CITIZENSHIP QUESTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN THE NIGER DELTA: A CRITICAL REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT

On a global proportion, human activities are altering the composition, nature and texture of the environment. It is often argued that in the absence of man, these environmental changes would take place. However, what is of concern today is the pace of the change and the relationship between the presence of man and his deleterious impacts on the environment.

One of the very important subject matter increasingly gaining attention on its own right as a result of the impact of globalization is the question of citizenship rights and privileges. In developing countries of Africa, like Nigeria, the impact of globalization on citizenship notions is threatening. The emergence of an ever-expanding global world order and its interest in environmental resources has created an alarming dichotomy in citizenship notions especially in the wake of the Ogoni crisis in November 1995.

This paper attempts a critical interpretation of the crisis in the Niger Delta of Nigeria in the light of citizenship questions. It concludes that such an interpretation allows for the transcending of boundaries on citizenship claims and stakes. It also provides the bridgehead for proffering certain categorical imperatives that will ensure peace.

Keywords: Citizenship, Environment, Conflict, Domination, Niger Delta

1. INTRODUCTION

"The major and fundamental problem with the current Nigerian nation-state is that it is based upon the principle that Nigerians are not equal. This principle which violates a basic human need underlies the structure of the Nigerian federation, the opportunities guaranteed individuals and the construction of the constitution" (Festus Iyayi).

"We cannot take communion from the altars of a dominant culture which confuses price with value and converts people and countries into merchandise" (Eduardo Galeano).

This paper attempt to place a thematic focus on the concept of citizenship and questions clustered around it as valid theoretical capstone for explicating the causes of environmental conflict and crises in Nigeria, with particular reference to the Niger Delta. The incidence of environmental crisis in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria has been a topical issue both within and outside Nigeria. Of

interest and concern has been the level of ecological degradation, human rights violation, the strangulation of the economic means of survival. The scars of this ecological crisis are evident. Towns and villages in the region have continued to experience the ravaging effect of oil explosion, the roads have been destroyed and rural farming, fishing and hunting ventures stifled. The ugly sight and the woes are endless. They are better imagined than experienced. But this is the daily experience of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta.

There are different schools of thought on the root cause of the conflict and crisis in the Niger Delta. No doubt, at the heart of the crisis is the struggle and the desire to control a natural resource – oil. For some, bad governance explains why there are incessant conflicts in the region. Others maintain that the root cause consist in the evolution of a class structure in Nigeria with its corrupt and venal outlook on the national coffers. The list is endless.

In this paper, the central thesis is the view that environmental crisis in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta taken to its zenith by the Ogoni case in 1995 and ongoing disturbances in the Warri case are the outcome of disparate attitudes on the question of citizenship occasioned by the problems of alienation. This is anchored on the view that there seem to have evolved in Nigeria's socio-political history a systematic, calculated and structured sense of political, economic and social exclusion of groups in the distribution and share of national advantages and privileges. In demonstrating the thesis of this paper and in following the arguments to its logical conclusion, it is worth asking some questions: how do we define citizenship? What are the peculiar strands of thought about the idea of citizenship in Nigeria? What is it about the nature of citizenship in Nigeria that makes it conducive to conflictuality? What is conflict?

2. DESCRIPTIVE AND THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT

Perhaps the most enduring, even if not the most accurate, image of Africa in the last quarter of the 20th century has been that of a continent of political upheaval, social unrest and collapsing state. Africa thus stands singled out as a continent of uniquely violent politics, a continent where uncertainty makes the everyday life of the people even more demeaning and demanding than in other poorer parts of the world[1].

How conflicts and violence should be tagged is still an issue of debate and controversy. Ordinarily, a state of conflict is said to exist where there is interaction between at least two individuals or groups whose ultimate objectives differ (Nicholson 1971) In the case of violence, Girvetz (1974: 185) has defined violence as "harm perpetrated on persons or property ranging, in the case of persons, from restraining their freedom of movement to torture and death, and,

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[1]   See Chabal (1994: 179). For a contrary view, see Laitin (1986: ix).

in the case of property, from simple fine or damage to complete expropriation or total destruction."

