Resource Control, Federalism and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Reflection on Nigeria at Fifty

Fred Ekpe F. Ayokhai
Department of History, Federal University Lafia, Lafia, Nigeria

Bwashi Rufai
Programmes Department, National Orientation Agency, Plateau State, Nigeria

Abstract
At fifty, Nigeria's nation-state project is still being called to question and strong fears are expressed for a possible disintegration. Some make bold to suggest that the current contraption may not survive beyond 2015. A section of this school thinks that the Nigerian nation-state project was a "mistake" that is about to be corrected. Others think it is a noble dream that is slowly being awaken to and feasible in spite of the huge challenges. The challenge of the national question which in part rests on the tripod of federalism, resource control and the elusive peace in the Niger Delta region is often held culpable for the failure of Nigeria to realize her full potentials as an emerging federal African state. Rather than make progress, she is caught in a cycle of debilitating conflict imposed on her by what appears to be the struggle of various sections of the Nigerian elite to appropriate control of public resources. The continuous exacerbation of the conflict in the Niger Delta and the inability of the post-independence state in Nigeria to resolve it provide the evidences required by the pessimists to question the prospect of the continuous survival of the Nigerian nation-state. This paper critically interrogates the practice of federalism, the resource control palaver and the elusive peace in the Niger Delta of post-independence Nigeria. It finds a positive correlation between them, but concludes that just as the conditions for conflict and disintegration are evident, so are those for sustainable peace, survival and development. The paper points the way towards the understanding of these dynamics and their resolution.
Keywords: Federalism, Niger Delta, Peace, Resource control.

1. INTRODUCTION
National security and peace in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria were top on the Yar'adua/Jonathan democratic regime's seven point agenda for socio-political stability and advancement of the nation to one of the top twenty economies of the world by 2020. The underlying assumption of this policy was that insecurity and violence, among other variables, were responsible for the crisis of development that engulfed the nation for most of her post-independence life. Repositioning her on the path of socio-political and economic advancement therefore requires conscious and deliberate re-engineering away from the malaise that held her back from progress. The policy thrust of the regime on security and peace in the Niger Delta region was unmistakably founded on the objective and material historical conditions of the Nigerian federal state bequeathed to it by the preceding regimes. This is illustrated by the spate of violent conflicts that engulfed the region, especially since the return of the nation to democratic rule in 1999. Giving the fact that the region provides over eighty percent of the petro-dollar that runs the nation, the absence of peace in the region is tantamount to the loss of monumental national revenue capable of bringing the national economy and overall social peace to a precarious state. The position of this paper is that the structure of the Nigerian federal state and the nature of the control of natural resources within it were the critical contentious issues that enthroned violent conflict and robbed the Niger Delta of peace. This process is historically examined in this paper with a view to identifying those issues in the practice of federalism and resource control that encouraged violent conflicts and negatively impacted peaceful co-existence. It also intends to find useful lessons that may assist the on-going peace building process in the region for the overall interest of national peace and security in Nigeria.

2. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS
Some concepts are central to this historical interrogation. They include the Niger Delta, federalism, resource control and peace. Their clarification is therefore key to our understanding of this discourse.

2.1 THE NIGER DELTA
The Niger Delta is a territory that covers about 70,000sq. kilometers (Olulu, 2003; Ekpo, 2004) in the southernmost part of Nigeria. It stretches from the Nigeria – Cameroon boundary in the east to the Ondo – Ogun states boundaries in the west of Nigeria. The area is also bounded in the north by Enugu, Ebonyi, Anambra, Kogi and Ekiti states. It is generally bounded in the south by the Atlantic Ocean.
       According to Omoweh (2003:12), the region comprises about 1,600 communities. The number of communities is put at over 3500 and the dialects at not less than 260 in 185 Local Government Areas(LGAs) and

nine states of the federation, with a population estimated at over 20million(Ekpo, 2004: 1). The four core states are Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. Others are Abia, Cross Rivers, Edo, Imo and Ondo states (Onuoha, 2005).

The Niger Delta hosts over 95% of Nigeria's proven oil and gas reserves. Its natural gas reserves were estimated at 174 trillion cubic feet in 2005. Only about 20% of its gas is currently used to generate electricity. It is estimated that at its current rate of production, it will last another 110 years. Also, the proven oil reserves amount to 32billion barrels. At the current rate of production, it is estimated to last another 37 years (Olulu, 2003:16; NEEDS Nigeria, 2004). The Niger Delta produces two million barrels of oil per day, which makes Nigeria the sixth largest producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). In addition, the Niger Delta is the world's second largest wetland, comprising mangrove swamps and low lying alluvial plains at the end of the Niger River, one of the great tributaries of sub-Sahara Africa, making it an incredibly fertile land (Hurst & Concannon, 2006: 7).

There are more than fifty distinctive ethnic groups in the Niger Delta. The cultural mix of the peoples is as diverse as the languages they speak. Generally, the peoples of the Niger Delta belong to what has been described as the high context cultures. In other words, they are more communal than individualistic in lifestyle. The family is the basic unit of social organization with the father presiding over the affairs of the family. The major occupation of the peoples is farming and fishing.

