Justice and Inclusive Governance in Nigeria: Rethinking the Niger Delta Problem

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Abstract

The Niger Delta issue besides attracting impressive attention continues to linger due to failure to find plausible explanation for issues of the region. The discourse woven around this issue leaves two clear lines of argument. One sees the region responsible for her development woes, the other hold the alleged flawed Nigerian federal system, responsible for the challenges of the region. This paper relied on triangulation of data to argue that the issue of the Niger Delta lingers because of injustice in the Nigerian governance. The paper concludes that inclusive governance capable of giving the troubled oil bearing region needed sense of belonging, would be able to bring peace to the region. The paper found inverted justice system in resource politics in Nigeria responsible for the continued agitation of the Niger Delta region. It concludes that true federalism be adopted in Nigeria to birth healthy competition for development.

KEY WORDS: Nigeria, Niger Delta, Development, Oil Politics, Justice

Introduction

The discovery and exploration of oil as a natural resource of note capable of engendering anticipated development of the oil bearing region, has failed largely to do so. While oil exploration and envisaged regional development of the Delta region present a knotty and complex issue that has attracted impressive scholarly attention, little mention is made of the oil induced politics that drives the Nigerian political cum economic system. Consequently, efforts by both government and scholars to explore the complexity of the seemingly failure of oil wealth to birth regional and national development, fail to explore the place of inclusive governance in the management of the now known intricate oil politics woven around distorted politics that shapes resource management and the development process in Nigeria, (Obi, 2010). Management of oil politics and how same influence governance, resource distribution and development by extension, invoke emotions in national discourse with differing views. While the Southern are quick to call for restructuring, their Northern counterpart, usually favour maintenance of the status quo

which Eghweree (2016), argued, perpetuates disproportionate patronage politics in Nigeria.

The debate and associated issues have not only made manifest the developmental discourse and the need for urgent attention, but has like never before, unmasked the lingering national question centred on the very essence of the Nigerian state. This is especially so when the veiled struggle for oil resources of the Niger Delta in the face of worsening developmental challenges and deplorable level of poverty, deprivation and infrastructural decay in the oil-bearing region, (Eghweree, 2016 and ActionAid, 2015). While revenue sharing formulae over the years may have not revealed clear signs of lopsided patronage politics skewed against the oil bearing region in clear terms, existential realities reflected in political engagement and developmental efforts at the regional levels, leave so much to debate about the place of inclusive and representativeness of the oil delta in national scheme.

This study explores the complex nexus between oil, politics and regional development in Nigeria. It focuses on the intricate dynamics of oil politics in Nigeria and how the same shape regional politics and by extension, development. This is done through comparative analysis of oil bearing South-South with what it obtains nationally in terms of political patronage and developmental effort seen through available developmental projects and political representation. This is done in one breathe, to mirror the impact of oil wealth on regional development in Nigeria and secondly, to explain how oil politics impact the nation building effort. To give the study theoretical grounding, theoretical triangulation was adopted. Consequently, the political economy of Nigeria seen through the lens of resource curse and elite theories adopted for the study. This was deepened with a cursory look at the intricate political dynamics in Nigeria that has shaped the oil war in the Niger Delta and how the same affect the national wealth since Nigeria depend largely on oil wealth, (Obi, 2010). To this end, relevant and associated but germane concepts such as resource management and resource curse, clientelism and elite dominance, corruption, federal imbalance and regional development disparity were discussed to put regional development in perspective.

To establish core issues at play to drive the narrative, this paper is divided into three main sections. The first, explores the political economy of oil in Nigeria and how it shapes national politics. The second dealt with the issue of governance and the politics of revenue allocation in Nigeria, while the last grapples with theoretical explorations while putting in perspectives, the Niger Delta struggle with the argument that the struggle persists because

of injustice to the oil bearing region due to the lopsided patronage politics that dominates the Nigerian polity.

1.0: Oil Politics in Nigeria

At independence in 1960, Nigeria relied on agricultural produce as its major source of national revenue. This was also the era where regional resources, played vital roles in the sustenance of the nation's economy despite availability of oil resources with history predating the 1960 political independence. As Gboyega (2011:7) noted,

> *"Nigeria is recognized as a country with the most known reserves of petroleum and gas in Sub-Saharan Africa. Petroleum has long become the most important aspect of the national economy, accounting for more than half of GDP, about 85 percent of government revenues, and over 90 percent of exports"*

Though history of the Nigerian oil can be traced to the colonial times when in 1887, colonial oil and mineral laws, were enacted (Obi, 2010) with subsequent amendment of the law in 1907, 1914, 1925, 1950 and 1958, quest to find oil in Nigeria effectively began in 1908. This is when Nigerian Bitumen Corporation, a German business concern, began exploring for oil around the Araromi area in present day South West region of the country, (PENGASSAN, 2012). The initial effort failed until further exploration in 1937 and in 1947, was carried out by Shell D'Arcy to achieve success in 1956 with the discovery of oil in commercial quantities at Oloibiri, a community in present day Bayelsa State, South-South Nigeria. Oil exploration consequently began in 1958.

How The Nigerian Oil Industry works

Nigerian oil is found in the Niger Delta region, (Mahler 2010, Higgins 2009 and Watts 2008). According to EIA, (2006), the Nigerian state is as a strategic global oil producer with a proven total of 36 billion barrels of oil and 150 trillion natural gas reserves. Chunk of these natural resources, are found in both on and off-shore belt of the Delta.