It must be understood, however, that the concept of conflict is multi-dimensional; it envelops a family of forms. We select one depending on our analytical framework, practical problems etc. Since theoretical constructs are normally appropriated from everyday life before being given their specialised and technical meanings, such analytical specificity not only aid our thinking, it also gives it direction. Moreover, it creates room for a correct application of our theoretical concept in an analysis of the causes of the peculiar patterns of conflicts given certain social condition. An attempt will be made to centre attention on the concept of environmental conflict. However, the source of environmental conflict cannot be divorced from the political setting operative in a given society, hence its close connection with the idea of political conflict.

2.1 THE NATURE OF POLITICAL CONFLICT

Conflicts that exert an effect, directly or indirectly, on the direction and content of public policy are political conflict. In essence, political conflict is ultimately about publicly determined access to public goods and services. Such goods and services, we may note, may be as a result of environmental exploitation and exploration. For example, government's direct policy on the deforestation and forest resources becomes a political matter especially when it is done to restrict or deny certain groups from access. In this case, any conflict that erupts as a result of such a policy may centre on the distribution of the rights and privileges available in the public domain. "The key to understanding political violence and conflict", argues Neiburg (1969), "must be found in the dynamics of bargaining relationships rather than in the chance issues of the conflict." The nature of political conflict therefore resides or is situated in the structure of power and the various attitudes or social behaviours that spells or dictates access to it.

It is against this background that Miall (1992) suggested four criteria as useful in describing a conflict situation with its attendant political dimension. According to Miall:
1. A conflict can only exist where the participants perceive it as such;
2. A clear difference of opinion regarding values, interests, aims, or relations must lie at the root of a political conflict;
3. The parties in a conflict may be either states or significant element of the population within the state;
4. The outcome of the conflict must be considered extremely important by the parties (Miall 1992).

Political conflict, however, does not lie in mere difference of opinion, values, etc. It is the desire or resolve to achieve those differences of opinion and interests, put into action, that denote or describe, properly, the conflictuality. It

is to this end that Lewis Coser (1956: 8) describes conflict as a "struggle over values, claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the 'opposing' parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals." Conflict may suggest to us an idea of or picture of struggle, but then it is not in every case that opponents are eliminated, if we take the notion of elimination literally. For instance, someone may lose the position of dominance but may not be totally denied or bereft of status, power or resources nor eliminated in the sense in which it is couched above.

Descriptively, political conflict can be seen as a situation of interaction involving two or more parties in which actions in pursuit of incompatible objectives, or interests, results in varying degrees of discord (Deng 1996: 220). Charles Tilly argued that conflict "seem to grow most directly from the struggles for established places in the structure of power" (Tilly 1969: 4-45). It is the struggle for access to opportunities, life chances - to the existing rights and privileges of society, which define citizenship within the nation-state. The nature of the prevailing political order and the social morality it sponsors or promotes are crucial elements that goes into the nature and pattern of conflict that occurs in such polity. In Nigeria, however, the struggle for places of power appears to have evolved a peculiar pattern. Empirical, sociological evidences seem to be demonstrating the validity of the view that conflict in Nigeria is about identity. The logic of conflict seems to be rooted in the problem of identity. In what follows, I shall attempt to establish the relation between the problems of alienation and citizenship, and their effects on the generation of environmental conflict and violence in Nigeria. But then, how do we conceive the environment? And, in what does environmental conflict consist?

3. INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

On a global proportion, human activities are altering the composition, nature and texture of the environment. It is often argued that in the absence of man, these environmental changes would take place. However, what is of concern today is the pace of the change and the relationship between the presence of man and his deleterious impacts on the environment.

Since the end of the Cold War more prominence has been given to the role of environmental factors in shaping global security and international relations (Klare and Thomas 1994; Miller 1995: 1-13). In a nutshell, the environment or ecology for short has generated much interest in the relation between countries and within countries. This interest can be located within two realms: the realm of the theoretical and that of the practical. It is intellectually correct to state that the practical gave birth to the theoretical. Simply stated, the practical was borne out of the struggle within and between states for the control, exploitation, manipulation and access to ecological resources. The attendant problems, which these tendencies have generated, have been the stimulating tonic for academic

researches and the production of intellectual energies and output in terms of resolutions, agreement, laws, conventions etc[2]. Moreover, the impact and the widespread of globalisation as a universal phenomenon have also heightened the status of concern about the environment. But first, what is ecology or the environment?