By and large, though the Niger Delta and the peoples that inhabit the area are often perceived as a single cultural and, sometimes, political unit, the fact however is that this is not historically correct. It is their common feeling of political alienation and marginalization in the control of the natural resource which they play hosts to and the consequent struggle to redress the situation that provides them the unity of purpose that generates the new identity of oneness in the public domain. This explains, partly, not only the horizontal but also the vertical direction of violent conflicts in the region.

2.2 FEDERALISM

Federalism is conceived as 'the method of dividing powers so that the general and regional governments are each within a sphere coordinate and independent' (Wheare, 1964: 187). This definition has remained the benchmark for the practice of federalism in all states structured along its principles. Its principle of coordinate and independent different levels of government promotes the concept of separation of powers between the central government and the component units within a given territory. Federalism is therefore a system of arrangement that promotes the sharing of governmental powers within a country. According to Nwabueze(1983:1), it promotes the division of governmental powers:

> between a national(nation-wide) government and a number of regionalized governments in such a way that each avoids, as a government separately and independently from the others, operating directly on persons and property within its territorial area, with a will of its own, and its own apparatus for the conduct of its affairs and with an authority in some matters.

The perspectives on federalism converge on a basic fundamental principle that it is a device for dealing with the problem of unity in a plural society. In this regard, Livingstone (1969: 12) lays emphasis on the economic, socio-political and cultural factors that shape the federal qualities of a state. To him, the objective of federalism is compromised unity in diversity. Whereas, Wheare is of the view that each unit should be financially independent, Riker (1964: 12) contends that a federal state should be a product of political bargaining among the component units.

However, modern global trends in the practice of federalism suggest a need to rethink the federal concept as a panacea to the problem of diversity, especially in multi-ethnic societies. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and the emergence of two republics from the defunct Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia (Obi, 2005: 190-191) and, even in Africa, the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia all expose the limit and impotence of the federal system. Consequently, it is the position of this paper that a combination of Wheare's financial independence, Livingstone's sociological factors and Riker's political bargaining, anchored on the morality political culture and situated within the historical trajectories of each society should be the minimum benchmark for negotiating a federal state.

2.3 RESOURCE CONTROL

Roberts and Oladeji (2005: 276) see 'resource' as a useful material or substance, which in a technical sense refers to the positive interaction between man and nature. It is thus a means designed to satisfy the given ends of individual wants and social objectives. According to them, resource is a social relation having two basic attributes of utility and functionality. Therefore, the essence of a resource is its functionality, rather than 'the thing itself'. Consequently, when nations or regions within nations struggle for the control of a resource, they struggle not for the resource in itself, but for its material or financial value.

Some scholars have tried to define what is meant by resource control. While one group conceives it as

the total take-over of the resources located in the resource producing states by the people of those states, others understand it to mean that the stakeholders in the resource-bearing area should manage greater proportions of the resources harnessed in those areas (Roberts and Oladeji, 2005: 277). Nevertheless, as presently used in Nigeria, resource control may be taken to mean 'the substantive powers for the community to collect monetary and other benefits accruing from the exploitation and use of resources in its domain and deploy same to its developmental purposes'(Ya'u, 2001: 46).

Bannon and Collier (2003) have argued in their study that countries dependent on natural resources for governance are most likely to be blighted by conflict. Also, according to Benjamin (1997), conflicts over the distribution of state resources and the control of resources within communal territories add to the difficulties of political accommodation in many federations. One is however inclined to agree with Roberts and Oladeji (2005: 278) that 'the extant link between resource dependence and conflict derives, not simply from the mere fact that a nation enjoys natural resource endowment but more from the manner in which natural resource abundance is most often mismanaged'.

2.4 PEACE

Conceptualizing peace has not yielded itself easily. There is no one known definition that exhaustively clarifies it. What we therefore have is a myriad of perspectives. It is probably out of this sheer complexity that one writer have observed that 'We may have all possible reasons against war--but how does this help us when we are unable to say what peace is, can be, shall be?' (Rudolf Pannwitz, 1950).

For the purpose of this paper, we find the definition provided by the Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia very instructive. It conceives peace as 'a quality describing a society or a relationship that is operating harmoniously'. It assumes peace 'is commonly understood as the absence of hostility, or the existence of healthy or newly healed interpersonal or international relationships'. It extends to include 'safety in matters of social or economic welfare, the acknowledgment of equality and fairness in political relationships and, in world matters'. Thus, 'peacetime is a state of being absent of any war or conflict'.