Four government institutions govern the oil industry in Nigeria. These are the Nigerian National Oil Corporation (NNPC), The Ministry of Petroleum; Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), and the president with his adviser (Gillies 2009). The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation was established in 1977 following the merger of the then Nigerian National Oil Corporation and Federal Ministry of Mines and Steel (Udosen et al., 2009). This followed the decision of the country to join the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971. OPEC's resolution which required member nations to be in firm control of their oil business by setting up national agency like the NNPC in Nigeria can be

said to have prompted the formation of the NNPC. Nigeria began to play a key role in OPEC and had the oil industry managed by the hugely politically regulated Department of Petroleum Resources. Oil sales gave the nation fortune in the 1970s during the oil boom era.

The exploration of oil in Nigeria is conducted by Multinational Oil Corporations (MNCs) in a joint venture agreement with the Nigerian government. Popular MNCs operating in the Nigerian oil industry include Shell, ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, Agip and Total. As earlier noted, dominance of the oil industry by MNCs has been attributed to the dearth of technological know-how and lack of the requisite man-power to pilot the technology driven industry. Ministry of petroleum steers affairs of the petroleum industry and report directly to the president; thus, underscoring the huge dose of political importance attached to the office of the petroleum minister. The Group Managing Director of the NNPC and the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) reports to the petroleum minister. The oil bearing Niger Delta for instance, do not benefit from the LCP as most OGI related trainings, are queued into the federal character principles anchored on disproportionate political patronage to the detriment of minority groups that the oil bearing region, represents, (Ikelegbe, 2013, Eghweree, 2016).

Oil and Politics in Nigeria

Intricate political economy of survival is manifested in what many have come to see as oil politics in Nigeria. This Eghweree (2016), believes has an interesting impact on the national political and administrative process because of the inextricable links between the nation's polity and oil revenue which as Obi (2010), concluded, sustains the nation. This explains why oil as a natural resource of great economic values, attracts in Nigerian political calculations and in global politics. To this end, countries spend fortune exploring and exploiting this black gold with a view to achieving accruable economic benefits to drive development process. Mirrored against strict realist perception, oil wealth if properly managed, give nations political edge among nations, (Morgenthau, 1978).

In Nigeria, oil and politics are inextricably linked. Political leaders are consequently, emotionally attached to the derivable wealth from oil. This consequently alters the paradigm of rewards as dictated by tilted patronage politics that oil politics, induces. This is in addition to the intricate rivalry for the control of oil wealth since the control of oil resource is seen by many, as the ultimate control of national political power. Consequently, an intense and often unhealthy contestation for political power is induced. What reflects Ekeh's (1975) civic vs primordial public is made manifest in the ensuing national politics, (Ikelegbe, 2013; Obi, 2010).

Consequently, the issue of oil and politics in Nigeria is a vexatious one as it opened new vista for contestation for political power with huge primordial inclinations by the ruling elites. As Omoweh; (2005:50) captured the mood clearly when he observed that:

> "*The new-found oil wealth in Nigeria introduced a new dimension into the country's character of politics, particularly the intensification of the fierce struggle to capture and privatize the state at all cost and by all means by the political class*".

The emergent oil politics in the Nigerian state, subsequently played out to the detriment of the nation's economy as *"roving bandits with the smash and grab mentality"* dominated the Nigerian political landscape (Lewis, 2010:20). This had an unpleasant toll on the nations' economy and political process as the reward system was not only truncated but replaced with highly tilted patronage politics that disproportionately rewards. This was particularly reflected in the lopsided federal structure that allows central collection and disbursement of resources between the central government and federal units. The primordial impulse received sectional support hinged on favourable rewards after winning the oil-politics battle that dominates the nation's polity.

Intense struggle for oil wealth among the political elites with deep regional, ethno-religious and primordial inclinations rather than national interest at heart, is usually reflected in the struggle for allocation of oil resources in Nigeria, (Akpabio & Akpan, 2010). This was the case as oil resources took sustenance of the nation's economic wellbeing over from agriculture that once held sway. Focus on oil wealth made hitherto peaceful resource politics, hostile as oil politics pitched regions against themselves in the struggle for accruable oil wealth with the oil bearing region, arguably short-changed to sustain the nation economically, (Eghweree and Igbafe, 2017). This manifested in the deliberate albeit; arbitrary alteration of the nation's revenue sharing formula. As Nabbon; (2010) noted, *"the decision of the Nigerian state to abandon the original revenue sharing formula that existed at independence, contributed to the orgy of violence that engulfed the oil belt of the Delta"*. The arbitrary alteration of the revenue sharing formula has been linked to the inequality that the distributional politics in Nigerian is anchored on. While agricultural produce such as cocoa, palm oil and groundnut held sway in the Nigerian economy prior to the discovery of oil, the revenue allocation principle was based on derivation principle with 50% as the sharing benchmark.

By this distributional principle, it means that regions where the resources are derived from were allowed to retain 50% of their produce and send the remaining 50% to the center government. This lasted from 1960 to 1970s when major ethnic groups of Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba held sway. Changes were introduced later as the pendulum of economic survival swung from agricultural produce to oil. That marked the beginning of the era where politics interwoven with oil ensued (Otoghile and Eghweree, 2011) and the federal system became skewed to favour the center and those that control political power, (Ikeji 2011; Akpabio & Akpan 2010). To understand intricate resource politics and be able to place the issue of justice in the Niger Delta and that continues to accentuate crisis in oil region, governance in Nigeria is explored broadly.

2.0 Governance in Nigeria

Nigeria operates a federal system made up of thirty-six states and a capital city as federating units. The nation attempted a unitary system of government between 1960 and 1970 but failed. The 1970 federal constitution led to the foundation of federalism in Nigeria (Ewetan, 2012). While equity is seen as the defining features of federalism, this aspect is largely lacking in Nigeria (Ikeji, 2011:12; Higgins, 2009). Consequently, the need to give federating units a sense of belonging, have prompted calls for entrenchment of true federalism in the country.

