

DEMOCRACY STABILITY IN NIGERIA – “THE BLACK GOLD CRISES” A STUDY OF IJAW NATION STATE

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Abstract

The Ijaw Nation state is a very important part of the country. It is the major source of the wealth of the nation. In spite of its economic relevance to the country, the area remains impoverished. The poverty level and under-development in the region is nothing to write home about. It is due to this obnoxious situation, that these studies tend to understand the cause and the way forward to study this unacceptable situation, this research, reviled wholly on secondary data, that is library research. Textbooks, magazines, journals, newspapers and the internet were consulted and relied upon as the relevant sources of data. One of the findings is political marginalization depicted in their minor representation in government. Another is the favorable revenue allocation formula and thirdly, is the unacceptable environmental condition of the oil producing communities of South-South, Nigeria, should be given adequate number of positions in the political decision-making body. Secondly, the revenue allocation formula should be reviewed to 50% derivation of oil producing states and thirdly, to fashion out remediation programmes to address the environmental degradation in the oil producing communities by federal government and oil companies. Also, there is every need to fast-track development activities in the Ijaw minority ethnic group.

Keywords: *Ijaw Nation, Oil Wealth, Economic Marginalization, Poverty and Underdevelopment, Revenue Allocation, Environmental Degradation, Political Representation*

Introduction

With the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta, the expectation was that they would automatically be entitled to benefits that come with being oil producing communities (Okpebenyo et al., 2023; Sam et al., 2024). But this expectation was frustrated by the collective failure of the Nigerian State and the multi-national oil corporation to bring about rapid socio-economic development to the region. Notwithstanding the marginalization, deprivation and under development of Niger Delta which caused the conflict is rooted in the nature of federalism and revenue allocation formula being adopted in Nigeria since independence (Igbashangev and Igbashangev, 2024, Aladegba, 2023). Emphasizing on this, Nkoro (2005:4), asserts that, The prevailing concepts of federalism in Nigeria fall short of expectations in both definition and practice to the extent that it is been practiced as quasi-federalism, there has been an overtly centralized control of resources by the federal government (Issaev and Zakharov, 2024). These aberrations continue to generate perpetual conflict with indigenous rights. Hence, it has become a major cause of Conflict in the Niger Delta especially from notorious Derivation principles for revenue allocation to states in the region. Chibuike and Ogbonnaya (2004:20) maintained that before independence, the revenue sharing formula emphasized squarely on the principle of derivation and fiscal autonomy. Tin and Bauxite were being exploited in the Northern region solely for the benefit of the North and the East was forced to develop other sources of income in a bid to survive. With oil becoming relevant to Nigeria economy, Riesman's commission of 1958, was politically motivated to reduce the use of derivation principle for sharing revenue in order to favour the North. In reaction to this change, Chief Obafemi Awolowo a onetime premier of the western region asserted that it is dishonesty to the extreme for a relatively poorer state to expect to have a share from the revenue derived from a relatively richer state quoted in (Obinna, 1985:18). These basic principles among others emphasize that beyond size, territoriality and constitutionality, the plurality and heterogeneity of the federal constituents must be recognized

(Olaiya et al., 2024). By implication the relative autonomy, independence and self-determination of these units must be appreciated and guaranteed in clear terms. And the general welfare of the constituent's members in general must always be assured As Awa (1976:11), noted for, only in these terms is it possible to objectively evaluate the relevance of a federal arrangement for all the citizens. This imbalance in Nigerian fiscal federalism noted in Azziki (2004:52), as cited by Jacks, (2005:2) reflected on the intense nature of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region