Conceptualization of the nature of peace is also enmeshed with considerations of the causes of its absence or loss. Among these potential causes are: insecurity, social injustice, economic inequality, political and religious radicalism, and acute racism and nationalism (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). From the Anglo-Norman *pas*, and meaning "freedom from civil disorder", the English word came into use in various personal greetings from c.1300 as a translation of the biblical terms pax and Greek *eirene*, which in turn were renderings of the Hebrew shalom (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). Shalom, cognate with the Arabic "salaam" has multiple meanings: safety, welfare, prosperity, security, fortune, friendliness. The personalized meaning is reflected in a nonviolent lifestyle, which also describes a relationship between any people characterized by respect, justice and goodwill. This latter understanding of peace can also pertain to an individual's sense of himself or herself, as to be "at peace" with one's own mind attested in Europe from c.1200 (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). The early English term is also used in the sense of "quiet", reflecting a calm, serene, and meditative approach to the family or group relationships that avoids quarreling and seeks tranquility — an absence of disturbance or agitation(Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

For the purpose of this study, it will suffice to conceptualize peace as the absence of war, violence, conflict and the deployment of force in the relations between the central government, the units and its members for the purpose of resolving differences. In other words, it perceives peace as a state in which differences among members and units of the federation are resolved without recourse to the use of force but through means that ensure justice, fairness and equity.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is anchored on the theoretical premise that political behavior in any state is directly and critically related to its political culture. It is argued that political culture is characterized by the individualistic, the moralistic and the traditional subcultures (Elazar, 1972). Political culture is itself a product of dialectical historical materialism.

According to the foregoing characterization of political culture by Elazar, the moralistic subculture conceives politics as a way of promoting public interest in a manner that can advance societal conditions. Thus, it promotes 'a strong participatory norm' in which politics is a concern for both citizens and public officials (Peters and Welch, 1978: 346). Consequently, the standard of public conduct is anchored on the moral code, which eschews acts that are capable of jeopardizing public interest.

On the other hand, the individualistic subculture perceives politics as another way to get ahead. Therefore, according to Peters and Welch (1978: 346), persons entering politics are expected to do so to accumulate wealth and gain personal esteem. In this case, the government is not meant to advance the public interest but individual interests and concerns. The traditional subculture shares the character of the individualistic in the sense that it is marked by an elitist political style in which 'public officials are expected to benefit

personally from politics'(Peters and Welch, 1978: 346). In the same vein, both cultures, as Elazar (1972: 95) observed, have a high tolerance of corruption because politics is restricted to a class of elites.

In every political system, it is the conduct and the activities of private and public officials perceived as norms that affect the promotion or otherwise of peace, stability and growth. One of such norms is clientele politics. Here, politics is essentially based on patron-client relationships. According to Hague and Harrop (2001: 116), it is a technique common to authoritarian leaders with strong inclination to structure political participation. It is also a relationship in which government agencies advance the interest of the client groups they are responsible for supervising and regulating (Heywood, 2005: 364). Politics in a clientele state is therefore the practice where particular groups in the polity receive a disproportionate policy advantage on the basis of their access to policy makers at the expense of the larger society (Kesselman et al, 1996:633).

In a way, this may facilitate the consensus building process and benefit the polity in a developed state. However, in a developing state such as Nigeria, this is most likely to prove counter- productive, dysfunctional and impinge the course of peace, stability and progress. The enormity of the effect of clientele politics on Nigeria was noted by Kesselman et al (1996, 633) when they observed the manifest neglect of her public infrastructure and the prevention of the full utilization of her productive capacities.

4.   METHODOLOGY

This study is a product of historical research methodology. It is therefore an ex-post facto research. It depends largely on content analysis of secondary source materials such as books, journals, magazines, and newspapers. All source materials were subjected to historical criticism to validate them and their contents. This also ensured the elimination of possible distortions in their contents.

5.   FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's federalism is one of the legacies bequeathed to her by colonialism. It dates back to the 1946 and 1954 constitutions. The First Republic provided the first indigenous attempt at Nigeria's experimentation with the inherited federal system of government. Under this arrangement, the Nigerian state was structured into three regions. In 1963, a fourth region was added. These were the Northern, Eastern, Western and Mid-Western regions. Between the regions and the Federal Capital Territory of Lagos, political   power was devolved in a manner that defined the federal character of the Nigerian state. Though the ethnic minority groups of the Niger Delta expressed their grievances against their perceived marginalization in this regional arrangement, it was the advent of the military in Nigerian politics that exacerbated the conditions that produced violent conflicts and eroded peace in the area.

This is because the advent of military autocracy aborted the process of federalization in Nigeria. According to Obianyo (quoted in Alli, 2005: 183), 'It is not out of place to state that the federal process came to a halt with military rule in Nigeria'. It embarked on the centralization of political power in the manner that conformed to its unitary character. The unitary command character of the military was imposed on the Nigerian state to make it amenable to military rule. Beginning with the overt attempt of the Ironsi junta at decreeing Nigeria into a unitary state to the pretentious attempts of the subsequent military regimes at federal restructuring, Nigeria went through a long, tedious and tortuous journey into over-centralization of political power, distortion of relations between the federating units and the disarticulation of the Nigerian federalization project. The 1979 and the 1999 constitutions authored by the military and bequeathed to the succeeding civilian regimes were anything but federal except in name. The attempts at practicing them have resulted in great complications such as are manifest in the serious breaches of peace in the Niger Delta.

6.   RESOURCE CONTROL IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is a mono-cultural economy. Over ninety percent of the revenue of state is earned from the oil sector. This implies also that Nigeria is a natural resource dependent state. The sharing of the revenue accruing from this resource has been particularly problematic, resulting in a cacophony of contending perspectives on its ownership and control. Resource control is one of the perspectives that are being strongly canvassed as an alternative to the central control currently practiced in Nigeria.

