decline of some Chiefs and elders to participate in the interviews or FGDs meant that the sample population had more “youths”<sup>29</sup> than chiefs and elders. This made my sampling a bit opportunistic as I cashed in on their willingness to explore and conducted my field research. With “the youths” being the larger percent of the participants (both the interviews and FGDs), their contributions demonstrated prevalence of social inequalities which are championed by chiefs and elders and those in power and the gains of resultant violent conflicts. The opportunistic nature of this sampling approach rather became a positive contribution to my data gathering and the entire

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<sup>29</sup> The definition of youth is a historically contested term, as societies define who a youth is taking into consideration their political, socio-economic, cultural, religious variables. Durham (2000:16) explains that the definition of youth surpasses biological or chronological age as social and cultural variables such as gender, religion, class, economy, responsibilities and ethnicity play important role in defining who is a youth or who is not. Oluwaniyi (2010:311) explains that “Youth is a social construction arising out of the political, socio-cultural, institutional and economic dynamics of a society that needs to be fully interrogated in order to understand the milieu within which it operates” Therefore in this research, “Youths” are not just adolescents between ages 17-24 as defined by The UN, but men and women who for either political, traditional or socio-economic reasons are not considered as part of the elders in the communities. This is an observed trend in many African societies. These youths could have their ranging up to 45 years.

research, as their information helped to establish the changing socio-economic and political nature of oil village communities.

Furthermore, as Ritchie *et al.* (2003) argue that the criteria for choosing samples are dependent upon the research questions or the topics to be explored. Therefore, the choice of samples from the ten oil village communities were influenced by the experience of the participants their knowledge of the theme, and the position of such participants in their various communities. Also, government officials whose official responsibilities connect them with the oil village communities and MNCs whose oil exploration activities take place in these communities were included in the interviews. Consistent with this, Miller and Crabtree (2004:191) argue that “respondents should be selected so as to maximize the richness of information obtained pertinent to the research question using in depth interviews.”

Considering that there is no list of oil village communities in Delta State, or rather no government agency agreed to be in possession of one, purposive and opportunistic sampling best served the situation. Again, considering the nature of oil village communities and conflict situations, gathering information proved somewhat difficult, especially where the participants offered to set up meeting between myself and some other people who could provide me with relevant information. This is described as snowballing technique (Kumar, 2005). For example, through snowballing I was able to meet and interviewed some community leaders and leaders of community development associations. Their views were very important in providing inside information on the host communities’ relationships (the popular name for oil village communities) with oil companies. Their views were considered very vital in issues such oil spills and compensation, development projects and other corporate social responsibilities of oil companies.

The individuals who were interviewed were located through participants already known to me, while some who have featured prominently in the Niger Delta conflicts either as mediators, peace builders or development agencies. E-mails were sent asking for interviews. In selecting these respondents from oil village communities, I tried to balance the ethnic representation of the participants by selecting two oil village communities from one ethnic group. The inclusion of ethnic representation for selecting participants is to avoid the research been biased by views of people from the same ethnic group as Delta state is a multi-ethnic state. Beyond the socio-economic conditions and power struggle issues, the researcher while gathering the data in the field discovered that gender has an important role in the entire conflict. As Oluwaniyi (2011:150) observed, ‘women in the Niger Delta struggle simultaneously against the state-oil partnership as well as oppressive gender relations’. However, in this research gender issues is recognised as important in the conflict but it is not possible to explore every aspect of the gender related conflicts. However, some gender issues were considered in the analysis of the main and sub-questions. Thus, within these oil communities, roles and gender were considered in the selection. However, women who participated were mainly women leaders and some younger women who participated in focus group discussion. This is due to the limited roles given to women in these communities.

In total, the research had a sample size of 75 participants across all the 10 communities visited, NGOs, interventionist agencies and oil MNCs. This comprised of 51 participants who participated in semi structured interviews and 24 participants (twelve in each forum) who took part in two separately organised focus group discussions (FGDs). The research selected the participants from across 10 village communities visited and was more interested in in-depth nature of the interview. This is because these communities share similar structural violence, in

areas such as oil resources and traditional institution system, youth unemployment and restiveness, sources and forms of livelihoods, environmental issues caused by oil, poverty and social exclusion. Table 4.1 contains the names of oil village communities visited as part of my field work.

**TABLE 4.1 List of oil village communities visited between November 2007 and February 2008**

COMMUNITIES	LGAs	ETHNIC GROUPS	OIL MNCs	Date Visited
Ugbokodo	Okpe	Urhobo	SHELL	16/01/2008
Sapele	Sapele	Urhobo	SHELL	17/01/2008
Okerenkoko	Warri-South	Itsekiri	SHELL	14/11/2007- 15/11/2007
Batan	Warri-South	Itsekiri	SHELL	16/11/2007
Uzere	Isoko-South	Isoko	SHELL/CHEVRON	24/01/2008
Olomoro	Isoko-South	Isoko	SHELL/CHEVRON	24/01/2008
Odimodi	Warri-South West	Ijaw	SHELL	05/12/2007- 06/12/2007
Gbaramatu	Warri-South West	Ijaw	SHELL	11/12/2007- 13/12/2007
Okpai	Ndokwa West	Ndokwa	AGIP	01/02/2008
Utagbo-Uno	Ndokwa- West	Ndokwa	AGIP	01/02/2008

**Source: Researcher's Field notes**

#### **4.4.2 Research Interviews**

Interviewing is a common data gathering method in qualitative research. Kumar (2005:123)

defines an interview as “[a]ny person-to-person interaction between two or more individuals

with specific purpose in mind.” This invariably shows that interview method in qualitative research seeks to uncover the perceptions, positions and experiences of participants. Thus, a semi-structured type of interview was adopted in this study to tap into participants’ views and knowledge of oil resources related violent conflicts.

I used an interview guide which contained my pre-determined questions, but had ample freedom to modified, re-word, explain, or omit questions when the situation seemed appropriate while conversing with participants (Robson, 2002). The technique also allowed me to rearrange the order of my questions from the original script.

Having made these initial interviews and contacts in Warri, and having used all the goodwill provided by both the location of oil-related development intervention government agencies and the location of oil companies’ operations offices in Warri, the interviews moved to oil village communities. In the oil village communities I relied on some of the contacts made in Warri and applied the snowball technique to access more key informants. It proved extremely difficult to get some of people in the oil village communities to talk, especially the chiefs and elders. They were cautious of the developments in some other oil village communities, with the Nigerian government trying some charity workers for espionage. However, it was not the same with “youths”, who showed more aggression over the state of infrastructural development and unemployment situations in their various communities. However with patience, persistence and follow-ups, as well as constant explanations of the importance of the interviews and research to me (as the research is not being done for profit or on behalf of any foreign organisation but purely academic), some key informants provided me with critical and balanced understanding and interpretation of the role played by oil resources benefits, power struggle and other factors in fuelling the violent conflicts in Nigeria’s oil village communities.



However, few people refused to grant me interviews, citing the sensitive nature of the topic and my association with a foreign university. Their refusal and views for not granting interview on the topic helped the researcher to further exploring the link between the second and third objectives. Specifically, in exploring how oil resources opportunities and benefits influence the disposition of those who benefit from it and the subsequent violent conflict. These refusals occurred more among few serving government officials who directly supervise oil development/interventionist agencies and among traditional rulers, elders and community development committee officials. However, the “youth” were much more ready to grant me interviews, except two “youth” leaders who denied my approach for interview; this helped me in forming my decision to use more “youths” in the FGDs. The hurdles encountered while visiting the ten oil village communities are mainly linked to the tense nature of the environment, especially the nature of existing conflicts and insecurity. Some gatekeepers at the government offices, who caused unnecessary delays, did not see the importance of my research to their personal gains. They rather gave access first to a contractor, a businessman or an influential “youth” leaders who wants to see their senior officials than allow the researcher access, as they may not get any financial gain from me. For instance, each time I visited DESOPADEC’s office, I meet thousands of “youths” from various oil village communities who were demonstrating, or contractors struggling to get access to government officials for contract jobs. For example: On the 7<sup>th</sup> of December, 2007, while visiting DESOPADEC's office (Delta State Oil Producing Development Commission), “youths” from the Ndokwa area of the state besieged the commission and sacked the entire workforce leading to the shutting down of the office, as they protest over non-inclusion of their communities in DESOPADEC’s development programmes. Again, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 2008, I was at DESOPADEC's office while the governor of the state, Dr.Emmanuel Udeughan was visiting the office and

there were hundreds of angry “youths” who stormed the office demonstrating and protesting over lack of jobs, accusing their community leaders and DESOPADEC of favouring only their family members, friends and relations in giving employment (Field Notes, Warri: 2007).

The situation I met on the ground was critical in some decisions made in order to meet the target set out for the field research. With a tense environment, the fear of being accused of espionage and the attitude of some gatekeepers in the government offices, I relied on the assistance of some “youths” in order to be able to conduct the interviews in the oil village communities. Furthermore, to get to government officials and some community leaders, the researcher employed a lot of snowballing techniques, where necessary, using an already interviewed community leader to get to the next community leader whose contributions might be informative. In some instances, I personally appealed to a senior official to introduce me to any official I had on my list. In sum, 51 respondents granted face to face semi structured interviews to the researcher. Table 4.2 shows the categories of participants in the interviews.

**Table 4.2: Semi-structured interviews by category conducted Between November 2007 and March 2008**

Category	Number interviewed
Traditional Heads of/elders of communities	7
Chairmen/ Members of Community development Committee	8
Community Youth Leaders	9
Development interventionist Agencies: NDDC DESOPADEC	6 (3) (3)
Non-Governmental Organisations(local)	2
Oil MNCs Director Senior Managers Community relation officer	5 (1) (2) (2)
Human rights activists Environmental right activists Constitutional Rights Activists	2 (1) (1)
Women Leaders/ Committee members of women Association	10
Development Consultant/Researcher	1
Diaspora oil village community Member	1
Total	51

**Source: Researcher's field notes**

Table 4.2 summaries the semi structured interviews conducted in the oil village communities between November 2007 and February 2008. In Total 51 semi-structured interviews were conducted as earlier explained. As can be seen in the table, out of the 51 participants, 35 are linked to oil village communities as either, Village head, Community Development Committee

members or “youth” or women leader. The remaining people are linked to Oil MNCs, NGOs, development/interventionist agencies, rights group and development consultancy.

In sum while visiting the oil village communities, some communities were very willing and with that, I had more respondents (as shown in the table 4.1). I visited some oil village communities more than once, while my visit to some communities lasted only a day as I had very few people willing to be interviewed. However, since this is a single/collective study and considering the security situation, the similarities in socio-economic, traditional and political structures, and the oil fuelled structural violence in the visited communities, in-depth information given by participants provided across the board evidence.

#### **4.4.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

Another aspect of the fieldwork data gathering exercise was conducted through focus group discussions (FGDs). The aim of conducting FGDs was to gain insight into the extent to which oil resources contribute to violent conflicts in oil village communities. Thus, two focus group discussions (FGDs) were held in Warri to provide additional primary data for the study. The first FGD was held on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2007 with 12 discussants participating while the second final FGD was held on 26th February, 2008 with another set of 12 discussants. Efforts were made to make sure that no person participated in both of the focus group discussion, in order to ensure balanced and new data.

#### **4.4.4 Documentary Review**

In this study, documents are another important source of evidence, and were used in the analysis chapters 6-8. The documents reviewed were to help in gaining a sense of the situation within oil village communities. During the course of the fieldwork and interview sessions,

requests were made for copies of relevant documents. These types of documents include bulletins, memoranda of understanding (MOU), newspapers, magazines, written reports, etc. In collecting these documents, I solicited for some of them through written application, especially where the custodians of such documents saw them as 'confidential'. Due to the non-passage of the Freedom of Information Bill by Nigeria's National Assembly, obtaining any document from government establishments was not easy at the period of my field work. Government establishments and agencies are not obligated to release information and details of their activities to the public; more often than not it is left to the willingness of the officials in charge, or his or her personal considerations.

In Shell Nigeria, the researcher obtained the full copy of GMOU (Global memorandum of understanding) between Shell and oil village communities and the report which records the whole process of the agreement. These documents provided really important evidence regarding the reasons for struggles for positions within oil village communities. In one interventionist agency, I was refused a list of oil village communities they consider as host communities, but was rather given their internal news bulletin showing different intervention projects embarked by them in some oil villages.

Yin (2003) writes that documentary information is relevant to every case topic and it is the object of explicit data collection plans. For the case, the newspaper clippings and the articles appearing in the mass media were also important sources of evidence, particularly for the conflict involving communities or groups which have drawn strong attention from the media during the whole project process. Therefore, documentary evidence enables any good case study to make use of as many sources as possible. The discovery of oil resources and the emergent violence and conflicts in the oil Village communities have generated a large volume

of documentary sources. Furthermore, in the course of collecting data for this study, I visited research centres, bookshops, educational institutions and their libraries where I solicited for documents relevant to the subject of this study. I also attended seminars and workshops on the wider issues of conflicts and development in the Niger Delta, as this is a burning issue in the Nigerian polity. Research materials and knowledge acquired in the course of such visits and participating in such seminars were all invaluable to this research, as some of the information acquired during such occasions were considered as ‘technical and specialized contribution’ on the subject been investigated. For example, Environmental rights action (ERA) Field Report 50; January 12, 2000, contains information on the use of “divide and rule tactics” by oil companies.

#### **4.4.5 Non-Participant Observation**

The research also employed non-participation observation in addition to the three major data gathering instruments used for primary data collection. Non-participant observation as described by Flick (2002:135) “refrains from intervention in the field.” In the course of the interviews, I visited ten oil village communities and made several visits to DESOPADEC’s office in Warri. On many occasions, while arranging interview dates at the DESOPADEC’s office, I witnessed youths from various oil village communities storming the agency, making demands and threatening to unleash havoc if their demands were not met. Other observations included contractors and job seekers from the oil village communities bringing letters from prominent citizens and politicians to be 'favoured'. Accordingly, I noted my observations in my field diary whenever such incident occurred. This critically helped in deepening my understanding of views and perceptions on some issues relating to their oil village communities, oil resources and violent conflicts. To achieve construct validity, I used some of the information gathered from this source which I wrote down in field note for triangulation in the thesis, which can be seen in the presentation of the data in the analysis sections.

#### **4.4.6 Field Research Notes**

Every researcher before embarking on any field research trip makes research plans and time-tables. However, more often than not, situations met on the field alter these previously made plans. This leaves the researcher with the alternative of making amendments to the original research plan. These changes could be in the period to be spent in the field, places to visit, or sampling, or even in the data gathering process. When these types of changes and unplanned situations confront me, I put them down in writing, as it will aid me in justifying impromptu decisions taken while in the field. These notes made in the field provide good explanations with other documents when undertaking analysis. De Laine (2000:146) describes field note as bits of information, data “which must be organized into categories to have significance in the text.” De Laine stresses that “field notes are developed and created by the fieldworker, who is in the unique position of bringing personal meaning to the created account” (2000:148). The researcher makes his or her personal submission while writing a field note, meaning that field notes are semi-processed data which includes the interpretation of the researcher.

#### **4.5 Data Analysis Strategy**

The process of the data analysis means that the researcher creates meaning from the raw data gathered. Data analysis involves a number of stages namely; data management; generation; interpretation and presentation (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). In this study, data analysis involves inspecting data for emerging themes, coding the data, developing categories and interpretation of data.

The process of the data analysis started with data management, as the researcher creates meaning from the raw data gathered in the field. Data management facilitates inspection of the data for representative and coherence, as well as to commence giving the data perspective,

interpretation and meaning. The transcription of the data generated over 250 pages of single spaced A4 paper. The audio tapes and field notes were from time to time used for further reference during the period of writing up and subsequently stored if further need arises. On completion of the transcription, I carried out a detailed review of the data by reading the transcribed material thoroughly and carefully. The reason behind undertaking a detailed review of the results was to identify recurring issues and themes. With this process, I was able to identify key words and statements on oil resources related conflicts.

The next stage involved generating categories and themes, which involved a thorough coding of the data. To achieve a well coded data, I further read through the data on a line by line and word-by-word basis. Through this process, I was able to label the data according to the three research questions under the main research question posed in chapter 1.1. The analytical framework developed in section 3.2 and illustrated in figure 3.1 guided the analysis. Through reading and re-reading of the transcripts, field notes and continuous reference to the analytical framework, analysis was kept close to the research questions. This was to avoid drifting from the main thrust of the research and develop grounded conceptual categories.

The researcher coded and labelled the data using an open coding system. The data was disaggregated and analysed for similarities and differences. The use of disaggregation of data helped the initial research findings to be explored in greater detail to further generate themes and categories. The researcher labelled and sorted the raw data into themes and categories thus producing an indexed document. The indexed document was categorised by general themes that had a page link corresponding to the raw data from which the themes were developed and derived. The process of indexation resulted in a document with about 55 pages of single spaced



A4 paper and linked to the initial 250 pages for retrieval and reference purposes during the presentation of result.

The next stage in the data processing is the interpretation of data. The interpretation stage is an integral and important stage of data analysis about the design and influence of oil resources on oil village conflicts. The data was indexed, was grouped according to codes developed by the investigator. This led to the emergences of themes (Creswell, 2009). Six themes that emerged initially from the indexed data on oil village resource conflicts were merged into three categories of themes namely; Socio-economic condition, Power struggle and management of oil conflicts. The three categories of themes were developed after a thorough examination of the transcribed data, and were used to draft the research discussion and analysis. To understand the data, I compared the categories and themes developed out of the data on oil resource conflicts in village communities and the initial data gathered in the field to ensure that the categories and themes developed in the interpretive stage were suited to answer the three research questions posed in chapter 1.1. The process of data analysis in its entity made it possible to develop consistent explanations based on the research questions and analytical framework. Further meaning of data comes from understanding, interpretation, and representation (Creswell, 2007). Overall, three chapters (six, seven and eight) of analysis were developed.

## **4.6 Reliability and Validity**

Denscombe (2002) sees reliability and validity as the two major questions that confront any social researcher when it comes to issues of accuracy. This means that, for any social research to stand up to critical examination, it must show reliability and validity.

Reliability of qualitative study relates to whether the same result can be achieved if another study is conducted using the same methods of research. To achieve reliability in qualitative research, there is a detailed description of the methods employed in the research during the preparation for field work exercise, data collection process, transcribing and coding and analysis and presentation of research findings (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). It is argued that this helps to solve the problem of reliability and validity, thus improve the quality of case studies when applied. This research on the political economy of oil resources conflicts in oil village communities in Nigeria, attempts as much as possible to present the research method in a transparent and honest manner. Some of the actions I took to enhance the reliability of this study include checking whether the questions were clear to the participants who took part in the interviews and FGDs

Validity in research is related to deepening the understanding of the qualitative data. This phase in qualitative research seeks to confirm whether the findings of the study can be relevant beyond the case study and the context of the research (Yin, 2009). The question of validity centres around three issues: (a) accuracy in terms of asking the right questions; (b) accuracy in terms of the precision and details of the data; and (c) accuracy in terms of the truthfulness of the information gathered (Denscombe, 2002). In this case study, to ensure validity, the questions asked were drawn out of the gap that exists in literature which the study is proposing to fill. This allowed me to establish a chain of evidence and maintain clear linkages between the various stages of the study, thus allowing the conclusion to be traced to the research questions, the data collection tools employed and the evidence. Furthermore, I had earlier followed correct research operational procedures for studying laid down areas of investigation in relation to the study's objectives. These research procedures were established in order to

construct validity for the research. This according to Yin (2003) is a tactics to increase the quality of construct validity during the data collection phase.

Although this study as a qualitative research is not designed to be statistically representative for generalisation of research findings, the research generalised its findings to structural conflict theory based on the theoretical sampling. This is contrary to the view that generalisation means application of data to a wider population, form of representational generalisation use by positivists (Yin 2009; Creswell, 2003). In this thesis, findings on the socio-economic conditions and power struggle in oil village communities in Nigeria has been extensively presented to allow for transferability of the findings to other similar settings or context. Secondly, the validity of the process cumulated in the quality of the data generated through the fieldwork. This is backed up by the explanations given for the steps taken while in the field to ensure accuracy. To enhance the validity of this study, the study drew on the documentary review, in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion, and non-participation observation as sources of evidence to increasing the understanding. These sources of evidence allowed the development of converging lines of enquiry, a triangulation process that improved the reliability of evidence and produces a holistic understanding. The availability of different documents from different sources with similar information provided a means of cross checking for accuracy.

#### **4.6.1 My position in the research**

My field work was conducted between November 2007 and February, 2008. This was my first major field work in the research. I anticipated some challenges in the Niger Delta region, especially in oil village communities, due to the activities of militants and the state security services. My first two weeks saw me conducting my activities with fear, based on two things: firstly, coming from the United Kingdom meant that I might be perceived as having a lot of

money, thus making me a good target for kidnap. Again, from the on-set of the fieldwork, I took an ‘outsider researcher’ stand considering the nature of suspicion among communities in the Niger Delta and not to be associated with any community, thereby risking my safety, and the probability that many people may see my name and ask me about my state of origin. Again, though two of the ten oil village communities visited for interviews are Igbo speaking, they do not comfortably identify themselves as such. Therefore, I never had the advantage of being an insider, and this hugely helped me with regard to the officials of the two interventionist agencies, the oil companies and the other non-Igbo oil village communities who saw me as neutral coming from another state and from a Western University.

Secondly, being an Igbo, one of the three major ethnic groups considered to be dominating Nigeria’s politics and economy, I had fears of not being given audience. Luckily, my being Igbo did not in any way affect responses I got or became a problem for me based on these reasons. This is because there are severally Igbo ethnic/speaking oil village communities in Imo state, Abia State, Rivers State and Delta State, so they suffer the same fate as other oil village communities from other ethnic groups. More so, most of the participants in the study understood the direction of the questions and answered accordingly. They explained how oil resources have re-conditioned their own local social relations, economic relations and power distribution, without referring to “power” at Abuja. Even where they did, they saw it as a plan against oil producing areas to which some Igbo village communities are among. The researcher’s Igbo identity and position as a researcher in an area other than his Igbo ethnic environment was an advantage as it guided against the researcher overtly introducing biases based on common knowledge during the period of data collection and reporting process. Unlike positivists, researchers who adopt interpretivism know that they “cannot be divorced from the phenomenon under study” or be free from the interests and values of the socially

constructed world (Holloway, 1997:2). However, this did not completely remove such feelings, biases and prejudices but as a researcher I remained objective as I asked the right questions and used member checking/ feedbacks mechanisms for re-affirmation. Even when in some oil villages I was shown farms claimed to have been destroyed by oil resources, I still asked questions to be sure it was not an act of criminality on the part of such community to get compensation.

Again, the interviews and focus group discussions were all conducted in English Language which is the official language of Nigeria, and where the participants were not fluent in English Language, they were encouraged to use pidgin/*broken English*, which is a diluted form of English widely spoken in the Niger Delta due to the multiplicity of languages in that region of Nigeria. As a Nigerian, I am fluent in both speaking and writing of pidgin/*broken English*. Therefore I did not need the assistance of any interpreter during the interviews. My ability to speak broken/Pidgin English helped in disguising my identity as a returnee or non-local, as I easily use the pidgin/*broken English* when communicating with local people. I employed feedback mechanism to prevent personal bias and affirmed such ideas from the respondents. I also shared some of my observation with participants before writing it in my field notes.

#### **4.7 Ethical Consideration**

This research was guided by the 2004 Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research by British Educational Research Association (BERA). The adoption of this external ethical guideline was due to the non-existence of ethical guidelines and consent forms for such research in the university at the period of the fieldwork in November, 2007. As opined by Osaghae and Robinson (2005:3) ‘the nature of recent conflicts and interventions to manage or resolve them has made ethical considerations a key methodological issue’. My adoption of British Educational Research Association’s ethical guidelines was to help me in observing ‘the

rules of confidentiality, especially with regards to disclosures, in order to maintain objectivity and accountability' (Osaghae and Robinson, 2003:3). The University of Birmingham's ethical guidelines and consent forms for research was later introduced in October 2008.

Conducting fieldwork requires a lot of tact and commitment, thus every researcher while in the field tries to stick to laid down research rules while at the same time tries to use his or her personal judgment where it is required or where the rules cannot be applied. The researcher had experience of youths who participated in the FGDs, asking the researcher for money, which they referred to as 'settlement'. The researcher had to explain to them that he is a poor Nigerian student with no form of sponsorship or scholarship, and could not afford to pay them. However, I provided drinks after each focus group discussion. According to De Laine, "ethical and moral dilemmas are occupational work hazards of fieldwork that the researcher cannot plan for, but nonetheless must be addressed on the spot, by drawing on values, ideals, ethical codes, moral and professional standards, intuition and emotions" (2000:16).

Embarking on a fieldwork "remains one of the most challenging of all social science endeavors" (Yin, 2003:1). However, in most situations, "it contributes to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political and related phenomena" (Yin, 2003:1). Generally, some of my respondents doubted my person, but a presentation of my introduction letter assisted me (See Appendix I), but as such discussions progresses, they let down their guards and discuss very openly. With their consent, all my interviewees allowed me to use an audio tape recorder but insisted that I would not use any video recording, citing the case of the CNN African reporter who faked militant activities for broadcast. The interview sessions were managed tactfully; even when an informant tended to digress, I generally allowed this as the digression was answering a further probe question I was planning to ask. Therefore, in

contemporary research, ethical issues such as confidentiality, risk and safety are given high priority before any sensitive research topic<sup>30</sup> is undertaken in the field. Looking at the sensitive nature of the topic that I was doing, there was recognition ‘that danger is probably inherent in anthropological fieldwork’, especially since some aspect of the conflict like militancy and kidnapping were still ongoing in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria (Sluka, 1995:276).

#### **4.7.1 Confidentiality**

Researching in an area recently affected by violence or still going through violent conflicts, I considered the ethics of my actions and took actions to ameliorate the impact my presence will have on the people I have studied. The researched topic is a very sensitive one because of its potential to pose problems to both the researched and the researcher, “as personal security is jeopardized” (Lee and Renzetti, 1993:5). As stated earlier, the selected communities which were visited were ones with no on-going violent conflicts; this is not to jeopardize my safety and that of the researched. The ethics in the research involves avoiding doing long-term, systematic harm to those individuals, communities and environments that we as social scientists seek to study in order to bring about social change. Social scientists should assure trust, ensure research integrity, and satisfy organisational and professional demands (Israel and Hay, 2006:2). Thus, ethical considerations are essential in undertaking any research. The nature, timing and location of my research made it very imperative that ethics and rules of research were met and observed. I was confronted with respondents’ views and preferences, gaining access and gatekeepers.

Furthermore, considerations around right to privacy, and deception, as well as protecting both the researcher and participants from harm were observed (Guillemin and Gillin, 2004). This

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<sup>30</sup> Sensitive Research – According to Sieber and Stanley (1988) quoted in Renzetti and Lee(ed) (1993:3) as “studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research”

research considered confidentiality as ultra-important, owing to the 'risky and sensitive' nature of the answers given by many respondents. Berg (2001) argues that deception arises when research participants' understanding of the purpose of a study is different from the purpose the researcher wants to achieve. To maintain confidentiality, it is important that those who decided to cooperate in the research do not suffer any negative effects resulting from the research. This research like political violence research had many 'skeletons to handle, too many closets to inspect' (Robben, 1995:94). I encountered a lot of character assassinations, deliberate lies or half-truths and self-exclusion and glorification. One of my respondents was busy accusing leadership of one of the development interventionist agency that featured in this research of missing managing funds meant for oil community development. He confided in the researcher that certain amount money has been promised to him if he will drop his case against the management. Interestingly, during my second FGD, some youth while discussing youth's involvement in illegal oil bunkering mentioned his name as a kingpin, that at 32 years he is fabulously rich. This quickly drew my attention to the fleet of cars and palatial nature of his house, which is rear for someone of his age in Nigeria.

Thus, in guaranteeing such participants protection, nothing in the study should be traceable to specific individuals or groups. An introductory letter conveying the purpose of the research and assuring respondents of the maintenance of confidentiality was shown to those who participated either in interviews or focus group discussions. However, confidentiality was still an issue; few public servants declined to grant interviews in their capacity as public servants, expressing concern over their jobs. Youths who participated in the interviews and FGDs were not much concerned about issue of confidentiality, but the information they were divulging were considered risky and very sensitive by me, if their identities were ever to be disclosed. Based on this, care has to be taken not to associate statements and quotations with the real



names of respondents, rather initials such E.O, E.E was used in place of original names. The positions and names of oil village communities were abbreviated to CL, or YL, and SAComm or UZComm respectively. As argued by Adetoun(2005:49) ‘ it is vital for researchers to protect the identity of their respondents in order not to expose them to any kind of recrimination from opposing groups- the researcher must not precipitate further crisis’. A list of true names of respondents was added for examination purposes, and was removed during the final submission to protect the identity of my respondents as promised to them during my data collection process.

The research has adequately ensured that no suppression, falsification or inventing of evidence occurs at the point of transcription and analysis. This is done through processes such as re-affirmation of unclear issues from respondents or retrieving and re-examining of raw data and indexed documents. Newman (2000) argues that engaging in such fraudulent practices is not acceptable in professional research communities as they constitute scientific misconduct. However, as a compromise to avoid putting the respondents in any danger, the categories of respondents in the interviews are listed without their names in table 4.2.

#### **4.7.2 Access and Fieldwork Timing**

Conducting fieldwork in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria is a task filled with great expectations. This ranges from the wonderful aquatic environs to the distorted nature which *petrobusiness* has created in the area. My first major problem was getting a list of oil village communities or oil producing communities (host communities, as they are called). I looked for this list in the state capital but met a brick wall, and in DESOPADEC’s office, they claimed that every community in Delta is regarded as a host community; even if a community does not have oil deposits, it harbours fleets of oil pipelines which transport oil way or experiences

discomfort through other oil activities. My search for this list took me to The Department for Petroleum Resources (DPR), but was still not able to get one; this thereby solidified my desired to use purposive sampling in selecting oil village communities where I conducted some of my interviews. I selected the ‘relatively peaceful’ oil village communities with past history or experience of intra or inter –communal violent clashes or conflicts. This I found out while I was doing my fieldwork arrangements.

In course of the field work for this research in Nigeria between November 2007 and March 2008, my personal observation, especially in relation to public offices and the oil industry reveals the secrecy with which any information regarding *petrobusiness* is held. Shell, which was one of the MNCs interviewed, was not prepared to grant any interview to me without an approval from Nigeria’s DPR (Department for Petroleum Resources),(see Appendices J and K for an e-mail from Shell asking for approval from DPR and a letter from DPR introducing me to Shell ).

#### **4.7.3 Risk, Health and Safety**

Risk, health and safety were thoroughly considered and assessed before I undertook the fieldwork. I made contacts with family and friends who live in Warri and other towns in Delta State, and was greatly assured that the situation was not as it was been blown in the media, as people still go about their daily duties and businesses. Again, like any other Nigerian who could speak and understand Pidgin English, I know I could communicate with any local resident with ease. However, like every new researcher on his or her first fieldwork experience, I was short of “knowledge of what can go wrong” during the fieldwork (Gokar, 2006:64). The risk, health and safety factors were things I could not envisage very well. Risk, according to Treweek and Linkogle (2000:18) is not something new in conducting research; it is the possibility of suffering harm, getting into danger or any hazards. Every research has its own

risk, health and safety issues; the nature, location and timing of such research could affect them, thus, Linkogle (2000:132) advised about researchers reflecting deeply on the challenges and dilemmas of conducting research in unfamiliar environments.

The nature of violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta were considered to constitute a risk, health and safety issue for non-residents, oil workers and foreigners. Mostly at the period of my fieldwork, with militants targeting oil facilities, kidnappings of oil workers, and in retaliation, a follow-up armed violence against such oil village communities by The Joint Task Force (JTF Operation Restore Hope). Through the help of my guide and staff of DESPODEC, I selected the ‘relatively peaceful’ oil village communities who had no militant camps or were not in any on-going violent conflict. As part of precaution, each time I visited any oil village community, I set out from Warri accompanied by a guide or two (youths from such community) who were introduced to me by the official from DESPODEC, and returned to Warri after such interview. Most of these “youth” either participated in the face-to-face interview or Focus group discussion depending on their position in their communities.

In some of the oil village communities, the researcher was met by angry “youths”, who after verbal pacification agree to grant interviews, especially on seeing me with a “youth” from their community or their “youth” leader. The researcher faced issue of rumour, as there are tense animosities within and between these communities. In many instances, I was challenged by respondents about visiting a particular community before theirs or why I went to see a particular respondent before him. Some would even want to know if the other respondent said anything about them. In such situation, I out-rightly explain that I am a researcher and that nothing has been said about anyone as my questions are not on anyone. Knowing that such

rumour will affect my field research, I tried to control by diffusing the situation (Reychler, 2001).

The tense nature and suspicion among oil village communities, and between oil communities and the state security outfit (Joint Task Force-Operation Restore Hope) were clearly visible, thereby making my choice of 'outsider researcher' the right decision' as I could not be associated with any community or the government. Another factor was the case of espionage brought against two foreign journalists and local NGOs workers by Nigeria's State Security Service (SSS) a month before I arrived for my fieldwork, as part of which Dr Mrs Judith Asuni, a Nigerian-American Peace worker in the region and two German Journalists were charged for espionage alongside another Nigerian Peace worker. Having earlier contacted Dr Asuni for an interview, and coming from a foreign university, I was careful not to get into any direct contact with the security officials. Some of the interviews contain sensitive and security related information, which for health and safety reasons I may not disclose in my research, at least for now, and where I have used some, the confidentiality clause is applied properly.