The Niger Delta people have continued to live with a range of environmental problems from Health hazards to lack of safe water and arable land, In spite of resource endowment and its immense potential for economic growth and sustainable development, the region is a parlous State It is under threat from rapidly deteriorating economic conditions and social tensions h has remained wholly underdeveloped and poor. This pathetic condition in the Niger Delta led to the agitation for resource control. However, the initial struggle for resource control started in 1960s. According to Akpobibibo (2001:3), the marginalization and injustice against the Niger Delta people promoted Isaac Adaka Boro, the young radical nationalist, an Ijaw born revolutionary and master campaigner of resource control to champion a revolt against the oppressors of the people of Niger Delta to effect change. Earlier in January 1966, Boro proclaimed the Niger Delta people Republic with himself as Head of State With one hundred and fifty-nine comrades, he engaged the Nigerian police force in a bloody battle and defeated them. But Boro and his men were defeated by the Armed forces o Nigeria in a twelve-day revolution. The death of Boro during Nigerian civil war on the 20th April 1968 brought the struggle to a halt. The emergence of another phase of the struggle was in the 1990s, wit the movement for the Survival of Ogoni: People (MOSOP) led by Ken, Saro-Wiwa Tom (2009:56), maintains that the environmental degradation of Ogoni Community by the activities of oil companies with lack of infrastructural amenities made Ogoni People on August 26/1990, to issue a hill of Right which was sent to the federal government demanding political, freedom for the Ogont people to own and control their resources to live peacefully in their God given land and justice for their people. This improvement continued and their demands were wholly neglected by the federal government and the multi-national corporations operating in the region (Alikornwo and Obara, 2025). The military government of General Abacha used military repression to suppress their demands which led to loss of man's lives and properties. Ken Saro-wiwa and eight other Ogont activists were arrested and hanged on November 10, 1995 in 1998, the Ijaw nationalism came up again as successive governments failed to meet the basic expectations of the Ijaw. Agbo (2006:9), contends that an all-Ijaw youths conference was held at Kaiama, Boro's home town, on December 11. the youths made ten resolutions known as the Kaiama Declaration. However, the military invasion of Ijaw communities consequent upon the Kasama Declaration and the Odi direct action 1998 marked a new interesting interface of oil conflict in Nigeria. Over the years, many intervention bodies have established to address the developmental needs in the Niger Delta such as Niger Delta Development Board, NDDDB (1960), OMOPADEC (1992) and NDDDB (2000), Dike (2006:1). Maintained that these bodies have not made any noticeable socio-economic impacts in the region.

Hence, the continued insensitivity of the federal government and Multinational Oil Corporations to the plight of the region led to the emergence of militia groups in the region who took over the struggle recently, the Niger Delta crisis that has been simmering for years assumed a dangerous and intractable dimension (Imiti and Anyanwu, 2025, Aremu, 2022). Akhaine (2009:5), noted that the various militant insurgent groups that have emerged to take over the struggle began the era of unprecedented and consistent violent campaign against the Nigeria state through numerous attacks on the oil industrial facilities. hostage taking, proliferation of arms etc. to resolve this conflict, the federal government in 2009, granted amnesty to the militants in the region and presently implementing the post amnesty plan.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the extent to which the agitations of the Ijaw ethnic minority group have enhanced democratic stability in Nigeria from 2008 to 2018. The specific objective includes:

- a) To find out how the Ijaw minority agitations improved in democratic stability in Nigeria
- b) To examine whether the derivation policy of the federal government is able to address the environmental degradation of Ijaw ethnic minority

Minority Ethnic Group and Political Decision Making Body

The use of the federal might to punish the small states because of their natural wealth is obviously against the principles and tenets of a federal system, which at least, Nigerian political leaders claim to be in practice since 1954 (Ahmed and Yashe, 2022; Manjo, 2024). These basic principles among others emphasize that beyond size, territoriality and constitutionality, the plurality and heterogeneity of the federal constituents must be recognized (Kong, 2025; Bonifati, 2023). By implication the relative autonomy, independence and self-determination of these units must be appreciated and guaranteed in clear terms. And the general welfare of the constituents' members in general must always be assured (Margalit and Raz, 2022). As Awa (1976:11) noted "for only in these terms is it possible to objectively evaluate the relevance of a federal arrangement for the entire citizen". But minority oppressions and suppressions by the major dominant ethnic groups in the operation of the federal system are not new (Körtvélyesi, 2022). Naturally and equally not new, are the demands for redress by the minority groups (Móré, 2023). The earlier minority groups within the regions were essentially direct against the regional governments manifested in demands for the creation of separate region/state (Körtvélyesi, 2022; Móré, 2023). The rationale was to allow ethnic minority groups within the regions have their own self-autonomy (Margalit and Raz, 2022). Notable amongst the earlier minority agitations were the bloody Ijaw Riots of 1959 to 1960 in the North, the demand for the creation of a Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers (C-O-R) state from the Eastern region and the demand for the creation of the Midwest region from the western region (Esire et al., 2024). The tempo and the intensity, as well as the focus of minority agitations have increased and changed since after political independence on October 1 1960, the reason being that the major dominant ethnic groups seized complete control of the state apparatus in defiance to the principles of federalism the disadvantage of the minority ethnic groups that constitute the federation (Yimenu, 2024). It is obvious today in Nigeria that ethnic minority groups, especially the minority oil producing states, exist in an antagonistic relations to the ethnic majority group, the nature of their conflictual relationship in the context of our federal system of government has been consistently outright cheating, marginalization and development-retarding being perpetuated by the dominant majority groups, being the focus of our present concern needs to be analytically clarified in terms of what constitute their major characteristics (Omoigberale, 2025; Ogunobo, 2022).