Federalism refers to a political system where there exist at least two levels of government that constitutionally share power, influence and responsibilities. Associated with K.C. Wheare, who conceived it as a "*method of dividing power so that general and regional governments are each, within a sphere, coordinate and independent",* federalism is not a new concept. Giving it a conceptual definition, Approdorai (1975:495) saw federalism as:

> *"…a state in which there is a central authority that represents the whole and acts on behalf of the whole in external affairs and there are also provincial or state authorities with powers of legislation and administration within the sphere allotted to them by the constitution".*

It works with clear cut constitutional powers that delineate authority and the area of influence among the organs/levels of government. It is often times adopted to foster unity among diverse groups, (Otoghile and Eghweree, 2011).

Arowolo (2011:2) noted that federalism in Nigeria developed in the colonial era when it was introduced alongside the 1954 Lyttleton constitution. He further noted that besides achieving administrative convenience, the colonial administration, adopted federalism in

Nigeria to unify the diverse groups that made up the yet to be named country in 1954. Despite the aim, the federal system that eventually formed failed to provide a level playing field for all sections of the country as there was an unequal division of the country with the North seen by many to be bigger than the entire South in landmass. This singular feature which was reflected in the larger political landscape, signalled beginning of the flaws believed to have been entrenched in Nigerian Federalism (Otoghile and Eghweree, 2011).

Governance at the Centre

As noted above, Nigeria operates a federal system believed to be unequally divided in favour of center. This section focuses on governance at the center, exploring its workings and how it's shaping growing calls for restructuring of the country. To drive this home, two critical points are examined. These are workings of the federal system and equity in governance mirrored with the patronage politics that thrives.

(i) Workings Of The Federal System

Nigeria runs a federal system many believe is lopsided due to inherent imbalance that leaves powerful central government and weak federating units. This according to Ikeji (2011), engenders marginalization of the federating units since power is centralized as the patronage politics that ensues; see to it that the federating units unequally benefits from the commonwealth. A powerful center as it is the case in Nigeria, leaves federating units financially disadvantaged and this skews the development process. What this means, is dearth of fiscal federalism as federating units becomes 'feeding bottle partners' excited about monthly federal allocation committee (FAC) allocation rituals while vital issue of constitutionally 'assured mutual co-existence' is sacrificed. This leaves awkward patronage politics with 'ethno-religious and primordial coloration, in its trail. This unfortunately, reflect the popular saying that 'he who pays the piper, dictates the tune' but in the Nigerian context, 'the ethnic group that controls *Aso Rock*, adopts Laswell's definition of politics of "*who get what, when and how*", Lasswell (1936). Tilted patronage politics in the Nigerian federal system, has negative impact on governance expected to be fair and just in keeping faith with enshrined constitutional provisions that guarantees flawless operations of federalism, (Aworo, 2011).

(ii) *Equity In Central Governance*

The federal system Nigeria runs arguably lacks equity in several respects. From structural imbalance to tilted 'reward system/patronage politics', equity is arguably in tatters. In the absence of equity in the distribution of both responsibility and benefit, undue competition suffices as it is in the present Nigerian construction. When this is the case, who emerge

victorious in the intricate struggle for power in national politics to pursue 'primordial inclined interest, favours disproportionate distribution of resources to federating units. This according to Ekeh (9175), reflects the civic vs. primordial public divides in most post-colonial African states. Disproportionate distribution of resources to federating units as against fair treatment of federating units irrespective of size, zone ethnic background, stand equity in governance on its head. This consequently fuels subtle struggle among the regions represented by ethnic groups for adequate resources from the center to better their development fortune, (Ikelegbe, 2005).

…and Patronage politics is born

Patronage politics is common in developing climes and democracies, Omobowale (2011) where institutional frameworks, are often underdeveloped. This makes it possible for individuals to manipulate institutions to serve narrowly defined political interest. Although population counts in the sharing of accruable revenue, the manner in which such from the center were shared with embedded ethnic patronage, showed lack of equity in resource governance in the Nigerian federation. While major ethnic groups got more resources on the basis of adopted revenue sharing formula of landmass instead of derivation once used when agriculture sustained the nation, interests of now resource bearing minority ethnic groups of the Delta appear to have been mortgaged. They are now arguably deprived of a voice as they have neither the political leverage nor needed resources to change the unfavourable status quo, (Obi, 2010 and Omeje, 2006).

In a nutshell, the issue of marginalization in governance at the center borders on resource governance and the larger patronage politics that arm-twists the principle of equity and justice in a federal system. This is in addition to the impact it has on national politics. Yagboyaju (Undated) believes patronage politics truncates national political development while Leonard et al (2010) established how patronage politics births exclusionary political atmosphere that promotes strive instead of needed cohesion for development. The table below showing pattern of patronage politics in Nigeria under period in focus gives credence to the assertion that governance at the center operates an alien principle instead of that of equity.

Table 1: Patronage Politics vs Working of the Federal System: Where the Regions Stand

S/N	ITEM & Corresponding Year	NO/% Where The Regions Stand					
		NC	NE	NW	SE	SS	SW
1	NO. of president produced 1966-2014	3	1	5	1	1	3

6	Poverty ratio in the year 2004	67.0	72.2	71.2	26.7	35.1	43.0
9	Occupants of petroleum ministers 1970-2014	2	4	3	-	1	2
11	Rate of absolute poverty 2010	59.5	69.0	70.0	58.7	55.9	49.8
12	Derivation principle 1954-1959	100	100	100	100	100	100
13	Derivation principle 1968-1980	25	25	25	25	25	25
14	Derivation principle 1990-1999	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
15	Derivation principle 1999-2014	13	13	13	13	13	13

Sources: Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, (2010), National Bureau of Statistics (2010).