Ecology is about understanding the relationship between living beings and their environment and to fully appreciate their interdependence (Wahren 1991: 8). It refers to "the intricate web of relationships between living organisms and their living and nonliving surrounding" (Council on Environmental Quality 1970: 6). In a related sense, the term environment is defined to include "water, air, land and all plants and human beings or animals living therein and the inter-relationships which exist amongst these or any of them. In a nutshell, the environment can be perceived to mean the whole complex of physical, social, cultural, economic and aesthetic factors which affects individuals and communities and ultimately determine their form, character, relationships and survival.

Three basic factors combine to determine the impact of human society on the environment. These are: the number of people, the average individual's level of consumption or affluence, and the technology used to produce agricultural and industrial outputs. The underlying truth can be seen in Simon de Beauvoir's argument that:

> Man, mankind, the universe, and history are "detotalized totalities" that is, separation does not exclude relation, nor vice-versa. Society exists only by means of the existence of particular individuals... each finite to each other, though they are all open to the infinity of the future and their individual forms thereby imply each other without destroying each other (de Beauvoir 1996: 36).

There has always been a one-to-one relationship between the level of population and the use, control and access to resources found in the environment. In cases where such resources are strategic, the desire for control has been found not only limited to the population of the country concerned; also, external economic agents within the international system have been contending factors in the use, control and access to such resources. Lewis Coser, in defining conflict hinted at the view that, conflict can be described as struggle over values, claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the 'opposing' parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals. The idea of the impact of the population, the idea of scarce resources and the pattern of denial of access to such resources are the tripod stand on which this study aims to interrogate citizenship and environmental conflict in Africa with examples drawn from Nigeria. The population of a particular country refers to

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[2]   An instance is the Stockholm Conference of 1972 held from 5th to 16th June, organized by United Nations Conference on Human Environment. See also Resolution 2996 of the United Nations General Assembly of December 15, 1972.

its citizens. Conflict over resources stems from denial of the rights and privileges of citizenship. The concept of population is inherent in environment, and environment is likewise implied in population. The process of interaction between the two plus the mediating role of the Nigerian state in the uncontrolled commercialisation of natural resources-oil in this case, without a corresponding improvement in the living standard of the people particularly inhabitants of the oil producing areas has done more in the occurrence of conflict and violence in this area than any other factor.

4. CITIZENSHIP QUESTIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: HISTORY AND SOME BACKGROUND ISSUES

In November 1995, an Ogoni playwright, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Nigerians were executed for complicity in the murder of four prominent Ogoni chiefs after being found guilty by a military tribunal. Almost immediately, the domino effect of that spiralled (1) the immediate suspension of Nigeria from the commonwealth, an organisation she joined in 1960 after gaining independence, (2) the West and South Africa castigated the government for the judicial murder. These actions nearly turned the country into a pariah nation with little or no friends in the international community. The process of events that led to the conflict is historic.

The antecedents of the current predicament of the Niger Delta lay in the era of Gunboat Diplomacy and Protectorate Treaties obtained through coercion. In the 1850s, 1880s and 1890s, the rule of the British was rather draconian. The people were sucked more and more into the vortex of colonial rule. An obvious consequence of this is the consciousness created in the people that the talk of human rights and freedom was at best mute. Their hatred of oppression was a catalyst in their quest for freedom. At independence, the situation grew worse. While British colonialism sponsored an image of an external master – servant relationship, independence in 1960 celebrated and engineered an image of an internal master – servant relationship. At both levels, the Niger Deltans (inhabitants of the Niger Delta) were forced to have a perception of their status as that of victims of a historically unfair process. Seen thus, the situation of the Niger Delta, from earliest times, had always been precarious. In plain language and at the risk of sounding simplistic, the Niger Delta Questions are political, economic and social – they elicit citizenship questions.