According to Wirth (1945:347) a 'minority' is a group of people who, by reason of their physical or cultural characteristics are singled out from others, and who, therefore, regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination. This implies that "minority status" carries with it a sense of exclusion from full and active participation in the socio-economic and political life of the society. Clearly, by this definition Wirth places the 'minority group' in opposition to the majority group. Valien (1964:432) expresses the views that the term 'minority group' sometimes just referred to as minority is applied to an ethnic racial or religious group. He contends, that the term 'ethnic group' is utilized when invidious distinction are not intended while the term minority group connotes such invidious distinctions. He however agrees that both terms, nonetheless, underscore physical, religious, racial and other cultural features of a designated group which distinguish them from other dominant ethnic groups in society. It has not been easy to know the appropriate basic features to be applied to

designate the minority status of a given group. This is because almost all variables used in identifying any minority group usually throw up uncertainties as to their meanings and functions. However, the following characteristics are often identified with a minority group. They are statistical or numerical size, socio-economic and political power distribution, homogenous physical and or cultural traits and differential treatment or status to this can be added agitations and incessant calls to redress. In a fundamental sense therefore, ethnic minority specifically implies low status in a social power relationship between a dominant power group and dominated group (Eteng 1996:7). Although, A.M Rose (1948) consider any purely statistical definition of the term unacceptable, they however place emphasis on the opposition between the dominant and minority groups. Therefore in their opinion, the mere fact of being generally hated and being hated because of religions, racial or national background is simply what defines a minority group. One theme that runs through all the definitions is the placing of the minority group in opposition to the majority group. This is because of the powerless and the low social status of the minority group, made even worse by the overbearing attitude of the dominant group especially in the Nigerian federal system. The Ijaw my ethnic group, south-south, Nigeria was specifically chosen for this analysis for certain reasons ranging from its difficult terrain to its capacity of providing 80 percent of the country's revenue. Indeed, the Niger Delta is single most important region in Nigeria, It is a region of strategic national importance yet inhabited by the poorest of the nation's population (Egbuna, 2025; Igba, 2022).

Notwithstanding, the marginalization, deprivation and under development of Niger Delta which caused the conflict is rooted in the Nigeria since independence emphasizing on this, Nkoro (2005:4), asserts that:

The prevailing concept of federalism in Nigeria falls short of expectation, both definition and practice to the extent that it is being practiced as quasi-federalism, there has been an over & centralized control of resources by the federal government (Weingast, 2025). This aberration continues to generate perpetual conflict with indigenous rights. Hence it has become a major cause of conflict in the Niger Delta especially from notorious Derivation principles for revenue allocation to states in the region. This issue of political exclusion is depicted in their non-representation in Government. This is because qualified people from the oil producing minorities are seldomly appointed into top Government positions, are usually the yardstick for measuring access to state power. All topmost government positions, are usually occupied by the Northerners. This northern dominance is often reflected in the control of strategic positions both in the public service and government owned Parastatals. For example, out of the 11 heads of government since political independence on the 1 October 1960, 8 are from the north and they ruled for a total of 41 years, while 4 from the south, ruling for a total of 17 years, and out of the 10 Inspector-General of police since 1964 to date. 7 are from the north and only 3 are from south, (Tribune 2009). Most instinctive and revealing in the marginalization policy of the federal government, of the oil producing minorities, is in the appointment into oil related federal government Parastatals. One would have expected that in making such appointments indigenes from the oil producing communities should be considered. But in total disregard to one of the basic principles of federalism which emphasizes that a federal government is a device of federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected (Livingstone, 1952:22) appointments by which they are usually made to protect only the interest of the northerners. A look at the following appointments clearly illustrates the northern dominance over the oil producing minorities even in the oil related industries. They are: Chairman. Petroleum Trust Fund (PT.F), Major-General Muhammadu Buhari-North, Managing Director; Pipelines Product Marketing Company, (PPMC) was until recently. Alhaji Haruna Abubakar, North, Managing Director Port Harcourt Refinery. Alhaji Mansuri Ahmed, North (Tribune, 25th July, 2009). The recent re-organization of the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPDEC) that replaced Professor Eric Opiya, from Delta State, with Assistant Inspector-General of Police Alhaji Bukar Ali, to head OMPADEC is like rubbing salt into a festering sore. This appointment by the General A.