## **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter looks holistically at the methodology of the research. It started with the exploration of the philosophical strands adopted in this study being the interpretivist and critical theorist strands. The chapter also explained the case study research as a scientific inquiry and its appropriateness for studying oil resource conflicts in village communities in this study. It explained the tools used for data collection such as interviews, focus group discussions, field notes and non-participant observation. The chapter further explained the concepts of reliability and validity as they affects the data collected in this study. Lastly, the ethical factors considered in the course of collection and analyses of the data for the study were explained.

The next chapter deals with the background to the political economy of oil resources in Nigeria. Focusing on oil village communities, it discusses the context in which oil resources promote rent-seeking behaviours, power and leadership struggles, economic opportunism and securitisation. The chapter contributes to the understanding of factors arising out of oil resources activities which fuels violent conflicts in host oil village communities.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **POLITICAL ECONOMY OF OIL IN NIGERIA**

#### **5. Introduction**

This chapter provides background information on the political economy of oil resources in Nigeria. The chapter particularly focuses on the oil economy, fiscal federalism, struggles for power and oil village communities of Niger Delta as well as the rentier nature of Nigeria. This chapter reviews the historical development of the oil economy and business in Nigeria. The chapter explains that right from the inception of oil resources production in Nigeria, ‘oil activities’ instituted various forms of violence on oil village communities, which only escalated into violent conflicts in the late 1990s. The chapter explains that oil has huge effects especially on oil village communities’ socio economic conditions, struggles for power and leadership, local governance, access to oil benefits and economic opportunities. These effects are likely to fuel violent conflicts in local oil communities. Therefore, in discussing the background analysis of the research, it is vital that the study’s phenomena and context are treated intertwiningly (Yin, 2004). This is to enable the study present a balanced analysis.

#### **5.1 The Background and Context of Oil Resources in Nigeria**

Nigeria lies on the Atlantic coast of West Africa, with a population estimated to be close to 167,912.561 million and with more than 250 different ethnic nationalities, with the Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbos as the dominant ethnic groups and languages (Thisday, October 30th 2011; UNDP, 2011; NBS, 2012). It is divided into 36 states, with Abuja as its federal capital. The 1914 amalgamation of two British Protectorates (the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria) and the colony of Lagos by Sir Fredrick Lugard, led to the creation of the geographical entity known today as Nigeria. After becoming a federation in

1954, on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1960, Nigeria obtained its independence from Great Britain. Since its independence, Nigeria has suffered one socio-political crisis or the other, including a civil war that lasted for about four years between 1966 and 1970. Omeje (2006:26) attributed this to a “very little effort at political, administrative, social, economic and cultural integration during colonial history. Primordial ethnic structures and cleavages have largely been the basis of national politics before and after independence.” Thus, it may not be out of place to question if the period of the discovery of the oil played any role in the entire set of socio-political and economic crises.

The trajectories of the development of Nigeria as a *petrostate* are linked to the 1907 exploration of petroleum by a German company, the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation. In order to ward off competition from other non-British interests, the colonial state introduced the *1914 Colonial Mineral Ordinance*, which formalised state control of oil exploration. This ordinance therefore allowed the colonial state to grant exclusive concessions to British and British-allied companies. Thus, the Anglo-Dutch group Shell D’Archy (which later became Shell-BP), under this exclusive arrangement obtained an oil exploration Concession covering the entire 367,000 square miles of Nigeria in 1938 (Frynas, 2000). This set the tune for Shell’s dominance of oil economy in Nigeria, with the company controlling about 50% of Nigeria’s total oil production and about 53% of its total hydrocarbon reserve base (Ibeanu, 2006). Also, there was a major policy change which saw the amendment of the *Colonial Mineral Ordinance* of 1914 with the *Petroleum Decree No. 15* of 1969. This change in policy strengthened Nigeria’s autonomy on the oil industry, and exclusively empowered it to grant Oil Mining Leases, oil exploration and oil prospecting licences. *Petroleum Decree No. 15* also gave the Nigerian state total control and ownership of all petroleum discovered in any part of the country, including its territorial waters and continental shelves. This development broke the

autonomy of Shell BP, which had the rights of marketing commercially oil found before Nigeria's Independence in 1960 (Frynas, 2000). Consequently, the policy change gave room for other major transnational oil companies (TNOCs) or oil MNC to join *petrobusiness* in Nigeria. These TNOCs included Mobil, Texaco, Agip, Elf, Gulf, and Esso West Africa among others (Onoh, 1983). Even with the state control of oil resources found in Nigeria's land, territorial waters and continental shelves, its lack of ownership of indigenous technology in the sector limits its ability to effectively control the activities of MNCs operating in the sector. For example, Nigeria is among the countries with the highest amount of flared natural gas. According to the satellite data of World Bank's Global Gas Flaring Reduction Partnership (GGFR), Nigeria flared around 16.8 billion cubic meters of natural gas in 2007, second only to Russia (Newsblog, 2009). This is despite various ultimatums given by the Nigeria state for an end to gas flaring. One of such ultimatums was a deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2010 for compliance on non-gas flaring by oil MNCs given by Nigerian Senate (Thisday, May 15th, 2009). However, gas is still been flared, with the Nigerian state not able to enforce such compliance.

Oil resources were discovered in large commercial quantities at Oloribiri Community in Bayelsa State in 1956, while exportation started in 1958. This seemed to have set the tone for the oil fuelled curses that befell the country. As the present, socio-economic and political crises which the country experiences have been mainly attributed to the impact of oil resources. Therefore, to many Nigerians, the discovery of oil resources remains a turning point in Nigeria's socio-political and economic history. Not only did this singular discovery change the nature of Nigeria's economic development and growth, it re-defined its political development, socio-political cultures and the political dynamics in the country (Omeje, 2006). For instance, oil resources supported a 'legacy of three decades of military (mis) rule' (Obi, 2004:3), and as



pointed out by Ross (1999), it rather hindered democracy in the country. The struggle for political power has been majorly linked to access it provides to oil resource opportunities. The contributions of oil resources to various military coups, political and civil violent conflicts in the country such as the 1966-1970 Nigerian civil war left bad experience to the country's development. These political and economic crises were subsequently followed by various violent conflicts in the oil village communities in the country. This is because the Nigerian state controls the oil, and 'has functioned as the instrument of economic accumulation and a key player in its distribution' (Okonta, 2008:4). Subsequently, this led to a culture of protest and revolt against the state and oil MNCs by oil village communities as well as the struggle for power by Nigerians in general for state patronage. Therefore getting into the state would give one access to benefitting from such oil resources opportunities. Omeje (2006:5) posits that:

A major feature of the oil dominance of Nigeria's political economy is the pervasiveness of high stake rentier politics. High stake rentier politics converges and interlinks the rentier features of the economy with the neo-patrimonial traditions of the post-colonial state and society to produce a convoluted political culture marked by clientelistic desperation in both oil-related accumulation and state-society relations.

Obi (2007:8) supported the above observation with the claim that:

Oil has since the end of the civil war in 1970, become a central factor in Nigeria's political economy, and a rather sensitive issue in the management of the country's vast diversities, inequities and pluralities, particularly as they relate to identities: ethnic, religious and regional, and competing claims to the control and ownership of oil.

With such developments, oil resources have continued to fuel violent struggles and conflicts in oil village communities. These violent conflicts range from armed conflicts which involve full participation of the state, revolt against oil companies, to non- state armed conflicts involving groups in oil village communities. For example, such example of state violence is the killing of local oil village people in the Odi, Bayelsa state by the Nigeria State Security in 2000(Ukiwo,

2007). Violent revolts against the oil MNCs by various oil village communities, includes for instance, the Ogoni uprising against Shell (Okonta, 2008). While the non-state violent conflicts among groups and communities in the Niger Delta region, includes the 1997 Warri Crisis between the Ijaws, Urhobo and Itsekiri ethnic groups (Imobighe, *et al* 2002).

In terms of economic impact, oil solely dominated the country's economy until the late 1990s, when sectors like telecommunication started making visible contribution to the economy (Tell magazine, February 18, 2008). At one period in the country's existence, oil resources accounted for 93 percent of its exports, 75 percent of foreign exchange earnings, and 45 percent of its gross national product (Ikein, 1990:19)<sup>31</sup>. Nigeria's oil resources production makes it the world's 13<sup>th</sup> largest producer globally, and the 6<sup>th</sup> largest oil exporting country (OPEC). Oil resources from 1970 to 1999 have also generated \$231 billion for Nigeria's domestic economy, which constitutes between 21 and 48% of the Gross Domestic Product (ODI, 2009:3). Financially, it accounted for around 79.5% of total government revenues, thereby making it the main bedrock responsible for sustaining the Nigerian state (UNDP, 2006). This development has impacted so much on the country's economy, resulting in the agricultural sector, which was once the country's pre-independence main source of revenue, being relegated to the background. There were fewer attentions paid to the agricultural, manufacturing and other sectors of the economy, thereby making the country a 'monocultural economy', which depended and focused only on the petroleum sector. Concentration on oil resources led to the other sectors contributing less than 20% to the national income (Tell magazine, February 18, 2008), thus leading to Dutch disease as pointed in chapter two. Interestingly, the Nigeria state was not the only party interested in the rent that oil resources generate, as the local communities with time also became interested. For the oil village

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<sup>31</sup> Oil resources' contribution to the national economy has since changed since 2000, with an increased diversification of the economy.

communities, judging from their financial contribution of oil resources to the federation account, they felt that they have not adequately been compensated for their entire economic contribution. Okonta (2008:3) writing on the revolts by Ogoni oil communities against the Nigerian state and oil companies on resources activities and benefits, said that:

The Ogoni also pointed out that they have not received what they would regard as their fair share of the income derived from oil production in their area, which they estimated at some 30 billion US dollars.

Therefore, it seems that as oil resources continue to make major contribution to Nigeria's economy, every stakeholder feels that they deserve more from the oil economy, even as the entire country is wholly dependent on the oil revenue. However, notwithstanding the enormous revenue generated from oil, which stands at about \$40 billion annually, the country has "a miserable, undisciplined, decrepit and corrupt form of 'petro-capitalism'...[of which] Nigerian per capita income stands at \$290 per year,". Thus, the living standard of the majority of Nigerians shows no difference from what it used to be prior to the production of oil in 1958 and after Independence in 1960 (Douglas *et al.*, 2003:2). From table 5.1 on relative poverty headcount in Nigeria and table 5.5 on oil production in Nigeria, it may be concluded that as Nigeria's oil production increases, the poverty level in the country increases as well. Obi (2001:32) considering the oil boom and doom of 1973 and 1977 respectively as factors claimed that:

The oil-dependent, mono-cultural Nigeria economy was in trouble as a result of the refraction of the crisis in the global capitalist system locally. With foreign reserves barely enough to cover a few months of imports, the economy fell into dire straits. The shock absorption capacity of the economy had long been undermined by its weak import-dependent (light manufacturing dominated) base; years of mismanagement, waste and corruption, extraction by global capital and western commercial and oil interests, and two decades of military dictatorship.

From the above submission, it seems very obvious that the economic cum political crisis which the country is in cannot be disassociated from the presence or role of oil resources in Nigeria's economy, especially the management and control of the oil and oil rents. For instance, oil presence and activities have continued to fuel massive corruption in the country, with the newest corruption issue being the discovery of payment of over 40 billion Naira from oil subsidy fund to 25 oil marketers who did not supply any oil to the country (The Guardian, August 23, 2012). The discovery and exploration of this resource, rather than bringing about the expected development, unfortunately led to a negative change in the country's socio-economic and political climate. As Nigeria witnesses rapid increase in oil production and resultant revenues, its socio-economic and political developments are influenced and directed by negative effects of oil resources. Therefore, the negative influence of oil resources on all levels of government and governance are greatly felt. For instance, with the gaining of a 'rentier status'<sup>32</sup> in 1971, especially between 1974 and 1993, it derived and based all its revenues and expenditures from oil generated income or rent (Sandbakken, 2006). Thus, oil therefore "featured prominently in the politics within and between the various tiers of the federal government, particularly as it relates to the principles for controlling and sharing the oil wealth between the oil producing and non-oil producing parts of the country. This touches upon issues of inter-ethnic relations and the distribution of power in a multi-ethnic federation" in Nigeria (Obi, 2007:8).

Ross (2001) in his 'oil-impedes-democracy claim', posits that rentier, repressive and modernization properties and effects of oil resources weaken democracy in oil resource-rich countries such as Nigeria. Obi (2002:97) complements this with an example by pointing out

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<sup>32</sup> Nigeria before 1971 obtained her revenue primarily from agriculture (whose revenue is not considered as rent), but from the oil boom period of 1971, oil generated revenue was its peak in the country, making the country turn all her energy to *petrobusiness* and the rents acquired from it.

that oil resources are “inextricably linked to the fragile and mono-cultural (oil) economic base, and the zero-sum struggles among fractions of the Nigerian ruling class for power.” Thus in Nigeria, according to Watts (2004:54) “these political struggles are animated by the desire to gain access to: (i) company rents and compensation revenues, and (ii) federal petro-revenues by capturing rents (often fraudulently) through the creation of new regional and/or local state institutions”. Undoubtedly, oil resources reconfigured and weakened government and governance at all levels in the country. It weakened all facets of the country’s economy, turning the economy into mono-cultural and oil rent dependent. More importantly, it fuelled socio-political crises which were driven by access to oil rent, revenue and opportunities. Table 5.1 shows the relative poverty situation in Nigeria on headcount from 1980-2010. Similarly, World Bank 2011 report claims that the poverty ratio at national poverty line (% of the population) moved from 43.0% in 1985 to 54.7% in 2004.

**Table 5.1 Relative Poverty Headcount from 1980-2010**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>POVERTY INCIDENCE (%)</b>	<b>ESTIMATED POPULATION(MILLION)</b>	<b>POPULATION IN POVERTY(MILLION)</b>
1980	27.2	65	17.1
1985	46.3	75	34.7
1992	42.7	91.5	39.2
1996	65.6	102.3	67.1
2004	54.4	126.3	68.7
2010	69.0	163	112.47

**Source: Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010 (The National Bureau of Statistics, 2012)**

## **5.2 The Niger Delta region and the Oil Village communities in Nigeria**

The Niger Delta is made up of swamps and creeks. It is estimated to cover an area of about 70,000 square kilometres, and inhabited by about 31.7 million people from the 2006 census

figure (NBS, 2011). It is considered as the largest wetland in Africa and has the third largest mangrove forest in the world, covering an area of about 6,000 square kilometres (UNDP, 2006). The Niger Delta region is peopled predominantly by minority ethnic nationalities, with the Izons (Ijaws) representing the largest group (Courson, 2009), and others groups includes Urhobo, Isoko, Itsekiri, Ikwere, Ogoni, Edo, Ndokwa, Etche, and Ogba. The region known today as Niger Delta is made of nine oil producing states namely; Imo, Abia, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Cross -Rivers, Rivers, Bayelsa, Edo and Ondo states (see Appendices b and C). However, Abia and Imo states are populated by Igbos, while Ondo state has Yoruba ethnic group as the major tribe with Ijaws ethnic group as part of the state. Politically, the other six states of Delta, Edo, Cross Rivers, Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom are referred to as the South-South Geopolitical Zone. Thus, the oil village communities or oil host communities are found within this region.

Surrounding these people from the Niger Delta region and their communities are Nigerian oil extraction, exploration and production, with offshore and onshore oil operations which produce over 2m barrels of oil a day. It is regarded as a strategic region because it serves as home to many oil installations, and acts as an operational base for many oil companies, such as Chevron-Texaco (Turshen, 2004). Despite these enormous oil resources which place Nigeria amongst the top major oil exporters in the world, the country is still bedevilled by poverty and underdevelopment. Nigeria's Delta region is greatly affected judging by its socio-economic and political underdevelopment experiences. UNDP (2006:16) report on the region had it that:

Social instability, poor local governance, competition for economic resources and environmental degradation have taken a toll. The delta today is a place of frustrated expectation and deep-rooted mistrust [where] [l]ong years of neglect and conflict have fostered a siege mentality.

Most communities in the region lack basic infrastructures like good roads, power, hospitals, pipe-borne water and other amenities. Analysing the situation of the people vis-à-vis oil endowment in the area, Onduku (2001) points out that the Niger Delta is the richest region in Nigeria in terms of natural resources deposits, but its potential for sustainable development is unfulfilled, as it is increasingly threatened by environmental devastation and worsening economic conditions. Coupled with the lack of these basic amenities is the issue of environmental degradation. Below are some tables showing the nature of poverty in Nigeria, especially in the oil village communities despite the large oil production and oil revenues. Table 5.2 points out the level of urban and rural poverty in Nigeria. Oil communities in Nigeria are located mainly in rural areas, therefore are considered as experiencing worse poverty situation than the urban areas. Table 5.3 contains figures on zonal incidence of poverty in Nigeria. Table 5.4 shows the figure on income inequalities based on area of residence and geographical zone in Nigeria. Table 5.5 shows the yearly crude oil production and earnings in Nigeria from 1960 to 2008.

**Table 5.2 Urban/Rural Incidence of Poverty by different Poverty Measures including Food Poor by Percentage**

SECTOR	FOOD POOR %	ABSOLUTE POVERTY%	RELATIVE POVERTY%	DOLLAR PER DAY%
URBAN	26.7	52.0	61.8	52.4
RURAL	48.3	66.1	73.2	66.3

**Source: Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010(The National Bureau of Statistics, 2012)**

**Table 5.3 Zonal Incidence of Poverty by different poverty measures**

<b>ZONE</b>	<b>FOOD POOR%</b>	<b>ABSOLUTE POOR%</b>	<b>RELATIVE POOR%</b>	<b>DOLLAR PER DAY%</b>
<b>NORTH - CENTRAL</b>	<b>38.6</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>67.5</b>	<b>59.7</b>
<b>NORTH- EAST</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>69.0</b>	<b>76.3</b>	<b>69.1</b>
<b>NORTH WEST</b>	<b>51.8</b>	<b>70.0</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>70.4</b>
<b>SOUTH- EAST</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>58.7</b>	<b>67.0</b>	<b>59.2</b>
<b>SOUTH- SOUTH</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>55.9</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>56.1</b>
<b>SOUTH - WEST</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>49.8</b>	<b>59.1</b>	<b>50.1</b>

Source: Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010 (The National Bureau of Statistics, 2012)

**Table 5.4 Income Inequalities by Area of Residence and Geopolitical Zone for 2004 and 2010**

		<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>%CHANGE FROM 2004 TO 2010</b>
<b>NATIONAL</b>		<b>0.4296</b>	<b>0.447</b>	<b>4.1</b>
<b>AREA OF RESIDENCE</b>	<b>RURAL</b>	<b>0.4239</b>	<b>0.4334</b>	<b>2.2</b>
	<b>URBAN</b>	<b>0.4154</b>		<b>4.2</b>
<b>GEO- POLITICAL ZONE</b>				
	<b>1.SOUTH SOUTH</b>	<b>0.3849</b>	<b>0.434</b>	<b>12.8</b>
	<b>2.SOUTH EAST</b>	<b>0.376</b>	<b>0.4442</b>	<b>18.1</b>
	<b>3.SOUTH WEST</b>	<b>0.4088</b>	<b>0.4097</b>	<b>0.2</b>
	<b>4.NORTH CENTRAL</b>	<b>0.4459</b>	<b>0.422</b>	<b>-5.4</b>
	<b>5.NORTHEAST</b>	<b>0.4114</b>	<b>0.4468</b>	<b>8.6</b>
	<b>6.NORTH WEST</b>	<b>0.4028</b>	<b>0.4056</b>	<b>0.7</b>

Source: Nigeria Poverty Profile 2010 (The National Bureau of Statistics, 201



**TABLE 5.5 NIGERIA'S YEARLY CRUDE OIL PRODUCTION, EXPORT AND REVENUE: 1960-2008**

YEAR	PRODUCTION (Million barrels)	EXPORT	REVENUE (Naira million)
1960	6,374.0	6,244.0	2.4
1965	99,355.0	96,985.0	29.2
1970	395,689.0	383,455.0	167
1975	660,148.0	627,683.0	4,272
1979	854,463.0	807,685.0	8,881
1980	760,117.0	656,260.0	12,354
1985	547,088.0	486,580.0	10,915
1990	660,559.0	548,249.0	55,216
1995	715,440.0	616,900.0	324,548
2000	797,880.0	688,080.0	1,340,000
2005	919,285.0	846,179.7	4,762,400
2006	813,950.0	656,090.0	6,109,000
2007	803,000.0	791,826.5	6,700,000
2008	768,745.9	724,479.8	NOT AVAILABLE

**AUTHOR'S COMPILATION SOURCES: CBN ANNUAL STATISTICAL BULLETIN, VOL.18 (2007); NNPC 2008 ANNUAL STATISTICAL BULLETIN (SUMMARIZED) 1ST EDITION; TELL MAGAZINE, FEBRUARY 18, 2008 (SPECIAL EDITION)**

Taking the figures in table 5.2 into consideration, it is obvious from all measurement that the incidence of poverty in rural Nigeria is higher than urban Nigeria. Oil village communities of Niger Delta being predominately rural and fall into this category despite the enormous wealth they contribute to the nation's wealth. UNDP (2006:1-2) submitted that 'these [oil village communities of Niger Delta] are rural communities, which offer very limited economic opportunities. Infrastructure and social services are generally deplorable and vastly inadequate for an estimated regional population of nearly 30 million people'. Thus leaving the oil villages to compete for these inadequate social services and struggle against exclusion from the distribution of the revenue.

Another critical look at table 5.5 shows a continuous rise in volume of oil resources produced in these oil village communities in Nigeria leading to rise in revenue generated from it. For instance, oil production rose from 6,374 million in 1960 to about 768,745.9 million in 2008. Thereby became the economic lifeblood of the country, providing about 40% of the gross domestic product and nearly 80% of government earnings in Nigeria (UNDP, 2006). Despite enormous revenue made from oil resources, the country kept experiencing rise in poverty, of which "by almost any measure of social achievement, the core oil producing states are a calamity" (Watts, 2009:18). This is mainly attributed to the difficult topography and the alarming deterioration of the environment due to oil activities which affect other economic activities in most oil village communities. With such difficult and deteriorating environment due oil production activities like oil spill, one could argue that it could be partly why the income inequality in the South -South region is high, alongside South East region which two of her five states houses oil village communities (see Table 5.4).

Following the situation of underdevelopment, poverty, inequality and exclusionism for more than four decades, the Niger Delta has degenerated into a conflict zone not just resistant against the Nigerian state, multinational oil companies and oil activities, but at war with itself. Ikelegbe (2005:234) describes the region as “generally restive with pockets of insurrections and armed rebellion.” This is often credited to over forty years of oil production, environmental degradation and state neglect, which has created a condition of impoverishment, a marginalised and exploited citizenry. For instance, UNDP’s 2006 report on Niger Delta discovered that local government areas without oil facilities or oil village communities fare better on poverty index than local government areas with oil village communities and oil facilities. Furthermore, local government areas with good human development index (HDI) are mostly the urban ones, while the poor performing ones are mostly rural local government areas. These disparities in HDI and poverty index are “indication of unequal distribution of revenue” (UNDP, 2006:1). Therefore it could be argued that even though the South-South region with most of the oil village communities is not the region with the highest incident of poverty (as shown in table 5.3), the nature of relative inequalities in HDI in the region is the highest. Significantly, local government areas without oil facilities appear to have fewer poor people than those with oil facilities (UNDP, 2006).

This situation is seen as a regime of state repression and corporate violence, which as part of structural violence has resulted in “violent protest, disruption of oil production, seizure of oil platforms, installations and equipment, kidnapping of MNOC staff, confrontations with state security forces and militarization of the region” (Ikelegbe, 2005:438). As oil village communities subsequently took to fierce struggle for either provision of social infrastructures or other types of appeasement. This has vehemently raised other questions, such as what are the roles of greed or genuineness of grievance over natural resources, and why the resultant violent

conflict, the exploitation, neglect and suffering in the name of resources and wealth (Collier and Hoeffler, 2001). Therefore, it may be difficult to draw a distinction between grievance and greed considering their interrelatedness.

However, understanding the changes in the political and economic situations of the entire Niger Delta upon the discovery and production of oil helps in understanding the issue of grievance or greed in the region. This is because oil resources changed the traditional occupations of the people by limiting their access to farming land and fishing waters, thereby depriving them of their two main sources of livelihoods. Not forgetting the already natural topography difficulty, which encourages people to gather in small communities, and compete for the available land (UNDP, 2006). Oil operation activities in the oil village communities seem to be given precedence over farming and fishing, using the Land Use Act (LUA) of 1979 (now updated in the laws of the Federation [LFN] 1990 and LFN CAP L5, 2004). As any land including community owned land, which are recognised under customary Act, were acquired in the Public interest for oil exploration. According to Obi and Rustad (2011:7), ‘the Niger Delta, with its high population density...meant a loss of power over ‘scare’ (oil rich) land for local people, and loss of compensation for full value of appropriated land’. It meant that access to livelihood for the local communities was of less priority to the state to acquiring communal and individual land in these communities for oil resources activities. Therefore, by the powers vested on the governor of any state, local tribal or communal lands could be handed over to the oil companies for the “good of the state”.

Furthermore, it could be argued that oil resources may have equally distorted the political environment in the Niger Delta, making political positions and other forms of leadership and authority increasingly competitive, as being elected, selected or appointed into any form of

government (formal and informal) provides better access to the oil revenue. An example of such political transformation is ‘the proliferation and militarization of youth movements amid increased opportunities for local political patronage, security contract with oil companies’ (Ukiwo, 2011:24). Thus, the various violent conflicts in the Niger Delta region are attributed to oil resources, as they are seen as factors that may have polarised the area, making it conflict prone. However, the argument on ethnicity playing a major role in the violent conflict is weak; judging that violent struggles or conflicts over such oil-related opportunities and benefits occurred even within communities of the same ethnic orientation. For example Ogoni crisis was mainly between Ogoni ethnic groups, with groups killing each other (Okonta and Douglas, 2003).

The violent conflict in the Niger Delta comprises all aspects of violent conflict linked to natural resources. It demonstrates not only environmental degradation, which leads to scarcity, but also political, economic and social conflicts associated with the maximisation and distribution of resources, benefits and opportunities from oil. The issues of social exclusion, poverty and economic deprivation are common; they in turn gave rise to struggles for limited opportunities and the urge to deploy physical violence in achieving such needs. Ibeanu (2002:163) concluded that:

Indeed, the Niger Delta seems to be inherently paradoxical. Like Janus, there are always two faces to everything in the Niger Delta. For instance, the region has the potential to be very wealthy, yet it wallows in pervasive poverty. The leaders of communities in the Niger Delta are very rich, and at the same time their people are extremely poor.

Like today in the Niger Delta, militancy and criminality are providing opportunities and benefits which leadership has denied a lot of people, especially the “youths”.

### **5.3 Oil and Power Struggles in Nigeria.**

Nigeria, with the largest population in Africa, ranks high among the countries in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of political instability and highest number of military coups. Since its political independence in October 1960, it has struggled to establish stable government. With more than 200 diverse ethnic groups, with their cultural and linguistic differences, the only unifying factor among Nigerians remains the colonial historical experiences. The diversity in culture, ethnicity, and to some extent religion, has continued to play an active role in the political development of the country, and more importantly dictates the tone of politics in the nation.

Politics in Nigeria, like in every society, has remained the determinant factor 'in decisions about the use, production and distribution of resources' (Leftwich, 2008:6). In many instances, other factors such as ethnic and religious diversities are regarded as playing big roles in influencing Nigerian politics. However, a thorough examination of the political situation in Nigeria shows that oil resources is another highly important factor in Nigeria's political development and political economy. For example, there is the obvious political culture of elected or appointed officials in Nigeria 'personalising' whatever revenue is allocated to their office. This political culture is understood in Nigerian terms as being supported by revenue coming from oil, which is obvious considering that a huge percentage of the revenue of the state comes from oil. This situation known as corruption is not peculiar to Nigeria alone but varies across the globe. Thus, "the subsequent closing of the gap between 'political power' and 'oil power' renders oil a prime target of zero-sum politics, or the prize of political wars over oil patrimony" (Obi,2002:97). This is also the reason for the fierce struggle to either be elected or appointed into political or state positions.

In Nigeria's local communities, various forms of power struggle occur within local leadership or traditional authorities (which are recognised in providing local governance). In the Niger Delta, this is majorly linked to most fierce non-state violent conflicts which take place among, between and within oil village communities. As oil productions increase, the stakes become higher, and local traditional authorities such as chiefs and "youth" leadership become tools and pawns in the hands of both the state and oil MNCs, who negotiate with them on behalf of their communities in order to continue production. Such negotiations include payment for land acquired for oil exploration, cases of oil spills and other corporate social responsibility projects which oil MNCs embark upon. Therefore, oil MNCs in many cases identifies the 'troublesome' 'powerful' or influential' people within these communities and empower them by funneling money into their pockets, thus buying their loyalty. This makes traditional leadership and local governance financially lucrative and attractive, thereby increasing the violent struggle for such positions, especially since the 1990s, as groups and persons target such positions as a means to gaining access to oil benefits and opportunities (Human Rights Watch, 2005).

Again, within these local traditional authorities, is the power struggle between local chiefs and "youths". This is mainly because these "youths" are the main perpetrators of the struggle against the state and oil MNCs; they carry out the violent conflicts and armed struggles and therefore should be recognised in the scheme of things. From the 1990s in the Niger Delta, and like most other armed conflicts in Africa, the "combatants have become increasingly youthful" (Peters and Richards, 1998:183). Their participation in violent conflict gives them a claim on how their communities are governed. Analysing the situation in the oil village communities, Ikelegbe (2005:217) argues that:

Furthermore, youths, militant youth groups and militia have become more active in the communities and community leadership. In many communities, the youths have sidelined, subdued or even driven into exile erstwhile traditional

rulerships and have taken over community leaderships and particularly, the liaison with the oil companies. Along with more youth and militant group involvement has been the fierce and pervasive entry of violence as an instrument of compulsive appropriation.

The essence of the struggle for power cannot be far from gaining access to oil resources benefits and opportunity. In the oil village communities, both the formal and informal forms of authorities and leaderships are beneficiaries of the enormous wealth derived from oil resources. For the informal authorities and leaderships which are represented by the traditional rulerships and an emerging strong and violent “youth” system, it is about fierce struggles against other groups within their communities. This will elevate them to a position of recognition by oil MNCs operating in their communities, who are willing to buy peace at all costs.

### **5.3.1 The Nigerian State and the Special Development Agencies**

The history of special development agencies in the Niger Delta region dates back to the 1958 Willink Commission<sup>33</sup>. These special development agencies were established by the Nigerian state to tackle “the poor state of infrastructures and the harsh terrain of Nigeria has paradoxically underdeveloped the region” (Ibeanu, 2008:34). The first of the special development agencies was the Niger Delta Development Board of the 1960s which was recommended by the Willink Commission of 1958. The next was the Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority, established during the military regimes in the 1970s. This was subsequently replaced by a Special Fund created by the 1981 Revenue Act for Oil producing Areas and the Special Presidential Task Force for the Oil Producing Areas, which managed the special fund which was created in 1989, giving the area about 1.5% from the Federation account. Next was the establishment of the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development

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<sup>33</sup> The Willink Commission was the first attempt in Nigeria, then under colonial administration, to look into the problems of the minorities of the Niger Delta.



Commission (OMPADEC) by Decree 23 of July 1992, which committed 3% of oil revenue for the development of the region. And at present, there is the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), which officially started in January 2001 (ANEJ, 2004; Ibeanu, 2008).

Historically, the establishment and performance of the special development agencies have remained questionable. Although they are designed as special interventionist agencies by the state to use allocated special resources in developing the oil producing areas of the country. The selection of representatives into such agencies often lead to both state and non-state violence, such as a community against the state, or communities against one another. This is because they are mainly used as an avenue to settle political associates or to enrich friends. During the period OMPADEC existed, it was perceived by the people as a means by which the military governments were enriching their families and associates rather than engaging in actual development in the region (Ibeanu, 2006). For example, the NDDC is constantly marred by succession disputes, appointments or corruption crises, rather than carrying out actual developments required in the region. Ibeanu (2008:32) writes that the general expression by civil society organisations is “the feeling that it [NDDC] is another patronage system, an avenue for enriching party loyalists.” This idea could equally be to make sure that oil production is continued, especially if those appointed could in one way or another muster support for the government and the oil MNCs, thereby making the appointments serve as a form of *Petro-settlement*<sup>34</sup>, which helps the Nigerian state and the oil MNCs to buy peace through appointing those considered as either influential or obstacles to the continuity of oil production in the region (Nwokolo, 2010).

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<sup>34</sup> The term *Petro-settlement* represents policies and programmes conceived and implemented by the Nigerian State and the Oil MNCs to financially or economically empower a selected few within oil bearing communities or regions of the Niger Delta. Their formulation and deployment are undertaken mostly as reactive conflict measures in restoring oil production distorted by violent revolts by oil bearing communities (Nwokolo, 2010).

These appointments give less consideration to the choice of representative from the oil village communities than to create a pathway for economic opportunity and access to oil benefits for a selected few. For example, between 2009 and 2010, there was an open political challenge between Edo state Governor, Adams Oshiomhole (Action Congress) and People's Democratic Party leader (PDP), Chief Anthony Anenih, who hails from Edo state too, over the nomination of Mr. Donald Omorodion as the representative of the state on the NDDC Board. While Governor Oshiomhole nominated Omorodion, Chief Anenih wanted one of his political sons, thus chief Anenih tried to use his party's majority at the Senate to block the confirmation, but this was thwarted by the Presidency (Vanguard, March 10, 2010).