The 13% derivation policy adopted between 1999 and 2014 arguably favoured major ethnic groups at the expense of the oil bearing Niger Delta region. What this represents, is a curious twist of fate from what hitherto was the case where resource bearing regions, take higher percentage in revenue but the tide turned against wen oil became mainstay of the economy. Negligible percentage in revenue, came to the 'now resource owners as against prior norm. This did little in allaying fear of marginalization by the minority ethnic groups as the centralized federal structure continue to favour major ethnic groups. The resultant agitations in the oil bearing region, culminated in armed militancy between 2003 and 2008 to draw attention to the alleged injustice in the distribution of centrally collected resource and development plight of the region in the face of oil wealth they see elusive to them. Situation like this strengthen argument that inequality in governance and lack of equity in administration of centrally generated revenue, gives credence to the issue of injustice in governance in Nigeria and within context of this discourse.

3.0 Oil, Struggle for Resource Space and the Politics of Revenue Allocation in Nigeria

The Nigerian state is made up of six geo-political zones dominated by three large ethnic groups with numerous minority groups spread across the nation. Intricate political struggle for oil wealth between the majority ethnic groups and the minority in the Niger Delta, exist. This may appear subtle but it is evident to keen watchers of the Nigerian polity and political economy of oil. This is amply reflected in the politics of revenue allocation which many see as unfairly skewed against minority groups but to the advantage of the major tribes. Events that shaped discovery of oil that led to the alteration of the revenue

sharing formula from 50% derivation principle when the major tribes sustained the nation with agricultural produce, gave credence to this. The revenue sharing formula earlier based on 50% derivation principle, changed to 25% between 1968-1980 and 1.5% between 1980-1989 when oil was discovered, (Akpabio and Akpan, 2010). It took sustained struggle by the oil bearing Niger Delta for it to be increased to 13% as enshrined in the 1999 constitution mid-wifed by the Abacha military government.

The politics that followed and later came to be known as the politics of revenue sharing formula as we earlier observed, is seen by many as direct political war between majority tribes and the minority tribes for the soul of the Nigerian oil. This to a very large extent amplifies what has come to be seen as *'national question'* that queries ills associated with the Nigerian federal system and oil politics in Nigeria, (Omeje' 2006; Yusuf-Bagaji et al 2011; Higgins, 2009). Ignoble division created by the struggle for equitable resource distribution, took north-south divide in the heat of the struggle. While governors of the oil rich South-South region wanted increased allocation for example,, those of the North sought maintenance of the status quo of 13% operational till now, retained.. As Agbo; (2013:19-20) had this to say:

> *"The 1999 constitution provides for at least 13 per cent derivation to oil producing states. Due to the agitation of the oil-bearing communities for more it was proposed in the on-going constitution amendment process for derivation to be increased to 20 per cent. This was rejected by 224 votes to 125. This is another interest of the South-South rejected by the North."*

What comes to mind is the subtle but fierce regional struggle for oil resources with majority ethnic groups seen to be muzzling minorities with their numerical strength in an already flawed federal structure. By implication, development is thus removed from oil bearing communities since they bear the brunt of oil production but receive little to mitigate externality of oil production. A chronological account of the derivation principle in the Nigerian federalism shows a steady decline in the percentage resource bearing regions enjoy. In 1966, the hay-day of agriculture, it was 59%. This became 45% in 1970 and 1% in 1979. It was to rise in 1982 when it became 2% and 1.5% in 1984, 3% in 1992 and was jerked to 13% in 1999 after fierce protest for fairer deal from the oil-bearing region of the Delta. With these gradual reductions in the derivation principle, the region missed out on the envisaged benefit that came with the oil boom of the 1970s to 1990s that other regions took advantage of to help their developmental effort. The table below captures transmutation of the revenue sharing formula over time in Nigeria and how it reflects absence of distributive justice.

Table 2: Gradual changes of the revenue sharing formula over time

Major revenue derivative	**Year**	**Allocation %**	**Benefiting ethnic groups/state**	**Effects on the benefiting regions**
Palm oil and Palm Kernel	1954-1980	100%	Igbo	Some measures of development amidst mild protests
Cocoa	1954-1980	100%	Yoruba	Some measures of development amidst mild protests
Groundnut and Cotton	1954-1980	100%	Hausa/Fulani	Satisfactory development
Rubber/Latex	1954-1980	100%	Mid-Western states	Some measures of development amidst mild protests
Crude oil	1980-1999	25%	South-South region	Protest, complaints of injustice and marginalization
Crude oil	1990-1999	1.50%	Niger Delta	Complaints of injustice, marginalization fear of underdevelopment, fear of political irrelevance Ethnic identity negotiation
Crude oil	2000-2014	13%	Niger Delta/South-South minorities	Resource control agitation, cries of marginalization, ethnic identity negotiation, underdevelopment, intra- inter communal conflicts

Source: Eghweree 2016

From the table above, it is clear that sharing of oil resources is tainted with politics to create avoidable division in a plural society like ours. Immediate consequence is open rejection

of the sharing formula as well as the growing call for re-organization of the country to achieve equity and true federalism by extension. All this fuels internal wrangling and call for overhaul of the existing political order. It also amplified an unsettling gap between huge revenue generation ability by the region and the small sum it receives as revenue. Ken Saro Wiwa (Cited in Amnesty International 2005,2) described this situation as *"... unjust, immoral, unnatural and ungodly..."*

Table 3: Changes in Derivation vs Population Principles over time

Criteria	**Year & Percentage (%)**						
	1966	1970	1979	1982	1984	1992	1999-2014
Derivation	59	45	1	2	1.2	3	13
Population	7	12	20	21	23	17	25