Abubakar's regime is a clear illustration of the marginalization policy of the federal government. The protestations that followed Bukar Ali's appointment (Punch 10/5/2009).

It will be recalled that OMPADEC was established in 1992 by the President Babangida's regime essentially in response to the complaints of neglect by the oil producing minorities. It was charged with the responsibilities of administering judiciously, the 3 percent allocation fund and to coordinate development projects in the oil producing communities. However, OMPADEC has not been a success story since inception. This is because its impact is not being felt in the areas in terms of development projects. It has always been a story of abandoned projects and more complains here and there as it becomes a contract rather than development outfit. In fact OMPADEC HOW constitutes an additional issue of complaint by the oil producing minorities. Recently, the Niger Delta crisis that has been simmering for years assumed a dangerous and irritable dimension. Akhaine (2009:5), noted that the various militant insurgents groups that have emerged to take the struggle began the era of unprecedented and consistent violent campaign against the Nigerian state through numerous attacks on the oil industrial facilities, hostage taking, kidnapping, proliferation of arms etc.

Revenue Allocation Formula

Power and revenue resources have since the mid-60s been concentrated in the federal government, thereby making the component states of the federation mere geographical administrative sub-division of the federal government (Annis, 2023; Asaduzzaman, 2024). . In reality, Nigeria, even as of today, masquerades as federalism, it is governed as a quasi-unitary political entity under an all powerful federal government that has also monopolized the vast revenue resources of the country (Elijah, 2025). In 1946, the Philipson commission was appointed to advise the federal government (Ikechukwu and Ovuoh, 2024). The commission recommended the adoption of the principles of Derivation and Even Development for revenue sharing amongst the regions. This recommendation soon gave rise to agitation by some regions, which regarded the principles as unsatisfactory. The Hicks/Philipson commission appointed in 1951 reviewed the revenue allocation formula and recommended some new principles, which would also meet the constitutional changes of the new Macpherson constitution of 1951 (Eteudo and Ufomba, 2022). The 1951 constitution enhanced the federal structure by increased legislative and financial autonomy to the Regional Government. Nwokedi (2002: 167), accordingly the federal government adopted the new revenue sharing formula based on the four principles of Independent revenue, Need, Derivation and National Interest. But it was not long that disputes amongst the regions over the implementations of these four principles of revenue sharing led to agitation for a review along with further constitutional reforms. With the inception of the revised constitution known as Oliver Littleton constitution of 1964, this further devolved more legislative and administrative powers from the constitutional changes. The Chicks commission Report of 1953 was introduced. The Chicks formula placed more emphasis on the principles of Need and National Interest. The Chicks Report also recommended that mining should continue to be under federal control while mining royalties should be allocated to the regions from where the minerals were extracted. Just before the independence, the constitutional conference held in 1957 commissioned another revenue review exercise. The Riesman commission made its recommendations in 1958. The commission's Report was significant in a number of ways. First, it was the report that was adopted for the independence constitution of 1960 by which a sovereign Nigeria was governed. Two, it re-enacted the provision of mineral resources in the exclusive legislative list under Federal Government control. Thirdly, it de-emphasized derivation principle from 100% to 50% the revenue derived from mining rents and royalties to the regions of the origin. It redistributed the other 50% as follows 30% to the center and 20% to the newly designed distributable pool Account. The reason given by the Riesman commission for abandoning the application of 100% derivation to region of origin was that at this time there was a great prospect of phenomenal use in revenue derivable from mineral oil exploration in the Eastern Region and if

the percentage derivation was not reduced now then in future, the revenue accruing to the Eastern Region would be awesome and far exceed these other regions (Dursun, et al., 2025).