Basically, considerations for appointments into NDDC are given other expedient considerations over the development needs of the oil village communities. Also in 2009, there were stories and news about a fierce battle for NDDC top jobs between Rivers and Bayelsa states over the Chairmanship and between Delta and Akwa Ibom states over the position of Executive Director, Finance and Administration (Newswatch, May 25, 2009). Following the dissolution of the board, the vacant positions of Chairman, Managing Director, Executive Director Finance and Administration were fiercely competed for by the South-South Zone states. The first two positions were zoned to Rivers and Bayelsa States respectively while the last two were given to Delta and Akwa Ibom States. The rivalry for who takes the jobs continued within the states to which the positions have been zoned (Newswatch, May 25, 2009). In many cases, politicians and leaders or rulers who tend to benefit from such positions often provide arms to the "youths", using them to fight their perceived opponents. Communities have also engaged in violent conflict against another, especially where one believes that an appointed member of the agency should be a member of a particular community and not that of the other community.

## **5.4 Economies of Violence: Economic Opportunism and Oil Resources**

One of the fundamental characters of oil resources is that “there is so much to fight for in oil economy. There are enormous legal and illegal resource opportunities, particularly in terms of benefits from oil companies... [this has] fuelled deadly and violent conflicts as each group struggles to prove their relevance and capacity to disrupt the oil economy,” (Ikelegbe, 2005:216). Thus much discussed social grievances may actually be an opportunity to do well out of war (Collier, 2000). However, as contentious as Collier’s arguments are, ‘ownership’ of an acquired land for oil exploration and production activities, or providing land for networking of oil pipelines and installations constitute a major motivation or drive for economic benefits or opportunities for oil village communities. When there are such developments, oil village communities expect to see their fortunes change for the better. This could come as a form of compensation paid to them for their land or other forms of corporate social responsibility activities which encourage good host community and oil MNC relationship.

There are other forms of compensation which could be given to a community based on environmental degradation it suffers from oil related activities such as oil spills. However, this type of compensation has continually pitched oil village communities against the state and the oil MNCs. There are always accusations and counter accusations anytime there is an oil spill. For instance “Ekpan Community in Uvwie LGA suffered major fish loss in their ponds from a spill traced to Chevron facility that affected the nearby Ekpan River”. The community blamed Chevron for the spill (ERA, 2010:17). While the oil communities are concerned about their environment, the oil MNCs and the state “claim that the spillage is the result of sabotage by local communities for purposes of illegally obtaining petroleum products and monetary

compensation”(Ibeanu,2000:23). Such accusation from the oil MNCs and the state has always been difficult to establish, judging by the fact that many of the pipelines and valves were laid many years ago and are already weak and partially faulty (ERA, 2010). Other forms of oil resources backed opportunities and benefits could also include appointments into the various special development agencies and committees set up by the Nigerian state and Niger Delta states as discussed in section 5.4.1.

However, there are still huge illegal opportunities provided by oil resources in form of oil theft, which is known as illegal oil bunkering. There are small and large scale illegal oil bunkerings. The small scale involves ‘smuggling syndicates who break into the distribution pipelines of the Nigeria National Petroleum Company and particularly those of refined fuel from the Warri and Port Harcourt refineries to fuel depots’ (Ikelegbe, 2005:221). The large scale involves “large-scale theft (‘bunkering’) via barges and flow stations for the international market,” (International Crisis Group, 2006), with about 200-250,000 barrels of crude oil stolen per day and sold to the international oil mafia who operate along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea. This is however made possible by the active involvement of high-ranking military and naval personnel, politicians, and oil executives and very recently the entrance into and part capture of the business by ethnic militia and warlords (Watts, 2004). In many instances, such illegal oil bunkering operations desecrate farm lands and fishing waters, leaving the communities with the option of making claims, which in many cases, ‘has resulted into conflicts between and within communities over the distribution and control of payouts and compensations by the MNCs for appropriated and polluted land and water’ (Ikelegbe,2005: 220).

Another form of illegal opportunity associated with oil resources is the kidnapping of oil workers, especially the kidnapping and hostage taking of foreign oil workers and the demand of

ransom payment for their release. There is also organised blockage of oil facilities, with the ring leaders being 'settled' by the oil firm either through an award of oil contracts or other forms of financial payment. The growth of numerous shadow or illicit economy around the oil village communities have been attributed to frequent loss of sources of livelihoods, social exclusion or out of sheer opportunities presented by the oil activities. Among these three, loss of livelihoods remains the most common due to oil spills and gas flaring in these local oil communities. Watts (2009:18) argues that by "conservative oil-industry estimates, there were almost 7000 oil spills between 1970 and 2000, more than one each day (the real figure might be twice or three times that number). An equivalent of one gallon of oil has been spilled for every 100 square meters of Niger Delta". In such circumstances, "fisheries and agriculture have been damaged as a result of oil spills and waste dumping and other harmful environmental practices", despite the government and oil companies' recognition of the dependence of majority of the people in the local oil villages on fisheries, subsistence agriculture among others for their livelihood (Amnesty International, 2009:34). Consequently, as local oil village communities experience destruction of their fisheries and farm lands by oil activities, expectedly, they shifted their means and sources of livelihoods to oil resources rents and opportunities.

Following these assumptions of deprivation and denial caused by oil activities, acts of violence have so much been supported by many people, as either an alternative means to livelihood or a way of drawing government attention. Human rights activist, Barrister Casely Omon-Irabor (the coordinator of the Human Rights organization of Nigeria) in an interview granted to a newspaper, justified militancy in the region as the way of attracting the sympathy of the international community and said that "if there was no riot, fighting and kidnapping, we would have been in shambles"(Niger Delta Standard, Oct.26, 2007).

The violent situation in the region has therefore created economic opportunities, not just for “youths” who have engaged in militancy, hostage taking and kidnapping, but also for top politicians, public servants and opinion leaders. As advanced by Dr Chris Ekiyor, the then President of Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), every step taken by the federal government has lacked commitment and political will, a reason for the unending crises in the region that only produces profiteers and government businessmen whose only stock in trade is the Niger Delta crisis (Vanguard, February 3, 2009). Based on this chaotic situation, militancy and illicit businesses around the oil Village communities are seen by some as an act of survival; according to Chief Edwin Clark<sup>35</sup>, “the Ijaw youths are not militants but freedom fighters” (The Nation on Sunday, February 8, 2009). In this, militancy and violent conflicts have remained not just an issue between the oil village communities, the state and the oil MNCs, but, like most illicit business and there are struggles to control the shadow economies. Subsequently, split groups often emerge, with violent conflicts ensuing between them, and often leading to what is regarded as ethnic crisis (like the Warri Crisis of 1997), which could as well pass as violent crisis over oil resource opportunities and benefits such as illegal oil bunkering.

## **5.5 Securitisation of the Oil Business in Nigeria**

A major feature of *petrobusiness* in the last fifty years of its existence in Nigeria is the securitisation of the oil village communities of the Niger Delta. Omeje (2004:431) defined securitization in Nigeria’s oil conflicts as:

basically the process by which an issue is factored into the state's security agenda, defined or recognised as a security problem and by so doing the state and its elites (power holders) acquire the legitimate authority and justification to take extraordinary measures (including allocation of social resources) to control or combat the identified issue or threat.

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<sup>35</sup>Chief Edwin Clark is a prominent and the highest ranking Ijaw leader, a one-time Minister of Information in the first Republic.

Through securitisation, every disagreement or civil disobedience is seen as a threat to oil exploration and production activities. Among this securitisation is ‘the growing presence of private security in the volatile environment of the oil-rich Niger Delta’ (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2009: 9), and massive militarization of the region with troops, ‘who stay long enough to engage in a range of activities that pitch them against communities’ (Ukeje, 2011: 89). A lot of reasons have recently been attributed to this development, but the major reason is the importance placed on the oil business by the Nigerian state, which seems to consider the growth and security of the industry more important than the wellbeing and security of its citizens, especially those living within the oil communities. With security portending different meaning for the state and oil MNCs on one hand and the oil village communities on the other, therefore, “in the Niger Delta, national security contradicts the security of nationals because of the politics of oil” (Ibeanu, 2008: 20). Incidentally, as the state continues to build up the security around the oil industries, it in turn militarises the oil village communities the more, and the entire Niger Delta in general. The current threat of militancy encapsulates a feedback from “a wide dimension of crisis spun by the struggles around oil and the potential explosive features of the militarized Nigerian political terrain, where every inch of political space is locked in a zero sum game of the state takes all” (Obi, 1997: 2). Unfortunately for oil village communities, their traditional leadership is one of the worst affected by the crisis.

Paradoxically, oil politics and struggles are no longer limited to the exemplars of the ‘oil complex’<sup>36</sup> but have very much included local communities or what this research sees as non-state violent conflicts, especially where communities or groups engage in fierce struggle over which group are to be employed to guide and watch over pipelines. According to Claude Ake (as quoted by Ukeje, 2008), the state evidently deploys swarms of soldiers, naval ratings and

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<sup>36</sup> The fierce relationship between the state and Oil MNCs on one hand and the local oil village communities on the other.

mobile policemen around the vicinity of oil installations and production to safeguard the *petrobusiness*, facilities and personnel, in order not to hinder oil exploration and production in a community where such violent conflict is going on. All in all, this environment of unbridled militarisation and securitisation is “essentially a contradiction of accumulation and development” (Ukeje, 2008:2). The employment of locals especially “youths” from oil village communities to carry out pipeline surveillance activities pitches each group against the other as they struggle for selection due to the huge payment they receive from oil MNCs for such services. For instance, Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC) was reported to have paid about \$40million to four former militant leaders for the guarding of oil pipelines (Wall Street Journal Europe, August 22, 2012). Using previous rivalry between these militant groups as a yardstick, the tendency that other groups not included in the contract will resume attack on the pipelines leading to violent conflicts are very likely. Unlike Nolte’s (2007: 217) explanation about local community security arrangement in other parts of Nigeria, like in the South West ‘where private security provision is dominated by vigilante groups, they often operate on the basis of local political concerns and forms of mobilisation, which may include language, faith and tradition practices’, this could not be said to be the same in the oil village communities in the Niger Delta. While Vigilantism as private security provisions in South-West Nigeria (like Odua People’s Congress) work for the interest of local communities, vigilantism as private security provisions in oil village communities work for the interest of oil MNCs who pay them for such functions, thereby often fuelling violent conflicts among groups.

Apart from the deployment of security to safeguard the *petrobusiness*, there are many cases where security forces, especially the military and mobile police have been directly deployed to attack a community. This is either for obstructing oil exploration and production activities or for being perceived to be harbouring people (often referred to as militant) who are hindering or



attacking oil installations (Human Right Watch, 1999a). In 2003, the Nigerian state established a Joint Task Force (JTF), an army led-unit which includes men from the Navy, Army, and paramilitary Mobile Police (MOPOL) and the regular police, code-named “Operation Restore Hope”, with a mandate to protect major installations, and curb the kidnapping of oil workers and other violent activities aimed at frustrating oil production in oil village communities (Amnesty International, 2005: 2). More resources have been deployed to provide security for the oil sector than to provide security for the local people who dwell in those communities. For instance in the 2008 fiscal budget proposal, NDDC which is meant to provide development to the oil communities was allocated 79 billion Naira, while security for the region was allocated a whopping 444.6 billion Naira (vanguard, 11 July, 2008; Vanguard, 14 February, 2008). Thus, showing the importance the state places on state militarism and violence, rather than committing such amount to tackling the developmental problems such as unemployment, environmental issues and lack of social amenities affecting the region. Therefore, according to Ukeje (2011:89) ‘a pervasive but ill-conceived notion is that every threat to law and order in the contemporary Niger Delta is viewed as another attempt to undermine oil production and state security’. Subsequently, the need to massively invest in security like the JTF (security service) in the region in order to secure an unhindered flow of oil resources production is considered a better security approach than investing in human security like infrastructural development.

Omotola (2010:49) opines that “the oil companies, for their part, have always expressed preferences for a more violent approach to secure their oil installations, workers, and production. They expressed this preference by calling on the state to deploy more troops into the region and are willing to offer assistance in that regard”. With such securitisation of the region, even mere peaceful demonstration are crushed, like the opening of fire on protesters

from the Ugborodo community at the Escravos oil terminal on the coast of Delta State by soldiers from the Joint Task Force on 4 February, 2005 (Amnesty International, 2005: 2).

Another example of oil MNCs involvement, Shell in 2008 is claimed to have spent \$99m on 'third parties' for security, which included the services of 600 Nigerian government police and 700 members of the controversial state joint task force(JTF), made up the army, navy and police(The Guardian, August 19,2012). The outcome of the use of state violence is that it creates suspicion among the people and further fuels violent conflicts among them, especially if any group is seen as less affected by the new development. Omeje (2004:429) posits that "the strategic nature of oil to the economic survival of the state and to the prosperity of its dominant elite factions practically heightens the prospects of the state's use of military violence against oil-related threats and conflict in the present historical conjuncture. Beleaguered and desperate, the state is scarcely impartial in its management of domestic threats and social conflicts"; this thereby continually polarises groups and communities in the region.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

Drawing from the literature reviewed in this chapter, it seems apparent that the violent conflict in the oil village communities has been strongly influenced by the nature of political and socio-economic developments in Nigeria or within the Nigerian state since the emergence of oil resource as the economic mainstay of the country. Oil resources have created a particular sort of structure. The influence of oil has taken an initial institutional structure and then altered it to support elite that derives its rent from oil. At the same time, the elites have used and adapted the structure in terms of creating allies (local chiefs) and other paramilitaries that can be deployed against those who are reliant on the incomes from the oil but have no say in that income (the local communities). From this perspective, it may be argued that it produces different definitions of what security might mean.

From this chapter, it also seems clear that violence in the oil village communities date back to the discovery of oil resources in large commercial quantities in the late 1950s. The subsequent displacement of the main sources of livelihoods of the oil village communities instituted the foundations of the eventual violent conflicts in the 1990s. In the chapter, it is also argued that this period of oil resources dominated economy in Nigeria transmitted negative effects on the Nigerian state. Subsequently, such oil resources effects like changes in socio economic conditions, struggles for power, leadership and local rulership, struggle for access and dependence on oil benefits and economic opportunity, illicit and shadow economy, and rent seeking behaviours were also transmitted to the oil village communities. As argued in the chapter, such oil-fuelled effects on the oil village communities, have in turn fuelled violent conflicts not only between the oil village communities on one hand and the Nigerian state and the oil MNCs on the other, but also non-state violent conflict amongst and within the oil village communities, as part of the struggle to gain, control or own access to oil benefits and opportunities. Chapter six looks at the analysis of socio-economic conditions, greed vs. grievance in oil village communities.

## CHAPTER SIX

# OIL RESOURCES, SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND ECONOMIES OF VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA'S OIL VILLAGE COMMUNITIES

“Oil fouls everything in southern Nigeria. It spills from the pipelines, poisoning soil and water. It stains the hands of politicians and generals, who siphon off the profits. It taints the ambitions of the young, who try to scoop up a share of the liquid riches—fire a gun, sabotage a pipeline, and kidnap a foreigner” (National Geographic, February, 2007).

### 6 Introduction

This chapter aims at analytically identifying the roles of oil resources in re-defining the socio-economic conditions of the oil village communities in Nigeria. The chapter examines how oil resources and its fuelled new socio-economic conditions have influenced cultures of grievance, greed and militancy in oil village communities. This is with regards to establish a study which show that oil resources activities lead to various forms of violent conflicts and development crises in most developing countries where it is found in abundance. Thus, this chapter looks at the new socio-economic conditions and social relations introduced by the discovery and production of oil resources in these communities in the Nigerian context. Therefore, this chapter seeks to answer the questions: *What are the effects of oil resources on the socio-economic conditions of oil village communities; and to what extent have oil resources produced a culture of grievance, greed and militancy in oil village communities?*

The conflict situations in Nigeria's oil rich region of the Niger Delta have led to various researches in the region. In many cases, the nature and failure of the Nigerian state have been attributed as the main cause of the crises. However, in examining these violent conflict situations, there are less mentions or linkages between the oil resources and the changes it

brought to the socio-economic conditions and social relations of the oil village communities. This chapter therefore implores both secondary (documentary evidence) and primary data (gathered through interviews, focus groups discussion and non-participatory observation) in providing an analytical understanding of the extent and how oil resources contribute to violent conflicts in these oil village communities. With this attempt, the discussion based on the research findings affirms that *the changes in socio-economic conditions and social relations brought about by oil resources are likely to have produced the cultures of grievance, greed, and militancy leading to violent conflicts*. The data gathered from the field are analysed within the framework of structural conflict theory and two supporting theories as identified in the framework of the research (c.f. chapter three).

## **6.1 The Nature of Oil Resource: Effects on the Socio-Economic Conditions of Oil Village Communities**

This section examines the effects of oil resources on socio-economic conditions of oil village communities, with interest on factors such land and landownership, unemployment, environmental factors and struggles for local economy.

### **6.1.1 Land, Landownership and oil resources**

In Nigeria, just like most African states, land is the main factor of production and this is based on the fact that these countries are mostly agrarian in nature. The agrarian nature of these countries means that land and landownership form part of the nature of the state's existence and could be a source of violent struggles especially in the rural communities. Derman *et al* (2007:2) write that “land rests at the centre of theories of conflict and scarcity due to its assumed growing scarcity”. These real and assumed scarcities become more imperative and visible when natural resources become the driving principle behind the usage of the land.

Remarkably, the introduction of Land Use Decree of 1978 (which was later known as the Land Use Act of 1979) radically re-positioned Land rights and legislation in Nigeria. The Act invariably empowered *petrobusiness* by neutralising 'all traditional impediments to land acquisition under customary laws' and thus freeing land for oil activities, as well as for industrial and agricultural development purposes. The Act in theory makes land a property of the state and vests its allocation and administration in the state Governor (FGN, 1978:2). This suggests that new conditions were introduced in a bid to make any and all land available for ventures which a state governor deems more economically viable for the state. In the case of communities with oil resources, their land became available for *petrobusiness*.

The change in land rights and land legislation re-defines land ownership, nature of land usage and more importantly places priority on land usage for oil resources over other forms of usage in oil village communities. In exploring the linkage between land and land ownership to violent conflicts in the oil village communities in Nigeria, the research posed this question to the participants; *what do you think are the contributions of land and land ownership to violent conflicts in your communities?* In giving answers to this question, issues raised by participants form a myriad of specific factors which singularly or intertwiningly are found to exist in the new conditions defined by land, landownership and oil resources. Among them are: land as source of livelihood, indigene-settler land crisis, and the struggle for inclusion in land ownership.

Participants maintained that the discovery and production of oil resources in their communities meant a loss of their land and fishing waters to *petrobusiness*, which thereby affected their sources and nature of livelihoods. This change in sources and forms of livelihoods meant that

their agrarian occupations became either diminished or are lost entirely. Again, this in turn meant more scarcity of farming land or fishing area and thus affected their livelihoods greatly. This change which has affected the people's forms of economic subsistence equally meant that more people in oil communities become landless, leading to many forms of violent struggles over the remaining farming land or fishing water. A member of the first FGD painfully reflects on the destruction and changes brought about by the oil resources on their old forms of livelihoods:

“For a long time we were into farming and fishing. But with the result of oil exploration, we don't have fertile land as oil production is affecting us. The rivers for fishing are without fishes again due to oil spillage into them. And this developed hardship for the people. Our land are either collected from us or given to the oil companies for oil wells by government for little compensation. Or we have oil pipelines cross all over the land that we have nowhere to farm. Our lands now belong to the government, which gives such land to the oil companies to explore oil. We now depends on what we get as land dwellers, as we are banned from such land and this has led to so many problems in our communities”(OR, Male,FGD;Nov.2007).

This statement depicts the feelings of the people over the nature and manner in which they lose their land to *petrobusiness*. Their sources of livelihoods are drastically affected by the oil activities. A “youth” leader in one of the communities also informed the researcher about the new wave of violent struggle for inclusion in land ownership (land found to harbour oil resources) created by oil resources in these communities. According to him:

“There have been a lot of crisis in the sense of these oil and gas production as host communities. People (referring to particular community) have signed documents with them (referring to oil MNCs about to operate in a community) as landlords, whereas the others around us like ....and others don't have. What leads to crisis among communities are rightful ownerships of these lands/places where these explorations take place. Every community wants to join in the ownership, even to the extent of applying violence to be associated with ownership of such land” (RO, Male, UzComm, YL, Interview; Jan.2008).

In an interview with a community leader, he stated that they believe that their livelihood is threatened once their ancestral land is taken over by government for oil. He explained thus: “Government forgets that land is in short supply in this region and that people will fight over the remaining land to be able to farm” (A.A, Male, BaComm, CL, interview; Nov.2007). Supporting this view, a women leader in trying to describe their situation said that their “footpaths struggle with raised pipeline, well heads and flow stations, while people are fighting over left over land for farming” (J.M, Female, Sacomm, WL, interview; Jan.2008).

Another “youth” leader while explaining the land struggle situation recounted a story of two peaceful neighbouring communities that were suddenly thrown into violent communal crisis immediately oil was discovered in their jointly owned communal land. According to the respondent:

“OkComm and AlComm are an Ijaw and Urhobo communities respectively. The particular land that oil was discovered, OkComm were claiming that their parents were farming in the place before, but the land is closer to AlComm. These were two communities who had lived together and inter-marry each other. But immediately oil was discovered in the place, there was crisis, crisis in the sense that money to come from land compensation and so on has disintegrated them” (VM, Male, OdComm, YL, Interview; Dec. 2007).

A similar story was given about Od and Og oil communities. Since 1968 that SP (oil MNC) started its oil activities with the building of the F-terminal, and NA (oil MNC) with its flow station, the once peaceful Ijaw ethnic neighbouring communities who share the same cultural heritages are now sworn enemies. There are claims and counter claims over land ownership and on whose land the oil facilities are located. This situation resulted in the 2001 communal violence that left hundreds of people dead and loss of property (B.S.I, Male, Odcomm, CDC-skp, Interview; Dec. 2007; Vanguard Newspaper, January 12, 2008).



The above views from these participants confirms how the acquisition of land for oil resources' explorations force communities into violent struggles, all in the bid to claim ownership of their long existing farm lands. Therefore in their effort to demonstrate ownership, violent conflicts ensue. Similarly in most land ownership cases in the oil communities, the Nigeria state and oil companies fail to mitigate or resolve the conflicts. As noted by one of the human right activists interviewed:

“Government made land use officially its prerogative using the Land Use Act; using it to encourage the expansion of oil sector in the region but forgetting that land is highly valued in our society and that the topography of this region will even make the claim of ownership even worst, as this land use policy will further fuel conflicts and struggles arising from landownership in these communities” (A.M-O, Male, Wa, CL, interview; Dec, 2007).

The problems resulting from the land and landownership and other fall-outs like loss of livelihood, is part of the ‘contradiction of security’<sup>37</sup> which the Nigerian state is unable to handle, manage or reconcile. This is because of its character, as there are differences in ‘perceptions and conditions of security advanced by local communities and those advanced by state officials and *petrobusiness*’(Ibeanu, 2000:24). Thus, this condition brings about a resultant self-help situation in the oil village communities as each community strives to prove ownership of the land earmarked for oil explorations not even productions. This was further explained by a Community Development Committee(CDC) member from Gbcomm as follows:

“yes, we had some previous conflicts over land, but the arrival of oil made it worst and even changed the direction of fight over land. They ignored our customary land rights and traditions, thereby making people and communities treasures treasures payment by oil companies for land over peace and good neighborliness” (D.W, Male, CDC Member, interview; Dec.2007

It is evident from the FGD and interviews cited above that peaceful co-existence which exists in oil village communities give way to violent struggle and competition over land each time

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<sup>37</sup>Ibeanu (2000:24) refer to the situation as 'a contradiction of securities', where the Nigeria state because of her weak nature is unable to address conflict situation or violence because of her interest in protecting oil business.

land is to be taken from them for oil explorations and productions. The aim of this new situation is about getting some forms of financial reward for 'their land' from oil MNCs who would be exploring oil in the land. The data illustrated how the livelihoods of the oil village communities are changed from an agrarian–food sufficient community to landless communities that depend on monetary handouts from oil MNCs. It further showed that violent struggles and conflicts erupt at each time such lands are to be acquired for *petrobusiness*. Affected communities and families take to violence in their bid to either show or claim ownership of such earmarked land. On the whole, it was evident that existing socio-economic conditions in these communities which are based on land as the major means of livelihood is radically affected or changed.

Re-echoing the whole discussion that disputes over land as a result of oil resources exploration are a feature of their communities today, a community women leader lamented thus: “all and all, brother fighting brother over land” (M.O.E, Female, OkComm,DC -WA, interview; Nov.2007). In essence she was referring to the violent situation over land, either on discovering of oil or the remaining land for farming and how it has polarized their social relations. This notion is in line with Ibeanu’s opinion (1999:171) about “triggered violent conflicts as villages contest the ownership of land on which crude oil is mined”. This implies that a form of structural violence is planted within these oil village communities with oil resources, land and landownership becoming evident. The above discussion clearly demonstrates the contribution of land and land ownership to the violent conflict in oil village communities. It was evident from the data that the discoveries of oil resources involve acquisition of land and waters, which in most instances are mostly farming land and fishing waters.

These changes in land and land ownership affect the old social relations, which gives way for a new one that is now based on oil gains and money. Although the change in land ownership and in nature of livelihoods are seen as a holistic situation resulting from the Land Use Act of 1979, which empowered the oil sector and there by 'accentuated the crises and conflicts arising from land throughout the Niger Delta'(Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2006:33).However, the changes that emanates due to the policy related to land and land ownerships introduce a structural induced scarcity, which as part of structural conflicts means that some people are alienated and discriminated against by the new policy (C.f. chapter 3). The nature and extent of possession of land in various oil communities resulted into economic inequality which gives raise to violent conflicts.

As argued by Cramer (2003) economic inequality is hugely important to explaining civil conflicts, but only insofar as the economic is considered inseparable from the social, political, cultural and historical. Therefore, it may be possible to draw a linkage between land and land ownership and resultant economic inequalities emanating from it, which at the same period empowers some over the others. As explained by two members of the second FGD who were from Ut-unComm, their community has always received few benefits from the contribution of their land to oil resources, unlike their others. Claiming that was why their “youths” violently closed down a development agency for oil communities in December, 2007 as they suffer from poverty, environmental issues and loss of land as source of livelihood like the other communities who are always rewarded. Therefore, they are ready to do more if they don’t get the same benefit as other oil village communities (C.O, Male and U.O, Female, FGD, Feb.2008). As observed during the field research, such circumstance has in most instances warranted the use of violent struggle by the much aggrieved party in a community to express their discontentment (Field note, Warri, Dec.2007). Looking at these conflict situations

critically, it is evident that oil resources create situations which made other resources like land to be inequitably distributed, as it re-structure the local economy for few people to hold sway in the new economic condition , while the remaining population suffers from shortages. This is referred to as structural scarcity (Hauge and Ellingsen, 1998:301). Providing an explanation on the situation, an NGO development partner working in the region stated that:

“When oil companies come in contact with these oil communities, they identify who are land owners and in most communities, there are land owners and landless people. And so, they oil companies would want to deal with the land owners, and while they do that, they are more or less polarising the communities between 'the haves' and 'the haves not', those who have lands the oil companies deal with, and pay compensations and enrich; and those who have no land, they don't or would not deal with. This polarisation leads to animosity in these communities. Therefore in a peaceful community, if oil is discovered or pipelines are lead across their land, they are ultimately polarised, leading to violent struggles over ownership and access to oil benefits” (DS, Male, Wa, PW: Interview; Dec.2007).

The evidence from the interviews from all the participants indicated that oil resources polarise relatively peaceful communities through re-structuring their land ownership system, land use and nature of production. As this re-structuring takes place, there is a development of unequal advantage within such communities. This means that people who either own or control such land, family or communal, or have access to oil companies are invariably empowered economically. However, there is an unequal benefit for everybody in the community as some get less compensation and are therefore disempowered more through losing their land to *petrobusiness*. In such situation, the material benefits that are fall-outs from oil resources re-define the people's social relations, especially where their socio-economic conditions have been re-structured through their relations to their land and its usage. Table 6.1 will demonstrates that such socio-economic conditions see arable land lost to oil production and could spark off struggle for control of remaining land or struggle to benefit from such lost to oil resources.

**TABLE 6.1-Cultivable Land Lost To Oil Exploitation – Related Activities in Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State, 1991**

<b>No. of Persons Affected</b>	<b>Name of Oil Field</b>	<b>No. of Wells</b>	<b>Land Area (Ita) per Well</b>	<b>Total Land Area (Ita) Lost to Oil Wells</b>	<b>Total Land Area (SQ.HA) for other Shell activities around the Well</b>	<b>Land Area for Helicopter landing</b>	<b>Land Area lost to flow station (SQ HA)</b>
72	Bolo	10	6.3	6.3	1.2	1.4	6.3
66	Iwokiri	9	6.3	53.7	1.2	1.4	6.3
61	Mbikiri	8	6.3	50.4	2.4	1.4	6.3
221	Agokien	34	6.3	214.2	2.4	2.8	6.3
81	Ele	11	6.3	69.3	2.4	2.8	6.3
141	Oraberekiri	21	6.3	132.3	1.2	1.4	6.3

**Source:United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Niger Delta Human Development Report, Abuja, Nigeria, 2006.**

Examining table 6.1, it shows the massive nature of oil resource activities and how it affects people living within these communities. For instance, Agokien oil field affected 221 persons, in most instances, the people counted may only be male family heads, excluding women and children who depended on them. An addition of oil operation around the community hosting Agokien oil field shows that 225.7 square hectare of arable farming land is lost to oil resource operations. As demonstrated by both primary and secondary data, such communities more often than not are thrown into one form of violent struggle or the other.

With the above discussion, it would not be out of place to reason that that there is a linkage between land, livelihoods and unemployment in these oil communities. Therefore, a discussion of oil resources and unemployment will further deepen our knowledge on how it contributes to violent conflict in such host community.

### 6.1.2 Oil resources and Unemployment

This sub-section further explains the linkage between oil resources activities and loss of livelihoods leading to a new socio-economic condition, which is unemployment. The rapid increase in unemployment in the various oil village communities over the years has led to the assumption that as *petrobusiness* increases in size and operations, the original means of livelihoods of oil village communities decrease considerably (see section 5.2). The unemployment situation in oil village communities which are mainly rural is linked to the loss of their traditional sources of livelihoods, which are farming land and fishing waters. These are in addition to oil production effects on the environment such as oil spill on the left-over land and waters (POI, male, Nsukka, DC, Interview Feb, 2008). Tables 6.3 and 6.4 show the extent of oil productions' effects on the environment, which have farming and fishing as main sources of employment and livelihoods. Farming land and fishing are lost to the new oil economy

Pointing out the pervasive nature of unemployment in the oil village community, a participant who is a director of one of the interventionist agencies set up by Nigeria's federal government to handle issues of underdevelopment caused by oil resources in the Niger Delta, said:

"It is one of the major causes of the conflicts that we are having today. There is massive unemployment, or say in Delta state, there is no one organisation or establishment in Delta state that employs up to 500 workers, none! So unemployment is high in Delta state, and is criminal. And if you look at the population growth, and the unemployment situation, the whole thing becomes a vicious circle that strengthens violent conflicts. With no farming land and fishing activities due to either oil company take-over of the land or because of oil spillage, the people especially the youths are restless and violent at any slightest provocation" (OU, Female, Wa, S.Dir. Interview; Dec.2007).

These radical changes in the nature of livelihoods are mainly due to various oil activities which among other things have continually denied people access to their ancestral land which has been the main source of livelihoods and means of production. This in common terms means that oil resources activities adversely affect farming and fishing occupations. In other words, as more oil deposits are discovered, there are displacements of more people from their farming land and fishing waters. As a result of the displacement, people from such affected communities especially the farmers and fishermen lose their sources of livelihoods, and “in many cases want to start fishing in their neighbours’s waters, which often result to ownership crises (F.U, Male, Warri, ERL,interview; Nov.2007).

Similarly, a community leader stated that:

“Among the major grievance of our communities, is lack of employment opportunities for the indigenes of oil producing areas. Our youths are angry, especially when they see people coming from other parts of the country to work in their communities, while they roam the village looking for means of survival or when they are not given jobs by the oil companies like others from other oil communities after using our farms for their float station and oil wells” (O.T, Male, OkComm, interview; Nov. 2007).

Citing the Od and Og violent communal crisis, a member of the Woman Association from Od community stated that it was the prevention of youths from OdComm in 1995, from getting employed in the then on-going F-Terminal Integration Project (FTIP) by OgComm that created the suspicion, and led to the violent conflicts between the two community in 2001(M.I.D, Female, OdComm, Sec.WA, Interview; Dec.2007; Vanguard Newspaper, January 12, 2008).

This shows that the Niger-Delta region is seriously confronted by problems of unemployment, and with the loss of a greater part of its source of livelihoods to oil resources activities, there are fierce struggles to gain employment in the only booming sector in the communities, which is the oil companies. Although high unemployment is not entirely peculiar to the oil village communities

alone, but as rural areas, they fall into the sector that has the highest level of unemployment in Nigeria, which is 25.6%, as against national unemployment rate which is 23.9% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011). This level of unemployment could be seen as the part of the reasons for chronic poverty in rural areas, which has 66.1% for absolute poverty and 73.2% for relative poverty (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

However, even with the boom and growth in *petrobusiness*, the dwellers of these communities are hardly given employment, and even where such opportunities are allocated to the communities, they are personalised. A Female participant in the first FGDs remarked that

“... in short, to get a job in an oil company or government is not about if you can do it, is about who you know and your connection, if you be [are] poor man pikin [child], forget am [it]”(A.A,Female, Warri, FGD Nov.2007).

