

numerous challenges ahead, many of which revolve around the intelligence question. Undoubtedly interwoven into the intelligence community's activities in the War on Terror is the issue of corporate contractors. One can

argue, for better or worse, their monetary and battle effectiveness. But one cannot claim they are not a majority force, in many respects and in many agencies.

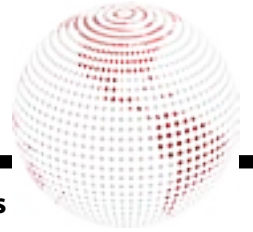
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Getting It Right : Searching for the Elusive Solution in the Niger Delta



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The Niger Delta conflict is one created and exacerbated by the oil and natural gas riches of the region. Great hydrocarbon wealth has been extracted over the past decades, yet Delta residents continue to live in underdeveloped and polluted circumstances. This situation has fueled widespread, and often violent, conflict within the region. While the Nigerian government has made attempts to resolve the conflict, most recently with the 2009 amnesty program, these attempts have repeatedly failed. This essay will discuss these failures, as well as present a set of initiatives for the Delta that, together, represent a possible path for regional rejuvenation.

The June 2009 amnesty program for Niger Delta militants offered by former Nigerian President Musa Yar'Adua represented an opportunity to stabilize the region for constructive conflict resolution negotiations. It was not the first time, however, that an amnesty initiative had been put forward to resolve the violence in the region. Yet it did seem to be an offer backed with solid proposals for the necessary disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the region's militants. Despite this the program was not able to assuage regional violence, largely due to the lack of attention to the peculiar type of conflict in the Delta. Thus, in order to fully appreciate the task of conflict resolution there, it is important to look at past attempts at conflict resolution as well as ideas for the future. In the coming years, the Delta may yet be stabilized and transformed into a region suitable for economic, social and political development.

Environmental Conflict

In order to fully understand how best to address the possibility of future widespread violence in the Delta, it is important to first recognize the particulars of the conflict facing the Nigerian government. Simply, the conflict is one created and exacerbated by

the oil and natural gas riches of the region. Hydrocarbon resources are the engines for Nigeria's economy, as oil provides 95 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and 80 percent of the government's budgetary revenues. Yet the vast majority of the Delta's 30 million residents live with only the negative effects of oil and natural gas production; the environment and its degradation are daily features of life for many. This, in turn, has fueled decades of cyclical conflict that continues to devastate the region.

The petroleum industry is, globally, a dirty industry. Nigeria is no exception. Owing to the wealth of oil and natural gas under their feet, the Delta constitutes some of the "richest real estate" on the African continent.¹ Yet despite this wealth, the region has degenerated into a "severely impaired coastal ecosystem" suffering from "damage from oil operations [that] is chronic and cumulative."² The pollution from petrochemical exploration, extraction and refining poses a constant threat to those whose livelihoods have not yet been disrupted. Rural residents live with "no real development, no roads, no electricity, no running water and no telephones" while only scraping by economically.³ Historically, Delta residents have engaged in farming and fishing as principal sources of household income, livelihoods for which a healthy and productive

environment are critical. As the environment continues to be polluted, the traditional means of economic activity in the region continue to dwindle; there are few, if any, opportunities in their place.⁴ Compensation, clean-up and monitoring practices – whether public or private – continue to be lackluster and hardly effective.

Thus, economic discrimination – including the marginalization of poverty, the creation of national sacrifice areas and a high level of international dependence – has become a pervasive aspect of life for Delta residents.⁵ In response to their common challenges, communities have bonded with “considerable coordination” in order to strengthen the “quality, intensity and extent

The vast majority of the Delta’s 30 million residents live with only the negative effects of oil and natural gas.

of articulation, aggregation and expression of demands... for equity and justice.”⁶ In the Delta, as in other regions of Africa, this organization has culminated in the growth of a nascent civil society that seeks to address the claims of Delta residents against both the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies operating in the region.⁷ Many of these groups are peaceful organizations seeking redress through legitimate channels. Others, however, act through violence and function in a world of gross illegality that further intensifies the conflict.