It therefore recommended that funds from Distributable Pool Account to which the 20% revenue derived from mineral resources was to be paid, should be shared amongst the regions on the principle of continuity of existing level of service and minimum responsibilities as well as the principle of need. This implied the use of population as the indicator of need used in the application of previous revenue formula. Those were subsequent revenue allocation review exercise but the basic principles adopted by Riesman commission's recommendation for revenue allocation endured throughout the life of the first Republic as most of them were adopted under independence constitution of 1960 and also under the republican constitution of 1963, when a fourth region, that is the mid-western Region was created. The 1963 constitution provided in section 141, the formula for sharing revenue from Distributable pool Account to the regions as follows:

North - Forty ninety fifths

East - Thirty one ninety fifths

West - Eighteen ninety fifths

Mid-west - Six ninety fifths (Adegoke, 2025)

The Benn's Commission set up in 1964 to review to Riesman Commission's formula did not make any radical changes but merely added a new principle of financial capability in the distribution from the distributable pool Account in the following percentage

North - 42%

East - 30%

West - 20%

Mid-west - 8% (Uchegbue and Ifedi, 2022; Reisman, 2024)

But this new principle was deficient to the extent that it did not realistically and unequivocally determine in relative terms the cash position of the regions, their tax efforts and the standard of services provided by them (Arowolo, 2019; Omodero, 2020). Nevertheless, the system remained in force until the military regimes upset the fairly stable revenue allocations system under civilian rule and adopted a chaotic system that over-centralized revenue resources and control (Ekpo, 2018; Suberu, 2020). There were some lukewarm attempts with premeditated outcomes to review revenue allocation system under the military (Uche & Uche, 2019). The Gowon Military Regime set up the Dina Committee of 1968 though the Government rejected its recommendations (Oyewo, 2021). Rather, the Gowon Regime preferred to make-provisions for allocation by issuance of decrees (Adebayo, 2020). The decrees were outrageous as they were disruptive of the Federal system (Ojo, 2019; Suberu, 2020). Through the country was in a civil war, there was no rational reason other than the militarist autocratic tendency, that informed the Gowon Regime to over-concentrate the revenue resources to the Federal Government and to instantly disrupt the federal system as all the states were severely starved of funds, deprived of independent sources of revenue generation and were constrained to crawl on their knees before the federal government to obtain funds for both their recurrent and capital expenditures (Ekpo, 2018; Omodero, 2020). In fact, the advent of the military government under General Gowon Marked the beginning of tendency to disrupt the institutional framework and the principles on which the Nigerian federation was establish (Suberu, 2020). Once the states were starved of the requisite funds to run their government, and were deprived of independent source of revenue they were downgraded to exist as glorified local governments or administrative units of the federal government (Oyewo, 2021). It is in this context that reference is made of the following decrees promulgated by the Gowon Regime (Adebayo, 2020).

Decree No. 13, 1970, which reduced revenue accruing to the state on Export Duties from 100% to 60% Duty on fuel from 100 to 50 percent, mining rents and royalties from 50% to 45%% (Ekpo, 2018). The reduction were to be paid into Distributable Pool Account, out of which 50% was retained by the Federal Government and the other 50% shared amongst the states half of which, on the

basis of equality of state and the other half on the basis of population (Ojo, 2019). Decree No. 9 of 1971 transferred rents and royalties of off-shore petroleum mines from states to the federal government (Suberu, 2020) while Decree No. 6 of 1975 altered the existing formula of allocation, from 45% to 20% of mining rents and royalties accruing to the state of origin (Arowolo, 2019). The same year, decree No. 7 of 1975 introduced standardized personal income taxes and rates as they deemed fit within their jurisdiction (Omodero, 2020). But while the Federation was staggering under the onslaught of financial strangulation of states by the Gowon Regime, the Mohamed/Obasanjo military Regime that toppled the Gowon Regime dealt devastating blows to the fragile federal system (Ekpo, 2018). In 1979, the Obasanjo Regime commissioned the technical committee on revenue allocation under the chairmanship of Professor O. Aboyade to formulate a revenue allocation formula preparatory to the military handover to the civil administration in 1979 (Oyewo, 2021). The Aboyade committee stabbed the federation at its most vital organ by destroying the principle of derivation, which had been the basic tenet of true and fiscal federalism (Suberu, 2020). The committee in its report urged the abrogation of the application of the principle of derivation in revenue allocation which it erroneously attributed to largely responsible for poisoning inter-governmental relations and for hampering the sense of national unity (Adebayo, 2020). The committee went further to assert that the derivation principle had the effect of denying the federal government the power to effect interstate redistribution of income (Ojo, 2019). The committee's report must have created the basis for the virtual abandonment of the principle of derivation by successive military regimes, when revenue accruing to the states was drastically reduced to pitiable levels (Arowolo, 2019). But as later events have proved, de-emphasis of the principle of derivation has caused more political tension and threats to national unity in recent times than in the post-colonial era when states were allocated 50% of revenue derived from their natural resources (Suberu, 2020).