The central control of natural resources currently in force in Nigeria is premised on the economic assumption that it has the capacity to bring about macroeconomic stabilization and the redistribution of income and wealth. This stems from the assumption that the central government is alive to its developmental responsibilities to all parts of the country in a manner that demonstrates justice and equity. As Roberts and Oladeji (2005: 277-278) have pointed out, 'this is not always the case, especially where the central government's responsibility is mediated and undermined by the strong influence of ethnicity and regionalism'. They further observed that whenever this is the case, the inequalities in fiscal federalism and the politicization of the principles governing resource sharing lead to a clamor for resource control. The history of resource control in Nigeria appears to lay credence to this position.

Resource control, in this discourse, is perceived as one of the manifestations of the struggles of the ethnic minority peoples of the Niger Delta to redress perceived injustices and inequalities in fiscal relations among ethnic nationalities, regions and political units within the Nigerian federation. It is also perceived as necessary fallout of the degradation of their environment and the callous neglect of their conditions by the central government, which is seen as advancing the interests of the ethnic majorities to the detriment of the minorities.

The agitation for resource control by the Niger Delta ethnic minorities stems primarily from the trajectories of the nation's fiscal federalism. Between the 1940s and the mid-1970s, particularly before oil and gas became the dominant sources of revenue, the control of natural resources would seem to have been vested in the regional governments. Though the 1963 constitution did not provide for the ownership and control of mineral resources by the producing states, their entitlement to fifty percent of the proceed (Roberts and Oladeji, 2005: 282) based on the provisions of the derivation principle, and a share in another 30 percent, with the Federal Government being entitled to only 20 percent (Roberts and Oladeji, 2005: 282) made it almost impossible for the producing states to feel alienation, marginalized or unfairly treated in any form in the distribution of national wealth. From the mid-1970s, when oil and gas took the center stage as the nation's revenue earner, the prominence of the derivation principle did not only begin to recede, but also natural resources became increasingly centrally controlled.

This twist of event has been accounted for by the allegation that with the ascendancy of oil as the major revenue spinner of the federation, 'the intelligentsia of the ruling majority ethnic groups considered derivation excessively favoring the minority oil producing states and hence, negating the principles of equity and fairness, among other values' (Roberts and Oladeji, 2005: 282). In the same vein, Mbanefo and Egwakhide (1998) noted that the recession of derivation in the revenue sharing formula was related to the 'political' reasoning that it had the potential to lead to a radical shift in revenue from the very influential and powerful majority groups to the minority.

Consequently, the revenue realized by the oil producing states from derivation principle became negligible in the 1980s (Mbanefo and Egwakhide, 1998). This status quo was sustained through the Revenue Mobilization and Fiscal Commission which ensured that only one percent of the Federation Account was set aside and shared among the mineral producing states on the basis of derivation.

It was during the constitutional conference and the Constituent Assembly in 1996 that the need for the peoples of the oil producing areas to have a greater share of the revenues derived from their areas became acknowledged as worthy of fair consideration. It was on this premise that a section was inserted into the 1999 constitution to provide that:

the principle of derivation shall be constantly reflected in any approved formula as being not less than thirteen per cent of the revenue accruing to the Federation Account directly from any natural resources(Nigeria,1999).

In spite of this provision, it took intense agitation by the oil producing states for the provision to be implemented. When the provision was eventually implemented, the Federal Government limited it by subtracting the percentage attributed to the offshore oil, which according to extant legislations in Nigeria, belonged to the Federal Government.

With the failure of the central government to live up to its developmental responsibilities to the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta, it did not take long before the central control of resources begin to run into troubled waters, which generated several agitations by ethnic nationalities and militias that breached the peace of the nation.

7. THE BREAKDOWN OF PEACE IN THE NIGER DELTA

The violation of peace is not novel in the history of the Niger Delta. Though, it may be convenient to date this development in post-independence Nigeria to the 12-day revolt of Isaac Adaka Boro in 1966, the historical process predates independence. The breakdown of peace in the Niger Delta is better understood within the context of the prevailing trajectories of nation-building in Nigeria. This paper disagrees that the hiccups faced by the Nigerian federal state in creating and sustaining peace as part of its nation-building efforts are rooted in the "mistake of 1914", though it concurs that they have some colonial origin(Ayokhai, 2009a,b).

On 1st April, 1939, the British Colonial Governor of Nigeria, Bernard Bourdillon, divided Southern Nigeria into two halves, Western and Eastern Regions. Some scholars argue that the justification of dividing the southern region was in recognition of its heterogeneous composition. The division, they argue, allowed the Yoruba and Igbo peoples in the south some control over their territories (Banigo, 2008). The larger Northern region was retained as one administrative and political unit. Some scholars posit that the retention of the Northern region as a single political unit was informed by the fact that 'it was considered homogenous, easy to administer and generally peaceful' (Ogbogbo, 2006).