More important is the view that environmental conflict in Nigeria stems from the desire of the state, engineered by the ethnic group having access and monopoly over power, to control total rents from oil without a corresponding improvement in the living standards of the direct inhabitants of the oil producing areas. Its attitudes to these inhabitants are a direct reflection of its neglect of the entire society distinct from it. According to Rowell,

> Oil and environmental conflict are rooted in the inequitable social relations that under gird the production and distribution of profits from oil, and its adverse impact on the fragile ecosystem of the Niger Delta. It involves the Nigerian State and oil companies on one side, and the six million people of the estimated eight hundred oil producing communities concentrated in the seventy thousand kilometre Niger Delta on the other. (Rowell 1994)

In contention is the oil-rich environment, the manner of distributing its wealth and the survival of its inhabitants who depend on the ecosystem for their basic needs and livelihood. The host communities of the Niger Delta are of the view that since oil is mined in their land, and they suffer from the pollution and environmental degradation attendant to oil production, they have the right to adequate compensation, a clean and safe environment, and a fair share of oil rents, while the state and its partners, the multinationals, insist on the optimisation of rents and profits on the basis of the modalities defined exclusively by the partnership.

An obvious deduction from the scenario is the factuality of domination of power and politics in Nigeria by the ethnic group in control of the state since independence and the alienation of other groups as marginalized groups. This viewpoint is sounded in clear terms in a communiqué signed by The Niger Delta People's Movement for Self-Determination and Environmental Protection at a meeting held in London on January 9th 1999. It is the view of the movement that the spate of killings and destruction of lives and properties in the Niger Delta is the "classic exhibition of the insensitivity, incompetence and inefficiency of successive Federal Governments of the Northern Oligarchy since Independence on 1st October 1960 to date". This is what Myron Weiner tagged the development of a 'mono-ethnic tendency'. Myron Weiner in the following words describes this process:

> In country after country, a single ethnic group has taken control over the state and used its powers to exercise control over and used its power to exercise control over others... In retrospect there has been far less 'nation-building' than many analysts had expected or hoped, for the process of state-building has rendered many ethnic groups devoid of power or influence. (Weiner 1987)

The history of this tendency can be traced to the role of the colonial state in its control and distribution of the resources of the colony to the advantage of the British foreign interests it represented. The colonial state was principally an instrument of domination, and as such it was not representative of the views of the colony. It sponsored only the economic policies of the interest it represented. To this end, the resources were used to advance British interests. After independence, the colonial state gave way to the post-colonial state, controlled by the ethnic group that succeeded in controlling state power. In the federal arrangement in Nigeria, the federal government had the sole prerogative of the

control of state resources. Moreover, it was responsible for the allocation of revenue to the various units that forms the federation. According to Nnoli, "revenue allocation in Nigeria was always approached from the point of view of inter-ethnic struggle for the national cake" (Nnoli 1995: 103). In one word, the history of environmental conflict in Nigeria can be attributed to the inter-ethnic struggle for resources the most crucial being the control of the rents from oil. This can be deduced from the following thus:

> In the inter-ethnic struggle for resources in Nigeria the most crucial asset was control of the federal government. Two major historical factors account for this. One is the partisan character of the state...the state was biased in group struggles and made no pretence about being neutral in inter group relations...The other factor is associated with the interventionist role of the state in the economic life of the society. It was the state that set up capitalism in the country. Therefore, it actively intervened in production and distribution of goods and services, often in favour of one or the other of the contending groups and classes. (Nnoli 1995: 104)

Historically, therefore, the occurrence of conflict over access and control of oil resources in the Niger Delta can be traced to the inherent contradiction that exists in Nigeria's federal set up. The most critical point perhaps revolves around the oil producing minority-nationalities of the Niger Delta and the Nigerian State and its destabilising potential, when combined with other internal contradictions. This set of internal contradictions can be traced to the existence of disparate attitudes to Nigerian citizenship and the related component of alienation. How do we then conceive of citizenship in Nigeria? And, what accounts for the alienation?