It is also to be observed that the committee's report must have encouraged the Obasanjo military regime to abandon the usual practice of embodying the formula of revenue allocation in the constitution (Oyewo, 2021). Rather the regime preferred to embody in the 1979 constitution a set of guidelines for determining the mode of revenue allocation but transferred the responsibility of determining the formula for revenue allocation for the federation to the National Assembly acting on the recommendation of a Revenue Allocation and Fiscal commission established under the constitution (Adebayo, 2020). To be specific, the section 162 (2) of the 1999 constitution vests on the National Assembly the power to determine the formula for revenue allocation on the recommendation of the proposals from the president of the federal republic based on the advice of the revenue mobilization allocation and fiscal commission provided that the national assembly must ensure that principle of derivation of not less than 13 percent of the revenue accruing to the federation account directly from any natural resources must be constantly reflected in any revenue allocation formula (Ojo, 2019; Suberu, 2020). These provisions under the 1979 constitution did not explode into open and bitter controversy between the federal and state governments, but resentments were noticeable amongst marginalized oil-producing ethnic communities during the civilian rule under the 1979 constitution on mode of revenue sharing caused violent social eruptions and disputes between the federal and state governments (Arowolo, 2019; Omodero, 2020). The controversy between the federal and state government reached its peak with each suing the other in the Supreme Court (Oyewo, 2021). The disputes centered around which tier of government, federal or state has possession of off-shore mineral resources, deciding the effective date of payment 13 percent derivation and direct allocation of revenue from federation account to the local governments and payment of primary school teachers in the local government (Ekpo, 2018).

Deplorable Environmental Degradation I jaw Minority Ethnic Group, South-South Nigeria

These multi-national companies by destroying the lands through oil exploration with its attendant environmental hazards are waging a form of ecological violence on host communities (UNEP, 2018;

Mgbeoji, 2021). As Ken Saro-Wiwa (1992: 42–48) poetically put it, “It is an ecological war in which no blood is (apparently) spilled, no bones are broken, no one (assumedly) maimed, so few are alarmed but men, women and children die; fauna and fish perish; air, soil and water are poisoned and finally the land and its inhabitants die” (Okonta & Douglas, 2021). The extent of environmental degradation in these oil-producing areas is widely regarded as alarming and paradoxical given their resource wealth (Ite et al., 2019; UNEP, 2018). The oil-producing minority communities also complain about the militarization and occupation of their territories by state and corporate actors (Watts, 2019). It is difficult to adequately describe the scale of environmental destruction caused by oil exploration due to its cumulative and long-term impacts (Ite et al., 2019). Oil spills into land, swamps, and offshore environments over the years have significantly undermined the livelihoods of these communities (Ebegbulem et al., 2019; Mgbeoji, 2021). In fact, the extent of environmental devastation is more empirically observed than theoretically imagined (UNEP, 2018).

The table below illustrates the volume of oil spilled into different ecosystems between 1976 and 1986 (Ite et al., 2019, *Isichei 1993*)

Volume of Oil spilled into different ecosystem 1976-1986		
Type of environment	Quantity of oil spill (Barrels)	% of spill incidents
Land	101,764	81.1
Swamp	513,231	12.6
Offshore	1, 121,404	63