Whatever is the real reason for the colonial division of Nigeria, the important thing is that the ethnic

groups in the Niger Delta found themselves split into two different regions in which they suffered the status of minorities. As Ogbogbo (2006) noted, this split up, ostensibly for administrative convenience, resulted in the balkanization of the territorially contiguous peoples of the Niger Delta into two political and administrative units as minorities.

The effect of the regional policy on the Niger Delta peoples has been captured by Okorobia (quoted in Banigo, 2008: 353) as follows:

> If there was any single policy which was so effectively used to internally colonize and underdevelop the erstwhile virile and progressive city-states of the Eastern Delta, it was the regional policy...as a result of this policy our study area (Eastern Niger Delta) was brought under the social, political and economic domination of the larger, aggressive and self conscious Igbo ethnic nationality. A number of political, economic and social policies and programmes were initiated and executed by the Eastern Region Government, and these had more negative than positive impact for the land and people of Eastern Niger Delta. Some of these impacts have been so grave that not even the creation of states had been able to mitigate them.

With this kind of perception of their place in Nigeria, the Niger Delta peoples acted to liberate themselves from "internal colonialism" by the larger ethnic groups. The agitation for state creation became important to the Niger Delta peoples because it was a sure way to assert their distinctive self-identity, liberate their people, control natural resources in their domain and gain political space in the polity. The period between 1954 and 1959 witnessed intensive politicking by the Niger Delta peoples to realize their dream of a separate state. This failed at the 1957 constitutional conference in London, but it led to the establishment of the Henry Willink Commission (1958), which later assembled 'to ascertain the facts about the fears of minorities in any part of Nigeria and to propose means of allaying those fears whether well or ill founded. Though, the commission did not recommend the creation of a state for the Niger Delta, it however recognized a widespread neglect of the peoples, their peculiar environmental difficulties, and recommended the establishment of a mechanism to cater for the needs of the area (Report of the Willink Commission, 1958: 94).

Though the Niger Delta peoples were disappointed at the outcome of the Willink Commission, they were not deterred. They established the Niger Delta Congress, a political party, to continue the constitutional agitation for the creation of state. The party participated in the 1959 elections but its candidate lost in the election. The party's manifesto was however clear as to its position when it stated that "The Niger Delta should be exorcised from the Eastern and Western Regions and be constituted into a unit of the Nigerian federation with simple governmental mechanisms seated in the territory to foster economic, political and social programmes" (Banigo, 2005: 65).

The frustration suffered by the constitutional means deployed to press home the Niger Delta cause led Isaac Adaka Boro to form the Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) with 150 warriors. He tried to pull out the Ijo people of the Niger Delta by a violent struggle for self-determination into a new state called the Niger Delta Republic. The twelve days rebellion was violently crushed by the Nigerian state and Isaac Boro and two of his accomplices secured the death penalty.

The hegemonic struggles that characterized the politics of the First Republic eventually played out in favor of the Western Delta minorities when the NPC – NCNC coalition government successful excised them from the Yoruba dominated Western Region controlled by the Action Group (AG). The creation of the Midwest Region in 1963 did not however liberate the Eastern Delta minority ethnic groups. For instance, about a quarter of a million (Report of the Willink Commission, 1958) Ijo people still remained in the Eastern Region dominated by the Igbo.

The January 15, 1966 coup terminated the First Republic and ushered in the military government of the federation. In July, 1966, the Ironsi led regime was overthrown in a counter-coup that brought the Gowon government on board, but not before he had decreed Nigeria into a unitary state. The Gowon regime, which was confronted with the secession of the Eastern Region under Ojukwu was forced by exigencies of the war situation to reconstitute the four regions structure of the federation into a twelve state structure as part of measures aimed at forestalling the disintegration of the nation. This arrangement further liberated the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta left in the Eastern region. The nineteen state structure bequeathed by the Murtala regime which succeeded Gowon's regime further expanded the political space for all Nigerian ethnic groups, including the Niger Delta minority ethnic groups. The Shagari civilian regime that succeeded the Murtala/Obasanjo regime left no legacy of state creation or restructuring. It was plagued by the same problems that characterized the First Republic and was overthrown by another military coup in 1983 and Buhari became Head of State. Probably, the brevity of the regime, which was overthrown in 1985, did not live it much space to live any noticeable positive impact on the historical landscape of Nigeria. Save for its draconian laws and rule, the regime is hardly remembered for anything tangible (Ayokhai, 2009b: 108).

The period between 1985 and 1999 is often considered the most significant in the history of military governance in post-civil war Nigeria. Though the period saw increase in the number of states to twenty – one,

then thirty – one and later thirty – six, it is argued that the conditions that engendered conflict and enthroned the breach of peace were largely created or exacerbated in the period.

It is argued that this long period of military rule led to the consolidation of the militarization of social life and public psyche. Dr. Frederick Fasheun (quoted in Akinwumi 2003: 349-350), the leader of one of Nigeria's ethnic militias buttressed this position when he noted that:

> We had a type of military government that made itself repressive and malevolently coercive. However, the long exposure to coercion and repression so successfully bastardized our psyche and destroyed our vital values that Nigerians even protested when soldiers were temporarily withdrawn to the barracks, with traditional rulers leading delegations to military administrators to beg for restoration of military presence in the streets. We no longer felt safe without this undue militarization. Yet the military personnel delighted in brutalizing the "bloody civilian" populace, seizing traders' goods, confiscating their wares and destroying people's property and dwellings. Each successive military government created a terror squad by which it became known and remembered. And such squads did nothing but help their founders to perpetuate corruption, militarization and repression.