SOURCE: Eghweree 2016

As though giving credence to the cries of marginalization by the resource bearing region, the table B above clearly shows how over time, the adopted revenue sharing formula, favoured major ethnic groups to the detriment of resource bearing ethnic minorities. While the ethnic majorities controlled agriculture as resource base of the nation between 1960 and 1966, derivation principle of population 59% while population which equally favoured them, was purposefully left at 7%. However, as the oil economy surfaced between 1979 and 1992, the derivation principle dropped to between 1 and 3 % while that of population increased to between 20-25%. What this implies is simply that the ethnic majorities benefited at any rate, when they held sway through agriculture via high percentage in derivation or through population as oil economy came on board. Larger implication of this is that, there is stifled supply of funds to oil bearing delta region because of an increased focus on population that by extension favours majority groups. This constant feed into the national question which has remained an intractable challenge to Nigeria's existence (Abutudu 2010). If both issues examined above do not paint picture of unjust governance system that excludes well enough, what do we say of patronage politics between 2015 and 2019?

4.0: Patronage Politics, the Niger Delta and the Issue of Justice in Nigeria

As a nation, we have had our fair share of nation building troubles since 2015. This we can see manifested in the management of our collective affairs by those saddled with the responsibility of politically piloting our affairs as a nation. Unfortunately, patronage

politics decried above as elixir spurring identity politics and growing call in many quarters for dismemberment from the corporate Nigerian project is not only obvious, but malignantly notable. Though this may not be obvious at the local and state levels where there is higher degree of homogeneity, same can't be said at the federal level where intractable battle between the civic and primordial publics, remain fierce (Ekeh 1975).

Patronage politics has assumed more daring albeit, embarrassing dimension as political appointments and allocation of state resources are done following primordial inclination; action that negates both equity and federal character principle created to ensure equity and allay fears of marginalization and injustice. Federal character principles recognize plurality of the Nigerian society and as such, recommend that sensitive positions in the centralized Nigerian federal system be shared among the various ethnic groups to give a sense of belonging. Patronage politics deeply embedded in sectional rather than national thinking, promotes primordial interest as against national interest. It encourages exclusion of people of different ethno-religious beliefs and as such, encourages strife and agitation for recognition among groups that should be in harmony if a more equitable governance system were embraced.

This has been our sorry state since independence with the last three and half years, as the tipping of the ignoble patronage politics that encourages primordialism; concept that negates nation building effort. Disenchanted groups within our *'volatile plural society'* can only watch helplessly as the nation face increasing division along ethno-religious lines in the brand of patronage politics that President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2019) choose to play to the chagrin of a nation desirous of cohesion. The table below shows regional spread of head obscurity services appointed by the President Buhari led government and how that meets minimum equity standard of any society, sane or otherwise. In a nation where united is needed to build our broken walls, robbing acidic patronage politics that disproportionately all and sundry in a plural society, is both absurd, condemnable and a direct negation of who we are as a people that accommodate.

TABLE 4: Sample of **unsavoury** patronage politics in Nigeria

S/N	NAME	AGENCY CONTROLLED	STATE	TIME APPOINTED	REGION
1	Ibrahim Mustafa Magu	EFCC	Borno	2017	NORTH
2	Modibbo Hamman Tukur	NFIU	Adamawa	7 Jan, 2019	NORTH

3	Mohammad Adamu	IGP	Nasarawa	2018	NORTH
4	Yusuf Magaji Bichi	DSS	Kano	Sept, 2018	NORTH
5	Ahmed Abubakar Rufai	NIA	Katsina	Jan, 2018	NORTH
6	Abubakar Malami	AGF	Kebbi	2015	NORTH
7	Zainab Adamu Bulkachuwa	APPEAL COURT		2014	NORTH
8	Abdul Kafarati	HIGH COURT chief Judge	Gombe	Sept, 2017	NORTH
9	Ibraham Muhammad Tanko	Acting CJN	Bauchi		NORTH
10	Tukur Yusuf Buratai	Chief of Army staff	Borno	July, 2015	North
11	Mahmood Yakubu	INEC Chairman	Bauchi	Oct, 2015	NORTH
12	Abayomi G. Olonisakin	Chief of Defence Staff	Ekiti	July, 2015	South
12	Sadiq Abubakar	Chief of Air Staff	Bauchi	July, 2015	North
13	Baru Maikanti	GMD, NNPC	Bauchi	2017	NORTH
14	Abdullahi Muhammadu Gana	CG, NSCDC	Niger	2015	NORTH
15	Hameed Ibrahim Ali	Comptroller-General of Custom	Bauchi	August 2015	NORTH

Source: Eghweree (2020).

What is discernable from the table above is patronage politics taken too far in a plural society. Where head of sensitive state agencies and departments of government are headed by people from one section of the country indicates tilted patronage politics to the detriment of expected equity and justice. Unfortunately, this *'unsettling and protest inducing scenario'* has been our lot since 2015 when the President Buhari led government took over the reins of power. Immediate consequence of this is growing loose of faith in the Nigerian

project by disadvantaged groups/region, as well as growing calls for unbundling of the centralized federal system we run as a country.

Oil Politics and Development in the Niger Delta

From the foregoing, discovery of oil and the emergent oil-politics with attendant distorted patronage politics, did not only magnify the nation's underdevelopment, but also plunged the nation into rent-seeking. This is seen in the nation's undue reliance on oil rents to the detriment of other vital sectors of the economy that can drive the growth process. Consequently, stifled growth became inevitable as oil wealth usually exposed to the vagaries of price instability with other sectors too weakened to support the growth process. This in a sense reflects resource curse because available resources would not be able to add value to national development while distorting relevant sectors that can drive the growth process. Besides the economic dimension as seen above, rent-seeking nature of any nation can increase incidents of corruption and underdevelopment nationally and in the oil bearing region of the Niger Delta (Ikeanyibe, 2011).