4.1 CITIZENSHIP STATUS AND ALIENATION IN NIGERIA: THE CASE OF THE NIGER DELTA.

At the beginning of the 1990's, citizenship is emerging as an important concept in socio-political discussions and discourses. As a term, citizenship denotes, opines Crompton, "full and participating membership of a nation-state. That is, it does not necessarily incorporate all persons resident within a given territory" (Crompton 1993: 139). In a related sense, Hill argued that the concept of citizenship embraces a range of positions. Traditionally, Hill contends, citizenship as a status denotes individuals with rights and duties constitutionally guaranteed to all members of society. He further argued, however, that citizenship is about power and its distribution, about the framework of public and thus collective decisions, and accountability for those decisions (Hill 1994:4). With respect to power, different attitudes to citizenship notions lies beneath the problem of integration in the political sociology of developing nations. According to Bryan Turner, "the problem of citizenship has re-emerged

as an issue which is central, not only to practical political questions concerning access to health-care systems, education institutions and the welfare state, but also to traditional theoretical debates in sociology over the conditions of social integration and social solidarity" (Turner 1990: 189).

Citizenship as a concept in political and philosophical theories is not subject to a single, universally acceptable definition. Citizenship, in its modern form, consists of three essential and central propositions: the notion of individual and human rights, the idea of political participation, and the principles of socio-economic welfare. The main significance of the concept of citizenship is its relation with the conferring of rights and duties. Hence, structurally defined, citizenship consists of rights and duties. According to T.H. Marshall, "citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (Marshall 1949: 87).

In intellectual discussions on the concept of citizenship, the recurrent theme has always been the distinction between the political cum legal component and the social component. The former refers to the political cum legal standing of an individual in a particular country that entitles him, from the constitutional position, to an array of right such as right to participate in the exercise of public power, political decision making, right to life, to fair hearing etc[3]. The latter refers to a person's right to "share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of civilised being" (Marshall 1949: 74). According to Ifidon, the social conception of citizenship is "usually the product of history and culture...an outgrowth from inter-personal relations" (Ifidon 1996: 102).

Intellectual comments on the definition of citizenship as outlined above, in Nigeria, are rather curious. In a catchy and classic essay, Femi Taiwo provides a critical insight on the nature of citizenship in Nigeria. According to Taiwo, the existence of the legal cum political conception of citizenship in Nigeria is queasy. In his words, "beyond phrase-mongering, there are no citizens **in** Nigeria, only citizens **of** Nigeria...That is, Nigerian citizenship is merely geographical, it is without moral-ideological content... part of what typifies citizenship, especially in the modern state, is the de-emphasising of geography and other natural facts in its composition... the freedom to locate anywhere within the boundaries of the relevant geo-polity is non-existent in Nigeria" (Taiwo 1996: 15-16).

It is to this end that the social conception, being an outgrowth of culture and history, becomes relevant in understanding the nature of citizenship in Nigeria. In fact, John Scott has provided very apt theoretical division of citizenship in the light of both perspectives, into the first-order and second-order construct. The

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[3]   John Scott (1994: 61) has argued that this cluster of civil-political rights and their corresponding obligations, "need not involve a system of full political 'democracy'... but it does imply a certain degree of democracy among those who are accorded the status of citizenship." It is, however, doubtful whether such rights are granted in a military set up, for instance, where the constitution and its provision, especially those that touch on the basis or legitimacy of such regimes, are outrightly suspended.

essence, argues Scott, is to transcend the limitation of the first-order construct which neglects the social conditions that establishes the contradictory conventions and practices that define the boundaries of citizenship. According to Scott, the second-order construct i.e. sociological conception helps us understand the idea of citizenship, which are found preponderant in people's mental awareness and acceptance. This conception identifies the idea of citizenship as a whole complex of institutions, practice, and conventions that are embodied, in often contradictory ways, in the cultural and sub-cultural perspectives of a society and which informs its political and ideological struggles (Scott 1994: 46).