In a similar vein, erstwhile Chief of Army Staff under Sani Abacha, Gen. Chris Ali (quoted in Akinwumi, 2003: 350) maintains that:

> ...the Nigerian psyche has been moulded into a frame of militancy and respect for the use of force.... The course of jungle law has been promoted by the state through terrorism, torture, murder and by every conceivable means, but due process.

The most visible evidence of militarization is found in the extra-judicial killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others by the Nigerian State under the leadership of Gen. Sani Abacha. Saro-Wiwa was an environmental right activist who sought to redress the devastation of his Ogoni homeland through the activities of oil exploration by multi-national corporations and the Nigerian state. There is no doubt that this singular action of the state went a long way in strengthening the resolve of groups in the Niger Delta to resort to militant expression of defiance against the oppressive rule of the Nigerian state and its penchant for the deployment of force in resolving matters of resource control and nation-building. It was like blowing the whistle to call out the peoples to take up arms. The killing of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) leaders cleared any doubt that might have existed. They became convinced that the only logic the Nigerian state understood was the use of force.

When we add up this to the socio-economic hardship which the mass of Nigerians were subjected to as a result of failed governmental policies and programs such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), it is not difficult to see the source of the army of unemployed youths which serviced the various militia groups across the country, including the Niger Delta's.

8. INTERFACING FEDERALISM, RESOURCE CONTROL AND PEACE IN THE NIGER DELTA

The negotiation for resource control by the peoples of Niger Delta has expressed itself, especially in the last two decades in the form of conflict, violence and the deployment of force. The Niger Delta conflict and the consequent loss of peace are a fall-out of the "National Question" that is plaguing the federal state in Nigeria. Though, it has been dated back to the colonial period, this paper does not subscribe to the view that the 1914 amalgamation was a mistake. Nonetheless, it agrees that the breakdown of peace in the Niger Delta is, partly, a fall out of the colonial process. This position requires some explanations. First, the amalgamation was carried out by the colonialist on behalf of the imperial state to serve its interest. Thus, if the amalgamation fulfilled its colonialist agenda, then Lord Lugard could not have made a mistake. The true mistake in this respect lies with Nigerian scholars perceiving colonization as a paternalistic service to Africa, including Nigeria (Ayokhai, 2009a, b). Second, Nigerian Scholars also assume that the indigenous state systems did not face challenges similar to the ones being faced by the post-independence Nigerian state. The evidence of civil wars in the Sokoto Caliphate, among the Yoruba city-states that succeeded the Oyo Empire, which itself is a case study for conflict in the nineteenth century, and the Benin Kingdom, to mention a few, suggests a contrary historical reality(Ayokhai, 2009a,b). Third, ethnicists in Nigeria are often guilty of wrongful assumption when they suggest that the Nigerian federal state should be restructured in such a manner as to coincide with ethnic boundaries. This perspective derives from the wrong assumption that pre-colonial Nigerian states were organized exclusively on kinship basis. The historical evidence from the Sokoto Caliphate, Oyo Empire, Benin Empire, Ibadan City-State, the Niger Delta city-states, etc. suggests the contrary. Rather, the historical reality is that the colonial amalgamation of Nigeria is, in the least, an indication that a Nigerian State is feasible. It is in the inadvertent admission of this much that the 'nationalists' did not opt to go their different ethnic ways during the process that led to the independence of Nigeria (Ayokhai, 2009a, b).

The breakdown of peace in the Niger Delta did not derive from the mistake of the colonialists as much as it is from the mismanagement of resources and the Nigerian federal system by the elites entrusted with the task. Having made this point, it is important to further clarify the objective content of federalism, resource

Research on Humanities and Social Sciences
www.iiste.org
ISSN (Paper)2224-5766 ISSN (Online)2225-0484 (Online)
Vol.5, No.24, 2015
IISTE

control and peace in the Niger Delta. These issues therefore are a part of minority rights agitations in Nigeria. Suberu (1996: xi) pointed out this when he noted that 'Ethnic minority tensions and agitations are an important feature of the ongoing struggles to resolve the "national question".

Beside the agitation of the ethnic minority in the Niger Delta against their 'subjugation' in the two regions in southern Nigeria which was initially characterized by demands for the creation of states for the minority groups, the 1980s witnessed the expansion of the scope of the Niger Delta conflict to include more demands. These demands have been summarized to include the need for the federal state to address the underdevelopment and official neglect of the region (Nigeria: Vol.1 Report of the Special Security Committee on Oil Producing Areas), the return to the practice in the country before petroleum became significant, (namely the full implementation of the derivation principle), adoption of the practice in other federations and other oil producing countries, which decentralized ownership and control of mineral rights, and the need for environmental justice (Roberts, 2005). These demands constitute the content of the conflict which over time came to deny the Niger Delta peoples and the Nigerian federal state their highly prized peace.