The Nigerian government is severely handicapped in addressing the demands of these groups. The country is a fragmented collection of over 250 ethnic groups, with each holding “certain basic political orientations” as well as an “unwillingness to alter” those orientations.⁸ Public attitudes and political culture are vehemently localized; history, language, culture, religion and political values stem from communal rather than national experience. Coupled with the country’s

history of military rule, the situation is one where Abuja views political pluralism as a “weapon of potential destruction” rather than a force for good.⁹ The Nigerian state remains fundamentally weak and thus continues to be unable to adequately perform for its citizens, particularly for those in the Delta region.

In the Delta the government has successively failed to execute its duties, evident in a 2002 decision from the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights that found Nigeria to have violated its responsibilities as a government on multiple levels.¹⁰ Corruption is a pervasive problem, and much of the government’s transparency issues are directly related to oil and natural gas activities.¹¹ The Delta continues to lack “adequate social services, viable employment opportunities, or economic growth and development,” while oil funds continue to be diverted, wasted, or both.¹² By law, 13% percent of oil revenues are to be transferred to the oil producing states, yet residents of the Delta see few improvements in their socio-economic situation. Far from being effectively appropriated, the financial wealth simply “seems to disappear.”¹³

Past Government Efforts

Despite their geographic separation from the problem, Nigerian officials have consistently been faced with pressure to resolve the Delta conflict. The past efforts of a confounding series of panels, reports and commissions have overwhelmingly sought to address the root causes of conflict in the region and facilitate a situation in which substantive conflict prevention can take place. Two specific reports – the 2001 Ogomudia Report of the Special Security Committee on Oil Producing Areas and the 2004 Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan – are expressive of both the government’s historical focus on trying to resolve the Delta conflict and its glaring inability to do so.

As the security situation in the Niger Delta began to deteriorate at the turn of the

century, the Special Security Committee on Oil Producing Areas was set up so that the Nigerian government could, in the words of the panel, “beam a search light on the oil producing areas in the quest for a solution” to the region’s deteriorating situation.¹⁴ The resulting Ogomudia Report, released in 2001, comprehensively presented a proposed series of graduated steps with a heavy emphasis on ownership of problems by all involved. Yet it accomplished no tangible gains in the region; the political will in Abuja was simply not present at the time.

The 2004 Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan was a second major attempt by the Nigerian government to address the situation in the Delta. Put forward by the Niger Development Commission, the plan was based on a careful examination of the day-to-day needs of Delta residents. The report sought a comprehensive “package of cross-sectoral, mutually supportive measures” that would effectively address the Niger Delta’s challenges while taking full advantage of the region’s opportunities.¹⁵ The plan rightly focused on wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value re-orientation, facilitated by an expansion of the private sector, the introduction of governance reforms and the development of a social development charter. Recognizing that previous reports were nothing but hollow political acts, the plan offered a specific funding schedule through 2020 and outlined the contributions needed from government and the private sector. It had, however, little effect in reaching its goals.

Both the 2001 report and the 2004 plan expressed the government’s belief that the resolution of the underlying causes of conflict in the region – socio-economic marginalization, lack of adequate services and infrastructure, and governance issues – could act as a viable conflict prevention mechanism for the Delta. Yet only surface attempts at preventing conflict were achieved. The lack of progress can be attributed to the fact that

the litany of reports, plans and committees have not adequately addressed the issue of militarism in the region. Without first addressing militarism, there can be little hope that proposed economic and political initiatives would be able to take root and develop into solutions.

Militarism is the violent culmination of “popular responses to economic mismanagement, economic marginalization and crime waves,” which have historically



Women washing their clothes and collecting drinking water along the Niger

been “prolific and controversial.”¹⁶ This is particularly true in regards to the emergence of youth-led, identity-based social groups. Social movements are a powerful force within the region, and the primary antagonists in the Delta are those whose leadership is dominated by militia and paramilitary members. As the environmental crisis destroyed the economic prospects of many young Delta residents, the ranks of these social groups swelled with youth seeking both recourse for grievances and group solidarity. Since these groups are responsible for the majority of violence and illegal activities in the region, any conflict prevention efforts must address their allure to Delta residents.