Niger Delta Oil Era and the development quagmire

While oil fortune was expected to birth development in the oil region of the Niger Delta, existential realities reveal the contrary. Poverty, absence of vital infrastructural facilities, as well as evident underdevelopment, pervades the oil bearing region. The region became capital of poverty despite oil exploration and exploitation with unpleasant consequences on the environment and aqua-culture that once sustained them, (Uyigue and Agho 2007; ActionAid 2015). Uyigue and Agho (2007:19) further noted that:

> *"The people of the Niger Delta are highly dependent on their environment for their source of livelihood. The region has been described as the richest wetland in the world and the home of numerous species of aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals. Before the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta, the people depended so much on the resources from their natural environment. They made their living from the exploitation of the resources of their land, water and forest as farmers, fishermen and hunters. They were attached to their environment. The economic activities of the people were soon distorted as a result of the environmental degradation caused by climate change and exploration and exploitation activities of multinational oil companies. These devastating effects on their farmlands, crops, creeks, lakes, economic crops and rivers are so severe that the people can no longer engage in productive farming, fishing and hunting as they use to do".*

The oil era in the delta represents a significant period in the national history where the economic paradigm shifted drastically from the lands to the rigs. This is particularly interesting when the expected but elusive development is critically considered. Pinning down the development issue of the region, demands critical analysis of situation of the oil bearing region in the age of oil exploration and exploitation in Nigeria. This is particularly interesting in the light of the distorted patronage politics in the Nigerian political system. To do this, focus will briefly be on infrastructure, social services, state of employment and incidence of poverty in both regions.

(I) Infrastructures

State of infrastructure in Nigeria is far from satisfactory. This is aptly reflected in dearth of basic infrastructure nationwide with severity varying from one region to the other(Eghweree 2016). The Niger Delta region has paucity of infrastructure. Where they are available, they are usually few and often times in poor condition (UNDP 2006; Kiikpoye, 2008: 269-270). With only 2% of federal presence in terms of basic infrastructures, the region lacks non-oil industries capable of generating employment opportunity for its younger generation. Riverine areas lack accessible roads due to difficult terrain on the one hand and neglect by the central government. Consequently, water transportation is costly due to high gasoline prices. This made rural transportation difficult for rural dwellers to access, (Chokor 2005, 366). This is also the state of things in health, industrial capacity and educational facilities in the oil bearing region.

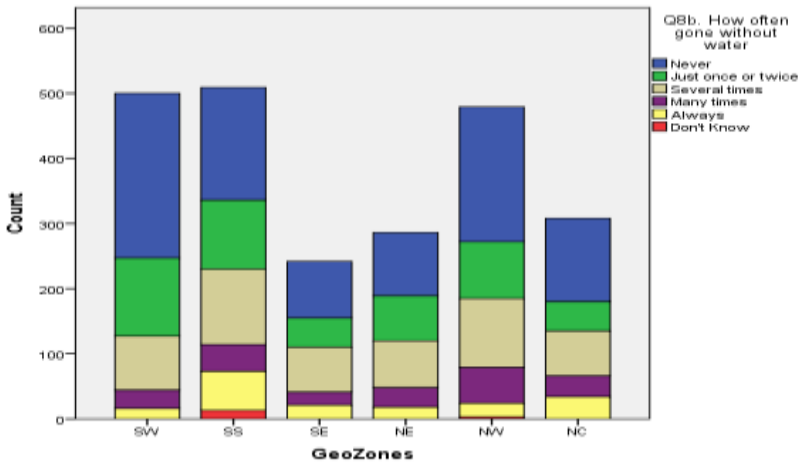
(I) Social Services

The poor state of infrastructural facilities in the oil-bearing delta equally manifests social services available to the people. According to Eghweree (2016), a single doctor was saddled with the task of attending to as much as 82, 000 people in the oil-bearing region against national average of a doctor to 39, 455 and a doctor to average of 41, 000 in the South-West, (Zalik and Watts2006). What this translates to, is that as of 2006, an average of one doctor attends to as much as 150,000 people in core Niger Delta states of Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa. This amplifies dearth of suitable health facilities. Where they exist, primary health care facilities lack basic requirement to meet the health needs of the people. Other basic social goods are equally in short supply. While just 27% had access to safe drinking water in 2004, only 30% were lucky enough to use electricity light, U.N.D.P Human Development Report (2008-2009:28). Confirming the poor state of the social services in the region, the U.N.D.P Human Development Report (2008-2009:28) had noted that the South-South region leads the pack in terms of poverty and inequality in Southern Nigeria. The report observed that about 49% in the region lacks access to improved sources of water. The report noted thus:

> *"Most settlements depend on untreated surface water and wells, which leads to health problems from waterborne diseases. It was estimated that only 20 percent to 24 percent of rural communities and 45 per cent to 50 percent of urban communities have access to safe drinking water. Poor access to adequate drinking water has had serious implications for the general health, environment, economic activity and sustainable livelihoods in the Niger Delta region".*

An empirical data by Afrobarometer in 2009, captured in the graph below, shows that a limited number of people have access to safe drinking water in the South-South region compared to what obtains in other regions in Nigeria.