Basically, the Niger Delta conflict has shifted focus from the demand for the creation of states for the ethnic minority groups in the region to the demand for justice for environmental degradation and pollution occasioned by oil exploration and the review of fiscal relations between states and communities in the region on the one hand and the central government in the Nigerian federal state on the other. Consequently, a series of governmental actions in the practice of Nigeria's federalism in reaction to the demands of the peoples of the Niger Delta have further aggravated the feeling of marginalization. The invasion of Odi in 1999 by the federal army, the legal resolution of the onshore-offshore dichotomy in favor of the federal government, the ceding of the Bakassi Peninsula and the shoddy handling of the resettlement of the Bakassi returnees in their fatherland, the failure of the national conference conveyed by the federal government to resolve the vexed issue of an acceptable revenue sharing formula and the blatant refusal by the federal government to return to the fifty percent derivation principle of the first republic 'has generated intense controversy and anger in the Niger Delta'(Naanen, 2007). This has not also been helped by the failure to reverse the environmental degradation and pollution of the region, the absence of and dilapidation of social infrastructures in the region and the poverty of the people. The deployment of the Joint Task Force (JTF) of the Nigerian Army to engage the militants has further complicated relations between the federal government and the Niger Delta peoples and further endangered peace.

The Niger Delta peoples argue that their condition has remained largely unchanged because the skewed federal system practiced in Nigeria 'continues to ensure the transfer of resources from the Delta region to other parts of the country while the main source of the wealth remains neglected and poor' (Naanen, 2007). By and large, the Niger Delta conflict and the accompanying breach of peace are a product of the failure of the Nigerian federal system to resolve the feeling of marginalization as perceived in the non-resolution of the issues of resource control, revenue allocation, environmental degradation, underdevelopment and poverty of the ethnic minority peoples of the region, among others.

9. CONCLUSION

From the forgoing, it appears tenable to reach the conclusion that, though the attractiveness of federalism as a governance mechanism derives from its potential to meet the demand in contemporary political systems for constructing an efficient, dynamic and peaceful modern state, it has not lived up to this expectation in Nigeria. Rather, the evidence from this study points to the fact that federalism, as practiced in Nigeria, did not only fail to avert conflict, violence and the deployment of force in the negotiation for resource control, but also promoted the breach of peace through national fiscal policies which the peoples of the Niger Delta considered hostile.

The way out of the cycle of conflict, violence and force in Nigeria is first to rethink the theory of peace from which the current panacea for resource control flows. Public policy actions, and sometimes statements, strongly reflect a perception of peace as the mere absence or termination of conflict and violence. The action by the Joint Task Force (JTF) of the Nigerian military and the consequent amnesty program aimed at disarming the Niger Delta militants lay credence to this position. Also, since the nature of Nigeria's federal state is as essentially structured by the military governments; there is no doubt that the military's perception of peace as essentially the termination of conflict and violence through the engagement of force and related strategies has gravely impacted it. This in turn has made the Nigerian model of federalism antithetical to peace building.

Therefore, a new concept and theory of peace, which leans more towards "peace as community" (Peck, 1987); "peace as action" (Cox, 1986) and peace as reducing separation appears to be the way forward. Of these, I suggest that conceptualizing peace as reducing separation may be the most useful. This is partly because it incorporates "community" and "action", and community is by definition less separated than non-community while reducing implies action. The thinking here is that once the proper concept of peace is adopted and operationalized in the character of a new model of federal system, resolving the resource control debacle will not entail conflict, violence and force and genuine peace would have been restored and the fear of a relapse

would have been allayed once and for all.

REFERENCES

Akinwumi, O. (2003). Ethnic Militias and Violence. In T. Falola & S.J. Salm (eds.). *Nigerian Cities*. New Jersey: Africa World Press Inc, pp.349 - 363.

Ayokhai, F.E.F. (2009a). National Integration and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: Reflections on the Niger Delta Question, 1999-2009. Paper Presented at the National Conference on "A Decade of Democracy(1999-2009): Reflections on Nigeria's Fourth Republic". Organized by the Dept. of History and Archaeology, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai on the 18th - 20th May, 2009, pp.1 – 17.

Ayokhai, F.E.F. (2009b). The Niger Delta Conflict and the Practice of True Federalism in Nigeria, 1999 – 2009. *NASHER Journal*, 7(2), pp.105 - 111.

Banigo, Y. (2005). Isaac Adaka Boro, My Account. *The Guardian,* 11 July, p.65.

Banigo, Y. (2008) The War is Not Over: The Ijo Struggle in Post-Civil War Nigeria. In A.M. Adejo (ed.). *The Nigerian Civil War: Forty Years After, What Lessons?* Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, pp.349 – 373.

Bannon, Ian and Paul Collier (2003). *Natural Resource and Violent Conflict: Options and Actions*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Benjamin, Solomon A. (1997). Politics of Accommodation in Nigerian Federalism: Analysis of Some Selected Issues. Ph.D Research Proposal Presented to the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan.