In order to address this fundamental obstacle to development in the region, in June 2009 then-President Yar’Adua announced a policy of amnesty for any and all Delta militants, to last from August 4, 2009, until October 4, 2009.¹⁷ The offer of amnesty, and the subsequent plan for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the militants, was widely accepted within the

Delta. A daily food allowance, monthly stipend, the promise of professional education and training, and the personal involvement of the president all contributed to the appeal of the amnesty proposal.¹⁸ What should have been cause for celebration, however, was instead darkened by the memory of the historical failings of the government to follow through on its promises and obligations.

Unsurprisingly, the amnesty program was derailed by allegations of corruption regarding the handling of funds meant for former militants. A key militant group in the region, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), declared the ceasefire over in January 2010, less than six months after the amnesty program was implemented. In March 2010, MEND went further, claiming responsibility for two bombs exploding adjacent to a government building in the city of Warri. The group succinctly stated its position with the announcement that the “deceit of endless dialogue and conferences will no longer be tolerated.”¹⁹ Abuja had again failed, further eroding faith in government and leading to a renewal of violence.

The Way Forward

In the Delta, it will be especially important to take into consideration the stakes each side holds in the conflict, the attitudes of each side toward the other, and the tactics that each side uses to attain its goals.²⁰ Firstly, in moving forward, each side will make gains at certain times. Thus, it will be important to transition viewpoints away from zero-sum attitudes, so that all conflict participants will realize that development and regional stabilization are for their overall benefit. Secondly, by shifting the attitudes of the parties from “conflictual to accommodative,” each will be able to better understand the other’s viewpoints and thus arrive at a more comprehensive and mutually beneficial solution.²¹ Finally, recognizing the importance of tactics in achieving goals will allow each side to understand the best overall

methods to achieve mutual goals in the new positive-sum, accommodative environment. The first issue that must be addressed is the basic socio-economic needs and grievances of



A Nigerian rebel fighter in Northern Nigeria

Delta residents. Economic development, save that required for oil and natural gas operations, is almost non-existent and those living in the area continue to lack access to clean drinking water, electricity and basic social services such as schools and health clinics.²² Unemployment and the perception of hopelessness in the region push “a huge number” of regional residents to “roam the streets feeling alienated and powerless” while making “youth activism, militancy and rebelliousness a common phenomenon.”²³

Socio-economic and political marginalization represents a significant “trigger cause” for conflict “by deepening and expanding the feeling of relative deprivation among the people, and making the tool and means for confrontation... readily available.”²⁴ While militias and other “modes of collective youth action” grow from the “top-down modes of governance and bottom-up responses to disorder,” the level of socio-economic marginalization in the region also represents a significant causal factor.²⁵ By giving disenfranchised youth education, access to basic services and economic opportunity, there would be a significantly lower appeal for opportunistic activities such as kidnapping, oil bunkering and the pursuit of general

violence. A lack of consideration for economic empowerment of the youth population is a grave mistake; youth will soon be young adults, and without legitimate opportunities they will be young adults easily recruited into a new generation of militancy.

Related to this point is an emphasis on graduated development in the Delta. Since resolving the basic issues will likely be a series of long-term initiatives, special emphasis on short-term projects with immediate results should be pursued as ‘good faith’ measures. This would not only jump-start regional development, but would also galvanize popular support among residents who would see quick results that positively impact their everyday lives. Yet although short-term projects can facilitate popular support by providing residents with an immediate tangible impact, these must be successively built on by later projects.

The 2001 Ogomudia Report and the 2004 Master Plan discussed above have an appreciation for this fact. Each incorporates a tiered development process that, in addition to allowing the cost of development to be extended over time, would allow authorities to periodically reevaluate circumstances and adjust development plans accordingly. In the Delta, this is an especially important aspect of development because environmental, political and communal circumstances can rapidly change the situation in which development is taking place. Graduated development allows officials to refocus resources and attention as time goes on, since what was planned in the past may not be relevant, necessary, or desirable in the present.

A third initiative for the region is the prevention of environmental problems to the greatest possible extent. The costs to the regional population from petrochemical activities are two-fold. There is the immediate cost to well-being from environmental problems such as oil spills, gas flaring and the general toxicity of pollution. Yet there are also the long-term costs of diminished

economic capacity as degraded rivers, lands and air hamper the ability of residents to earn a traditional living. By maintaining a high level of ecological awareness and protection there would likely be fewer bitter feelings, less economic marginalization and less reason for residents to turn to violence.