This revelation from this participant demonstrates the level of socio-economic exclusion that exist in oil communities, as community leaders personalise employment slots allocated to them by oil companies (Field note, Warri, Nov.2007). Consistent with this, an interviewee explained that he got the DESOPADEC job because of this role as a “youth” leader (Field note, Warri, Nov.2007).

In the same vein, another community CDC member recalled that: “the only period the oil companies want to service their oil heads and wells, are the periods they give us casual employments. It is always tense, as people struggle over who gets into the casual worker lists and in most instances resulting to violent fights between communities or within a community” (V.U,Male, Olcomm, Sec- CDC, Interview; Jan.2008). Interestingly, it is worth noting that owing to the technical nature of the oil industry, most jobs created by the *petrobusiness* require highly skilled manpower and the majority of the unemployed, especially the “youths”, do not possess those levels of skills (DS, male, Warri, Peace worker: Interview;



Dec.2007).Furthermore, to show the fall-out of unemployment or underemployments in these communities, a development Consultant interviewed maintained that the new employment opportunities created by the oil industry are too highly skilled for people in oil village communities, and it rather created economics of violence. In his words:

[...] even when or where the oil companies want to deal with these communities, they discover that these communities could not benefit from employment opportunities because they lack skills. The “youths” that are there are either illiterates, those that are educated, are not educated in areas useful for the oil industry. So what the oil companies did to deal with the situation were to pay these “youths” that they cannot employ to just stay at home or to keep them out of their operations. So every month they pay these “youth” money they have not earned. And so, the “youths” discovered that at the first instance, that the reason they (unemployed) are paid money is because they were causing trouble for not being employed by the oil companies, and that is why they are paid. And so logically, if they cause more trouble for not being employed, they will keep getting paid by the oil companies (POI, male, Ns, DC, Interview; Feb. 2008).

This situation breeds violence as the unemployed especially the “youths” continued to demand for jobs that they are not qualified for in order to keep the money coming, since the oil industry could not provide the type of job that could absorb them. This is consistent with the view echoed by Human Right Watch (1999:8) that 'those with full-time employment in the oil industry are paid high wages for skilled work, but they are a well-paid minority surrounded by a mass of unemployed or underemployed'. This demonstrates that oil resources cement economic inequality as people who are given such few oil jobs, becomes better off in oil village communities. In many cases, as will be revealed and discussed later, such process lead to fierce struggle and affects social relations in these communities. In furtherance of the situation, Amnesty International (2005:2) noted that the oil companies in order 'to alleviate the frustrations of communities without development or employment,...offer "ghost" jobs, paying money to people who are not expected to work'. And in cases where there are such jobs, only few places are available, and in most instances there are lots of other factors which come to

play to determine who gets such position. Factors such as politics, privileges and patrimonialism in the community influence who gets such job opportunity and in most cases, such situation degenerates into violence within such communities as people struggle for such few well paid oil jobs. Table 6.2 illustrates the prevalent nature of unemployment in the oil production region of Nigeria.

**Table 6.2 Unemployment Rates by State in the Niger Delta (2003-2008)**

STATES	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Abia	14.80	11.40	9.65	7.90	13.50	10.90	14.5
Akwa-Ibom	12.30	14.40	14.40	14.40	15.30	13.50	34.1
Bayelsa	3.50	7.10	14.00	20.90	16.00	6.90	14.5
Cross-River	7.90	12.00	11.55	11.10	16.90	11.80	14.3
Delta	14.90	17.10	10.80	4.50	13.80	18.90	18.4
Edo	4.80	3.10	6.50	9.90	8.60	5.10	12.2
Imo	19.90	22.10	19.30	16.50	21.50	7.60	20.8
Ondo	16.80	7.30	6.75	6.20	6.70	5.80	14.9
Rivers	6.60	15.30	11.15	7.00	25.00	4.70	27.9
All Nigeria	12.60	14.80	13.35	11.90	13.70	14.60	19.7

**Source: Social Statistics in Nigeria, National Bureau of Statistics, 2009(General Household Survey Report NBS/CBN Survey 2007 and 2008)**

It is evident from the interviews and supporting literature that oil resources to large extent changes the existing dominant nature of employment and livelihoods in any community where it is discovered, especially where farming land or fishing waters are acquired for oil activities. However, it does not reproduce corresponding employment positions to take care of those displaced from their original jobs or source of livelihoods. This creates a form of structural

inequality within the host communities. As shown in table 6.2, the 2008 national unemployment rate was put at 19.7% while Niger Delta region was at 22.07% which is above the national level. Supporting this evidence, Francis *et al* (2011:24) submit that ‘62 percent of the inhabitants are below thirty years of age, unemployment is high, and there are few opportunities for advancement’. This to a great extent has fuelled violent conflict in most oil communities in many ways, especially in a situation where the few opportunities which come as casual jobs are to be contested for by numerous unemployed “youths”. As demonstrated by both primary and secondary data, such communities more often than not are thrown into one form of violent struggle or the other over land, job opportunities and other benefits created by oil resources, like in the case of two neighbouring communities.

### **6.1.3 Oil resource Activities and Environmental Factors**

From interviews and FGDs, it is evident that oil resources activities caused various forms of environmental crisis, which fuelled negative socio-economic conditions and social relations among dwellers in oil village communities. These adverse effects which are seen more as environmentally induced arguably stand as the first major source of conflicts between oil companies and oil village communities. The nature of the environs in the Niger Delta which hosts Nigeria oil village communities is such that it is made up of aquatic, swamp mangrove forest among others. The distortion of the bio-diversity of this region by oil activities resulted in environmental degradation and environmental scarcity as witnessed today (Social Action, 2009).

However, in trying to understand how these environmental problems cause by oil resources affect existing socio-economic conditions in oil communities, it is imperative to establish the

linkage between oil resources and environment and its subsequent ramifications which create the perennial environmental conflicts. A participant in the second FGD declared this while answering a question on the benefits of oil resources to his community;

We are not actually deriving anything from oil resource, but rather misery. In those days before the exploration of oil, our basic occupation have been farming and fishing. We depended on our products, which were in abundant but today the reverse is the case. There are oil spillages from these companies, which destroy our rivers and farmland. We can no longer farm, as our farms are now full of oil wells and pipelines. Our rivers have no fishes again, as the fishes are now deep into the ocean. The benefits we get from oil are the struggles in our communities over land to farm or portions of fishing waters. Local people in the communities frequently engage in communal fights in farms and in the rivers. In short, there are no visible benefits from oil production, but the damage on our environment and struggle over compensation from such damages (TK, Male, Warri, FGD; Feb.2008).

Relating a story of what happened in her community, a woman leader gave an account of an incident in her community, saying, “there was oil spillage and the oil company paid deaf ear to our complaints. Our youths were provoked; they hijacked the vehicles of the oil company, blocked the roads and chased their workers away. The next day they came for dialogue with us and agreed to pay us some compensation” (VA, Female, Tr- WA, OdComm, Interview; Nov.2007). Probing further on impact of environmental degradation on women, I asked another woman during the second FGD, if oil resources affect them differently from the men, she replied that “we are the ones who do the cooking, washing and fetching of water, when the river is polluted; we suffer most, because our children will need to eat, they don’t ask their fathers for food but us” (G.A, Female, Warri, FGD, Feb.2008). A similar view was expressed by another woman during the first focus group discussion; she said that

“we have families to feed, when oil spillage occurs, it pollutes the entire water and damage our cassava soaked in it, causing hunger and waste” (E.O, Female, Warri, FGD; Nov. 2007).

Informing the researcher on the extent of such pollution, a community traditional head, stated that when such oil spill occurs, the entire environment and surroundings are entirely covered by crude oil deposit from such oil spill. The situation is always unbearable as farms, drinking water, fish traps, fish gears, fishing breeding grounds, ponds and all aquatic life in the mangrove are devastated. When such incident happens, oil companies care more about their pipes working again than finding a way of paying us for our damage farms and cleaning up our environment (HRM.JT, Male, GbComm, Interview; Dec.2007; Vanguard, May 15, 2008). A similar story was told by a “youth” leader about his community’s oil spill experience. He said that:

“The last oil spillage which occurred in our community had quantities of crude oil pumped into the land and river of our community, causing destruction to the people. Our only source of water was polluted while farmlands with crops, as well as economic trees were destroyed by the spill”. (H.O, Male, YA-Sec, UgComm, interview; Jan.2008)

Another participant also echoed that in his community NA (oil MNCs) paid little monetary compensation for a latest oil spill, but left without properly cleaning the polluted environment. He further said that the affected farms are no longer in use, while the distribution of the money awarded to them was hijacked by their community leadership (E.B., Male, Warri, FGD; Feb.2008)

The submissions made by these respondents suggest three issues associated with oil resources and the environment, in respect of the role oil resources play in fuelling violent conflicts in oil communities. First, there is evidence from the submission that oil production activities degrade the environment and this in many ways affect the source of livelihoods of oil communities. Subsequently, in their bid to either farm or fish in the remaining portions of land or waters, violent conflicts often ensue as the contest for the remaining land or fishing water. Second, it is also evident that oil activities reduce and affect the outputs from farms and fishing water and this cumulates into a form of environmental scarcity. Thirdly, in situation where environmental

degradation is as a result of oil spill, the issue of compensation payment is raised. The issue of compensation, which would be discussed later in this chapter, has become one of the major causes of violent conflicts or struggles in various oil village communities. Finally, in many African societies, women are home makers; therefore they take the responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, fetching water among other domestic chores. When oil spill occurs in oil village communities, it put the women through series of psychological trauma.

Furthermore, it is equally evident to point out that environmental issues do not stand alone or could not act alone in causing violent conflict. In most instances, it either acts in conjunction with other variables or trigger other factors that cause violent struggle. In one of the interviews, I posed this question to the Peace worker working in oil village communities: *Between environmental problems which arise out of oil activities and issues of underdevelopment in these communities, which of these factors do communities react much violently to?* The interviewee declared:

“These communities if well-developed will take the issues of environmental problems such as oil spill with lighter concern, if the issue of underdevelopment is addressed. But the peculiarity of the Niger Delta would be absolutely difficult in forgoing the environment, but it would down play the struggle, although it is an avenue for getting compensation, so it is tricky” (DS, male, WA, PW, Interview; Dec.2007).

In other words, as these communities slump further down the ladder of poverty and underdevelopment, they therefore make their living out of the environmental problems caused by oil activities. This declaration goes to confirm the earlier submission by interviewee TK indicting that environmental issues intertwine with other factors to fuel violent conflicts.

An interpretation of this expression, is in line with some views in literature, Libiszewski (1992:9) opines that 'the idea of struggle over increasingly scarce resources which is often used

to characterise the linkage between environment and conflict is not totally wrong, but it does not explain very much... Surely the scarcity of a resource represents an important challenge for every society'. But if this will lead to conflicts and how these will develop always depends on a multitude of other factors which are socially and historically conditioned. This is in addition to the interviews which show that other factors like socio-economic, political, cultural and development issues play important roles in causing environmentally-induced conflicts. This therefore justifies this study's use of structural violence approach to understand the various interwoven and intervening factors that lead to violent conflicts in oil village communities.

However, notwithstanding that there are lots of ambiguities in the understanding and meaning of what constitute an environmental conflict, but nevertheless, in most natural resources conflicts like oil resource conflict, there are direct inter-play of environmental scarcity and environmental degradation. Again, Even with the study of environmental conflict been criticised for its methodological weakness, it does not rule out the evidence of the existence of environmental factors in host communities of such resources (see chapter 2). The two processes exist side by side in oil village communities and are attested to by the damage, new conditions and changes they have created in these communities. Consequently, environmental degradations which occur during most oil production process are easily confirmed by environmental changes in these communities. Environmental degradations which occur as results of oil resources activities come in forms of land and water pollution by oil spill and air pollution by gas flaring. Using Tables 6.3 as an example, it gives insight about the quantity of oil spill that occurs in oil village communities, whenever an oil spill occurs.

**TABLE 6.3 Summary of Some Oil Spills in the Niger Delta: 1979 – 2005**

<b>EPIISODE</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>QUANTITY SPILT IN BARRELS</b>
Forcados terminal oil spills	1979	Delta	570,000
Funiwa No.5 well blow out	1980	Rivers	400,000
Oyakama oil spillage	1980	Rivers	10,000
System 2C Warri – Kaduna pipeline rupture at Abudu	1982	Edo	18,000
Sohika Oil spill	1983	Rivers	10,000
Idoho Oil spill	1983	Awka-Ibom	40,000
Jones Creek Oil spill	1998	Delta	21,000
Jesse Oil spill	1998	Delta	10,000
Etiamia Oil spill	2000	Bayelsa	11,000
Ughelli Oil spill	2005	Delta	10,000

**Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Niger Delta Human Development Report, Abuja, Nigeria, 2006.**

A thorough consideration of Table 6.3 and Appendix G and show the amount of oil spills and the effects of these oil spills on the environment. Apart from the environmental hazards which oil activities bring in cases of oil spills, the after effects of such development, or what I call “oil spill settlement”<sup>38</sup> leaves the communities polarized and conflict prone. For instance, at each occasion where a financial compensation is agreed by the oil MNCs, a group or some group within the particular oil village community involved are left worse off than they were before the oil spill incidence. They either receive less financial compensation when compared to others or are totally left out. In most of the responses gathered during the interview, it was referred to as part of the 'divide and rule'<sup>39</sup> tactics of oil MNCs. An environmental right

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<sup>38</sup> “Oil spill settlement” is a system of financial inducement embarks upon by oil MNCs, in which the ring leaders and vocal members of a community affected by oil spill are selectively and secretly paid, in order to either have them work against their communities or keep mute.

<sup>39</sup> Divide and Rule policies as freely used by many respondents to refer to policies and actions of oil companies which tend to either pitch members of a particular community against themselves, or one community against the other or policies which are used purely to neutralize any strong and united representation by a community or



activist/lawyer in his opinion stated that “before now, elders were the only ones dealing with the oil companies on the settlement and more often than not, they under declare the actual amount paid as compensation for such spill to their community and pocket the rest, and this has often thrown communities into conflicts, if discovered” (F.U, Male, Warri, ERL, Interview; Nov.2007). Another “youth” leader openly mentioned a name of an Ijaw traditional ruler who stopped a multi-million Naira project which an Oil MNCs was supposed to execute for his oil village community as part of an agreed compensation for degrading their environment. In return, his company was awarded a huge contract of lesser amount, and this sparked off a violent conflict in the community leading to the burning down of his palace and blockage of the company's activity in that community (OT, Male, GbComm, YL, Interview; Nov.2007).

Similarly, one of the “youth” leaders in UgComm while responding to an interview question, bitterly complained about the clashes among communities as they struggle to control either their 'environment' or the benefits from oil activities. He declared thus:

“The clashes between communities are about land and water boundary adjustment, which lead to oil exploration benefits. Each neighbouring community wants to benefit from the oil activities. Out of this, is the problem of families', groups', communal' and ethnic struggles and conflicts over ownership and possession of such resources It is a survival of the fittest” (EEO, Male, UgComm, YL, Interview; Jan. 2008)

While I listened to this submission from this “youth” leader, he believed that oil resources activities have created a situation of ‘socio-environmental vulnerabilities’ within oil village communities. With such creations, everything linked to the environment, especially environmental degradation sparks off violent conflicts within the concerned parties in such community. Therefore, it implies that the environmental scarcity which they experience arises

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communities. In such cases, acts such as selective financial or material empowerment could be used by oil company to get the ring leaders off the community’s course for redress (Field note, Warri, 2008).

out of the social effects of oil resources. As oil communities face increase in environmental scarcity, there is increase in salience of group boundaries, which causes more segmentation of communities' social cohesion. The result is struggles and competition over resources such as land. This struggle could either be for farming or for oil resources purposes especially where such land has been designated for such oil resources. As earlier noted, environmental conflicts acts alongside other factors, it is therefore evident to note the presence of other factors which aids environmental conflicts. The struggles and conflicts over environmental resources are linked to the new discovery, which are oil resources.

In another development, there is also the issue of inequality and social exclusion as those with access to oil benefits or opportunity are better off. Drawing support from literature, Ibeanu (2001) notes that the, "...uses of the environment are socially constructed. Such construction of the environment involves values, expectations, structures and institutions that influence human interactions with the bio-physical environment...In short, the environment exists in unity with social, economic and political processes". Therefore, there is a causal link between the environment, oil resources and violent conflict, and when you examine these factors; there is a *prima facie* link between the three factors.

#### **6.1.4 Oil resource and Poverty**

To understand the role oil resources play or have played in creating and heightening poverty in oil village communities, it is important to understand the involvement of the other factors: land and land ownership, unemployment and environmental issues. The research has discussed these three factors, but has deliberately avoided drawing any conclusions from them. This is to enable the analysis of the relationship between oil resources and poverty to be done separately.

However, there is no gainsaying that there is a linkage between poverty in oil communities and the three previous factors discussed. Emergence of poverty in oil villages is often linked to loss of sources of livelihoods, in this case farming land and fishing waters. More often than not, poverty is the obvious outcome of negative impact of oil activities. According to an interview response from a Community head in OkComm:

“At a certain time in the lives of our communities, fish and food were abundant, people had food and enjoyed themselves, but now in these communities, there are no fishermen. The oil companies influenced our life styles, and it had a short duration. People are paid while the oil processions are on, and after that, nothing! They drill and go away, destroying the land and waters. While they were here, they did not put any infrastructure for the communities, to make up for their activities. If they do these violent agitation won't be this bad, and now there is no other source of employment after the drilling ended, leaving the people fighting over scavenged land and fishing waters or other activities such as watching over used pipelines and oil equipment, they have left us poor and suffering, which was not our case before” (EE, Male, OkComm, CH, Interview; Feb 2008).

A woman leader from Ut-Un Comm was blunt in expressing her opinion about the change in the nature of livelihoods and poverty situation in the oil village communities. While reflecting on how oil resources have affected the source of livelihoods of the oil communities and the nature of poverty, she commented that:

“If you go to our farms and see the extent of damage on our livelihoods, oil has devastated the area in a very criminal manner, and leaving the people in poverty situation. We have been impoverished socially, cultural, economically and otherwise. Oil has taken away the serene nature of the area, life of subsistence farming and local abundance to life of high cost of living arising from oil activities, which incidentally does not really trickle down to the local inhabitants of these community, the only way they get such is through violent struggle” (EO,Female, Ut-unComm,WO, Interview, Feb. 2008)

A participant who took part in one of the first FGDs also said that:

“....at the end of the day, the whole issue boils down to poverty. It is reflected in the nature of our livelihood, housing and so on.

The worse of it all is that each passing day we are descending more into poverty and conflict while the money goes to Abuja” (F. A, Female, Warri, FGD; Nov.2007).

A similar view was expressed by an interviewee from one of the development agencies, while underscoring the reason for the violence. He stressed that “these young men and youths have no objection but to resort to violence when there are no jobs. And as you can see, the violence is not only against the government and the oil companies but against their community and opinion leaders. A reason why the commission is working hard to train and create jobs for them” (M.T.G, Male, DD (YD), NC, PH, Interview; Feb.2008).

While explaining about the pervasive nature of poverty in oil village communities based on his various work in Niger Delta, another participant stressed that it is one doctor to between 82,000 to 132,000 people in the oil village communities as against the national average of 40,000. Safe drinking water is accessible to only 27 percent (31.7 percent for national average), and 30 percent of households (33.6 percent for national average) having access to electricity (POI, Male, Ns, DC, Interview; Feb.2008).

Judging by the above views, it is a clear case of impact of oil resources on livelihoods. It is obvious from the situations the respondents above presented, that the old forms of livelihoods of the people made them happier than the new form of livelihoods imposed on them by oil resources and its activities. Secondly, the above submissions show an emerging cycle of structural violence which exist in oil communities. Poverty here goes beyond lack of material benefits but other forms of benefits. However, it is also indicated the change in socio-economic activities of the people, which leaves them struggling for oil benefits or opportunities. Again, from responses of our interviewees, it could be inferred that the arrival of oil production and allied activities also raised their cost of living. Nonetheless, oil activities should increase the

growth and development of host communities, which in this situation is not the case here. It rather changed the existing socio-economic conditions in host communities without corresponding economic conditions. Thereby leaving the new situation it has created to shoulder the overburdened socio-economic situations. New situations created by oil activities includes-: destruction of previous sources of livelihood without replacement and environmental issues. Below is Table 6.4 on incidence of poverty in Niger Delta.

**Table 6.4: Incidence of Poverty in the Niger Delta in Percentage. 1980 – 2004**

	1980	1985	1992	1996	2004
Nigeria	28.1	46.3	42.7	65.6	54.4
Edo/Delta	19.8	52.4	33.9	56.1	Delta 45.35 Edo 33.09
Cross River	10.2	41.9	45.5	66.9	41.61
Imo/Abia	14.4	33.1	49.9	56.2	Imo 27.39 Abia 22.27
Ondo	24.9	47.3	46.6	71.6	42.15
Rivers/Bayelsa	7.2	44.4	43.4	44.3	Rivers 29.09 Bayelsa 19.98

**Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2005)**

Analysing above table, the incidence of poverty in the Niger Delta shows rise in poverty in 1980 has an average figure of 17.4% and then rose to an average of 60.1% in 1996, which is a rise of 42.7% within 16 years of oil production activities. Analysis from interview data suggests that changes in the socio-economic structures of host communities examined meant an imposition of a new way of life and social relations. The new way of life brought a condition of inequality, especially unequal access to the new source of livelihoods. This form of structural violence means that oil resources- linked economic opportunities are not equitably distributed.

Rather, two new socio-economic groups of the advantaged and the disadvantaged for the new socio-economic conditions are created. This development brings about a new conflictual relationship between the disadvantaged and the advantaged, which results into violent struggles.

Expressing a similar view, Ibeanu (2008:18) writes that 'Niger Delta's poverty is in part the consequences of oil production, which have destroyed livelihoods by destroying farmland and fishing waters'. This picture supports the position of the oil communities and in very clear terms and imagery, a new dissolute life that oil resources activities imposed on its host. Understandably, the other five other geo-political regions in Nigeria have not really felt better considering the enormous wealth the country has made from oil resources. However, Niger Delta, especially the oil village communities are peculiar and different judging from the adverse effect of environmental problems from *petrobusiness* despite contributing over 50% of the country's GDP.

In this discussion, one thing remains very common and obvious, and that is that the poverty experience here started first as a demand-induced scarcity<sup>40</sup>. This basically has to do with the dispossession of land belonging to the people in favour of *petrobusiness*. This is further heightened by environmental factors that oil activities heap on the people. An explanation of the situation using the theoretical framework shows that poverty comes as part of the changes in socio-economic conditions, which as part of structural violence could fuel violent conflict.

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<sup>40</sup>Homer-Dixon (1999:19) explains that 'Demand –induced scarcity arise only with resources that are (to use economists' term) rivalrous. A resource is rivalrous when its use by one economic actor reduces its availability for other.

Interestingly, this discussion raises a lot of moral and academic debates such as: why do these oil communities take to violent conflict knowing that the poverty situation in Nigeria is not peculiar to their communities alone? Secondly, are there fundamental differences between the nature and causes of poverty in the oil village communities and the rest of the country? In trying to reflect over these questions, the research takes a look at the effects of oil resources in these communities as against the rest of country. Experiences such as environmental factors, unemployment, landlessness have direct impact on the people's livelihood. However, there are claims about the existence of similar factors or causes of poverty in other part of the country, incidentally, these causes of poverty are not direct outcome of any natural resources production as witnessed in oil village communities. In sum, the above research tries to fully grasp the dynamics of the poverty situation in the oil village communities and how such situation manifests into violent conflicts. This the research has done by looking beyond poverty as a single causal factor but including other factors such as unemployment and environmental issues.

## **6.2 Petrobusiness: Grievances, Greed and Criminality**

To answer the second part of the study's research question 1; interviews, focus group discussions, observation and documentary reviews such as newspapers, reports and research findings were used. The investigation focused on examining the extent, if any, to which oil resources contributed to issues of grievance, greed, criminality and militancy in oil village communities. This will thereby establishing the relationship between the new socio-economic conditions, and the new culture of greed and grievance in fueling violent conflicts in oil village communities.

## **6.2. 1. Grievances due to ‘underdevelopment’<sup>41</sup> and Changes cause by oil activities**

These study findings reveal a pattern of intricate relationship between underdevelopment and the reaction of oil village communities to negative oil activities. Expressing the height of the underdevelopment in these oil village communities, A.M.O (Constitutional right lawyer) queried the situation in this manner:

“The oil communities over time feel very strongly that they are highly marginalised. Marginalised in the sense that if you go to the oil communities, especially the ones in the river line areas where the bulk of the oil comes from, if you see their standard of living, it is very low and poor. They have no potable water to drink, they wash, bath, and drink from polluted streams. A few kilometres away, you have boat houses, where oil companies, their staff and security men, all will be on. They have 24 hours power supply and drink bottled water. Oil communities see all these. The oil companies enjoy these amenities and still drill their oil away, and you think they will not one day rise up against these oppressors” (A.M-O, Male,C/L, Warri, Interview; Dec2007).

As observed during my fieldwork, the situation of underdevelopment or lack of development was frequently cited by the various oil village communities as reasons to why they resort to violence. For the genuine agitators, the situation represents living in penury in midst of plenty (Field note, Gbaramatu, Nov.2007). Explaining about the situation in her village, a young unemployed graduated who took part in the 2<sup>nd</sup> FGD, described her village in this form:

“My village is wired for electricity but no electricity as it is not connected to the national grid. We have a pipe-borne water that that was commission since ten years ago, but has never worked. All our household chores are done in the stream; the same stream serves as source of drinking water and waste disposal”(O.I,Female, Warri FGD; Feb. 2008)

Interestingly, the one million man march in Abuja, Nigeria’s federal capital in 1998 is said to have increased the knowledge of oil communities on the real worth of oil resources to Nigeria,

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<sup>41</sup> Underdevelopment or lack of development in this context represents the non-presence of basic amenities like roads, hospital, electricity, schools,



especially the “youths” who on visiting Abuja for the first time saw bridges, highways and skyscrapers, and wondered why their communities are continuously underdeveloped through oil exploration for Abuja to be developed (J.O, Male, YL, Ut-UnComm, interview; Feb.2008).

Similarly, another “youth” who took part in the one-million man march gave his opinion on the lack of development in the oil communities as thus:

“... for example go to Olobiri, they just suck the oil and abandon that village. No good pipe borne water, no electricity, no good school and education, the roads linking the village is not even good. But go to Abuja and see what they [Referring to the Nigerian state] have done at Abuja. There is no electricity, you may get one if your community or village is close to the oil company, but if yours is not, there would be no light”. (UT, Male, Warri, FGD; Feb. 2008)

This revelation of underdevelopment went a long way to support a popular claim during the interviews and FGDs about the role of awareness and enlightenment in fuelling the violent conflict. The more the oil communities understand their relative deprivation especially in comparison to their contributions and that of others parts of the country, the more they feel aggrieved (Field note, Warri, Feb.2008). Again the more any particular community perceive its own underdevelopment in comparison to other oil village communities, the more it resorts to the use of violence in attracting recognition or benefit from *petrobusiness* (Field note, Warri, Feb.2008;Amensty International, 2005).

With the awareness and enlightenment that came with the Abuja discoveries as against the underdevelopment of the oil communities, DS pointed out that:

“... judging from the developments they saw in Abuja and the underdevelopment in the Niger-delta, they understood that the development of Abuja is from oil and this prompted them to ask questions and more agitations for development of the Niger Delta. Especially, they questioned their leaders [referring to leaders from Niger Delta] on why they left their communities/ area in this situation [underdevelopment] or allow this underdevelopment to go on, they found out that their

leaders more or less have mortgaged their future by dealing with the oil companies, and so on and so forth without considering the development of their areas. So, this gave rise to insecurity and instability as well as conflict in the Niger Delta” (DS, Male, Warri, PW: Interview; Dec.2007).

What was evident from the interviews and FGDs was that oil communities consider their relative lack of development as fundamental issue that fuels the violent conflicts. For the oil communities, underdevelopment stands as the major cause of their grievances. When the question, *between lack of development and environmental degradation like oil spill which attracts most violent reactions from oil communities?* was posed to a community relation officer from oil MNCs, his answer was thus:

“To be very truthful to you, all that these communities want is development in terms of amenities, but of course oil companies pay taxes to government and cannot take over their function. I agree we have not met the global environmental standard, but this should not translate to violent conflicts if amenities were provided” (CP, Male, PH, CRO, Interview; Feb.2008).

The above statement from the interviewee (CP) may seem contradictory or contentious to earlier held view on environmental degradation, judging that the case of oil village communities draws more attention when the environment is mentioned. Nevertheless, the point been made here is that the issues of development remains very important and have fuelled violent conflicts in most oil communities. A critical look at this revelation shows that lack of development is mostly used among the main dwellers of the various oil communities, while emphases on the environment comes from mostly the environmental friendly NGOs who are cashing in on the global attention giving to the environment to promote the issue of development in The Niger Delta, knowing that most parts of Nigeria are facing case or cases of underdevelopment. An analysis of opinions expressed by respondents shows that lack of employment opportunities for the indigenes of oil producing areas; total neglect by federal and

state governments and the oil companies; and general lack of development are major causes of grievances.

It is evident from views of respondents above that grievances are mostly on issues of underdevelopment and loss of livelihoods. The less the oil village communities perceive their benefits of oil resources especially in terms of development, the more likely they would resort to the use of armed violence to secure such entitlements. In situations where social amenities were provided for oil communities, oil resources became agent of development therefore increasing the environment for peace. However, in situations where the MNCs and the state fail to provide social amenities for the oil communities, oil resources become a source for underdevelopment and deprivation, thereby fertilising the environment for violent conflict.

From the interviews, FGDs and observation, it is clear that the nature of violent conflicts that erupt in the oil village communities are due to a plethora of grievances felt by dwellers in these communities regarding activities of oil resources and lack of development. In general terms, the issue of “development” here means the provision of basic and standard social amenities, such as roads, pipe borne water, electricity, hospitals, schools and jobs. While “underdevelopment” means lack of above-mentioned amenities, and in addition to the situation where oil activities such as oil spill and gas flaring have deformed existing local resources such as streams and rivers. These grievances were first directed at oil MNCs operating in many of oil communities, and then at the Nigerian state and later at some members of oil communities who are seen as collaborators in under developing their communities.

The case of development of the oil communities or its underdevelopment has been cleverly discussed as “how development underdevelops the Niger Delta” by Ibeanu in 2008. In his

thesis, Ibeanu raises two issues: first, how the unsustainable nature of oil exploration destroys livelihoods and the environment. Secondly, the lack of attention given to the provision of social and essential amenities like roads, electricity and education by the Nigerian state and Oil MNCs, while they are abundantly available at oil camps and quarters. Ibeanu (2008:29) further opined that “this has heightened the sense of relative deprivation in communities and made oil installations ready targets of the anger”. This deprivation and the subsequent grievances could easily be understood within the framework of structural violence. For example, the road to this violence against the oil village communities started as the oil production began in 1956-8, but actual physical violence could be dated to the 1990s.

### **6.2.2 Grievances over Compensations**

Findings from interviews, FGDs and observations, reveal that there are various violent struggles in the oil communities over compensation. These compensations are mainly payment for land acquired for prospective oil exploration, or payment due to environmental damage especially from oil spill in communities. Accordingly, compensations in cases of acquisition of land are paid either to an individual or family. Furthermore, in situations where a piece of land is communally owned, the community leadership or executive negotiates and receives such compensation on behalf of members of the community. The same arrangement is equally applicable in cases of compensations for oil spill.

Firstly, in the course of this research, it was evident from the interviews that there is such high distrust about ways in which compensations are disbursed. Evidence from the field also shows that oil companies and oil village communities are often in conflict on whether an oil spill is sabotage or not. In many instances, this has resulted into unexpected crisis, especially where the oil company had initially accepted liability, only to turn back after some days to accuse

such community of sabotage (CBH, Male, OlComm, CL, Interview; Jan.2008). For example, International Crisis Group (2006) reported about Azuzuama in Bayelsa state, where a MNC's oil pipeline has devastated the livelihoods of the inhabitants of the community. On contacting Agip, the oil MNC involved, they claimed ignorance of the spill but later confirmed that corrosion could have caused the spills but that the company was not ruling out the possibility that saboteurs had used acid to hasten up pipeline deterioration in order to demand for compensation (ICG, 2006). This is among the many frequent causes of conflict in most oil communities. In instances where an oil company either denies culpability or is too slow to act, the affected oil community takes measures such as protests, shutting down the oil operations or taking the oil workers as hostages to press home their demands as seen in previous interviews cited in this research. An emerging point from this submission could be that deployment of violent confrontation by oil village communities makes the payment of their compensations or claims paramount. Thus, it could mean that peaceful communities may not have their demand taken as important (Field note, Warri, Feb.2008; DS, Male, Warri, PW, Interview; Dec.2007).