Cox, Gray (1986). *The Ways of Peace: A Philosophy of Peace as Action. (*Paulist Press).

Ekpo, U. (2004). *The Niger Delta and Oil Politics*. Lagos: International Energy Communicational Ltd. Publishers.

Elazar, D. (1972). *American Federalism: A View from the States*. New York: Crowell.

Hague, R. and Harrop, M. (2001). *Comparative Politics and Government: An Introduction* (5th ed.). New York: Palgrave Foundations.

Heywood, A. (2005). *Politics* (2nd ed.). New York: Palgrave Foundations.

Hurst, C. & Concannon, P. (2006). *Oil and Corporate Recklessness in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region*. London: Longman Publishers.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace

Iwara, A.U. (2004). Identity Politics, Globalization and Socio-Political Engineering in Nigeria. In D. Oni, S. Gupta, T. Omoniyi, E. Adegbija & S. Awonusi (eds.). *Nigeria and Globalization: Discourses on Identity Politics and Social Conflict*. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), pp.19 – 36.

Kesselman, M., Krieger, J. and Williams, J. eds. (1996). *Comparative Politics at the Crossroads*. Lexington D.C.: Heath and Company.

Livingstone, W. (1969). *Federalism and Constitutional Change*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mbanefo, G.F. and Egwakhide, F.O.(1998) Revenue Allocation in Nigeria: Derivation Principle Revisited. In K. Amuwo, A. Agbaje, R. Suberu and G. Harault(eds.). *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd. and IFRA, pp.213 – 231.

Naanen, B. (2007). The Niger Delta and the National Question. In E.E. Osaghae & E. Onwudiwe (eds.). *The Management of the National Question in Nigeria*. Okada: Igbinedion University Press, pp.197 – 206.

Nigeria (1999). Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. Lagos: Federal Government Press.

Nigeria (2002). Volume1 report on the special security committee on oil producing areas submitted to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR on Tuesday 19th February.

Nigeria (2004). NEEDS. National Planning Commission.

Nwabueze, B.O. (1983) *Federalism in Nigeria under the Presidential Constitution*. London: Sweet and Maxwell.

Obi, C. (2005) Oil and Federalism in Nigeria. In Onwudiwe E. and R.T. Suberu (eds.). *Nigerian Federalism in Crisis: Critical Perspectives and Critical Options*. Ibadan: Programme on Ethnic and Federal Studies.

Obianyo, N.E. (2005). Federalism, Constitutionalism and Local Government System in Nigeria: the Need for Constitutional Amendment. In W.O. Alli (ed.). *Political Reform Conference, Federalism and the National Question in Nigeria*. Nigeria: The Nigerian Political Science Association, pp.175 - 196.

Ogbogbo, C.B.N. (2006). Nigeria – Niger Delta Relations 1960 – 1995. In O. Akinwumi, O.O. Okpeh,Jr, & J.D. Gwamna(eds.). *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, pp.550 - 569.

Olulu, C.E. (2003). The Legal Interpretation of Resource Control in Nigeria. *The Enterprise Journal.* February, Vol.5, 7 - 20.

Omoweh, D. (2003). Governance, Democratisation and Development in Niger Delta. In Nyong, E.E. Oladipo, E. (eds.). *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Sustainable Development of the Niger Delta*

Region (Port Harcourt: NDDC).

Onuoha, A. (2005). *From Conflict to Collaboration: Building Peace in Nigeria's Oil Producing Communities.* London: Adonis and Abbey Publishers Ltd..

Peck, M. Scott (1978). *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*.Touchstone.

Peters, J.G. and Welch, S. (1978). Politics, Corruption and Political Culture: A View from the State Legislature. *American Politics Quarterly,* 6(3), pp.*345* - 346

Riker, W. (1964). *Federalism: Origin, Operation and Significance*. Boston: Little and Brown.

Roberts, F.O.N. and Oladeji, A. (2005). Federalism and Resource Control Governance in Nigeria: The Resource Control Palaver. In Alli, W.O. (ed.). *Political Reform Conference, Federalism and the National Question in Nigeria.* Nigeria: The Nigerian Political Science Association, pp.274 – 292.

Roberts, F.O.N. (2005). Resource control. In A. Owosekun, O. Ojowu & F. Egwakhide (eds.). *Contemporary Issues in the Management of the Nigerian Economy: Essays in Honour of H.M.A.* Onitiri. Ibadan: NISER, pp.332-360.

Rudolf Pannwitz (1950). Quoted in R.J. Rummel. *Understanding Conflict and War:* Vol. 5. In http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/TJP.CHAP3.HTM

Suberu, R.T. (1996). *Ethnic Minority Conflict and Governance in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.

Wheare, K.C. (1964). *Federal Government* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Willink Commission (1958). Report of the Willink Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and the Means of Allaying them. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Colonies by Command of Her Majesty. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office.

Ya'u, Y.Z. (2001). Resource Control and Social Justice in Nigeria. In Uba Sani (ed.). *Federalism, Resource Control and Social Justice in Nigeria (*Kaduna: Northern Coalition for the Protection of Democracy), pp.44 – 52.