A fourth initiative, directly related to the above emphasis on environmental protection, is the need to hold oil corporations operating in the Delta accountable for their actions and policies. In the past, conversations about the proper role of oil corporations in the regions have been regarded as “polemical” with the corporations maintaining that “corporate social responsibility cannot replace effective governance.”²⁶ Yet corporate policies and procedures are vitally important in the region, since it is the corporation that is doing the drilling. Corporate responsibility should be comprehensively practiced to ensure that past failures are not repeated. Due to the importance of the region for corporate revenues, the first step should be to recognize the importance of development initiatives to regional stability.²⁷

Oil corporations must recognize that they are, by their very presence, an integral

Without first addressing militarism, there can be little hope that proposed economic and political initiatives would be able to take root and develop into solutions.

part of the Delta community. By investing a portion of corporate revenue back into the region, corporations would be able to reduce the impetus for violent action from those who feel cheated. Development initiatives supported by oil corporations should be substantive and avoid frequent mistake of degenerating into “some sort of PR exercise” that serves the corporate public image at the expense of the region.²⁸ There must also

be a commitment by the oil corporations to effectively control the use of force. Allegations of excessive bloodshed in the Delta by private security firms in corporate employ, as well as by government forces, serve to further inflame emotions and contribute to the desire to take violent action for revenge and retribution. Finally, there must be a commitment by the oil corporations to maintain a high level of environmental responsibility. This includes ensuring that oil facilities are properly maintained and that prompt action to address overall ecological clean-up is taken when problems do occur.

A fifth initiative for the region must be the promotion of an effectively organized civil society. A cohesive civil society movement – whether professional associations, non-governmental organizations, grassroots movements or communal groups – must be maintained to help ordinary residents gain a voice in the regional development process. A statement succinctly summarizing the characteristics of civil society in the Delta, and in Africa generally, deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

“In Africa, civil society activities have been characterized by popular mobilization, social protests, opposition, advocacy and criticisms in favor of reform, change, accountability, control of state excesses and abuses, and have contributed immensely to regime and policy changes, democratization, increased liberalization and observance of civil rights.”²⁹

In many ways civil society is already a positive force for change in the region, owing to the region’s transformation into a “broad, participatory, highly mobilized and coordinated platform” on which groups can act.³⁰ Indeed, community development associations, communal and ethnic groups, youth organizations, environmental groups and civil rights groups have “blossomed” in the last decade.³¹ These groups represent the cornucopia of “regional, ethnic and...

localized responses” to the “fear of domination and marginalization” they face on a daily basis.³² Civil society groups must also be matched with global partners and supporters, given adequate resources and be allowed to continue their work on behalf of Delta residents.

A sixth initiative should be the inclusion of a variety of global actors in the Delta regeneration project. The international community – whether governments, individuals, civil society groups or international and regional organizations – can play an important role in providing funds for development, supporting local communities and maintaining a degree of pressure on the Nigerian government and oil corporations to keep promises and maintain transparency. This international support is especially critical in the wake of the 2009 amnesty program, in which external third-party support mediation, negotiations and peace implementation were viewed as necessary to effectively maintain the program’s integrity. The international community has a clear stake in the comprehensive resolution of the Niger Delta conflict, and any short-term costs of support would surely be outweighed by the long-term benefits.

The final initiative, and one of the most critical, is the creation of an effective and accountable governance regime that encompasses the local, state and national levels. The lack of good governance in the region is a principal conflict accelerator, and resolving this problem would offer enormous benefits on multiple levels. Indeed, many of the initiatives outlined in this paper and in official Nigerian documents are impossible to be implemented effectively without first fundamentally addressing the governance issue.

In Nigeria, as in many other African states, the government still struggles with the legacies of its colonial past. There continues to be “no convergence in thoughts, objectives, and actions between the rulers... and the

ruled.”³³ This fact, combined with the socio-economic and political marginalization of the region, creates a situation in which many residents perceive an acute degree of isolation from the political process. This is a critical issue that must be addressed for two reasons. Firstly, the disconnection between government at all levels and Delta residents creates a situation ripe for violent action, as residents will increasingly turn to violence and militancy rather than legitimate grievance channels. Secondly, residents will be more likely to view government programs and initiatives with suspicion, decreasing the likelihood that they will view themselves as stakeholders in the area’s development.