Secondly, it was also evident from the interviews that there is an existence of a “selective empowerment style”<sup>42</sup>, in which the ring leaders in such affected community or communities are selectively compensated either by awarding of contract, employment or financial rewarded to reduce their involvement in the struggle against the oil company. A visible angry “youth”, who took part in the second FGD said that:

“not until the “youths” got involved in negotiations, our elders and leaders were always ‘settled’ by oil companies; they will then come back and ask us to give them[oil MNCs] more time”(BE, Male, Warri FGD; Feb. 2008)

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<sup>42</sup> The term “selective empowerment style” is an act of making some selected members of an oil-bearing communities, especially those the oil companies considers as arrow –heads of conflicts or the elite or leaders benefits from *petrobusiness* either in form of contracts, employments or financial payments.

Again, as reported by Okonta and Douglas(2003:59), “the local communities have accused them[referring to Shell]of brutally suppressing peaceful protests and using financial inducements to divide the community whenever there is an oil spill, so that they cannot present a common front and successfully press for compensation”. The implication of this is the tendency of fuelling violent conflict among members of oil village communities on discovering this sort of empowerment policy which the affected oil company has used.

The second aspect arises from within the oil communities where their representatives, village development executives or community leadership who represent an entire community during negotiations for compensation, on receiving the agreed financial compensation, mismanages it. In many instances, the most affected peoples whose farmland or fishing nets were affected or destroyed by such oil spill get little or no compensation at all. A “youth” Executive during interview said this about community leaders and compensation:

“They negotiate with the oil companies, and agree on the amount to be paid. This monetary payment is control by community elders and executives. And immediately the money is paid, conflicts arise. Just like money paid to the state for the community that do not get to the communities, the money the communities get as compensation do not flow down to the members of the communities as well, the crisis starts with the sharing of the compensation”(AS, Male, OkComm, YE, Interview; Nov.2007).

In fact, grievances over the nature and manner of distribution of compensation received from oil MNCs presents most conditions for violent struggles and circumstances for a full blown intra-communal violent conflict. This therefore could arise from situations where money paid by an oil company ends up in pockets of few members of the community. Again, this could be part of the reason for the fierce struggle for leadership in oil village community (see discussion in Chapter 7). Thus, oil resources create economic opportunities which allow local/community

leadership to engage in the same manner of corruption linked to oil resources at the established governmental and state level.

Again, oil resources at this stage of existence within the communities' socio-environment has created a "rentier psychology"<sup>43</sup> among the oil village communities, and further fosters the institutionalisation of a patrimonial culture in community leadership driven by oil rent and benefits. In the view of Omeje (2006: 3), 'The distribution of rentier revenues in this context, in the absence of stable and well-developed legal, political and bureaucratic institutions, tends to encourage corruption'. This means that since oil resources have re-structured the existing economy in these communities, there is the tendency that the new social relations introduced includes "rent-seeking culture"<sup>44</sup>. With oil resources negatively impacting on their sources of livelihoods, seeking compensation for their land has virtually made them "rentier communities"<sup>45</sup>. They seek any form of compensation, be it compensation for prospective oil exploration or oil spill on farmland or for the fishing waters. When their expectations are not met, they could resort to violent conflict, as they now claim to be enlightened about the value and importance of oil.

### **6.2.3 Greed and Web of Criminality in Oil Communities**

Greed and criminality are two critical fall-outs of natural resources economy and remain a major cause of violent conflict in natural resources-rich continent of Africa including Nigeria's Niger Delta. Greed and criminality in some literature are perceived as the cause of outbreak of

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<sup>43</sup> "Rentier Psychology" is developed out of the activities of a rentier state, which involves the conditioning of the mind and behaviour of people linked to the oil resource (in this instance, the oil village communities) to the belief of demanding and making financial and material gains from oil resources or its agents-*petrobusiness*. This also includes job opportunities in the oil industry or payment of salaries without working.

<sup>44</sup> This implies a new way of life that is built on seeking oil related rents, revenues, benefits and opportunities such as compensation, financial hand-outs, especially with the loss of means of livelihoods to oil resources.

<sup>45</sup> This is used to represent the status of oil communities as dependent on oil related rents. Like *rentier States*, "rentier communities" show the same trends in a micro level, as all economic activities of the communities such as earnings revolves around the oil industry.

civil wars in countries with abundant natural resources. The economic theory of civil war argument with Paul Collier as one of its major proponent ( see section 2.4.2) believes that rebel groups ‘justify their actions in terms of a catalogue of grievances: repression, exploitation, exclusion’ (Collier, 2007:18). Rather, Berdal (2005:691) relying on other studies on the subject points that ‘the longevity, internal logic and, indeed, the ferocity of civil wars have all been affected by the greater ease of access to economic and financial resources that belligerents whether governments or rebels, have enjoyed in the 1990s’. In many instances, access to such natural resources such as oil has promoted criminality. In the case of the oil fuelled greed in the oil village communities in Nigeria, the exhibition of greed was difficult to distinguish from grievance at the earlier stage of the conflict until the situation degenerated from protest, to persistent vandalisation of oil pipeline which was commonly referred to as sabotage, to kidnapping of oil workers and militancy, and to outright war with the Nigerian state over the control of the resource. ICG (2009) wrote that criminal and political militants have used everything from targeted attacks to oil bunkering to hostage-taking to make clear their discontent. The result is the current violent situation.

### **6.2.3.1 Illegal Oil Bunkering**

Illegal oil bunkering remains one major catalyst of the recent violent conflicts which occur in oil village communities in Nigeria. Although this might be disputed because of the focus on direct conflicts between oil communities and Oil MNCs or Nigerian State, but evidence from the field shows how the struggle to control various illegal bunkering sites and routes sets groups against the other, either within a particular community or groups, or among various communities. Illegal oil bunkering started as uncommon practice which takes place any time there is an oil spill due to either faulty oil installations or pipelines, or due to a deliberate act of vandalisation of the oil pipelines of the MNCs. The gushing out of either crude oil or refined



petrol from the burst pipelines creates an economic opportunity for some dwellers to make some money by collecting and selling the product in black market (TY, Male, FGD; Feb.2008; HRW, 2003). DS (A Peace worker), he stated that:

“on realising the huge amount of money that could be made from the sale of the siphoned oil, the practice gradually became widespread and a regular and common means of making a living for some people, especially the youth” (DS, Male, Warri, PW, Interview; Dec.2007).

Another male respondent in the first FGDs expatiated on the illegal oil bunkering activities asserting that:

I am an Ijaw, and lots of Ijaws are into it [benefitting from it] and we are telling the government in clear terms, you people [referring to government] are also stealing our oil, so we are not stealing it because it is our property, we will take it and sell it and that is just the truth” (BD, Male, FGD; Nov.2007)

A participant in the FGD mentioned above gave more insight on their perception about the “legality” of their oil bunkering:

We use it to empower ourselves [referring to making a livelihood, as explained by him], I have a brother who is an illegal oil bunker, and this empowers my family. Most of our leaders, politicians and people in power pay them to siphon the oil for them to the high seas. The illegal oil bunkers pay the Navy for them not to block their sea routes...so you can't say that we are stealing it (EK, Male, FGD; Nov.2007).

These illegal oil bunkering activities embarked upon by some dwellers in these oil communities were insignificant when compared to the major illegal bunkering activities undertaken by international criminals with their Nigerian collaborators in the security services and oil companies (ICG, 2006). For example, the oil companies were accused of insincerity in the fight against illegal oil bunkering in Niger Delta. Brig.-Gen. Tukur Buratai, the Brigade Commander, 2 Brigade, Port Harcourt and Commander, Sector two, *Operation Pulo Shield* noted that “The bunkerers will not operate if the oil companies are playing their part very well” (The Punch, May, 29, 2012). It is a common knowledge that in the oil communities, the oil that

the dwellers siphon are leftovers from the broken pipes discarded by these international criminals (OU, Female, Warri, S.Dir. Interview; Dec.2007). However, the change in the nature of the conflict from peaceful agitation to violent conflicts or armed conflict and militancy meant that any group that has opted for militant struggle against the Nigerian state and oil MNCs needs arms to persecute it (POI, Male, Ns, DC, Interview; Feb, 2008). Therefore, it could be assumed that it became imperative that these agitating groups turned militant groups within the Niger Delta region needed to engage in illegal oil bunkering in order to support their men and as well as to purchase arms. Commenting on the situation in the oil communities, ICG (2006a) noted that illegal oil “bunkering” – theft – has accelerated the conflict and provided anti-government militant groups as well as criminals with funds to purchase arms.

For example, HRW (2003) in one of its publications, ‘Nigeria: Delta violence a fight over oil money’ noted that the Warri crisis involving the three major ethnic groups—the Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Urhobo—were among other things, mainly about controlling the theft of crude oil. For instance in Delta state, the fight for the control of illegal bunkering opportunities has significantly fuelled the violence and worsened the human right abuses suffered by the people (HRW, 2003). Subsequently, the loss to Nigeria through illegal oil bunkering “amounts to figures in the order of U.S.\$750 million to \$1.5 billion annually at oil prices between nineteen to thirty dollars a barrel, assuming bunkering at around 150,000 bpd (close to 55 million barrels a year); or \$3.5 to \$6.2 billion annually”(HRW,2003:18). This shows how financially huge and rewarding the activities are, and why it could constantly set groups and communities against each other as they try to illegally benefit from the oil money in one way or the other.

In addition to the illegal oil bunkering is the huge amount of money oil MNCs pay to groups to watch over these pipelines to avoid either vandalism and deter illegal oil bunkering. According to ICG (2006), oil companies to deter this act make discreet payments to militant

leaders in return for “surveillance” and protection of pipelines and other infrastructure. This has constantly set groups or camps against each other, with those chosen to carry out security surveillance fighting against those who were left out, and the later turns to illegal oil bunkering as their last resort. Therefore for some members of the oil communities, their targets were either to get financial settlement from the Oil Companies or to get their share of the oil resources by engaging in illegal oil bunkering from the various pipelines in the communities.

This could be why the then Nigeria’s Chief of Navy Staff, during a courtesy call on Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan of Delta state about illegal oil bunkering situation in the Delta, said that “Militancy in the Niger Delta may go but criminality [illegal oil bunkering] will not go because, the saboteurs and those who want to grow faster than their legs would continue to introduce more sophisticated dimension to achieve their aims” (Thisday, November 20, 2009). A further analysis could be that people may drop their arms against the state, but since the socio-economic conditions introduced by oil resources leaves them with a curtailed means of livelihood and economic sustenance, engaging in criminal activities like illegal oil bunkering may continue.

### **6.2.3.2 Kidnapping, Militancy and Violent Revolts**

The height of greed and criminality in the oil village communities and Niger Delta region are kidnappings (which started from the kidnapping of expatriate oil workers to indigenous oil workers and to ordinary Nigerians), militancy and rebellion against the Nigerian state. Incidentally, the escalation of the various agitations and protestations into violent conflicts started with the country’s return to civil rule. However, to understand the greed and criminality factor in the oil village communities, it is pertinent to situate the existing violence within the context of the denials and social exclusions and alienations suffered by the people.

In the first FGD, while discussing the issue of greedy vs. grievance, this question was posed: *Are illegal oil bunkering and ransom kidnapping in oil village communities not signs of greed and criminality?* A participant from this group said that:

They are the one that is greedy [referring to The Nigerian government and oil MNCs] we have been oppressed, and we just got to know that we are been oppressed, so we are fighting back. So any means we can use to get our money, we are going to use it. Until we see that the government and oil companies are doing something to our benefits, the conflict cannot stop. The federal and state governments have put us aside, so are the oil companies, for the illegal bunkering, people will continue to do it, until things are properly put in order (EK, Male, FGD; Nov.2007).

However, in answering a similar question, a community leader pointed out that the “youths” rather no longer take order from the elders and when there is a crisis between the communities and oil MNCs, “youths show their anger through violence, using guns, machetes and kidnapping”(GP, Male,Ut-UnComm, CL, Interview; Feb.2008).

To another participant in the second FGD, his views were that:

“Although we are not in support of the use of violence by our youths, but these amenities you now see from oil MNCs came through youth’s militancy”(JEK, Male, FGD; Feb.2008).

It was evident during the interviews in the sampled communities that criminal and militant activities such as kidnappings, did not receive the support of the elderly respondents, although it made government and oil MNCs to do more for the communities, as many of the young respondents see such violence as a means of drawing the attention of the state. To the “youths”, criminality such as hostage taking of oil workers is a tool for negotiation regarding their deprived conditions.

However, what becomes the problem is about drawing a line between genuine intent of the community and personal gains fuelled by greed. There is a current awareness by the people to mobilise as a group against the oil MNCs and oil resources production. With the loss of their free access to such benefits, they (former *petrobusiness*'s associates from the communities) went into outright criminal activities. For instance, an elderly participant in the first FGD claimed that criminal activities were rather associated with people who were formerly seen as powerful by oil MNCs and who were constantly settled, and have now been overthrown by popular revolt (EK, Male, FGD; Nov.2007).In describing the popular revolt against few individuals within their communities, another FGD participant said that:

“...so these miscreants no longer have the patronage from oil companies, they no longer enjoy what they were enjoying before this time. So what they did is to go into criminality” (O.O, Male, FGD; Nov.2007)

From all the submissions, it is evident that all the greed-fuelled criminal and militant activities are direct responses to the effects of oil resources on the lives and livelihoods of the oil community dwellers. Even though some of the activities were for personal gains, the root of such violence was laid by oil resources through its newly created socio-economic conditions and social relations. Consequently, the new condition meted out poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment and loss of livelihood in general, resulting in a culture of greed, militancy and criminality.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

This chapter explored and showed that oil resources to a large extent have great influence on the socio-economic conditions of oil communities where it is located. Oil resources change the means of economic sustenance, in otherwise livelihoods of such community, especially in areas of land ownership. This thereby polarises such oil communities and making them susceptible to

crises and conflicts. Oil resources re-structure the social relations of host communities creating a new economic class, especially in relationship to *petrobusiness*. Therefore, the changes in socio-economic conditions and social relations brought by oil resources influence the cultures of grievances, greed, criminality, which results into violent conflicts in oil communities.

In this study, the effects of changes in socio-economic conditions and social relations brought about by oil resources were gauged using variables such as landownership, unemployment, poverty, and factors such as grievances, greed, criminality, militancy and violence as a mechanism. All these variables and factors are interwoven and interlinked, as each one has a spillover effect on the others.

The chapter argues that singularly or collectively the negatives effects from oil resources breed new social relations which financially empower those who were able to gain access to *petrobusiness*. However, gaining access to oil resources is achieved through so many means, of which adopting violent struggles strategy reigns supreme. Therefore, in more concrete terms, oil resources with its financial largess brought about visible inequalities among the people, thus setting them against each other as they struggle for the scarce farming land or fishing waters, financial benefits, employment or compensations from oil companies.

The chapter further argues that the effects of oil resources increases as oil production grows and over the years was greeted by non-violent protestation and grievance by the oil communities but were suppressed by oil MNCs using many “*divide and rule*” tactics, such as financially inducing vocal members of any aggrieved oil community or awarding contracts to such parties to gain their support against their communities. The aftermath of these acts were the various intra-communal violent struggles that occur especially where oil resources benefits

such as compensation were involved. However, these unchecked and suppressed grievances gave room to other forms of violent and criminal expressions. Incidentally, these violent agitations and the need to gain access to oil resources opportunities or to get benefits from oil resources resulted in the growth of various forms of greed, criminality and militancy in the late part of 1990s and into the year 2000s in these oil village communities.

These violence and criminalities which were expressed in forms of illegal oil bunkering, hostage taking and outright militancy are spearheaded mainly by “youths”. They cite years of alienation and deprivation from their sources of livelihoods and negative effects of oil activities on their environment by *petrobusiness* as the major reason behind their actions. Based on this, the next chapter discusses the struggle for leadership and power in these communities and accesses the extent to which oil resources influence the quest for power in oil village communities, in the bid to gain access to oil resources opportunities.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **LEADERSHIP AND POWER STRUGGLES IN THE OIL VILLAGE COMMUNITIES**

#### **7 Introduction**

This chapter examines the violent struggles for leadership and power in the oil village communities in Nigeria. It critically investigates the extent to which oil resources have influenced the nature of politics, leadership and power struggles in these communities, using the theoretical and analytical framework developed in Chapter three. The chapter provides empirical data based on interviews, FGDs and other secondary data to examine the influence of oil resources on the nature of leadership and power struggles in oil Village communities in Nigeria. Based on this, the key question guiding the investigation and analysis is: *To what extent have oil resources influenced the nature of politics, leadership and power struggles in oil village communities?* The chapter has five sections including the introduction and conclusion sections.

#### **7.1 The Changing Nature of Local Governance and Leadership Struggles.**

In examining power, local governance and leadership struggles in oil village communities, I found evidence of changes in the nature of these factors. Firstly, the new social relations created by oil resources (as stated in Chapter Six) meant that “Power is oil and oil is power”, thereby subjecting all social relations and local governance issues in these communities to the whims and caprices of those controlling oil resources (Obi, 2002:97). Evidently, this is because the new economic conditions are centered on oil resources, which further alienates the people from their original forms of livelihood resulting in the use of violence to gain access to this



new socio-economic condition. As Obi(2002:98)opines, “those who monopolize such control of oil (violently acquired) will not willingly give it up or transfer it, those who are excluded from the ‘spoil of oil’ will do anything to get to power”. Although Obi in the above quotation was referring to the role of oil in transition politics in Nigeria, especially at the national level, evidence from the field research for this thesis have shown that the same situations exist in local oil village communities, as oil resources have so much influence on the nature of local and communal leadership and governance.

Thus, oil resources have created a regime of violent struggles for power and authority that are used by individuals or groups to gain access to the rents and opportunities associated with it. Describing the main motive behind the violent struggles in very plain words, a CDC member said that:

“There is a very strong quest for leadership in our communities; everybody wants to be the president-general of oil producing community or the president of the “youth” council, so that you can actually get what comes with it. Some leadership who gets in there enriches themselves instead of working for the general good of the community. There is a strong quest to become a community leader, because Mr A when he was president-general was able to build a house and bought two cars, Mr B wants to get into the corridors of power, so he too can also do what Mr A did, for himself and members of his family” (MN, Male, BaComm, Member CDC, Interview; Nov.2007).

What this means is that material and financial benefits and opportunities associated with oil resources play a very divisive role in oil village communities. Again, as echoed by another “youth” who participated in focus group discussion:

“Community youth leaders live like kings, whatever they want from oil companies they get, and in many cases, those who are not getting form their own groups too”(WC, Male, FGD; Nov.2007).

As illustrated by the theoretical framework described in Chapter Three, oil resources can directly fuel structural violence within a community, which could pitch one group against the other, and could see such groups fight over leadership and local governance positions. In some cases, economic agenda can be very prominent, especially since the communities' original and main socio-economic conditions have been greatly affected by oil resources activities. Judging from the nature of the oil industry, especially its demands for skilled employees, the only available means of participating in *petrobusiness* left for the majority of people, in order to have access to the benefits of oil resources, is to be in the community or "youth" leadership, or to participate in any form of local governance and authority. Again, for *petrobusiness*, in order to secure continual existence and businesses in these oil communities, promotes some forms of negative socio-political culture in matters concerning "oil-resources local leadership and governance relations" (Field note, Warri, Feb.2008, IGC, 2006; HRW, 2003). A detailed analysis of the nature of power and leadership struggle is given below.

### **7.1.1 The Struggle for Community Leadership and Local Governance**

Chapters Two and Five of the thesis covered the researcher's investigation of the various effects of oil resources in Nigeria, and the links between oil resources and conflicts. Furthermore, this investigation laid the foundation for a study that would provide the missing link ignored by the existing literature on oil resources conflict: a study on the effects of oil resources violent conflicts in oil village communities. Rather than studying Nigeria's oil resource violent conflicts. As earlier stated, this study is about Nigeria's oil village communities as independent microcosms, rather than as part of Nigeria as an oil producing state. However, when drawing inferences from observations of Nigeria as an oil producing state, one of the general understandings is that oil resources have influenced its political economy – its governance and politics – and in many instances have determined and sustained

its regimes (see Karl, 1997; Khan 1994; Le Billion 2001 among others). Watts *et al* (2004) observed that in Nigeria oil rents have historically kept parasitic ruling elite and providing the financial resource for the state to secure a sort of political consent among regions and within a competitive multi-ethnic state. A further analysis of this submission, as demonstrated by empirical evidence from the oil village communities investigated, shows that oil resources have equally created and sustained similar parasitic ruling elites and groups in these communities.

Secondly, it is useful to know that this creation runs across all forms of authority – traditional, charismatic and legal, thereby creating a condition that “renders oil a prime target of zero-sum politics, or the prize of political wars over the oil patrimony” in oil village communities (Obi, 2002:97). And, in order to achieve such dominance over ‘who gets what benefits and opportunities from oil’, violence and armed struggles are applied to gain power and authority to participate in local governance. In giving reasons for such violent struggles for positions in the communities, an interviewee (DS) said that:

They fight to get into such positions due to privileges that come to people by virtue of occupying such position, especially oil benefits that goes on in such community. They can recommend contractors to the oil companies for jobs and they can recommend themselves as well. These are some of the gains members of the community executive enjoy and with this everybody struggles to be elected into it (DS, Male, Warri, PW, Interview; Dec.2007).

This in clear terms points to part of the new social relations created by oil resources, which also means that leadership and positions of authority or governance in the communities are now highly priced, due to the “oil resource privileges” that are attached to them.

Giving support to this finding, another interviewee questioned why there would be no fights for power when community leaders or community development executives decided who would get the job opportunities given to the community by oil companies. He then stated that:

“it all boils down to who gets what; and the bottom-line is the money that comes from oil, and getting such power or authority determines everything. In oil communities today, you might be surprised that you have three different factions contesting for the leadership of such a community” (A.M-O, Male, C/L, Warri, Interview; Dec2007).

This confirms the explanation that “conflicts over power and material issues tend to be seen by all contenders in zero-sum terms” (Gurr, 1994:359). The above submissions clearly answer the fundamental question of why the struggles and ‘zero-sumness’ of local governance and leadership which exist in the investigated areas, as the answers confirm the assumption that these positions bestow unfair advantages when it comes to the distribution of oil rents and opportunities among people occupying local governance positions in oil communities.

As argued by structural conflict theorists, (see Chapter Three), the behaviours of people are affected or influenced by the unequal distribution of advantages in society, which can result in the use of violence by each party in the conflict in order to either maintain or gain an advantage or to change a disadvantageous position. In many oil communities, confirmation of undue advantages on some members have led to series of violent conflicts (Field note, Warri, Feb.2008, IGC, 2006; HRW, 2003). Thus, this assertion demonstrated the deep seated nature of the conflict and suspicion, with a particular member arguing that:

“some of our leaders were used by the oil companies. They will be selected and paid, and are used to blind the rest of the community as the exploitation goes on. Now when such a community notices such deceit, especially the youths, they fight their own leaders, (kill them, burn down their houses and so on), and questioning them about their positions and involvement” (MR.E.S, Male, FGD; Nov.2007)

A typical example of one of such cases of oil community violence is the celebrated case of rivalry between the Ogoni 4 led by Dr Garrick Leton and the Ogoni 9 led by Ken Saro-wiwa. The struggle for control of MOSOP (Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people) led to the killing of the four Ogoni Chiefs. According to Okonta and Douglas (2003:129):

“There were also accusation and counter accusation of betrayal, and a few Ogoni chiefs were specifically pointed out by angry Ogoni youths as collaborators who were working with Shell... Some MOSOP activists said they have evidence that a former MOSOP President had been compromised by Shell, and they rebuffed attempts by a handful of individuals to mediate between Leton and Saro-wiwa, with a view to giving Leton his old job as President....There was dissension, true, but nothing so irreconcilable as to result in the senseless slaughter of Ogoni by a few Ogoni”.

Similarly, I had an interview in Birmingham, UK, with a respondent- D.TM, on finding out about the killing of his father, a past chairman of Ugborodo Community trust fund and oil village conflict in the community. D.TM said that Mr.S.A.K. Metseagharun(his father)<sup>46</sup> was killed in broad daylight by some people from his community. This is because they feared that his election as the chairman of their Community’s trust fund would stop them from squandering and embezzling the community’s trust fund. According to him:

Ugborodo community is equally referred to as Escravos; it is a host to some oil MNCs including NLNG. It had its community trust set up in 1968. There was not much fund in the trust account until the 1980s, and within the 1980s and 1996, Chief Sandys Omadeli-Uvwu who was the chairman had embezzled monies paid to the community as either compensation or part of CRS for the community by oil MNCs, without other members of the community being aware. However, his inability to account for the massive fund paid by NLNG in 1996 raised the awareness of fraud in 1998. With this development, a new election was conducted in 1998, and my father Mr.S.A.K. Metseagharun became the new chairman of the community trust (CDC). The group led by the former chairman who had refused to leave the position or recognise my father’s leadership, used youths whom they have bought over to disrupt

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<sup>46</sup> With the consent of the respondent, names were used here, since the data is already in public domain. It is in newspapers, journal articles and reports. The family of Mr.S.A.K. Metseagharun had approach Justice Oputa Truth Commission set up in 1999 by former President O. Obasanjo, asking for the truth about the involvement of Chevron and Delta state government in the murder of their father, as the alleged killer were immediately given local and state positions.

and question my father's leadership. Chief Omadeli-Uvwu and others including an uncle of mine, Mr Thomas Metseagharun (whose angry is that my father will not allow the money to be "eaten") went to court to stop the new community's executives from managing the trust. While the case was still in court, some of the violent youths bought over by Chief Omadeli-Uvwu and his cohorts, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, 1998, just two months into his leadership as chairman of the trust brutally murdered my father at Okere road in Warri. Those who were charged for his death includes Mr Omamofe -Pirah (who was later appointed the chairman of Chevron- GMoU for Iteskiri) and we are relations. Oil resources has brought the culture of dog eat dog in our communities" (D.TM, Male, Birmingham, Diaspora oil community Member, Interview; March, 2008)

Furthermore, it is believed that Mr.Metseagharun's murder represents a gang up between few people supported by the state government and Chevron against Ugborodo community. This is judging from the actions of Chevron in recognizing a Community development committee that was voted out by the people, and the state government for recognizing the interim leadership of this voted out CDC even why some of their members were facing charges for the murder of Mr.Metseagharun (Warri Mirror, Nov.30 2007; Faleti, 2000).

Evidently, the two cases cited show how deadly and violent such struggles for leadership and power in local community governance can be. In clear terms, the entire violence revolves around oil rents and opportunities. This invariably promotes a culture of violence, which is easily deployed in getting recognition or gaining the opportunities provided by oil resources. For example, opportunities such as decent education scholarships from oil MNCs are award mainly to children and wards of local leaders or are used as a means for pacifying those considered as ringleaders of communal agitations or struggles. Drawing from literature on such practices, Peel (2005:6) writes that:

"These kinds of schemes raise important questions about whether companies use scholarships as means of pacifying opposition or winning favours from community leaders. For example, according to company records, in 2000-01 Texaco funded Bello Oboko, a highly controversial Ijaw ethnic militant

and critic of the oil industry, to do a one-year M.Sc course in environmental science at the American University in Washington. The confidential internal report prepared for Shell in 2003 said that ‘scholarships and employment opportunities are often presumed divided among people that have connections with [Shell] staff’.

As further shown by the nature of these conflicts, the causes of violent struggles for leadership and power in these oil communities cannot be separated from the emerging socio-political cultures which oil resources have entrenched into the fabric of these communities. (This will be discussed fully in Section 7.2). Significantly, these socio-political cultures are well supported by oil resources, thereby making local governance positions ‘deadly attractive’ and important in gaining access to oil rents and opportunities.

Again, evidence has shown that the effects of oil resources on power and leadership struggles do not only start with the direct fuelling of violent conflicts, but can also start with the eroding and diminishing of the importance and presence of traditional authorities. This it carries out through routes such as: compromising those in charge of such traditional authorities by financially or materially enriching them to the detriment of their subjects. It could also be by by-pass such traditionally mandated authorities and raise a new set of ‘leaders’ whom it empowers economically through activities such as acting as surveillance for oil installations or acting as private security or through outright financial payment. In most of these cases, such newly empowered groups either take on a role parallel to that of the traditional authorities or oppose most communally agreed decisions taken against their benefactor (i.e. the oil MNCs) who they work for (ERA, 2000). In some situations of this nature, the “youth” leadership (as we will see in Section 7.1.2) becomes the re-enforcing institution by acquiring the mandate of such communities. An example is the case of the “youths” of Sangana in Brass Local government area of Bayelsa state, who were poised for a showdown with Continental Oil and Gas limited (Conoil) over what they described as ‘non-consultation of their traditional ruler and the chiefs’

council by the company in relating with the community... [and] by-passing [of] the chiefs, leadership of the youths and other relevant stakeholders to satisfy a few persons in the coastal community' (Vanguard, September 1, 2009b). According to M.T.G, DD (YD), headship or leadership of a community becomes an issue of conflict once oil is discovered. "Everyone who has any stake in the community, or link to the community starts laying claim to one form of authority or another. In many instances, the educated and well-connected ones who may have been living outside these communities use their influences to try and become chairmen of the community development committees or presidents of the council or leaders of the youths". Such issues result into violent crisis, especially with resistance to such imposition coming from the real dwellers in the communities (M.T.G, Male, DD (YD), ND, PH, Interview; Feb.2008).As identified in Chapter Six, radical changes especially in the livelihoods of some members of the same community, who by their closeness to the oil MNCs have received oil resources benefits or rents, can spark off intra-communal conflicts.

### **7.1.2 The Emergence of Women in Community leadership**

The full emergence of women as part of decision making in the oil village community arose out of their participation in the challenges against oil MNCs activities. This is unlike the situation where the community's traditional authorities is dominated by men (often referred to as the elders council). Dominant women leaderships which emerged in many of such oil village communities became instrumental in mobilizing women to protest against issues that affected their sources of livelihood, such as farms and fishing waters. In many cases of oil spills, women mobilized themselves against such oil company (Turner and Brownhill, 2004). Such mobilization by women created an avenue for them to have a say on how their communities were governed by the male dominated community leadership. Tracing their emergence as part and parcel of decision making in their communities, a woman activist/Leader said that:



“We were not given any decision making role in the community. Rarely do men allowed us to be present when they take decisions that affect us. Our sons were even superior to us in such meetings. But our persistence and struggle against oil companies and our mediatory role when our men fight over such oil compensation brought us in”(Ms.AL, Female, Warri, WA, Interview, Feb.2008).

Another Female participant in assess their new found role and struggles against oil companies said that:

“It gave us the will to question how we are governed by our elders, leading to our inclusion into community leadership like community development Association to represent the women” (VA, Female, OdComm,Tre-WA, Interview; Nov.2007).

Lending support to the above view, one women leader during her interview said that, “we have to fight for our rights because our elders who are our husbands on collecting any compensation money go about marrying more wives instead of sharing such money with their families. They forget that we were the ones farming on such lands and using the proceeds in feeding the family” (Mrs.N.D, Female, CDC Member, Uzere community, Interview; Jan.2008).Therefore, as families suffer from the adverse effects of oil resources, women are mainly affected due to their responsibility as home makers. As they struggle against the effects of oil resources, they are confronted by “a discriminatory tradition that gives power to men over the affairs of the community, thereby allowing men to share money gotten from oil resources compensation” among them (OU, Female, Warri, S.Dir. Interview; Dec.2007). However, as oil resources bring changes to social relations, “women have seized such opportunity to have a voice in how the affairs of their communities were determined”, by joining in the protests against negative activities of oil MNCs (Ms.AL, Female, Warri, Women Activist, Interview, Feb.2008). This therefore implies that like every conflict, there may be some positive changes from a conflict situation. Oil resources may have fuelled structural violence in oil village communities, but it

indirectly helped in creating opportunities for women to voice their opinions in the affairs of their communities.

### **7.1.3 Youth dominance in community leadership and local governance**

Historically, various African societies recognised the role of “youths” in building their societies, but their activities were subject to the authority of community rulers and elders. But today in Nigeria’s oil village communities, the case seems to be different, as confirmed by my observations, interviews and FGDs. To understand the current domineering presence of “youths” in community affairs and leadership, the field interviews and FGDs posed this question to informants: *What are your views about the role of “youths” in community leadership, and is this connected to oil resource activities?* Most responses given to this interview question confirm that “youths” through their militancy and violent activities, have tended to become the determinants of major decisions in most oil village communities, especially in relation to oil rents, compensation and opportunities. In short, they are the perpetrators of various violent struggles for oil rents and opportunities as demonstrated by interviews and FGDs in chapter 6. For example, one of the “youth” associations from an oil village community in Delta state, under the banner of the youth wing of the Host Communities of Nigeria (HOSCON) made a submission to the Delta State House of Assembly in 2006, warning them that:

“...it would not take lightly the alleged plan by the state house of assembly to make certain allocation to local governments in the state from the 13% Derivation fund....however, [They] advised the lawmakers to expedite action on the establishment of the Host Community Commission, whose members shall be drawn from oil producing communities based on production ratio...“we view this plot as not only an invitation to crisis, but a calculated attempt to undermine the constitutional recognition of host communities (in oil producing areas) of Nigeria... Any

deviation from the status quo is an open invitation to chaos, crisis and violence”. The group stressed that it expected nothing less than the other oil producing states adhering to the constitutional provision...” (Thisday, July 25, 2006).