As a product of history and culture, citizenship in Nigeria is social, involving contradictory patterns and conventions. The contradictions inherent in citizenship in Nigeria can be found validated in the terse but profound conclusion that while a Nigerian nationality is non-existent, properly speaking, citizenship is operative at the homeland level (Ifidon 1996: 103). In the same vein, Peter Ekeh had argued that " citizenship is still largely a group (primordial) phenomenon rather than an attribute of individual political actors" (Ekeh 1972: 84).

4.2 CONTRADICTIONS IN CITIZENSHIP STATUS AND THEIR CONFLICTUAL TENDENCIES IN NIGERIA

Put simply, the idea of environmental conflict and the political implications it entails in Nigeria's political system can be understood in the light of this contradictory pattern and problematic nature of citizenship. The spate and outbreak of conflicts in the oil-producing area, the systemic eruption of religious violence in the northern and southern parts of the country and incidences of conflicts all have their base and can be located in an already existent citizenship problems in Nigeria. Empirically, national citizenship in Nigeria is far from being resolved, and the inability is due to the fact that various ethnic groups that compose the Nigerian nation-state[4] have conceived different attitudes to Nigerian citizenship. Such identity differences have heightened, to the point of political significance, the incidence and outbreak of conflicts in Nigeria.

We hinted at the view, in our theoretical construct on violence and conflict, that conflict resides, most prominently, in the struggle, of two or more individuals, groups, within a state whose objectives differ, over power, status, privileges and values etc. The struggle over resources in the Niger Delta is the struggle to define their citizenship within the Nigerian nations-state. In Nigeria

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[4]   There are two categories of nation-states: those where there are dominant (ethnic, racial, or religious) group and those where there are not (Young 1993: 3-35). Clearly, the Nigerian case is the former. The bogus claim to dominance has been used for political advantage by a section of the country.

today, the success of an ethnic group, due to an illusory belief in the strength of geographical and numerical size, to hold unto power since independence has succeeded in generating a sense and feeling of alienation and marginalization on the part of other major ethnic groups. The existence of such an overriding philosophy with respect to control of oil and the rents accruing from it has enabled the dominant, alienating group to define citizenship status as that of a first class citizen and others to a set of under-class or second-class citizens within the same geographical boundary[5].

Over the years, each successive governments and regimes have often been defined in the sense of a dominant ruling group and subjected, excluded groups. This consistent pattern in the nature of governance and rule and the inordinate, unbridled ambition to perpetually dominate others, coupled with the struggle to monopolise the resource-allocating elements of the state are the factors that accounts for the problems of citizenship, statehood and their effects on the incidence of conflict in the Niger Delta. The utter denigration of the environment consequent on the exploration of oil leaves the oil producing areas polluted with no prospect of livelihood. Air, water, the soil and the vegetation are all enmeshed in the mess of pollution that leaves lives unbearable and a thing of agony and misery. It is the treatment of these inhabitants as slaves that provokes violence and conflict. Over forty years of oil exploration and production by Shell and several other multinational oil companies has seen the land, rivers, creeks and mangroves mauled almost beyond repair. Where Shell takes great pains to bury its oil pipelines out of sight in other countries, in Ogoni the company simply lays them right across farmlands and people's homes. The bulk of Shell's pipelines are rusty and obsolete, having been installed in the 1960's. The result is that a slight torch on any little spillage sends the whole community almost on the fire of hell. The Ogoni song captures the heart of the strong Niger Delta community's experience with Shell:

The flames of Shell are flames of hell
We bask below their light
Nought for us serve the blight
Of cursed neglect and cursed Shell

Packed in the experiences of the Niger Deltans is the issue of social, political and economic exclusion. Citizenship, in Nigeria, is now defined as exclusion, not inclusion. Presently, political interaction entails a level of awareness and consciousness defined in one's identity. Citizenship entails an identity and such an identity can be defined in multiple terms. It may be defined as a member of a nation-state, a member of an ethnic group, as a member of a communal group

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[5] This is referred to as the "principle of northern primacy". A classic instance is the following statement credited to Malam Maitama Sule that "...everyone has a gift from God. The Northerners are endowed by God with leadership qualities. The Yoruba man knows how to earn a living and has diplomatic qualities. The Igbo is gifted in commerce, trade and technological innovation. This is no doubt the material for the theology of domination.

within an ethnic group. In Nigeria's political history and development, the level of identity awareness and consciousness spells a lot of the nature of political interaction and attitude that is prevalent in our political order. The existence of the problem of national identity will, in turn, mean the existence of the politics of alienation. This is the precipitant to conflict in the Niger Delta. In short, the lingering conflict in the Niger Delta is the battle not only to resists the alienating tendencies of the Nigerian state but also, the battle to realise the rights and privileges of citizenship.