GRAPH 1: Regional water scarcity



SOURCE: Researcher's computation (2009 Afrobarometer Data/SPSS)

(I) Poverty

Enweremadu (2009:6) noted: *"… [The] increasing poverty rate in the Niger Delta has made the people largely malleable and susceptible".* The point he made can safely be seen to be largely reflective of the level of employment in the region. Consequently, poverty remains pervasive in varying degrees in the regions. From findings, one can say that poverty is extensive and endemic in the oil-bearing region of the Delta (NDES 2007). The incidence of poverty is put at 58.2% in the Niger Delta in 2003 (Kemedi, 2003:8). Meanwhile the UNDP 2006 Human Development Report estimated an even higher poverty rate 74.8%. A strong dichotomy of extremely rural poor and urban rich exists in the region, (Eghweree, 2016, ActionAide, 2015). Much of the poverty that exists does in rural rather than urban

areas. For instance, about 72% of households especially in the rural areas live below the poverty line, (ActionAide, 2015) amidst crippling corruption. The table below captures the poverty ratio in the states of the Niger Delta.

Table 5: Living Standards: South-South

Zones	States	Very Poor %	Poor %	Moderate %	Fairly Rich %	Rich %
Niger Delta	Akwa Ibom	14.0	15.4	16.5	4.5	1.8
	Bayelsa	32.6	14.1	13.4	1.7	2.1
	Cross rivers	17.0	14.1	13.2	3.7	0.7
	Delta	13.6	12.5	14.2	6.0	0.7
	Edo	3.9	12.9	13.9	6.1	1.1
	Rivers	12.0	15.7	19.2	6.2	1.9
Zonal Average		**93.1**	**85.2**	**90.4**	**28.2**	**8.3**
National average		9.5	37.2	47.2	5.2	0.9

Source: National Office of Statistics, 2010

Poverty appears prominent as it increases in the oil-bearing Delta with attendant low income that makes it difficult for the people to meet their basic needs. A clear picture of this was graphically painted by the UNDP (2006, 36-37) in report that associated endemic poverty in the region was to:

> *economic stagnation, agricultural underdevelopment from soil infertility, unemployment, poor quality of life due to shortages of essential goods, facilities and money; isolation and poor communication; government insensitivity; and an unhealthy environment spreading diseases and malnutrition ... poor environmental quality and high levels of pollution, conflict and lack of security, threats to health and wellbeing including HIV/AIDS and unsustainable livelihoods.*

While it is expected that oil wealth might push down the cost of living in the oil-bearing region, the reverse happens to be the case. As UNDP (2006, 36-37) noted, there is an exceptionally high cost of living which never spared cost of petroleum products found in

abundance in the region; and that of accommodation which is in short supply. Prices of those things and especially that of food are tied to the high earnings of oil sector workers, thus making living difficult for non-oil workers. As Ibeanu (2008, 98) observed, "*the cost of living index in the urban areas of Rivers State of 783 is the highest in Nigeria.* Consequently, there is a decline in purchasing power in the region that amplifies poverty. There is thus a paradox of plenty in the region which UNDP 2006 report captured thus:

> *"Its rich endowments of oil and gas resources feed methodically into the international economic system, in exchange for massive revenues that carry the promise of rapid socio-economic transformation within the delta itself. In reality, the Niger Delta is a region suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor, and endemic conflict ... But juxtaposed against the potential for economic growth and sustainable development are deteriorating economic and social conditions that have been largely ignored by contemporary policies and actions. With local inhabitants subjected to abject poverty and suffering in the midst of plenty, some view the oil and gas endowments as a curse and a double-edged sword (UNDP 2006:25)."*

In the light of the above and based on existing realities in the region, one can say that the region hasn't benefited from the oil boom contrary to expected development at the discovery of oil.

5.0: Oil and Revenue Allocation Politics, the Niger Delta Crisis and the Question of *'Justice'*

All we have seen thus far as the oil politics and tilted patronage that dominates the Nigerian polity, one is left with no option than to re-evaluate the place of justice in the undying Niger Delta struggle. The federal system Nigeria operates does not only centralize rents, it hands resources to federating units on a monthly basis. Those not favoured like the oil bearing region, suffer resource glut with unpleasant administrative consequences outside what corruption consumes (ActionAide 2015). To drive the issue of justice in the Niger delta struggle, two key issues are highlighted to showcase extent to which 'justice prevailed' in the management of oil resources in the Nigerian polity in relations to the Niger delta region. These are the oil revenue sharing and ownership of oil wells on regional basis in Nigeria.

Revenue Sharing in Nigeria: Where the Regions Stand

One issue that attracts attention in the political economy of Nigeria is that of revenue sharing. The nation has had to contend with the challenges of how to equitably distribute the accruable wealth from the sales of oil resources. Challenges associated with the revenue sharing in Nigeria Eghweree and Otoghile (2011) are embedded in the peculiarity of the federal structure the nation operates. The political economy of the nation thrives on an intricate oil-politics tangle which arguably makes it possible for the structure of the nation to be altered to serve perceived and entrenched interest indifferent to the very tenets of justice needed to pilot affairs of multi-cultural society. That explains why in spite of massive oil production and revenues accruing to the nation from the South-South region, the economy of the region progressively declined over time. Besides unabated destruction of the ecological system that once supported the agriculture, the region only received small sum as derivation resources from the federation compared to what it contributes and suffers as externality of oil exploitation.

A careful look at the derivation principle in the Nigerian federalism shows a steady decline in the percentage of resource accruing to the bearing regions. While it was it was 59% during hay-day of agriculture in 1966, it became 45% in 1970 and eventually 1% in 1979. It hovered between 2% and 1.5% in 1984 and settled at 13% in 1999 after fierce protest for fairer deals from the oil-bearing region of the Niger Delta. With these gradual reductions in the derivation principle, the region missed out on the envisaged benefit that came with the oil boom of the 1970s to 1990s that other regions took advantage of to help their developmental effort. For example, despite producing 60% of the nation's oil, River State only got 5% as federally allocated revenue and only one fiftieth in revenues of the value of oil it produced between 1970 and 1980 (Watts, 2005:67). This amplified an unsettling gap between huge revenue generation ability of the region and what is receives as revenue. Ken Saro Wiwa, (Cited in Amnesty International 2005:2) described this situation as *"... unjust, immoral, unnatural and ungodly..."* Ownership of oil wells across the nation also shows disproportionate distribution reminiscent of the inverted patronage politics in Nigeria to the detriment of the oil bearing region.