This goes to show that “youth” associations in the oil village communities have grown into formidable forces that are highly influential, especially in matters concerning their communities. A participant further stresses his perception of the role of “youths” in community leadership and the consequent violence as follows:

“They [referring to the youths] have taken over everywhere. The elders have been made completely irrelevant. It is painful but that is the reality. The youths have hijacked the authority and power, just to benefit from spoils of oil. It is the youth that are strong, they can carry the guns and can generate the conflicts, they can kill and they can do anything. So the elders just gave way” (DO, Male, Warri, FGD, Feb.2008)

Further, Ukeje *et al* (2002) supporting the above responses wrote that “ in their bid to fight for their rights as individuals, groups and communities, the youths damage oil companies’ equipment and machines. They no longer take orders from the elders, and often embark on guerrilla warfare, thus, heightening the fear of insecurity in the oil producing communities”. Again, another respondent boldly recapitulate youth’s ascent to power and leadership positions in oil communities in the following words:

“...the elders are patients and slow to action, but the youth are not. And due to evolution of the society, the youths are getting old and have taking over. And for 40 years, they have seen the injustice meted on their communities. The elders believe in evolutionary changes but the youths believe in radical changes. And after the death of ken saro-wiwa, the tension has risen more” (DV, Male, AD (Adm) DES, Warri, Interview, Nov.2007)

The explanations provided by DO and DV in their interviews, the story by thisday newspaper and Ukeje *et al*, similarly linked the violent conflicts spearheaded by “youths” in the oil communities to oil resources, especially to the distribution and acquisition of oil rents and opportunities. Significantly, they demonstrated that there is a changing trend in the nature of

leadership which is catalysed by oil resources. As supported by evidence, it shows that the “old trend”<sup>47</sup> upheld by community elders was non-violent and had accommodated all unfavourable outcomes from oil resources and *petrobusiness* with less demand for oil rents and opportunities, while the “new trend”<sup>48</sup> championed by “youths” is characterised by violence, especially physical violence, and constant demands for more oil rents and opportunities for oil village communities (Field notes, Warri, Dec.2007). Thus, Ikelegbe (2001:443) describes them as follows:

The youth associations are a more recent feature of civil society in the Niger Delta. Expectedly these groups have been very vociferous, militant and even violent in their articulation, activity and methods. They have been the key players in the violent conflicts in the region. The youth groups have been more mobilisational in their approach, raised awareness and provided a grassroots base for the Niger Delta agitation...

A critical analysis of Ikelegbe’s observation presents a very salient point that has been notably under-discussed in most previous research into oil fuelled violence. There are fewer emphases on the failure of the elite and elders of these communities as a contributing factor in the involvement and domination of leadership and governance by the “youths”. The failure of the elite and elders of these communities to champion the problems of their communities leaves this role to the “youths”. In the course of our fieldwork, I found evidence that the “youths” of these oil village communities, in trying to raise such awareness of deprivation or alienation from the new relations of production, resorted to the use of violence. As they succeeded in drawing attention of oil MNCs and the state using such violent approaches, they resorted to more violence to get their subsequent demands (Field notes, Warri, Dec.2007;DS, Male, Warri,

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<sup>47</sup> The old trend means the pre-late 1990 era and a system of local governance which believed in lengthy negotiation with no recourse to violence or armed struggle against the oil companies or the Nigeria state. This era started with the inception of oil production in commercial quantity and with all the types of violence meted out to the people by the Nigerian state and *petrobusiness* (Field note, Warri, Feb. 2008).

<sup>48</sup> The new trend means the present era which is run by the “youth”, especially their philosophy of deploying violence and armed struggle to achieve their object. This they easily attribute to their present knowledge of the importance of oil resources, acknowledging the influence of education and the mass media, which are unlike what their parents knew in former times (Field note, Warri, Feb.2008).

PW,Interview; Dec.2007). One of the commonly used violent methods is the seizure of oil facility by angry “youths”. Citing grievances ranging from oil spills and claims for compensations to issues of unemployment, the “youths” of an oil community could become volatile in order to have their demands met (BBC News, 2007; The Punch, 2007).

However,Adetoun (2005:50) while identifying some recurring factors in the Niger Delta conflict, also identified two burning issues that existed between the elite/elders and the “youths”. According to Adetoun:

1. The youths of some communities are pitched against their elders, accusing them of duping their communities of various benefits for their own selfish ends.
2. Rival youth groups within a community seek to be recognized as the authentic representatives of their people and claim various benefits from the oil companies.

These observations by Adetoun, when critically interpreted, also show that the “youths” are not immune from the same leadership struggles that exist within the main community leadership and the elite/elders; nor can they escape the struggle over positions in order to gain access to oil benefits. As noted by POI, “the youths are product of their environment and are influenced by the factors in their environment. Therefore, struggling for power to acquire such benefits will not be an exemption” (POI, Male, Ns, DC, Interview; Feb, 2008). Another participant remarked that the violent conflicts among “youth” groups within oil communities cannot be far from “rivalry over patronage and rent-seeking, and control of oil resources related business” (OU, Female, Warri, S.Dir.ND, Interview; Dec.2007).

In addition to these views and the points raised by Adetounon show why “youths” become involved in struggles and rivalry for local leadership and governance; access to rents and opportunities or benefits coming from oil companies operating in their area. With such unprecedented inter and intra-communal violent conflicts among “youths”, this evidence

suggests that the intentions of these “youths” (just like the intentions of the community elders whom they engage in fierce opposition) may also be about getting into leadership and governance positions in order to gain access to oil rents, benefits and opportunities. Another community elder remarked that although the “youths” have helped in making oil companies sit up to their responsibilities but “their rivalry and fight over youth leadership have divided our community, because they all want to buy big cars”(Ms.AL, Female, Warri,WA,Interview, Feb.2008).Another example of such “youth” leadership rivalry and struggle was reported in Thisday newspaper on October 16, 2009:

Tragedy struck at the venue of a meeting convened to reconcile two warring youth factions in Effurun, Ovwie Local Government Area of Delta State, when the factional head of one of the parties in dispute, Mr Destiny Ogbeni, a.k.a. Yellow-man, and his younger brother were killed. About a dozen others reportedly sustained various degrees of injury, with some of them admitted at three hospitals in Warri and Effurun. Thisday learnt that the death of the well-known Youth leader came as a surprise, because he was stabbed to death at the venue where the council chairman had summoned them for a peace talk.....he was mobbed by some members of the opposing group who accused him of suffering from sit-tight syndrome [refusal to leave office]. ... as the situation degenerated and cudgels, knives, missiles and guns were used in the free-for-all [Fight] ensued...effort were in top gear by some community leaders, including the Ovie of Uvwie,HRH Emmanuel Abe I, to broker peace between the warring youths to avert further bloodshed. Uvwie Local Government hosts several oil and gas companies... (Thisday, October 16, 2009).

This incident, when examined in the context of the observation noted in the research findings as to why “youths” could be struggling for leadership positions, confirms the fears earlier expressed. Four major issues come to mind while reading this story: warring “youth” factions; violent fights; sit- tight syndrome or refusal to leave office; and the presence of oil and gas companies. One can make a connection between the four main points, as one faction wants to remain in leadership, in order to retain access to oil benefits, at the expense of those in

opposition, who want to assume such leadership position(s) to be able to gain access to oil benefits. In the course of these struggles for leadership, violent conflicts occur.

#### **7.1.4 The Influence of Oil resources on Local Politics and Power Struggles**

The transition and return of Nigeria to full civil rule in May 1999, opened up democratic spaces, allowing many more people to participate in civil rule and political governance in many ways, such as local councilors, State assembly members etc. However, participation in this new democratic experience seem to have been ‘reduced to a struggle over who controls the Nigerian states’ share of oil rents’ (Obi, 2002:98). Thus culminating in violent politics which have beset the country since the inception of transition to democratic rule in 1998/1999. What remains a puzzle in the whole experience are the high level of armed conflicts and struggles which have existed in Niger Delta over the last ten years, especially during and after elections. Solving this puzzle involves further questioning the role of oil resources activities, if any, in the conflict.

The research therefore reflects on this conflict *vis-à-vis* the role of oil in the entire political landscape of Nigeria (as discussed in Chapter Five). However, in order to have a firm understanding of the links, it is good to situate the whole sequence within the context of the theory adopted for this research, thereby building a clear account of the various factors.

Again, In order to have a deeper understanding of the effect of oil resources on the nature of leadership and power struggles in oil village communities, the researcher also felt the need to look at the struggle for political power at the formal legal level – that is, in political elections within and around the oil village communities. Working from the explanations provided by some interviewees in response to the question- “*What do you think is the role of oil resources in the violent struggle for political positions in your communities/area*”, it was possible for the

researcher to understand the diverse contributions of oil resources to political violence in this region. An interviewee in her assessment of the impact of oil resources on politics and elections said that:

Nigerian politics is ‘winner takes all’ and so is that of the Niger Delta. Oil has changed the landscape of politics in the Niger Delta, the Niger Delta struggles. There is now too much aspiration for elected positions because of recent attention of federal government to the area, especially in giving funds to the state and local authorities in the area. Government and oil companies compensate these communities through their local authorities, and those who are elected as their representatives, who came in through politics benefits so much, and so politics has now become a do or die affair in Niger Delta. Politics is now a motivating factor behind violent conflict, as it is easier to get into seat of power, thereby gaining access to the unlimited fund provided by oil resource via allocations. These positions help them to enrich themselves, so to acquire wealth from oil resource is either you take to violent struggle and be recognised for settlement or you contest for political position and make sure you win by any violent means possible (OU, Female, Warri, S.Dir-ND. Interview; Dec.2007).

The explanation provided above depicts the influence of oil resources benefits on the struggle to win political positions. There are many recorded instances and cases of electoral violence in oil village communities since the return to democracy (DS, Male, Warri, PW, Interview; Dec.2007; HRW, 2005; HRW, 2008; HWR, 2008a). Again, other participants in the interviews and FGD provided similar explanations of the role of oil resources in politics. According to a participant in FGD, “oil money and politics goes together in this area and has led to the insecurity and sometimes, even the insecurity is deliberately generated for them to have a leverage to negotiate certain things with government...if they can generate enough restiveness, they can get political appointments, funds allocation and contracts” (OB, Male, Warri, FGD, Feb.2008). This particular argument was further elaborated by another participant in FGD, who said that:

“local politicians and political leaders instigate such violent conflicts in oil village communities to gain or remain relevant, in order to benefit from situations involving oil companies or the government” (KA, Male,



Warri, FGD, Feb.2008).

Citing a typical example of the influence of oil resources on local politics, an interviewee said that:

For instance councillorship is the fashionable thing in local authority areas, considering the funds available at their disposal. The councilors serve as negotiators during crisis between oil communities and oil companies, and such positions provide opportunities for them to gain from oil resources (F.U, Male, Warri, ERL; Nov.2007).

This statement above was further buttressed by a claim that “youth” associations and CDC members in oil communities form the foot soldiers of local Politicians, and they are used during elections to cause mayhem and electoral violence (Ms.AL, Female, Warri, WA, Interview, Feb.2008; HRW, 2003). They “transform from representing their communities to representing highest paid politicians”, and this has in many cases split such association into different rival groups in a particular community (DV, Male, AD (Adm) DES, Warri, Interview; Nov.2007). Again, the researcher observed that “youth” association or CDC is a training ground for future participation in state politics. Influences and goodwill acquired during headship of a strong vocal CDC or violent “youth” organization (especially an oil community with large presence of oil operations) are later used to get into the state either as an elected or appointed member of government, such as local councilors, Members of State Assembly, State Commissioner, Members of Various State board (Warri Mirror, Nov.30 2007;Field notes, Warri, Dec.2007). For Instance, due to his destructive activities and bitter complains by Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) and Chevron Nigeria Limited, Late Eric Igban,the then Youth Chairman of Ugborodo Community was appointed a Special Assistant to former Governor James Ibori on community affairs. Mr. Thomas Ereyitomi, the then Chairman of Ogidigben/Ugborodo Community Development Committee was appointed as a member of the Delta Waterways Security Committee set up by Delta State Government(Warri Mirror,Nov.30,2007)This same view was re-echoed by another participant while discussing about the power struggle and violent killing

in oil communities (D.TM, Male, Birmingham, Diaspora oil community Member, Interview; April, 2008).

Evidently, there is a link between oil resources, violence and political positions. The boundaries between them are further weakened by greed and economic opportunism, especially in considering the benefits provided by oil resources. A retired headmistress who is now a women leader in her community put it in this manner:

“Oil control influences political struggle because political positions help in influencing decisions in this area” (FUU, Female, OkComm, CL. Interview; Nov. 2007).

Describing the violent elections in Rivers State (an oil producing state with many oil village communities) in 2007, HRW (2008:11) reported that “Polls in Rivers State have been among the most violent and brazenly rigged in the country. In large measure this is because Rivers’ oil wealth has increased the financial spoils of political office”. However, this may be contested on other grounds, looking at socio-political issues other than oil benefits which could have warranted the fierce struggle for political positions. Taking a historical review of Nigeria’s political development, as done in Chapter Five, it has been demonstrated to a large extent that oil resources have a major role in Nigeria’s socio-political development. Since its discovery, it has become the focus of Nigerian socio-political and economic problems, with prolonged military rule, corruption at all levels of government and highly rewarded official positions. As the Nigerian state and political offices continue to be highly rewarded, owing to oil resources rents and benefits, politicians in and around the oil village communities (as in other parts of the country) continue to deploy all the weapons within their arsenal to win elections. In one set of elections, for example “for six weeks in July and August 2007, dozens of people were killed and more than 150 injured when armed gangs-competing for a greater share of illegal state government handouts-staged pitched battles in the streets of Port Harcourt, the Rivers State

capital. Using automatic weapons, explosives and machetes...” (HRW, 2008a). Armed violence during elections in oil village communities is typical of the violent struggle to control state-resources, which are enormous due to the allocations that accrue to these states from oil activities in their domain. This could be seen as a confirmation of a submission by Klare (2001:222) that ‘most resource wars of the future will occur in the developing world – notably, in countries where the national government is weak or corrupt and where local and external actors are competing for political power’.

With the evidences presented, it may be convincing to link oil abundance to specific political issues or development like political violence in oil Village communities. Relying on data gathered from this research’s field work, it is evident that oil resources re-positioned the socio-economic conditions of communities where they were discovered. The changes in the socio-economic conditions in the short or long run facilitate an outbreak of violent struggles to gain access to the new economy-oil resources. Therefore, it is not out of place to link the socio-economic conditions of an oil village community to the nature of its evolving politics, as the two are always re-positioned together. For example, available evidence links a major part of the proliferation of arms in oil village communities of Nigeria or the Niger Delta as a whole to political struggle, as politicians recruit and arm lots of unemployed youths in these communities, using them to cause violence in order to get themselves into political positions (POI, Male, Ns, DC, Interview; Feb, 2008). The changes in socio-economic conditions, such as in the amount of employment and the nature of livelihoods, means that the unemployed, who are mostly youths, become vulnerable to electoral violence and crisis, as their services are easily recruited for violence. The promises of jobs and other assistance from politicians energize them into committing more violence in rigging their supported politicians into office (DS, Male, Warri, PW, Interview; Dec.2007). To further buttresses the above opinions by participants in the research’s interviews and FGDs, the International Crisis Group said:

In 2004, several key Ijaw and Itsekiri militants were appointed to local and state government positions. In 2006, President Obasanjo's government reserved an oil block drilling license for a company linked to members of the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw communities (FNDIC), which actively coordinated and led Ijaw fighters during the deadly conflicts in 1997, 1999, 2003. Shell has also admitted giving service contracts to FNDIC members (ICG, 2006:2).

This shows that violent struggle and militancy are readily rewarded with either political appointments or outright benefits from oil resources, especially where it is perceived that such rewards will promote the continuation of *petrobusiness*. The evidence adduced in support of the argument advanced in this section of the chapter further shows the effects of oil resources on politics and power struggles, and it is of varying and interlinking sorts.

On the whole, it was evident that to analyse and understand the violent conflict situation in the oil village communities requires the application of structural violence approach, while drawing support from environmental conflict theory and greed vs. grievance in providing adequate explanation of the cause(s) of the conflict. For example, in analysing the effects of oil resources on local politics and power struggles, it is obvious from available data such as KA (Male, Warri, FGD) on local politicians fuelling conflicts and Warri Mirror (2007) on appointment for violent "youth" leaders. Therefore oil resources have empowered those who have had access to them, whether through legal or illegal means. Such financial and material empowerment, which had restructured social relations in communities (according to the structural conflict theory), means that those who have access to oil resource benefits are more financially capable of standing for office in elections. Again, the greed and opportunism are able to demonstrate that the economic and material benefits from oil remain the one major driving force behind violent conflicts as profited by political leaders (IGC, 2006). As the majority of people living in the communities continue to experience various forms of socio-economic restructuring due to the

presence and abundance of oil, they are further thrown into poverty and loss of livelihoods, which leave them scrambling for political and other leadership positions in order to gain access to the benefits of oil.

## **7.2 Oil Resources and the Emerging Socio-Political Culture**

Critically assessing the nature of the Nigerian state *vis-à-vis* its socio-political culture, it is evident from available data the research looked at in chapter 6, 7 and part of chapter 8, that the country's chronic underdevelopment is an issue arising from its socio-political culture because:

The country have made so much money from oil and so much is claimed or believed to have been released for development, but you turn around without seeing what the money is used for. The money has ended up in private pockets of those entrusted with its management or execution of the project for public goods. Public service today is about 'eating' the oil money (A.M-O, Male, C/L, Warri, Interview; Nov.2007).

What this shows is that the presence of oil resources has helped to institutionalise a socio-political culture of bad governance. Nigeria's more than 50 years of production and commercial exportation of oil, instead of promoting economic development and other forms of good governance, have created a culture of massive corruption, embezzlement of public funds (of which 80 percent come from oil resources) and all other forms of socio-political and economic behaviours that work against development. With oil resources forming such a large part of the state's earnings, "the state has increasingly become a magnet for all facets of political and economic life, consuming the attention of traders, contractors, builders, farmers, traditional rulers, teachers, as much as that of politicians or politically motivated individuals..."(Joseph,1987:1). The persistent struggle to profit from oil-resources-funded

political and public offices, or to have share of the “National cake”<sup>49</sup> as it is commonly known in Nigeria, remains the major contributory factor to the violent struggles over leadership positions both in the formal–legal authorities and in the traditional authorities (especially where funded by the state) in Nigeria. Furthermore, to have a share of the National cake implies “to exploit an office of the state” or any informal authority linked to the state or oil resources, to the benefit of the occupier (Joseph, 1987:1). This therefore has been the trend of political and traditional governance in Nigeria, especially since after the unprecedented increase in the government’s earning from oil rents in the 1970s. Interestingly, oil village communities’ legal formal and traditional authorities are not exempted from this socio-political cultures and behaviours of endemic corruption, embezzlement, mismanagement of public funds, clientelism and patrimonial approaches to governance and public offices.

### **7.2.1 Prebendalism, Neo-Patrimonial Culture and the Distribution of Oil Benefits and Opportunities**

According to Joseph (1987:1), clientelism and prebendalism are the ‘two fundamental elements of the socio-political system which affect and often determine the allocation of public goods in Nigeria’. A Peace worker in his interview captured the scenario in this form:

The community development associations embark on development projects that are not people-oriented but just one which will enrich them and their associates. There have been instances where oil communities fought over the type of development projects to be sited because their executives have styled the projects to enrich themselves without considering what the entire community wants (DS, Male, Warri, PW: Interview; Dec.2007).

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<sup>49</sup> National Cake refers to public office or any form of participation in governance which is bank rolled by the Nigerian state. In this case, the elected or selected officers managing the affairs of the people see their office or appointment as an avenue for personal enrichment (Field note, Warri, Feb.2008).

This assumption is further supported by a community liaison officer with oil MNCs, who recalled how their meeting with a community development committee (CDC) degenerated into a free for all fight because the community “youths” invaded the meeting to beat up their leaders who incidentally were negotiating to have the construction of local drainage giving to them than to reputable construction company (BE, Male, PH, CRO(SP), Interview; Feb.2008). As noted in many cases, after an MOUs is drawn up between the oil communities and oil companies, “apart from the fact that most of these awards were annexed by a few individuals, contracts awarded were either not executed at all, or they were shoddily executed ’ by such communities’ CDCs”(Faleti,2000:12).

Evidently, many of the projects and programmes executed in some of “these communities do not guarantee sustainable development but to enrich families and cronies of the people either appointed or elected to administer the public goods” on behalf of such oil communities (DS, Male, Warri, PW, Interview; Dec.2007).Drawing insights from the above submission, it can be argued that the existence of these cultures in oil village communities and Nigeria in general is guaranteed by oil rents. Soliciting further support from literature, Ross (2001:356) argues that “oil does greater damage to democracy in poor states ..., and a given rise in oil exports will do more harm in oil poor states...” This further implies that a rise in oil exports means a rise in oil activities in the oil village communities, which will ultimately result in a rise in the generation of rents and thereby lead to a rise in violent struggles to control and personalise oil rents paid to, or to attempts by community leaders to distribute oil benefits or opportunities to the advantage of their families and friends. This can also explain why there are fierce struggles for power and leadership positions, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The alleged killing of Mr S.A.K. Metseagharun for the fear that his headship of Ugborodo trust fund will mean that the

CDC will become accountable to the people, show how deep the struggle to control such oil fund has become (see section 7.1.1).

For instance, it was evident that oil resources promoted this kind of socio-political culture and violent conflicts through unequal distribution of oil benefits and opportunities among oil village communities. AS (a “youth” executive) and TK in second FGD acknowledged that if a community discovers that the number of barrels of oil which are extracted from its land is higher than those extracted from their neighbours, but their neighbours are more highly favoured in terms of oil benefits and opportunities, they resort to violent attacks on the neighbouring community, especially if the person in charge of such distribution hails from the favoured community(AS, Male, OkComm,YE, Interview; Nov.2007; TK, Warri,FGD, Nov.2007). This statement was also acknowledged by HRW (2003) report on Warri Crisis. In many instance, Communities have gone to war against each other over amount of oil production, rewards and appointment (Vanguard, January 12, 2008).

Incidentally, in some instances where the two rival communities are from two different ethnic groupings, this has been described as ethnic-related conflict or being fuelled by ethnicity; available evidence seem to disprove that as many of the cases are from the same ethnic group. Ikelegbe (2005:209) sees it first as the reason behind “the acute struggle for the control of resources, which increases vulnerability to conflict, violence and war”. Ikelegbe further submits that, “the struggle by rulers, counter elites and merchants for access to such resources for accumulation and political consideration through patrimonialism, has meant increasing appropriation and privatization through exclusive contracts with foreign firms, corruption, external and indigenous commercial network, emergent challenges from the excluded and ensuing conflicts and violence”(2005:209). This system of selective financial and material



empowerment further polarizes and restructures existing social relations, leading to more inequalities and structural conflicts.

A further analysis of above evidences show that, with the subjection of oil benefits and opportunities to the rules and dictates of prebendalism and neo-patrimonial distribution, the likelihood of oil benefits and opportunities reaching all concerned becomes difficult or unattainable. In the course of the inequality that this generates, the left-out groups are compelled to resort to greed, criminal opportunities and violence to gain from oil resources. Secondly, oil resources benefits and opportunities distributed through a prebendal and neo-patrimonial culture restructure existing social relations by empowering some members of the community who have access to them more than others. In the long run, it leads to revolts and violence in the community.

In examining some of the causes of violent conflicts and struggles in oil village communities, I found evidence of the existence of prebendalism and patrimonial culture in the distribution of oil rents, benefits and opportunities. Evidence from interviews, FGDs, observation and documentary review indicated a high rate of ‘personalisation’ of common wealth or oil rents, benefits and opportunities to serve the interest of self, family, friends or one’s own community, to the detriment of others who might have a claim to the common wealth. There is also a general consensus among respondents interviewed and the supporting documentary evidence that the deployment of violent conflict was all part of the quest to control and maximise oil rents, benefits and opportunities.

### **7.2.1 The Culture of Violence and “Settlement”**

Violence and settlement are today a major part of the oil business in Nigeria. In short, they have become a culture as well as a means of gaining access to oil benefits and opportunities.

Using fieldwork interviews and FGDs, violence and settlement cultures can be approached either from the angle of individual efforts, in which case ringleaders are selected by *petrobusiness* and settled; or from the angle of oil village communities, in which case demands made by a community are seen as the grievance of the entire community which needs to be satisfied. In either of these cases, the use of “violence is seen as the surest means of getting the attention of the oil companies”, and once an individual is identified as the master-mind of violence against an oil company, he or she is up for settlement (POI, Male, Ns, DC, Interview; Feb, 2008). In the same vein, any community that is perceived as becoming violent or known to be violent will always have their complaints quickly dealt with (DS, Male, Warri, PW, Interview; Dec.2007). In line with this assumption, oil village communities that use peaceful approaches to seek redress or in making demands are easily neglected until they resort to violent struggle (B.S.I, Male, OdComm, (CDC) Spk, Interview; Dec.2007).

The culture of violence has become part and parcel of these oil host communities, especially since the late 1990s (Francis, *et al*, 2011). As explained by a “youth” leader that:

“we now know that each time we close or shut down a flow station,  
or a gas plant, and they lose money, they hurriedly attend to us”  
(EOO, Male, UgComm, YL, Interview; Jan. 2008).

This view seems to be in agreement with Omeje’s position on the centrality of this culture of violence and settlement. According to him, “the societal processes of oilification are part and desperate responses of local people to the institutionality and dynamics of petro-politics and petro-accumulation” and the only assured means of ensuring access to the benefits of oil resources is violent conflict (2005:32).

A community leader interviewed during my fieldwork gave more insight of into this culture of violence and linked it to the policies of oil companies. He said that:

“oil companies play some kind of games by developing a community, if that community is using violence, if they could fight and threaten them, and make trouble, they will attend to them, but the ones that are peace-loving are usually abandoned, until they use violence or make trouble” (CBH, Male, OlComm, CL, Interview; Jan.2008).

Confirming the above position, a participant in FGD boldly captured the establishment of violence as a mechanism for getting oil benefits and opportunities in the following words:

Some ethnic groups and communities tend to be violent, and in doing so, we have come to see that violent actually pays, because if a community or ethnic group does not get what it wants it resort to violence to get it. I don't stand corrected, I know what I am talking about here, The Ijaws [The biggest ethnic group among the oil Village communities], are more violent in Delta state, and when they go rampaging and violent over what they are entitled to, they get it. But some other communities who are very calm, who are taking dialogue in the face of aggressive provocation, do not get what they expect (E.O, Female, Warri, FGD; Nov. 2007).

Again, in a situation that is described as unfortunate, the rise in “youth” leadership as discussed earlier in this chapter has aided this culture of violence, “as youths are the main perpetrators of these violent and armed struggles against oil activities and companies, may be due to unemployment” (OU, Female, Warri, S.Dir(ND). Interview; Dec.2007).

Similarly, to summarize the push and pull nature of violence and settlement in the oil village communities drawing from literature, Ibeanu (2002:165) wrote that:

Thus, even as greater amounts of money are sunk in the Niger Delta as a means of pacifying the region, even greater conflicts have resulted. The best that has been achieved is a matrix of concentric circles of payoffs and rewards built on blackmail and violence. The closer a person is to the center, the greater his/her capacity to blackmail oil companies and therefore the greater his/her payoff. In time, members of the raucous inner circle fade away in a whimper and silence as a new core of vocal “community leaders” emerges: more blackmail, more payoffs. Consequently, conflicts and violence are never eliminated, they are only recycled through new purveyors. Yet

in all this, the true representatives of the people are systematically sidelined and silenced, most times violently.

This submission by Ibeanu also quietly explains the reasons for the struggle for leadership and power in these communities, as settlement and oil benefits become the driving force, and once a lone voice or a gang is settled, another person or group emerges and wants to be settled. It is significant to note that today in Nigeria, the oil village communities are perceived as a very violent area, not just by the Nigerian state and *petrobusiness*, but among the states that make up Nigeria. Militancy, “youth” restiveness and all forms of agitations have become part of the life of the people.

In addition to the above is the existence of oil-linked affluence for a few which, from my observation, comes from association with *petrobusiness* and from striving by all means possible by those unable to gain such access to oil resources, who subsequently take to other forms of oil-linked illegalities such as oil bunkering and kidnapping, in order to gain from the oil resources (Field note, Warri, Nov.2007).

### **7.3 Conclusion**

This chapter analysed and explained the influence of oil resources in the struggle for leadership and power in oil village communities. In addressing the question: *To what extent have oil resources influenced the nature of politics, leadership and power struggles in oil village communities*, the chapter dealt with the question in two sections: first by examining *the changing nature of political and leadership struggles in village communities*; and secondly by examining *oil resources and the emerging socio-political cultures*.

The findings indicated that the changing nature of political and leadership struggles in the oil rich communities are greatly influenced by the rents, benefits and opportunities which flow from oil resources. Politics are now characterised by struggles for community leadership and local governance, “youth” dominance in community leadership and governance, and violent struggles in elections and the distribution of political positions. Compared to the power struggles at state level, the struggle at community level is to participate in local governance, but is similarly ‘oilified’ by benefits and opportunities. Violent conflicts are ignited as people fights to participate in local governance or to serve as a local representative of their community.

Furthermore, the chapter explained that as more people are alienated from “oil benefits”, the need to resort to violent conflicts increases, especially where there are clear indications that people based on their closeness to *petrobusiness* are seen as benefiting from oil resources by using their position. This chapter also argues that these positions of power and leadership influenced by oil resources promote some particular forms of social relations and political cultures which enable managers of collective goods (like oil rents and oil-linked opportunities) derived from oil resources to appropriate the benefits to their individual advantage (see the arguments in Chapter Five). Therefore judging from the available evidence, the outcome of these situations is the fierce quest for leadership positions and power in oil communities, all with the intention of managing and benefiting from either the oil rent or other opportunities provided by oil resources.

The evidence showed that emerging socio-political cultures also serve as factors which fuel and promote the various violent struggles and conflicts over leadership and local governance positions. Thus, an aftermath of a restructured socio-economic conditions and social relations are

the emergence of culture of violence. Therefore, from the evidence that this research collected, I conclude that, *'the nature of politics, leadership and power struggles in oil village communities has been seriously influenced by oil-resources-related-activities'*. Next Chapter will look at the roles of Nigerian state and oil MNCs in fuelling oil resources conflicts in oil village communities.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **THE NIGERIAN STATE, OIL COMPANIES AND THE MANAGEMENT OF PROBLEMS FROM OIL RESOURCES**

#### **8 Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with the management of oil related problems, socio-economic opportunities and interests of oil village communities by the Nigerian state and oil MNCs. The chapter aims at examining whether the nature and patterns of such management exacerbated violent conflicts in the oil village communities. This addresses the final sub research question: *“Has the style of management of oil resources problems, socio-economic opportunities and interests of oil communities by the Nigerian state and oil MNCs contributed to violent conflicts in the oil village communities, and if so, in what ways?”* The examination and analysis of various policies and programmes of the Nigerian state and oil MNCs will help me in addressing this sub research question, and will be carried out using data gathered from primary sources (Interviews, FGDs and observation), and secondary sources comprising of newspapers, magazines, press releases, annual reports, books etc.

#### **8.1 Overviews of Various Major Management Failures**

There are so many dimensions to understanding and examining violent conflicts in oil village communities. However, negative changes in socio-economic conditions which imply loss of source of livelihoods, environmental scarcity, poverty and inequalities in the distribution of oil resources benefits and opportunities have remained major factors which exacerbate violent situations relying on available data gathered from the field.

However, this section tries to explain that the emergence of these oil related conflicts are also due to the failure of the state and oil MNCs to manage the changes brought by oil presence mentioned above. For instance, “the social effects of environmental scarcity are often insidious... and can in turn lead to clashes between ethnic groups and to social rebellion” (Homer-Dixon, 1998:87). My observation during my fieldwork and as supported by data in chapters six and seven, show that the new socio-economic conditions from oil resources often fuel violent struggle among groups who subsequently fight over the new economy (Field note, Warri, Dec.2007). This according to HRW (2002:9) is also because:

“The presence of the oil companies in the Niger Delta exacerbates communal tensions of the type seen across Nigeria. The weakness of conflict resolution structures—whether the courts, responsible elected and appointed state officials, or the law enforcement agencies—means that many disputes in Nigeria are settled violently that could have been resolved through peaceful means”.

Unfortunately, as indicated by HRW, the Nigerian State and oil MNCs seem unprepared for outcomes arising out of oil resources activities. A participant in the interview said that:

“...every community [oil village communities] sees the oil produced in their community as their own too! With their land involved, they will do anything to gain from it” (VM, Male, OdComm, YL,interview,Dec 2007).

Another participant in the second FGD angrily demanded that:

“If our land is taken over for oil, and we also suffer the effects of oil Operations, should we then be chasing them [oil companies] for our benefits?” (TK, male, Warri, FGD; Feb.2008).

Drawing support from literature, Ikelegbe (2005:216) opined “there is so much to fight for in the oil economy. There are enormous legal and illegal resource opportunities, particularly in terms of benefits from the oil companies.” Especially, where there are rooms to gain from such benefits, every strategy is deployed to enable it work. Thus, “in the face of protracted grievances of neglect and injustice, compounded by the inability of the rentier state to make



significant sacrifice to uplift the Niger Delta region, the oil village communities are compelled to resort increasingly to the use of violence”, against one another in a bid to gain access to oil benefits and opportunities(Omeje, 2005:332). It is worthy of note that it is the violence meted on these communities by *Petrobusiness* that catalyses these armed and violent conflicts between and among oil village communities. Drawing further assumptions from interviews with bureaucrats working with development intervention agencies and staff of oil MNCs, it was evident that some actions, programmes and policies of the Nigerian state and oil MNCs which were geared towards ensuring oil exploration and production are triggers of violent conflicts among oil village communities.