While in most cases the struggle in the Niger Delta is presented as one of self-determination of an ethnic group, taken to dramatic heights by the Ogoni debacle, within the context of the structurally imbalance Nigerian federation in which the majority ethnic groups control oil resources found in minority areas, the site of conflict has remained within the dialectics of oil production, distribution and access.

5. CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVES FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

From the foregoing, it has been established that the outbreak of environmental conflict is intricately tied to the existence of a disparate attitude or a more or less perforated sense of citizenship crises compounded by an increasing sense of alienation of groups particularly minority groups in the overall allocation and distribution and access to the fruits of environmental resources. Where minority groups are alienated in an ethnically diverse community, especially where a majority group is in control of power, they find their citizenship status threatened. As such, this sense of relative deprivation has the full tendency of breaking into conflict especially with the ethnic group in control of power. This is the case in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

However, a resolution of this crisis situation will have to take some categorical imperatives into consideration. In the first place, it is essential to note that the era of military rule in Nigeria has been historically injurious in the sense that the apathetic attitude of the military has been a causal factor in the outbreak, continuance and consolidation of this trend of conflict. The military has failed to respond favourably to the conflict because of its illegitimate standing. A legitimate government will never watch while its domain is exposed to increasing danger and state of lingering instability. To this end, therefore, it suffices one to contend most vehemently that the resolution of conflict in this region will have to go with full democratisation of all aspects of social, political and economic life with respect to this region. The issue transcends the establishment of democracy; it has to do with total democratisation of every sphere of public life. It is more than establishing democracy; it is consolidating and sustaining it. This means the entrenchment of democratic principles with respect to every sphere of public life.

Moreover, it is important to stress that a policy that promotes the safeguarding and reparation of human rights abuse should be set in place in order to redress some of the injustices that have been perpetrated in that region. In other words, there should be respect for human rights. This goes with a full guarantee of citizenship rights and status. Citizenship status is ensconced on three essential propositions: individual human rights, political participation and socio-economic welfare. The entrenchment of this basic constituent of citizenship will go a long way in resolving the dynamics of conflict already in place in this region.

Furthermore, Johan Galtung has defined peace as the condition in space for non-violent development (Galtung 1996: 223). In line with this, the Nigerian State should ensure that an appreciable level of development takes place in this region. This has the special quality of promoting the welfare of the people thereby drawing a sense of belonging from them. Social and economic amenities should be adequately provided for. In addition, the greatest measure of reparation and independence that can be granted to the Niger Delta is a heightened revenue allocation. Presently, the government pledged 13% to the area. It suffices us to state that nothing short of a 40% to start with, on the basis of justice, will be acceptable.

Apart from the above, there should be respect for international laws on the environment. One of the very absurd ironies of the operation of multinational companies in the Niger Delta is the lack of respect for international laws. For instance, there are international environmental laws that states that

No state has the right to use or to permit the use of its territory in such a manner as to cause injury by fairness in or to the territory of another or to the properties or persons therein, when the case is of serious consequence and the jury is established by clear and convincing evidence.

In furtherance of the heart of this case, principles 21 and 22 of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration states that

States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other states or areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

States shall co-operate to develop further the international law regarding liability and compensation for victims of pollution and other environmental damages caused by activities within the jurisdiction or control of such states to areas beyond jurisdiction or control of such states to areas beyond their jurisdiction.

Multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta, with Shell being the largest producer and extractor of oil should operate according to the laws regulating the environment. It is not a misnomer to states that the same Shell

operates according to laws in the extraction of resources in Europe while neglecting to go by laws in most West African countries. It will be safer for all if the Nigerian State with its economic ally can transact their business in the light of rules.

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