While it is expected that the oil bearing region of Niger Delta would have remarkable representation in the ownership structure of oil wells, this was however not the case. Situations like these, lend credence to the issue of injustice that has accentuated cries of marginalization by the resource bearing region in Nigeria. Table 2, 3 and 4 above showing gradual slide in the revenue sharing formulae to the detriment of the oil bearing region, is seen largely as injustice. What this implies is there is stifled supply of funds to oil bearing delta region because of an increased focus on population that by extension favours

majority groups. This consequently manifested negatively in the development efforts of the region which was openly resisted by the governors of the region and later birthed armed conflict in the region in reaction to the manifest poverty and environmental degradation as well as socio-economic dislocation, Ikelegbe; 2005:15).

The table below showing leadership position of key departments in the Nigerian Oil and Gas industry substantiates the claim of injustice to the oil bearing region. Out of the twenty one key positions, twenty are occupied by people from the North while none from the oil bearing region, is considered good enough to head any of the positions. This further amplifies the skewed patronage politics that dominates the Nigerian political system to the detriment of the oil bearing Delta. This has been the major source of the recurrent Niger Delta crisis that the Amnesty programme of 2008 failed to nip in the bud.

Table 6: Leadership of Key Positions in the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry.

SN	NAME	POSITION	REGION
1	Mele Kolo Kyari	Group Managing Director (GMD)	North
2	Umar Isa Ajiya,	Chief Finance Officer, Finance and Account.	North
3	Yusuf Usman	Chief Operating Officer, Gas & Power	North
4	Farouk Garba Sa'id	Chief Operating Officer, Corporate Services	North
5	Mustapha Y. Yakubu	Chief Operating Officer, Refining &Petrochemicals	North
6	Hadiza Y. Coomassie	Corporate Secretary/Legal Adviser to the Corp.	North
7	Omar Farouk Ibrahim	GGM, International Energy Relations, (IER)	North
8	Kallamu Abdullahi	GGM, Renewable Energy	North
9	Ibrahim Birma	GGM, Governance Risk and Compliance	North
10	Bala Wunti	GGM, NAPIMS	North
11	Inuwa Waya	MD, NNPC Shipping	North
12	Musa Lawan	MD, Pipelines & Product Marketing, PPMC	North
13	Mansur Sambo	MD, Nigeria Petroleum Devt. Company, NPD	North
14	Lawal Sade	MD, Duke Oil/NNPC Trading Company	S-West
15	Malami Shehu	MD, Port Harcourt Refining Company	North
16	Muhammed Abah	MD, Warri Refining and Petrochemical Company	North
17	Ahmadu Katagum	GGM, Shipping (Downstream)	North
18	Abdulkadir Ahmed	MD, Nigeria Gas Marketing Company	North

19	Salihu Jamari	MD, Nigeria Gas and Power Investmt Company ltd	North
20	Mohammed Zango	MD, NNPC Medical Services	North
21	Sarki Auwalu	Director, Department of Petroleum Resources, DPR	North

Source: Nigerian Bulletin available @ www.nigerianbulletin.com/threads/see-names-of-newly-appointed-nnpc-managing-directors.243531/

The table above explains the issue of injustice in the Niger Delta struggle in clearer perspective. While one would expect that the region that produces the oil and faces negative externality of oil production would have tangible stake in the management of the oil resources, existential realities reveal the opposite. This has led to continued quest for fair deal in the vicious resource politics in Nigeria since 2003. Injustice induced waves of violent engagement with the state by the oil bearing Niger Delta region can be traced to the Ogoni uprising, the youth violence and insurgency among pockets of agitations across the region. All these negatively affected not only oil production in the region (Ikelegbe 2004) but national cohesion as it sparked national debate about nation building as far as inclusion is concerned in a multicultural society.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The unending Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria has dragged far too long with no end in sight. Out of all the issues put forward to discuss the issue of the Niger Delta, adequate attention is not given to the critical issue of distributive justice in Nigeria within the context of the Niger Delta discourse. This study went deep to interrogate the issue of resource and patronage politics within the large Nigerian polity and discovered how the Niger Delta was unfairly treated in both resource and patronage politics. This was empirically captured in the number of appointment the region enjoys compares to others as well as the near absence in the management of the oil and gas industry sited in their land. Table 4, 6 and 7 indicating position of the region in national political appointment and position in the oil and gas industry respectively, reinforces the issue of injustice to the oil bearing region. This, the study found, is substantially responsible for the recurrent uprising and troubled peace in the oil bearing region of the Niger Delta.

Recommendations

Peace in Nigeria is desirable as it is the Niger Delta region. Though this has been arguably elusive due to the relentless agitation by people of the oil nearing region for fairer treatment in the sharing of the oil wealth it produces, it nevertheless, vitiate the very

essence of peace needed for both national and regional development in Nigeria. With emphasis on distributive justice in the discourse of the political economy of oil management in Nigeria, the study identified injustice as a factor accentuating the lingering Niger Delta agitation for fairer deal in the management of oil resources in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends the following.

(1) There should be equity in the distribution of oil resources in Nigeria.
(2) The Niger Delta deserves special development attention beyond the bureaucratic bottleneck prone Niger Delta Development Commission that is still struggling to give the oil bearing region needed sense of belonging.
(3) The Niger Delta region should be considered suitable to head national political positions as well as key positions in the Oil and Gas industry.

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