### **8.1.1 Communal land struggle and the conflict handling mechanism of oil MNCs**

In Delta state, little is known or documented about violent land conflicts among communities before the discovery of oil in commercial quantity, although it is documented that there were existences of land ownership disputes before 1956 in these oil communities (Imobighe *et al*, 2002).Unarguably, there have been changes in the nature of the conflicts and increase in the level of armed violence engulfing claims for land ownership, going by the various land related conflicts in oil village communities(Field note, Warri, Feb.2008;DS, Male,PW,Interview;Dec.2007).This happens especially “where such communal land is discovered to contain oil or is earmarked for oil exploration activities” (POI, male, Ns, DC, Interview; Feb, 2008). Citing Warri as an example (Warri is seen as the centre of *petrobusiness* in Delta state), Imobighe *et al* (2002:3) stated that “the violent trend... which is a new and recent phenomenon in the history of the Warri crisis, goes back to the early 1990s while the more recent unabating bloody conflict dates back to March 1997”as communities struggles over land ownership. For instance, the violent conflict in 2001 over ownership of the

land where Forcados terminal is located between Odimodi and Ogulagha communities, led to the setting up of a panel of Ijaw elders led by Chief Edwin Clark by Delta State Government to resolve the conflict. Among the findings of the panel was that “SPDC and its servicing companies, especially some of the staff have helped to fan the embers of suspicion, distrust and hatred among the two sister communities” (Vanguard, January 12, 2008). Referring to the conflict between Odcomm and Ogcomm oil communities, a participant from one of the communities said that NA’s (Oil Company) refusal to credit his community with the ownership of land where the NA’s facilities are, is due to instigation from their neighbouring community (B.S.I, Male, OdComm, CDC-Spk, Interview; Dec. 2007).

Further examination of land related oil village communities conflicts show that the oil MNCs could deliberately adopt an avoidance conflict handling style<sup>50</sup>, thereby allowing the communities to contest for the ownership of such land and fishing water amongst them in whichever way or form, while they wait for the eventual winner. During an interview, a senior oil MNCs official stated that:

“We [referring to Oil MNCs] don’t get involve; the claimants take themselves to court of law. We don’t go into such piece of land that are been contested, we wait for the issue to be resolved. We have new technology which allows directional drilling, we can drill without going into that piece of land, but if for any safety reason, if we need to go into such contested land, often what we do is to bring all the contestant together and tell them their entitlement for the piece of land, but it will be deposited at the court where the contestants have gone to prove ownership, and whoever wins will be handed the money” (UN, Male, SP-P/H, H-S&P, Interview; Dec. 2007)

Consequently, such communities have witnessed and are still experiencing era of communal violence due to contestation of ownership of oil prospective land and waters (Vanguard,

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<sup>50</sup> Luc Reychler (2001) describes the avoidance style of handling conflict as unassertive and uncooperative. The party simply withdraws and refuses to deal with the conflict. This style is also called Flight.

January 12, 2008). In adopting avoidance conflict style, MNCs forestalls unity among oil village communities, thereby limiting the ability of the communities to engage in a collective demand. In some cases, they seem to deliberately fuel the contestation (EOO, Male, UgComm, YL, Interview; Jan. 2008). Okonta and Douglas (2003:60) typified efforts at stopping collective demands of oil communities by Shell, in which 'Shell Police' are given 'service money' for intelligence gathering, bribing and befriending villagers from oil spill communities. "These villagers would then instigate conflicts in the village over competing claims for money, a situation Shell would subsequently exploit, claiming that it would not pay any compensation since the community was divided on the issue of who would get what". Another example of failure of oil companies in handling land disputes among communities is the case of Aja-Omaetan Community of Warri-North Local government. In 2006, the community have to petition the then State Governor, James Ibori over "the ownership of Chevrons DIBI oil field with the Ogbonbiri Ijaw Community", claiming that Chevron after 25 years of acquiring the area from them (Itskiri villages) for operations suddenly co-opted some Ijaws villages as part of the DIBI field operation area even "when they have no geographical link with the field" (Vanguard, July 10, 2006). This action from Chevron goes further to re-confirm the claim and analysis in Chapter 7.2.3, about the culture of violence and why some communities deploy violence to gain recognition and benefits. In this case as shown by a way of further explanation, Chevron deciding to include the Ijaw villages in the DIBI field operation area than finding other means of resolving the crisis. And this could be to avoid the Ijaw communities attacking its oil facilities and possibly the oil workers (Field note, Warri, Feb.2008). However, Chevron's action failed to take cognisance of the predispositions of the action fuelling further and future violent communal clashes among the communities, as some communities will see their non-violent approach as counter-productive in the struggle for oil benefits and opportunities, and will subsequently try the use of violence.

It is evident from above data that each community tries as much as possible to demonstrate that they are bona-fide owners and original landlords; and could go any length to prove it by engaging in fierce struggle for ownership and claims of such contested land. In situations like this, as clearly shown by evidence from the field, management of interests of the contending communities becomes very important especially before such claims and counter-claims of land ownership become violent.

### **8.1.2 ‘Divide and Rule’ Policies**

The term “Divide and Rule” as commonly used by local oil communities during my fieldwork and in some literature, is a strong perception of policies of oil MNCs as being discordant, and breeds economic exclusion between or among oil community. This perception may not really be an established fact going by the original idea of the term ‘divide and rule’, but owing that the policies failed to achieve its objective, and rather helped in fuelling violent conflicts among village communities, it was branded a planned policy for causing division among oil village communities in order to maintain oil production.

As noted in chapters 6, 7 and above, oil village communities resort to the use of violence over policies that tend to deny them access to oil resource opportunities and benefits, or policies that give more benefits to their neighbouring oil communities. Among such policies which oil communities regarded as ‘divide and rule’ policies is the designation of some communities as ‘host community’. This policy confirms some rights and privileges on some communities within oil MNCs operational area, while having others left out. This is among one of the many policies of oil MNCs that fuelled rivalry and violent conflicts among oil communities in Nigeria. Using instances cited by participants during interviews, it was evident that these policies were discriminatory, thereby fuelling ferocious and vicious struggles for recognition

among communities. Interestingly, the aim of such violent conflicts or struggles is to gain access to oil resources opportunities. The research probed participants from oil MNCs to find out their criteria for the designation of communities as host community. I asked; *“what are your parameters for designating a particular community as ‘oil producing or host community’ and the next community who shares a common boundary where the oil production takes place as ‘non-host community or oil producing’?”* Explaining the situation, a senior oil MNCs official acknowledged thus:

“Our criteria used to be communities which our pipelines traverse, oil wells, flow stations, terminals and other related oil facilities are located. But we have since moved away[to cluster communities] from that type of definition which tended to set one community against the other” (JJ, Male, MR-PGPA, CHR; Interview; Feb. 2008)

However, a participant in the first FGD acknowledge the removal of the tag ‘host community’ on oil communities with large oil operations but not the feeling of marginalization from communities with only pipelines and well heads, as they still feel that much benefits are accorded to host communities. The participant said that:

“We feel left-out and marginalized by actions of oil companies, because the pipelines are still part of their operations. We know that the communities with big operations wants to have every benefits to themselves, forgetting us” (OR, Male, FGD;Nov.2007)

Another participant acknowledged the divisive effects of the policy such that:

“those [communities] left out of it do not feel happy, it has led to suspicion and tension among communities” (C.O.T.,Male OkComm, interview; Nov. 2007).

In many instances, especially where such “communities share a communal land or where there were claims and counter-claims over ownership, the resultant host community-rights on the eventual winner of the land dispute always fuel inter-communal conflicts”(DS, Male, Warri, PW, Interview; Dec.2007).

Further analysis of host community labeling bases on how it affects social relations among communities, indicates that these policy were mainly concern about continual flow of oil and less concern about the social cohesion of the dwellers. For example, International Crisis Group (ICG: 2006b) wrote that;

“The “host community” system is a clear example of policies that have inadvertently exacerbated division....in the absence of a stable, reliable, regulatory framework, even rumours about oil exploration prospects have on occasions been enough to spark deadly conflict”.

This policy to a large extent polarised the relative peace that existed in these communities because the oil MNCs considered only the direct impact of their operations. Impact such as environmental degradation, oil spills or cases of land acquisition in which they (oil MNCs) are obligated by law to pay compensation to the affected communities or parties are prioritized as serious. Again, the policy of designating communities as ‘host communities’ adopted by the oil MNCs neglected the negative social impact of oil business industry (such impact as rise in cost of housing, increase in the cost of living, increase in the struggle to control the local economy, increase in population, promotion of prostitution and violent robbery) on the entire area which includes the “non-host communities”.

According to some participants, the “host-community” policy is part and parcel of the ‘divide and rule policy’ deployed by the oil MNCs to keep the oil village communities from having a common front against the ills of *petrobusiness*. Another participant in the first FGDs cited a case of two communities who share common boundary in W-S-W Local Government. SP which is the operating oil MNCs designated one of them a “host community” over a piece land which surprisingly is in-between these communities, thereby favouring one above the other. Subsequently, this discriminatory policy led to a violent inter-communal conflict between the

two communities (E.O, Female, Warri, FGD; Nov. 2007). Furthermore, another participant complained that:

“SP deliberately omits the names of some communities in the production map (A map that shows all oil wells and oil communities) in order to shy away from Corporate Social Responsibilities”(OT, Male, GbComm,YL, interview; Nov.2007).

In this situations, tension, envy and suspicion are built up among communities, especially where one community is favoured by an oil MNCs and the neighbour gets nothing, this could ensue inter-communal communities (H.O, Male, UgComm, YA/ Sec, interview; Jan.2008). Again, oil MNCs hardly regards as their social responsibility the spill-over effects of environmental damage on neighbouring non-host communities (F.U, Male, Warri, ERL, interview; Nov.2007). There are known cases such as the Odimodi and Ogulagha communities where such situations have in turn sparked off communal violent conflicts between these two sets of communities. Especially where the non-designated communities have been badly affected by these impacts and had received no form of compensation for it, while their neighbours are enjoying the benefits of oil resources because they host the operational base or have oil wells within their domain(Vanguard, January 12,2008).

Furthermore, the policy of designating some communities as “host communities” meant that such communities are well privileged in terms of receipt of oil benefits and opportunities such as compensation, financial and non-financial incentives like employment opportunities from oil MNCs, which have contributed to various intra-communal violent conflicts. This led to ChevronTexaco issuing a statement that its aid policies, especially the “host communities” development assistance had helped in fuelling violence, as it is “inadequate, expensive and divisive”. It further acknowledged that “The system of designating some communities as host communities left those not designated feeling alienated and underprivileged, inadvertently

leading to or adding to the causes of conflicts among communities”(IRIN,July21,2006). Although, ChevronTexaco announced that it was going to revamp the aid policy by using a development assistance that targets “cluster of communities in its operational area with distinctions”, what it never considered is that the new policy would further increase the struggle for leadership in these cluster communities. It will further develop the communities into *rentier communities* and increase the culture of *rentier psychology*, and selective empowerment fuelled by its old aid policy.

Therefore as discussed in chapter 7, the contributions of these policies such as host community policy to violent struggle for leadership and local governance positions are very enormous. As people fight over positions of authority to be able to gain access to oil benefits coming to host communities or to the cluster communities. HRW in February 2005, on the violent conflict in River State detailed that:

“Customary and statutory payments are also made to “host communities,” or those who own the land and fishing grounds where drilling or other activities take place. Designation as a host community thus brings significant benefits in the form of compensation, community development funds and promises of labour and security contracts. The oil companies negotiate such agreements and contracts with individuals whom they identify as community representatives, notably the top traditional leaders or chiefs. These policies have fueled inter-communal conflict by funneling large quantities of money to the tribal leaders, many of whom fail to share the benefits with their community. As traditional leadership positions became more lucrative and the tribal elders more powerful, the competition to occupy them intensified. Beginning in the mid 1990’s, prominent local leaders competing to assume top chieftaincy positions in an area recruited youth leaders and provided them with money and weapons to assist in their often violent struggles to control villages. Such violent clashes occurred in several villages...”(HRW, 2005).

What was evident from this observation by HRW was that communities designated as “host communities” are thrown into series of violent struggles and conflicts over means of gaining



access to such oil benefits and opportunities. With occupying local leadership and authority providing access to oil benefits, the struggle for such positions further heighten the violence in the oil communities due to policies which tended to economically empower a selected few. As also observed in chapter 6, such policies by oil MNCs restructures existing socio-economic conditions in oil communities or within the region, and has further been noted as promoting inequalities leading to violence. Applying the case within the context of our theoretical framework, it would be situated within structural conflicts theory, as dwellers of particular designated community or in the case of two neighbouring communities are suddenly drawn into violent conflicts because the oil policies tend to discriminate some of them, bringing inequalities and empowering only a selected few.

However, during my fieldwork, neither the oil industry regulator (DPR), nor any of the oil MNCS could provide me with a copy of the list of communities designated as 'Host communities'. The secrecy made it difficult for the researcher to identify such communities contained in DPR list, leaving me to rely on physical presence of oil activities and claims from communities. This same incident was encountered in one of the development agencies, where I could not get list of the benefitting communities or criteria for labeling such communities oil producing communities. However, the researcher was told that the commission cannot ascertain that, and considering that the impact of oil resources is on direct and surrounding communities. Therefore they have decided to treat all communities as oil bearing/producing. However, this response seem questionable to the researcher as he had previously witnessed two incidents of protestations and violent revolts at the headquarters of the commission by communities who claimed they were left out in their development programmes and projects (Field note, Warri, Nov.2007).

## **8.2 Appointments and Economic Opportunities:**

This submission below opens up the issue of primitive accumulation which in this situation is supported by oil resources. Karl (1997:138) writes that:

“One of the great ironies of petro-state is that administrative reform, so often put forward to correct inefficiency, instead can become a mechanism for the further deterioration of state capacity. The reason is evident: because the petro-state is the center of accumulation, reform has the potential for setting up different filtering processes for organised interests”

In this case, the Nigerian state is firstly, very committed to promoting the continual exploration and production of oil. To achieve this, it establishes mechanisms which help in sustaining this very objective of increased and continual oil production. These mechanisms which come in the forms of intervention agencies were to specifically help in bringing infrastructural and socio-economic development within the oil producing area and as well as reducing the impact of oil resources on the communities.

### **8.2.1 Appointments of members of NDDC**

This sub-section takes a look at the appointment of members of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) as a support to the submission by the preceding section. Following the return to civil rule in 1999 and the consequent outbreak of violence in most oil village communities, the Nigerian state established a new interventionist development agency to cater for the lopsided development and the impact of oil resources activities experience by the nine oil producing states, otherwise classified as the Niger Delta region. Citing Chief Ufot Ekaette<sup>51</sup>, “The various Nigerian governments have never shield away from its responsibility to cater for the oil bearing communities, going by array of interventionist agencies it has so far put in place

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<sup>51</sup> Chief Ufot Ekaete was Nigeria’s first Minister of Ministry of Niger Delta. He had between April 1999 to April 2007, served as the Secretary to the Federation under the government of Chief Obasanjo. He was also a Permanent Secretary at the Federal civil service from 1975 to 1979, was among the Permanent secretaries dubbed the “Super Perm Sec”.

to protect and promote the interest and well-being of the people of the Niger Delta” (Thisday, April 24, 2009). Even though this is true, judging from the history of previous agencies set-up by former administration at various point, what Ekaette never mentioned was that the agencies did not serve the interests of the majority of the dwellers in these oil communities, but the interest of a selected few. While explaining to the researcher that oil communities are not consulted over the choice of representatives, a participant held that:

“We have no hand [no influence] over their appointment... We know why they are fighting for jobs, is surely not for the development of this place but for their pockets” (Ms.AL, Female, Warri, W/A, Interview, Feb.2008).

Another participant submitted that the fight over positions in NDDC are because of the amount of money which the people appointed can get from the commission, such is the money that “he or she can never be poor again” (DO, Male, Warri, FGD, Feb.2008). Consistent with this participant’s view, is this report that “personal wealth and political mileage are among the principle attractions of the position. Anyone appointed can become as wealthy as he [or she] can stretch his [or her] ambition and greed” (Vanguard, June 3, 2009). Describing the agency, a participant in second FGD said that:

“NDDC is not for the local oil communities, but for contractors, politicians, traditional rulers and influential people in Niger Delta. They the one asking youths of communities to either protest or fight their neighbours, with the claim that the quantity of oil and gas from their land is the highest, which makes the community responsible for producing the chairman or member of the NDDC board”(BE, Male, Warri FGD; Feb. 2008).

Evidently, concerns over the selection of representatives or contestation into the board of the agency could be because of the financial gains. As explained in chapter seven, getting into a leadership or representative position provides a good opportunity to gain access to oil resource benefits. The issue of who represents the area in the board has thrown most communities into violent conflicts, as communities struggle over who is to produce the representatives. In most

situation of a contest, as expressed by a participant and as observed by the researcher, the onus of making such appointment do not lie with the oil village communities, but with the federal government who in most instances use such opportunity to compensate their party members who are either loyal party men or women or who may have lost an elective election (Ms.AL, Female, Warri, W/A, Interview, Feb.2008; Field note, Warri, Nov.2007). This is done in regardless of the fact that the government appointed representatives is not the choice of the oil village communities, or in some serious cases, may not have lived in the communities or even hail from any of the oil village communities. A participant claimed that:

“The agency today has no man from oil village communities on its board. They may come from the state, but not from oil village communities, these appointees of government take the opportunity to divert the mega projects meant for these communities to their communities, thereby instigating the oil communities to resort to violence to get a redress” (M.T.G, Male, DD (YD), ND- PH, Interview, Feb.2008).

This sentiment expressed by the above participant seems to reckon with the appointment of Chief Onyema Ugochukwu as the first chairman of NDDC in 2001. It generated a lot of controversy as he was only from an oil producing state (Abia State) but not from any of the oil village communities in the state. His nomination was rejected by the Nigerian Senate on two occasions but President Obasanjo insisted on either having him as the chairman or stalling the establishment of the commission. This made the Nigerian senate to reluctantly confirm his nomination. Again, another of such appointments, was the nomination of Mr. Godwin Omene, the then immediate past deputy managing director of Shell Development Company as NDDC managing director, and just as in the case of Onyema Ugochukwu, his nomination was later confirmed (Vanguard, September 8, 2001). The nature of selections and appointments depict how such appointments are given more political consideration than consideration that would bring sustainable peace and local representation in affected oil communities. Following the problems posed to the appointment and selection processes by the campaigners of local

representation, and government repealed the existing ACT to eliminate the insistence of having all appointees coming only from oil village communities. President Obasanjo submitted a bill for the amended of the ACT establishing NDDC. Section 12(1) of the NDDC Act 2004 provides that: "There shall be for the commission, a Managing Director and two Executive Directors who shall be indigenes of oil producing areas starting with the member states of the commission with the highest production quantum of oil and shall rotate amongst member states in the order of production." This automatically meant that an appointee must not come specifically from an oil village community to be appointed into the board, but from any area of oil producing states (NDDC ACT 2004; p.1). Evidently, the appointments was not to serve the purpose setting up the commission but covertly promoting “selective empowerment” as discussed in chapter six and neo-patrimonial culture in 7.2.2.

### **8.2.2 DESOPADEC and the oil communities of Delta State**

The formation of DESOPADEC (Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission) came at the heels of the incessant violence that besieged Delta State in 2003. The commission was reconstituted on October 21, 2007 under Chief Willington Okirika, with the mandate of managing and using 50% of the 13% derivation funds accruing to Delta state from the federation account in developing the oil producing areas of Delta state (Vanguard, December 16, 2007a). Since its 2007 inception, it has been marred by accusations of underperformance, corruption, mismanagement of funds and fuelling rivalry among communities through inequitable establishment of development projects.

For instance, an organization of oil village communities in Delta under the auspices of the Host Communities of Oil and Gas Production of Nigeria, HOSTCOM, took the agency to court in the early part of 2012. DESOPADEC is alleged to have “diverted funds meant for Itsekiri devastated communities to building and renovating Nigeria Police Barracks in Warri and

provision of infrastructure in Warri Club, a private recreation club”(Vanguard, January 27,2012). Participants seem to share the same sentiment about the first DESOPADEC Board which tenure ended in July 2010, as it is seen as a massively corrupt in 2007. A participant in first FGD lamented that:

“Within a few months of the setting up of the commission,  
The contracts they awarded ran into Millions of Naria, and  
they [contracts] were for exotic cars, not utility cars; is this  
the intervention!” (E.O, Female, Warri, FGD; Nov. 2007).

Similarly, an outcome of such contracts led to Uzere oil village community dethroning their king of 27 years in July 2012 for his involvement in a DESOPADEC contract scam. According to the Uzere president- general, their king (HRM Isaac Udoger 1), “failed to provide water for his people to drink even when he allegedly had a contract of N25million given to him by DESOPADEC” (The Leadership, July 30, 2012). This seems to explain why this participant holds this view that:

“DESOPADEC is a cesspool of massive corruption, administrative  
Ineptitude, extravagant financial recklessness and patrimony”  
(A.M-O, Male, CL, Warri, Interview; Dec2007).

Similarly, Aja-Omaetan Community in Warri North council area of the state in 2007 petitioned the state governor, Dr.Emmanuel Uduaghan over their then appointed representative Mr.Johnson Toritsemotse and the former chairman of DESOPADEC. They claimed that the two (Toritsemotse and the chairman) are not conversant with ‘the politics and relationship between Itsekiri oil producing communities and therefore are trying to instigate one community against the other’. This is because they were denied their legitimate rights in the distribution of projects and season’s largesse on the excuse that their community is not recognised in the Dibi field. Their community (Aja-Omaetan) is erroneously seen as not being independent from Tisun community, another neighbouring community (Vanguard, January 7, 2008).

The views from participants and the secondary data on DESOPADEC seem to explain why since its inception, the agency had had lots of accusations leveled against it and the tendency of violence owing to its activities. However, the State governor reputed the accusations and in February 2008 declaring that “DESOPADEC is not for crisis. DESOPADEC is for peace and we should not by our imagination behave in such a way as to bring another crisis to our area (Vanguard, February 13, 2008). Interestingly, the position of the Governor has since changed following his utterance in public meeting on the activities of the commission. He told a town hall meeting that "some persons took home N2.5m monthly. The top echelon of the board cruised around town with siren in long convoy of vehicles accompanied by dozens thugs and mobile policemen who draw hefty feeding and months allowances that surpass their salaries”. He talked about his intention of closely monitoring the commission from henceforth (The Nation, September 1, 2009). However, with accusations such as the one leveled by HOSTCOM and the recent dethronement of a king, the promised made by the governor seems difficult to keep, as the agency seem to be polarizing the oil village communities, promoting inequality and fuelling violence among groups in oil village communities.

### **8.3 Institutionalisation of Security Culture in the Oil Communities**

This section examines the culture of securitisation which oil resources have imposed on the oil village communities, as this security culture of protecting the oil business has rather increased the level of violence and armed conflicts in the oil village communities (ICG, 2009). For instance, 2008’s budget proposal of 444.6 billion Naira out of 2.45 trillion Naira to security in the Niger Delta showed that the state was more than ready to use military solution in increasing the oil production (Vanguard, February 14, 2008). This situation even gained support from the international community, especially countries that depend on Nigeria’s oil. For example, the

former British Prime minister Gordon Brown during the G8's 2008's meeting in Japan said that the UK 'stand ready to give help to the Nigerians to deal with lawlessness that exists in this area and to achieve the level of oil production that Nigeria is capable of, but because of the law and order problems has not been able to achieve' (The Independent, July 11, 2008).

### **8.3.1 JTF, oil village communities and the Growth of Militant Groups**

The formation and imposition of a special security squad made up joint military and police force on the oil village communities became one of the policies of the state that came up during my field research. Joint Task Force (JTF) also known as *Operation Restore Hope* was specifically created to curb the incessant attack on oil facilities in the region. Their operations are aimed at reducing the insecurity threatening the oil industry, which has greatly affected the quantity of oil production in Nigeria. However, these increased military presences did not reduce the level of militancy and criminality in the region, but rather escalated almost to a full scale war, in which oil village communities were attacked by State security forces for allegedly harbouring militants. During an interview, a community leader stated that: "We now live in fear of attack by JTF for being a camp for militants. The bad thing is that your rival community can report your community of harbouring militants, and you will be attacked" (GP, Male, Ut-UnComm, CL, Interview; Feb.2008).

A similar view was expressed by another "youth" during one of the two FGD, she said that:

"There are lot of tensions each time we see army or police in our community. You see people running or hiding as they are not sure of what will happen".

The views held by above participants seem to be in consonant with other reports. For instance, a community reacted to a media statement by JTF Joint Media Campaign Centre (JMCC) that an attacked lunched on JTF were from militants based in their community. The reported stated that it is "a deliberate attempt by JTF Media Centre to incite the JTF against the peace-loving



people of Okerenkoko community, as there are no militants in Okerenkoko Community, talk less of attacking JTF troops”(Vanguard, October 8,2008).

There is evidence from submissions above that even with the increase in the level and height of security, the oil businesses seem not to have been secured. Rather, there seems to be a creation of a tense environment of security culture in oil communities, which seriously affected *petrobusiness* in Nigeria. ICG (2009a) reported that:

“The 92 attacks on the oil industry in 2008 were about one third above the previous year. Crude oil exports have fallen to 1.6 million barrels per day (bpd) in March 2009, down from 2.6”

This seems to explain why the participants hold the views that the use of security cannot stop militancy. A participant in one of the FGD declared that:

“We know the terrain more than them [referring to Nigerian security], they can use all the country’s money for security, that can never stop us, the oil is ours, so we have to keep fighting”(BD, Male, FGD; Nov.2007)

Consistent with this, is the fuelled violent reprisal as groups like Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) declared a total war on Nigerian oil industry, boasting that “we will wipe out the Nigerian oil industry in one swipe”(National Geography, February, 2007).The situation escalated even more until the introduction of the amnesty programme in June 2009. The concentration of the state in the protection of oil facilities and installations in order to maintain oil production in the communities, and neglecting lives and property of the dwellers of these communities is a demonstration of the unrelenting structural violence meted on oil village communities. Drawing support from Omeje (2005:323), he argues that “that both the state and TNOCs share common security perspective and response to threats to oil investment”, which seem to be to only protect the oil business at all cost.

However, the aim of this policy did not achieve its major objectives as not only did the quantity of oil production continued to dwindle. Rather, it led to an increase in the level of militancy, kidnapping of oil workers and demands for huge monetary ransoms. The militant groups also engaged in serious illegal oil bunkering activities to fund their rebellious attack on *petrobusiness* in the oil communities. However, the major aspect of their security threats was the declaration of full scale war with continuous strategic bombing of oil facilities and full military skirmish against The JTF. Evidently, JTF from their activities heightened the violence in the region as they kill the local dwellers, rape women and burn down houses as they chase after the militants groups. For instance, the invasion and destruction of Odi Community in November, 1999 by JTF on the orders of then President Olusegun Obasanjo over the killing of 12 Policeman by some militants(Thisday, May 27,2009). However, the presence of JTF has not in anywhere reversed the situation, and as observed by David Dafinone,<sup>52</sup> “the protracted intransigence in the region is an indication that military action is not a viable option for reversing underdevelopment and restoring peace there” (Vanguard, February 14, 2008c). The above points are supported by ICG (2007) report that the deployment of JTF is necessary but may not be sufficient. Thus, as the structural violence continues, there is the tendency that attack on oil businesses and state security force may persist.

### **8.3.2 The Deployment of State Coercive Apparatus by Oil MNCs in Handling Communal Protests**

Another facet of institutionalization of security culture that emerged from interviews, FGD, documentary review and observation is the use of state security apparatus by oil MNCs in handling or managing community protests. However, the contentious question or issue was whether such invitation of security forces especially the army was the best approach or practice to use, considering the vulnerability of the Nigerian security forces in handling protests and

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<sup>52</sup> David Dafinone is a former Senator of Nigeria in Second Republic.

demonstrations, and the tendency of such deployment further fuelling the conflict. To this question, a participant from oil MNCs responded that:

“To us, the invitation of state security forces was to avoid the breakdown of law and order, or destruction of oil facilities in cases of occupation of such facilities by demonstrating groups or communities” (UN, Male, SP-P/H, H-S&P, Interview; Dec.2007)

A similar view was also expressed by another participant from the oil MNCs, who said that:

“We do not go directly to security agencies. But when militant groups take over our facilities, we turn the situation over to the government. But if community people with a known grievance take over our facilities, we also get them to the negotiating table” (JJ, Male, CHR-LG, MR-PGPA, Interview; Feb. 2008).

Evidently, oil MNCs seem to see the use of state coercive apparatus in protection their facilities as the best and last option available not only to them, but to the state who owes a greater percentage of the oil rent. As submitted by another MNCs official who participated in the interview, he stated that:

“The Federal government of Nigeria is in a joint venture with oil companies and therefore would go to any extent to protect its investment, she is a major owner” (P.O, Male, SP-PH, CRO, interview, Dec.2007).

Similarly, the above situation is supported by Okonta and Douglas (2003:32), in which they wrote that “in October 1990 the inhabitants of Umuechem, another oil producing community, took to the streets, and armed troops, called in after Shell’s request for “security protection”, killed and maimed them into submission’. This also seems to explain why “the governments of Delta, Akwa Ibom and River states are reported to have contributed 15 billion naira (\$100 million) to finance the military operations in Gbaramatu [oil community], Delta State, on 13 May 2009” (Perlo-Freeman *et al*,2010:181).

Incidentally, the continuous reliance on state security forces to suppress community protests instead of using good conflict handling mechanism seems to motivate communities into

developing more violence measures. In most cases, outright militancy are championed by the “youths” who engage the security forces in combats relying on their knowledge of the terrain of the Niger Delta, which the security forces lack. (DS, male, Warri, Peace worker: Interview; Dec.2007).

### **8.3.3 The Rise and Growth of Private Security Companies and Vigilantes Groups**

The use of vigilant groups or private security companies to watch over and protect pipe-lines against illegal oil bunkering and vandalism of pipelines (to cause oil spill leading to demands for compensation) have created fierce struggles among groups on who are to carry out the security contract. Even with this ‘category of self-help and self-policing’ which acts independent of a state police and with the tendency of breaking national laws to achieve providing protection to its benefactors(Baker,2002:223), oil MNCs still deploys them to watch over pipelines and oil installations. However, the situation in Nigeria seems different, as the state has even engaged the services of former militants in policing pipelines. Wall street Journal Europe (August 22, 2012) reported that:

“Nigeria is shelling out hundreds of millions of dollars a year to maintain an uneasy calm in the oil rich delta. ... the program has sent young men a different message: that militancy promises more rewards than risks... Last year, Nigeria's state oil company began paying him \$9 million a year by Mr. Dokubo-Asari's account, to pay his 4,000 former foot soliders to protect the pipelines they once attacked”.

Similarly, Shell Petroleum Development Company developed an arrangement with oil communities in what it called “Community and Shell Together (CAST)” aimed at using people in communities in which oil pipelines are laid to protect the facilities from vandalism’. According to Shell’s former Manager for Pipelines Operations, Mr. Godwin Idoko “ The Cast project was initiated to protect oil pipelines in the Niger Delta area, a projected 4,000 youths

from different communities would be made to play a whistle blower role when there is any attempt at sabotaging oil and gas pipelines in their neighbourhood”(Thisday, July 6,2008).

A contrary view was raised by participants in the interviews and FGD, who pointed out the selection process, is as difficult as getting employed in the oil companies, and the contracts have always fuelled fierce struggles among community “youth” associations as well as groups within oil village communities( Field note, Warri, Feb.2008). A participant explained that:

“Situations where some groups are left out, they resort to attacking the pipelines, kidnapping or the other forms of violence or oil resource- related criminality” (OU, Female, Warri, S.D-ND, Interview; Dec.2007).

This policy has raised more questions than answers it needed to provide to the problem of oil pipeline vandalism. Some of such questions are; does this policy not encourage ‘selective empowerment’ which financially and economically empowers certain group in the communities, therefore polarizing the existing peace in such communities? Secondly, there are questions about the resort to violence and culture of violence, as Nigeria states and oil MNCs seem to be awarding such contracts to militant leaders as a means of buying peace. It also raises the question of change in leadership and authority equations in the communities as it empowers the “youths” more than the elders, as the “youths” are used mainly to watch these pipelines. It also raises the question of struggle for access which it provides, which is the job of watching over pipelines. Oil resources having displaced their main source of livelihoods and with the level of unemployment in these communities, communities are pitched against each other in the quota of number of people to watch over the pipelines. In raising these questions, it was evident that the policy have never solve the problem of illegal oil bunkering or vandalism of oil pipelines but rather it has provided avenue for increased illegal oil

bunkering, increased struggle for community leadership, increased culture of violence and inequality in the communities(Field note, Warri, Feb.2008).

A proper analysis of this policy indicts that Nigerian State and Shell did not take into cognisance the rivalry this scheme may fuel in the various communities. Considering the level of unemployment, level of poverty, the fierce struggle for access to oil-related sources of livelihoods, groups will engage each other in fierce battle to manage the scheme within their communities, thereby heightening the struggle for local leadership and power (see chapter7). There is also the tendency that there will be lopsidedness in the selection process, considering the multitude of unemployed “youths”, and this could fuel inter or intra communal conflicts. Finally, it would become a source of empowerment for a just few people, which could be considered as a form of inequality. Finally, with presence and production of oil imposing a change in their socio-economic conditions, the new scheme or job will also further alter their socio-conditions, thereby increasing the grievance situation and culture of greed, especially on the part of those not accommodated to watch the pipeline.