Steps must be taken to address the lack of a “genuine” political process in the region,³⁴ the general disenchantment of residents with government at all levels, the problems of corruption and lack of transparency and government’s seeming inability or unwillingness to provide basic goods and services to the region. Yet, like the other initiatives, these programs must be successively built on to continually address the issue of governance. Without doing so, the government risks an intense and emotional re-escalation of violent conflict.

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Conclusion

Three lessons can be taken away that should influence future decisions concerning solutions to the Niger Delta conflict. First, there is a need for comprehensive conflict prevention measures that include programs, policies, and initiatives focused on addressing the multi-faceted nature of the area’s problems. There is no single solution from one actor, but rather a collection of solutions from many actors. Second, it is not enough to simply build roads and open schools. Rather, conflict prevention should be approached holistically while putting the focus on “human-centered values and norms of peace, social justice, and freedom.”³⁵ By focusing on a wide variety of socio-economic, political, governance, security, and environmental issues, the disparate root causes of unrest can be addressed and resolved. Finally, there must be a creative approach to conflict prevention in the region. If one recognizes that the region is a complex and quickly changing environment, interested parties can understand the value of creative and compromising approaches for conflict prevention in the Niger Delta.

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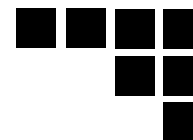
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The Same Bed: Articulating a Continuity Thesis in US-China Policy



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This analysis of U.S.-China relations was motivated by what I perceived to be misplaced "controversy" over Obama's China visit in autumn 2009 and his subsequent policy initiatives, which despite all of the public scorn are really no different from those of previous administrations. The paper singles out a rarely-articulated coherent logic in the history of U.S. foreign policy towards China, one that I argue can also predict U.S. policy in the present and future.

Introduction

In a controversial and popularly cited 1999 *Foreign Affairs* article, Gerald Segal posed the question "Does China matter?" in response to growing international attention regarding China's economic miracle over the preceding decade. Segal's answer, "the Middle Kingdom is a middle power - China matters far less than it and most of the West think, and it is high time the West began treating it as such"¹ resonates considerably less today; since then, both China and opinion regarding it have advanced significantly, giving rise to new fears and perceptions of U.S. foreign policy. In 2007, the *Financial Times* boldly suggested that "the era of American global dominance is coming to a close" and may be overtaken by China in about twenty years.² Alarm over conciliatory policies in this newly perceived context is commonplace and unsurprising, as exemplified by the sharp criticism of Obama's China policy in the wake of his state visit to Beijing last month. His critics in Congress, non-governmental organizations and the general public bemoan that a hard line on China, rather than the open-handed approach of the Obama presidency and his compromising character, would fashion a tougher and ultimately safer stance on China for national security and prosperity.

However, this common narrative belies the complex realities of the Sino-American relationship. It unfortunately makes

up in popular appeal, by indulging in a public fearful of its national decline, what it lacks in a sound understanding of past and present U.S. political relations with China and the Far East. Despite journalistic and scholarly claims to the contrary over the years, current U.S. foreign policy regarding China follows in a long pedigree of bilateral relations that have, over the last two decades especially, formed and severely constrained the range of policy options available in the present day. The realities and complexities of this relationship effectively limit the influence that any one ideology or personality in power may have. In spite of the rhetoric of U.S. leaders and the much-publicised occasional "crises" that have marked the tumultuous nature of Sino-American diplomacy, this study argues that U.S. foreign policy towards China has not only exhibited remarkable continuity since and during the Cold War, but will continue to be unremarkably predictable in coming years. Rather, the perceived multiplicity of policy options is a misperception arising from the traditional and systemic conflict between Congress and the Executive over China policy.

US-China Bilateral Relations: The Traditional Macro-History

In traditional terms, the story of U.S. foreign policy towards the People's Republic of China (PRC) is divided into two distinct periods – the Cold War and the period since the Cold