## **8.4 Conclusion**

The chapter examines the policies and projects of the Nigerian state and oil MNCs, with an aim of understanding the extent to which and how the management of oil resources related problems and policies by the state and oil MNCs fuels violent conflicts in the oil village communities in Nigeria. Evidently, it was established that the nature and management pattern of policies and programmes initiated by the state and *petrobusiness* in handling oil-related problems such as pipeline vandalisation, land disputes, insecurity in the region and community developments have exacerbated violent conflicts in oil village communities. This is due to oil related policies which did not take cognisance of the effects of oil resources on the socio-economic and social relations of the oil village communities. There is also the non-

consideration of violent struggle for access to oil opportunities and benefits which is achievable through occupying leadership and positions of authority in oil village communities.

As the new economy of oil resources emerge with new socio-economic conditions, social relations, resulting into power and leadership struggles, the Nigerian state and the oil MNCs engage in one form of development projects or peace building process to make the environment safe for business in oil village communities. With concern raised on the effects of oil resources on the communities, the state institutes one interventionist agency after the other to “cater” for the development needs of oil village communities. Evidence from the field implies that like every oil resources backed policy, such development projects are opportunities for few members from the oil communities to benefit from the abundant oil rents and thus resulting into fierce leadership struggles and violent conflicts about who should get elected or appointed (please refer to chapter 8.2; 8.2.1 and 8.2.2). The examination and analysis of various policies, programmes and actions of the Nigerian state and oil MNCs in the oil village communities show that social relations such as struggle for land or compensation, or socio-economic conditions like employment are handled in such a manner that it fuels violence and struggle for power.

Again, the weak nature of the Nigerian state in conflict management was further demonstrated and compounded by the state’s over reliance on oil rents and oil revenues. The State maintains oil production by using coercive force through state security institutions in providing “a negative peaceful” environment for oil business to operate. This weak nature of the state is again exposed by the engaging of private security and vigilantes groups by MNCs to watch over a joint venture which the state has the highest stake. It is obvious that oil MNCs seem to dictated and directed the security needs of the industry in Nigeria, even though they always

claim non-involvement. The security culture rather than reducing the agitation increased the insurgency and militancy in the region.

Therefore, based on the examination of the nature and pattern of management of the new socio-relations created by oil resources by Nigerian state and oil MNCs, the research assumes that *“The nature and patterns of managing oil resources -related problems, social economic opportunities and other interests of oil communities by the Nigerian State and Oil MNCs are likely to have exacerbated violent conflicts in oil village communities”*.



## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **SUMMARY, RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **9 Introduction**

This thesis examines how the presence of oil resources fosters violent conflicts in oil village communities, and the implications of this phenomenon for the socio-economic and political structures of such communities. The work has analysed oil resources conflicts using a single case study of oil village communities in Nigeria to illustrate the effects of oil resources in contributing to violent conflicts. To understand the effects of oil resources in fuelling violent conflicts in local oil communities, the research's analytical framework was based on structural conflict theory approach with the support of environmental scarcity theory and greed vs. grievance theory. The selected oil village communities were from Delta state, and were examined as a single study, since the indices considered were the same. This chapter has two main aims: to summarise the key findings and conclusions of the study; and to present the contribution of the research and indicate directions for further research.

#### **9.1 Summary of the Study**

As noted in the introduction, the background to the research problem is the current violent conflicts being experienced in oil village communities in Nigeria, which are fostered by the exploration and production of oil resources and the control and distribution of oil resource benefits and opportunities. In spite of the enormous wealth accruing to the Nigerian state from oil resources, the state has suffered from various development crises, among which are violent conflicts. In all this, the oil village communities have experienced unprecedented violent conflicts, owing to activities centered on oil resources. Oil resources have changed these communities' socio-economic conditions and social relations through increasing struggles for

access to oil-backed opportunities and benefits. The issue this research has investigated is the extent to which, and the way in which, oil resources have contributed to violent conflicts in these communities. The central argument of the thesis, therefore, has been that oil resources contribute hugely to violent conflicts in oil village communities through changes in socio-economic conditions, social relations, power relations, and access to oil benefits and opportunities.

The review in Chapter Two of the literature on the structure of violence and conflicts related to oil concluded that the structures and paradoxes of oil resources, such as oil resource abundance, oil resource scarcity, the curse of oil resources and rent seeking also exist at the local community level. In other words, oil village communities in Nigeria exhibit and suffer from oil resources paradoxes such as rent seeking and resource scarcity, but this has never been properly investigated because most research uses macro level analysis, which is state-centric, rather than adopting micro-level analysis to specifically research local oil village communities . The analysis (Chapters Six to Eight) of this study supported this argument.

Following the literature review came Chapter Three, which discussed the theoretical and analytical framework based on structural conflict theory as the anchor theory, environmental scarcity theory and greed vs. grievance theory as support theories of the framework. Chapter Four discussed the research methods, which were mainly qualitative, interviews, focus group discussions and documentary analysis. These methods and approaches to data gathering enabled evidence to be collated that gave credibility to the findings and conclusions of the study by responding to the research questions. Chapter Five presented the background and context to the oil economy in Nigeria and the political outcomes, and concluded that the violent conflicts in the oil village communities were strongly influenced by the nature of political and

socio-economic developments in Nigeria or within the Nigerian state since the emergence of oil resources as the economic mainstay of the country.

As discovered in the research, oil resource conflicts in the region started with oil production activities. The conflict started with the dispossession of land from local communities, the pollution of farmlands and fishing water. The oil activities consequently produced outcomes such as poverty, loss of sources of livelihoods, struggle for remaining land and waters. It therefore means a change in the existing socio-economic structures and conditions of these oil communities, thereby making oil resources and oil resources rent the main and new source of existence. As this structural conflict deepens and evolves, it consequently fuels grievances, greed, militarism and economic opportunism such as illegal oil bunkering. In addition, other changes brought by oil resource activities include fierce struggles for local leadership and positions of influence which give access to oil benefits and opportunities. There is also the emergence of “youth” associations both as alternate leadership group to elders and chiefs, as well as chief tormentors of oil MNCs.

Similarly, unlike the old tradition that forbids women from participating in decision making, oil resources presence and conflicts brought a change of role for women in oil village communities, as women became part of the decision making organs, especially in the CDCs. This is because as women protest against the activities of oil MNCs and the environmental impact of oil on their sources of livelihoods, their protestations consequently forced oil MNCs into embarking on many CRS activities for such communities. Secondly, their mediatory roles within their communities helped in stopping violent struggles among men especially the council of elders and CDCs, and this has further cemented their roles in their communities.

## **9.2 Research Findings and Implications**

### **9.2.1 Socio-economic conditions, greed vs. grievance, oil resources and violent conflicts.**

Essentially, the discussion here aims to address the question: *What effects have oil resources had on the socio-economic conditions of oil village communities; and to what extent have oil resources contributed to cultures of grievance, greed and militancy in oil village communities?*

The findings show that the socio-economic conditions created by oil resources have led to cultures of greed and grievance which culminate in violent conflicts. The socio-economic conditions which come with the new, alien oil economy restructured and displaced existing social and economic structures, thereby creating new social relations. The new oil economy is characterised by loss of livelihoods and employment; environmental scarcity and environmental factors; land scarcity and land ownership struggles; and a new local economy which excludes the majority of the population, leading to violent struggles. The nature of the new oil economy means that the entire population now depends directly or indirectly on it. The changes are indicated in the thesis by references to the original livelihoods of these communities, which were farming and fishing.

However, with oil exploration and production activities taking over their farmlands and fishing waters, oil village communities are left to depend solely on “rents” and compensation from oil MNCs. Paradoxically, instead of oil resources improving the economic and social well-being of these communities, they have turned out to be a source of violent conflicts, as shown in the thesis. This is clearly exhibited by both peaceful (if such are possible) and violent struggles for participation in, and control of, the local economy that has grown up around oil.

This is very much heightened by the struggle for other opportunities and benefits that derive from oil resources. Such opportunities and benefits are: employment; payments for ownership of land; and compensation for oil activities on remaining farming land and fishing waters. In such cases, as demonstrated by the thesis, communities that were originally at peace and shared communal farmlands and fishing waters could suddenly erupt in violent conflict over land ownership and who should receive the compensation paid by oil prospecting MNCs. The case of the Ijaw-speaking OdComm and OgComm oil village communities is well cited. Oil exploration activities by SP since 1968, and the establishment of flow stations by the NA on communal land belonging to these two communities, has led to a series of violent conflicts in these once peaceful communities. It could therefore be argued that oil resources create conditions that make conflict feasible. The benefits and opportunities (money, employment etc.) are never evenly distributed: for example, they may be controlled by one group; or one group may suffer more from the environmental and social effects of oil and gain little from these oil benefits and opportunities. Ordinarily, when oil-backed opportunities and benefits occur, what happens is that through the new socio-economic conditions, such as poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation and loss of livelihoods, the oil creates new social relations, which favour those who own it or those who can adapt easily to the new socio-economic conditions. Most of such occurrences do not take place without other local dwellers agitating for collective compensation, as oil exploration and production affects every member of the community. The changes in socio-economic conditions and social relations in oil village communities are at the core of violent conflicts. This is mainly because, intentionally or unintentionally, the control and distribution of oil-backed opportunities and benefits introduce social exclusion and inequality into these agrarian communities. They do this through the new social economic conditions and social relations, thereby setting communities against

communities, or groups in a particular community against each other. In most situations, it lays the foundation for protracted grievances and a desire to assume ownership.

Furthermore, the introduction of a culture of greed and grievance in these oil village communities has been identified in the thesis. These cultures emanate from the new socio-economic conditions and social relations which the economy of oil resources has introduced. They can make it possible to gain access to opportunities and benefits, depending on the position taken by a person, a group, a community or communities. People's position and actions may depend on what aspects of oil production that affects them most. A grudging attitude can have a range of causes, from underdevelopment of the community or communities to non-payment of promised compensation or selective payment of compensation, or financial inducements or other forms of empowerment such as contracts, scholarships or employment to just a few in a community. The cultures of greed and grievance, as shown in the thesis, often culminate in criminalities which are centered on and around the oil economy. Interestingly, the violent aspect of the entire culture is not only about local resistance to state violence and negligence by oil MNCs, but about the struggle for who controls the shadow economies and illicit businesses which often lead to all-out war between groups in the oil village communities of the Niger Delta. The engagement of groups in illegal oil bunkering has shifted from mere survivalist behaviour to multiple ventures in which rival groups deploy all violent means to control their hold. Often, these groups in the oil village communities see illegal oil bunkering as representing their share of the 'oil money' or benefits from the oil economy.

### **9.2.2 Power struggle and oil-benefits and opportunities**

To gain an understanding of the growing trend of violent conflicts (especially non-state violent conflicts) in the oil village communities, the research sought to answer this question: *To what extent have oil resources influenced the nature of politics, leadership and power struggles in*

*the oil village communities.* The thesis reveals that oil resource benefits and opportunities seriously influence the nature of politics, leadership and power struggles in the oil village communities. These changes in the nature of politics, leadership and powers struggles are the resultant need to gain the control and distribution of oil resource benefits and opportunities. Thus, oil benefits and opportunities have become the defining factors of the new socio-economic conditions and social relations which entire communities have to accept. Consequently, they have created new power relations in oil village communities which are sustained by violence and fierce struggles. Thus, the wielding of power or local influence, or the possession of local governance and local rulership, guarantee access to the control and distribution of oil resource benefits and opportunities in oil village communities. Undoubtedly, as discussed in Chapter Seven, people within these oil communities now struggles for these positions of power, in order to profit from this new oil economy. For example, the case of the Ogoni uprising against Shell and the Nigerian state showed that some prominent Ogoni citizens were using their position to their advantage. Their position meant that they served as spokesmen and negotiators for their communities, and thus they were able to gain from the access these positions provided. This was clearly demonstrated by the internal rivalry between Ogoni 4 led by Dr Garrick Leton and the Ogoni 9 led by Ken Saro-wiwa over the control the MOSOP (Movement for the survival of the Ogoni people), as a consequence of which violent conflicts ensued leading to the killing of the four prominent Ogoni Chiefs. Importantly, the struggles for power, local governance and local rulership are made even fiercer because of access to oil benefits and opportunities, as groups and individuals within oil village communities take to violent conflicts in order to gain or remain in power

Again, and very fundamentally, oil has changed the nature of power relations between the elders of oil village communities, who represent traditional authority, and partially replaced

these elders with community “youths” who have almost taken over the administration and governance of communities, especially as this concerns dealing with the oil MNCs. According to Faleti (2006), as explained in the structural conflict theory which is the anchor theory of the framework described in Chapter Three, the unequal distribution of advantages and disadvantages in society re-defines relationships and behaviour in the society, and this breeds violent conflict. “Youths” who are particularly disadvantaged in oil communities, owing to the loss of their source of livelihood, resort to violent behaviour and violence against oil MNCs and against the elders of their community whom they assumed to be benefiting from the new socio-economic conditions. Consequently, the ability of “youths” to exercise violence and militancy against oil MNCs and traditional authorities has led to youth leadership being given more important recognition by oil MNCs than traditional rulers/elders. Furthermore, the “youths” engaging in power struggles amongst themselves as well as against the traditional community rulers as they split into factions on which group represents their community, shows that they are not immune from aftermath of the new oil economy.

In addition to the above, the study finds that socio-political cultures such as neo-patrimonialism, prebendalism, clientelism and other bad practices in governance are reinforced by oil resources not only at the centre – in this case at the federal level – but also at local community level, i.e. within local traditional authorities and governance. The way in which funds meant for the public good are stolen or embezzled at the centre is the way funds given to communities as general compensation and funds for development as part of CSR are stolen or embezzled by community leaders. For everyone, getting part of the funds is part of your ‘national cake’. With the competition and fierce struggle for leadership and power in these oil communities, violent conflicts often result. Interestingly, the struggles to get into such positions are catalysed by the fact that such positions provide access to benefits and opportunities from oil resources. In many



oil village communities, it is common to see people fight over the chairmanship and membership of the Community Development Committee (CDC), because of the enormous funds put at their disposal by oil MNCs to carry out development work, or payments for the acquisition of land from communities or to compensate them for oil spills and other environmental damage. Thus, as funds are stolen and embezzled, or opportunities such as scholarships and employment from oil MNCs are monopolised by those in authority and power, the desperation to be in such positions or maintain such positions increases, leading to violent killings and fierce struggles. Cases that demonstrate this situation include: the struggle of two warring youth factions in Effurun, Ovwie Local Government Area of Delta State; the killing of about 150 people in Port Harcourt by groups fighting over government hand-outs; and the murder of Mr. S.A.K. Metseagharun over the chairmanship of the Ogborodo Community Development Fund.

This study also found that the struggle for oil resource benefits and opportunities created cultures of violence where violence was prized and well rewarded. The culture of violence means that whoever can threaten *petrobusiness* by any violent means is handsomely ‘settled’. On the other hand, it cultivates a culture of violence and militancy within oil communities, making resorting to violence a common occurrence. There are many cases of violent communal conflicts and group fights resulting in deaths and the displacement of many people. Incidentally, those who are selected to receive settlements are those considered as conflict ringleaders or masterminds, or those seen as very vocal. Their ‘settlement’ means that they are expected to cease to champion their communities’ agitation against oil MNCs. What is striking about this activity of settlement is that instead of dowsing violent tendencies, it increases them, either causing communities to rise against those whom they view as ‘sell-outs’, or leading to the emergence of other ringleaders or vocal champions of violence whom have to be ‘settled’.

This creates what Ibeanu (2002) describes as ‘concentric circles of payoffs and rewards’. This helps to explain the rise in the culture of violence in oil communities: the settlements paid by oil MNCs to violence leaders; or violence over non-inclusion in such settlements.

Another important finding of the thesis is on the issue of how oil resources seriously affect power, leadership and governance in oil village communities. Clearly, as indicated by the study, because oil resources have become the major determinant in the local economy, access to oil now means access to a better livelihood. Therefore any opportunity that can provide such access becomes highly valued. Some of these opportunities are in the hands of traditional authorities, some are in the hands of politicians; some are obtained through community development associations, and some through “youth” leadership. These positions are fiercely contested by groups and communities, because of the access they provide to oil resource opportunities and benefits. In many cases, as indicated in the findings, many lives have been lost and people displaced. Coupled with this, the research found that “youth” leadership was gradually displacing the traditional rulers in communities, and was well supported by oil interests, which paid them off to keep violence away from their production activities. As this continues, the “youths” are carving out positions of authority for themselves and are major parties to all decisions. Their ability to wield violence remains their selling point. Consequently, like every group that wants to benefit from oil resources, they wage war not only against the oil MNCs, but against the established government authorities and against community leaders and they also split into rival groups and fight each.

### **9.2.3 When managing oil resource outcomes exacerbates violent conflicts**

In answering the question: *Has the style of management of oil resource problems, socio-economic opportunities and the interests of oil village communities by the Nigerian state and*

*oil MNCs contributed to violent conflicts in the oil village communities, and if so, in what ways?* The thesis reveals that the nature and patterns adopted by oil MNCs and the Nigerian State in managing oil-resource-related problems, socio-economic opportunities and other interests of the oil village communities exacerbated violent conflicts. The socio-economic conditions and social relations such as poverty, environmental degradation, unemployment and inequality mean that the oil village communities are reduced to ‘oil-resource-dependent communities’. And when benefits and opportunities are distributed to the advantage of some and to the disadvantage of others, suspicion and antagonism are created within groups or within a community or within oil village communities who share a neighbourhood within the radius of oil resource exploration and production.

Generally, there are fierce struggle over the new relations of production in these oil village communities, as the new oil economy has re-structured the existing socio-economic conditions and social relations. It is easy to see two communities take to violent conflict resulting in countless deaths over compensation payment by oil MNCs or disputes about land earmarked for oil exploration and production. Clearly, as discussed in Chapter Eight, the economy of oil resources has brought changes to every aspect of the people’s existence and relationships, creating a ‘free for all’ struggle in pursuit of legal and illegal opportunities from oil resources. For example the conflict in Warri dates back to the period of colonial rule, but was never previously violent: the contestations were carried out using formal and legal means. However, the discovery of oil resource in Warri and neighbouring communities increased the resolve to lay claim to the area, especially when Warri became the operational headquarters of some major MNCs.

Another fundamental issue regarding the manner of managing oil resource fall-outs by oil MNCs and the Nigerian State is that some policies are assumed to exhibited a ‘divide and rule’ technique, policies such as the “host communities” policies. The labeling and rewarding of some communities as host communities and others as non-host communities has further increased the struggle over land ownership and the use of violence. Therefore, in a bid to curtail losses in production due to the vandalizing of pipelines, illegal oil bunkering and direct attacks on oil facilities by communities, “youths” and militant groups who felt excluded from oil opportunities and benefits, the Nigerian state formed a security task force, the Joint Task Force (JTF). There is also oil MNCs’s arrangement for various private security organisations and vigilante groups to watch over the oil facilities. This study discovered that the use of the JTF as a method of securing oil village communities, a method which simply deepened the security culture built on state violence in the region.

The use vigilante groups to guard oil pipelines was another aspect of ‘selective empowerment and settlement’ in which groups who were not able to benefit from oil-resource-backed opportunities resorted to illegal bunkering, waged a fight against those chosen to watch the pipelines, or engaged in direct pipeline destruction, until they were recognised and ‘settled’. Thus the circle of violence, recognition and settlement continue.

The implication of the failure of the state and oil MNCs to manage the fall-out from the new socio-economic conditions and social relations has been that power relations in the oil- village communities have tended toward demonstrations of violence as a means of getting recognition and benefits from oil resources. The thesis further argues that where state violence is used to calm the situation, it simply fuels more resentment against the state, the oil MNCs and against members of the communities who are considered as beneficiaries from oil resource opportunities. The situation of the state investing in security to protect oil business rather than

investing in human development (a choice which is the main driver of violent conflict) means that militancy against oil resource production and violent struggles to benefit from it will continue.

#### **9.2.4 Violent conflicts, oil resource and oil village communities**

Cumulatively, the study seeks to answer the question: *To what extent and how have oil resources contributed to violent conflicts in oil village communities in Nigeria?* The commonly cited causes of violent conflicts in oil village communities are armed reaction and struggle (see Chapter Two for the definition adopted by this thesis), especially where the Nigerian state unleashes physical violence on oil village communities, often referred to as state violence. Such state violence, which is mainly carried out to maintain oil production, could come as a reprisal against an oil village community for protesting against environmental hazards created by oil resource activities, or in a situation where a community takes action against another aspect of oil production which is affecting their livelihoods. For instance, Ibeanu (2000:19) while examining violent conflicts across oil village communities in the Niger Delta region argues that “paradoxically, the violent suppression of the Ogoni, which the military had hoped would cow the restive region and keep the oil wells flowing, unleashed a rash of further conflicts involving the state, oil companies and ethnic communities across the Niger Delta”. Thus, Ibeanu pointed out the relationship between oil production activities and the escalation of violent conflicts across the Niger Delta region. Le Billion (2001:23), on the other hand, contends that “distributional conflicts frequently arise relating to the ownership of natural resources and the allocation of the revenues they generate among the state, businesses, local communities, and other interest groups” This implies that the way in which revenues and benefits resulting from natural resources like oil are distributed among stakeholders is an important variable in oil resource conflicts.

Conversely, this research has shown that beyond the oil-fuelled state violence which involves the state actively taking part in a violent conflict, are the oil-fuelled non-state violent conflicts with their variables and influences derived from the political economy of oil resources, and are spearheaded by the structures and paradoxes of oil resources. Firstly, the structure of oil resources means that they monopolize the available land resources in an area of operation, thereby changing the nature of the livelihoods of the inhabitants, creating a form of inequality and new class relationships. Within this order, as seen in the Land Use Act of 1978, land belonging to a community can be commandeered at will for *petrobusiness*. But the interesting part comes with who is given the financial compensation for the community. A further implication of this is that the number of jobs the oil industry destroys is not in any way matched by the jobs it creates. And even where it creates some jobs, it also creates a situation of struggle over who gets the jobs. In the communities' bid to survive, a *rent seeking culture* similar to that which exists at the central level is created. Local oil communities, because of loss of livelihoods, loss of land, social exclusion and poverty, start informal rent seeking activities, from demands for settlements, to all forms of grievance- or greed-driven activities which help them profit from oil resources.

As discussed in Chapter Six, with a change in socio-economic conditions, oil resource benefits and opportunities become the defining factor in new social relations, and achieving this is mainly possible either through the demonstration of violence or through threats of violence. In most cases, it is no longer a struggle against the state or oil MNCs, but violent struggles between groups or communities to decide who will get which oil benefits and opportunities, when and how. Secondly, access to such benefits and opportunities provided by oil resources, as shown in Chapter Seven, leads to violent struggles for power, leadership and ruling positions

in local communities, thus increasing and institutionalizing violence as a means of gaining access to oil benefits and opportunities. This consequently raises the status of “youths” in the communities as major decision makers, owing to their penchant for the use of violence.

### **9.3    *The    Contribution of the Study***

This work on oil resource conflict is a study of a critical component of a natural resources curse. The study has made an important contribution to the understanding of oil resource conflicts in local oil communities, particularly in Nigeria. The findings of the thesis have established that violent conflicts in local oil communities cannot be divorced from the changes that have occurred in their socio-economic and political structures due to the presence of oil resources. Therefore, in examining the effects of oil resources in creating violent conflicts in Nigeria, this research suggests a reappraisal of violent conflicts caused by oil resources, especially in oil village communities. This section presents the contributions of the study.

First, in researching the effects of oil resources in creating violent conflicts in oil village communities, this study has deployed a micro-level analysis and community-based approach. This is contrary to most studies on oil resource conflicts which apply state-centric approaches and macro-level analysis. The central argument of the contribution is that oil resources are a curse which fuels violent conflicts at the local level, just as it does at the state level. The paradoxes of oil exploitation, such as a rent-seeking culture, rentier characteristics, a resource curse, resource scarcity, and so on exist in local communities as well as at the state level. In this case, micro-level analysis provides a better approach for understanding the situation. This therefore reinforces Okruhlik’s (1999:295) submission that “neither Weberian nor Marxist conceptions of statehood adequately account for development in oil states. The Weberian emphasis on extraction does not apply because oil states have been largely relieved of that

function. Thus, a defining exchange between state and society is absent". Therefore, the structures and effects of oil resources in societies could today be examined independently of the state. This thesis has demonstrated that oil resources cause distinct and direct violent conflicts in oil village communities, which may not actually be linked to the state.

Second, this study, in an attempt to understand the relationship between oil resources and violent conflicts in local oil communities, the research employed an integration of environmental scarcity theory and greed vs. grievance theory into structural violence theory to serve as support in the providing full analysis of the research. Thus, the framework was able to explain the rise of oil-related violent conflicts in village communities. Again the possession of natural resources itself seems to be promoting political underdevelopment, thereby creating a vicious circle of negative outcomes (Moore, 2000). This point to lack of good governance, which promotes most negative variables associated with the exploration and exploitation of oil resources, one of them being violent conflicts over natural resources. This in most situations could arise out of perceived relative deprivation and insensitivity to environmental stress and degradation (Moore, 2000). The outcome of such situations, as shown in this study, is the establishment of an attitude of grievance which, where it is not reconciled, may result in greedy criminality such as kidnapping, illegal oil bunkering and militancy.

Finally, this study applied a non-state-actor perspective in examining the perpetuation of conflicts in local oil village communities. This is unlike many studies of oil-resource conflicts which rely on the concept of traditional conflicts which are related only to contemporary ideas of predation by the state. This is because when such views are advanced, *identical-driven conflicts, involving subjective and elusive categories such as ethnicity, religion, ideas, history, [which are]....hard to resolve* are easily adopted and applied. Thus, many studies restrict their research *primarily to rational-choice theory* and the application of statistics, forgetting that one



case study is different from another (Berdal, 2005). This is a fundamental limitation of many previous studies on oil-related violent conflicts.

#### **9.4 *Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research***

The findings of this thesis are important from both theoretical and empirical perspectives, it is important to note that it is difficult to claim general generalizability beyond the Delta region because of difference in socio-economic, traditional, political and environmental factors. However, this research claims partial transferability of the research findings within the same population of study in this case, oil communities in Nigeria. However, the findings of this research provide further challenges to the study of resource conflicts, especially in respect of the on-going debate on the effects of natural resources on developing economies.

In the context of this limitation of generalization, the findings of this study have set in motion the study of other important areas within the concept of resource conflicts. For instance, the study has shown that there may be a need to study the nature of informal rent-seeking fuelled by structural violence in Nigeria. As suggested by the study, as the state becomes weak, self-help emerges, and cultures like rent-seeking and the struggle to control the distribution of opportunities arise. A further study of how dependence of oil rich developing states on rents from oil MNCs can weaken a state control of its security in the long run may be worthwhile.

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# APPENDIX G --TIME SERIES ANALYSIS OF OIL SPILL IN THE NIGER DELTA

S/N O	YEA R	NO. OF SPILL	QTY SPILLED(BARRELS)	QTY RECOVERED(BARRELS)	NET VOLUME COST TO THE ENVIRONME NT (BARRELS)
1	1976	128	25,157.00	7,135.00	19,021.50
2	1977	104	32,879.25	1,703.01	31,176.75
3	1978	154	489,294.75	391,445.00	97,849.75
4	1979	157	94,117.13	63,481.20	630,635.93
5	1980	241	600,511.02	42,416.83	558,094.19
6	1981	238	42,722.50	5,470.20	37,252.30
7	1982	257	42,841.00	2,171.40	40,669.60
8	1983	173	48,351.30	6,355.90	41,995.40
9	1984	151	40,209.00	1,644.80	38,564.20
10	1985	187	11,876.60	1,719.30	10,157.30
11	1986	155	12,905	552.00	12,358.00
12	1987	129	31,866.00	25,757.00	25,757.00
13	1988	208	9,172.00	1,955.00	7,207.00
14	1989	228	5,956.00	2,153.00	3,803.00
15	1990	166	14,150.35	2,785.96	12,057.80
16	1991	258	108,367.01	2,785.96	12,057.80
17	1992	378	51,187.90	1,476.70	49,711.20
18	1993	453	8,105.32	2,937.08	6,632.11
19	1994	495	35,123.71	2,335.93	32,787.78
20	1995	417	63,677.17	3,110.02	60,568.15
21	1996	158	39,903.67	1,183,807	38,716.86
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,647</b>	<b>2,369,470.04</b>	<b>549,060.38</b>	<b>1,820,410.50</b>



## APPENDIX H ---TOPIC GUIDE

### Topic Guide for In-depth Interviews

The following are some of the generic questions that were used for the in-depth interview with key participants and groups on the political economy of oil resources conflicts in the oil village communities of Nigeria. The interviews were focused on oil fuelled socio-economic conditions, cultures of violence; governance, politics and leadership struggles, access to oil benefits and benefits; and state and oil MNC conflict handling mechanisms.

#### SECTION A: THE DEMOGRAPHY OF THE RESPONDENT.

**Date & Time of Interview**...../.....

**Name of respondent** \_\_\_\_\_

**Occupation of Respondent** \_\_\_\_\_

**Respondent's State/Local Govt. Area** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tribe of the Respondent** \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g, Ijaw, Isoko, Igbo, etc)

**Place of Residence** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sex** \_\_\_\_\_ (Male, Female). **Age** \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Respondent, the information solicited here is for academic purpose only. It will be treated with confidence.

#### PERCEIVED CAUSES OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN OIL VILLAGE COMMUNITIES:

1. Is your community designated as an oil producing community? What are the benefits?
2. How many times have you experienced violent conflicts between your community and your neighbouring community, and what were the causes? What is the nature of the relationship between your community and the oil producing company operating in your community?
3. When was oil discovered in your community, and what year did the exploration activities start?
4. What is the nature of the relationship between/among the three main ethnic groups before the discovery of oil resources?
5. What is the nature of the relationship between /among the three main ethnic groups after the discovery of oil resources?

6. What effect did the discovery of oil resource in your community have on your sources of livelihood? How in your views will you describe your community without oil resources?
7. What are the contributions of factors such as Landownership, unemployment, oil pollution and underdevelopment to the conflict in your community?
8. What mechanisms do you use in attracting attentions of the government (Federal, state or local government) or the affected oil producing company to issues such as oil spill, gas flaring or underdevelopment?
9. How can you describe the activities of youth in cases of ransom kidnapping of oil workers; arson and stoppage of oil production activities?
10. Are there other oil related illegal activities (like oil bunkering- which is the act of breaking and stealing crude oil from the pipelines) which you think that can warrant youth groups to engage in fights or violence?
11. What do you think are the contributions of land and land ownership to violent conflicts in your communities?
12. What are your views about the role of youths in community leadership, and is this connected to oil resource activities? Do you think that militancy has really helped in solving the problem or brought awareness?

## **POLITICS, LEADERSHIP AND POWER IN OIL VILLAGE COMMUNITIES**

1. Considering the contribution of oil resources to Nigerian development, do you think there are the same amounts of development influence coming to the oil producing communities?
2. How does politics in your community influence the violent conflicts being experienced? And how has the quest to gain access to 'oil resource 'such as (oil contracts etc) affected the nature of conflict in your communities
3. Do you think is the role of oil resources in the violent struggle for political positions in your communities/area
4. What would you say about the development agencies set up by the Nigerian state since the inception of oil production, such as OMPADEC, and now NDDC? How are their members selected? Do the oil village communities select their representatives?
5. What do you think is the role of oil resource in the violent struggle for political positions in your communities/area

6. Are the youths of oil village communities not showing signs of greed or but if grievance why illegal oil bunkering and kidnapping for ransom?

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SCARCITY, DEVELOPMENT AND CONFLICT**

1. In ways does your community benefit from the oil production going on in your community?
2. Looking at the events that have taken place, especially since the 1990s, what do you make out of the whole conflict? Do you in your opinion think that it is an opportunity for some people to get rich?
3. Given the nature of your community, how do you determine appointments or representation to oil companies for negotiation?
4. How has the oil production affected your fishing areas, especially in contributing to environmental scarcity? In such cases, how do you resolve the conflict? And in cases where your land or fishing area are acquired for oil production, how do you continue your fishing and farming?
5. Between lack of development and environmental degradation like oil spill which attracts most violent reactions from oil communities
6. Between environmental problems which arise out of oil activities and issues of underdevelopment in these communities, which of these factors do communities react much violently to

## **THE NIGERIAN STATE, THE MNC OIL COMPANIES AND CONFLICT HANDLING**

1. How do you determine the owner or owners of a particular piece of land where oil is found? In situations of claims and counter-claims of ownership, how do you found out the real owners?
2. What are your parameters for designating a particular community 'oil producing' and the next community who shares the common boundary where the oil production is taking place, 'not oil producing'.
3. Given the nature of oil activities taking place in the oil communities, in cases of oil spill, who exactly in the communities do you pay the claims to? Do you monitor the

distribution of the claims, to know if it gets to real residents of the community who are directly affected by the oil spill?

4. In most cases, there have been protestations by some oil village communities over non-implementation of agreement, sometimes blockage of oil production sites, what are your conflict handling mechanisms in ensuring peaceful resolution?
5. At what stage in a conflict situation do you ask for the services of the Nigerian security?
6. In corporate social responsibility, who determines the projects you implement for the local oil village communities?
7. In your view, do you think that your activities may have contributed to the escalating nature of violent conflict and insecurity in this area?
8. Are your activities in any way affected by the national, local or ethnic politics in this region? Do local politicians, community leaders, women leaders and youth leader have influence during any negotiation and payment of claims in cases of oil site acquisition or oil spill?