Leaking oil pipes as a result of corrosion, equipment malfunction or outright sabotage are all causes of oil spill which pollute the environment (Ebegbulem et al., 2019; UNEP, 2018). The recent Jesse town (Delta State) horrifying tragedy which occurred on the 17th of October, 1998 in which a value pit was vandalized by people suspected to be unscrupulous oil bunkerers (Watts, 2019) is just one of such episodes (Ite et al., 2019). The wretched of the Earth of Jesses and its environs oil producing communities, living amidst abundant oil, oil everywhere but none to use, decided out of want and to make use of the gushing and wasting petrol and damn the consequences (Okonta & Douglas, 2021). This is because petrol and kerosene in the country since 1994 had become like the Hailey's comet, seen once on earth every 76 years (Ebegbulem et al., 2019) of course, the lives of about 1,200 were wasted by the inferno that resulted from the unexpected explosion (Watts, 2019). This is the glory situation consistently facing the oil producing minorities in their everyday life (Ite et al., 2019). This has led to struggle by the Ijaw ethnic minority group for socio-economic, environmental and political rights (Watts, 2019; Okonta & Douglas, 2021). Their militancy is not limited to the exclusion from the political sphere (Ebegbulem et al., 2019). It is a total war on all fronts: economic, social, political and environmental rights (Mgbeoji, 2021). These militant groups are predominantly found in the ethnic minority section of the country particularly in the Niger Delta region (Watts, 2019). Abubarka Momoh (2005: 166) provides the rationale why this is so as he write (Ite et al., 2019). This is partly because they account for a sizeable proportion of the nation's wealth and yet they are victims of exploitation without any commensurate compensation, representation and social amenities (Mgbeoji, 2021). Worse still, the Nigerian state creates the impression that it is wrong, if not criminal, of them to complain against their social and political conditions (UNEP, 2018). What Momoh failed to add in his well-articulated passage above is the environmental degradation and socio-economic dislocation these people have suffered as a result of oil exploitation and activities (Ite et al., 2019).

Gas flaring is another environmental hazard that pollutes the atmosphere in Ijaw minority ethnic group (Ite et al., 2019). In 1996, the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) made a by-product of the process of oil production by 2008 (World Bank, 2020). The federal government of Nigeria has since adopted 2008 as the target date for ending the flaring of gas in oil operations in the country (UNEP, 2018). In order to meet this commitment, SPDC has had to embark on a major integrated plan to collect and put to economic use the gas otherwise flared from its network of 73 flow stations (World Bank, 2020). In addition, the company has decided that it would not develop any new oil field without a clear plan for the utilization of the associated gas from such fields (Ite et al., 2019). The establishment of the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) project, which was first conceived in the mid 1970s, is one of the principal avenues through which SPDC hopes to achieve its plan of gas utilization and therefore, bring to an end gas flaring in its operation (World Bank, 2020). Ofuebe & Anierobi (2006: 117), a significant investment of over \$2 billion has been made since 1999 by the joint venture which SPDC operates, to develop major Associated Gas Gathering (AGG) projects to collect gas from the field scattered across the Niger Delta and supply such gas to NLNG and to the Power Holding Company of Nigeria for power generation (Ite et al., 2019). Part of the reason behind the effort to end gas flaring is that burning has become source of accusation of environmental mismanagement occasionally leveled against the SPDC by civil rights activists and NGOs operating in the Niger Delta areas (UNEP, 2018). It is also a constant source of conflict with host communities in the Niger Delta (Mgbeoji, 2021). The seriousness with which SPDC pursues the goal of eradicating flares is an indication of its responsiveness to the interest of its major external stakeholders (World Bank, 2020). Gas flaring is a serious environmental issue (Ite et al., 2019). This is because it tends to reduce the ozone layer (UNEP, 2018). The depletion of the ozone layer reduces the oxygen level of the atmosphere and this is a serious threat to life (Ite et al., 2019). To survive, human needs oxygen (UNEP, 2018). Oil spillage on land destroys vegetations that produce oxygen and food for human beings and when it spill on water, marine lives are destroyed hence a source of water for use and means of incomes is destroyed (Ebegbulem et al., 2019). The people of Ijaw minority ethnic group are really devastated environmentally (Mgbeoji, 2021). Surely, they have a cause to agitate (Watts, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The calls of the oil producing minorities on federal government to redress this imbalance are often met with repressive measures as seen in the arm-twisting strategy, of the government. This approach rather than solve the problem has indeed exacerbated it because it is counter-productive. In a democratic state, the minorities should be given their rightful place constitutionally. It is not an era of promulgation of its decrees and arbitrary actions solely devised to bring development to its lowest ebb in minority ethnic group, south-south of the Country Darah (2001:63) has relied on the Ogoni bill of rights 1990 and Kaiama declaration to emphasis the needs for the region to have power over the ownership and control of its major economic resources and determine the way to explore them to promote development in modernization and wellbeing of its people. According to the declaration, all land and natural resources (including mineral resources) within the territory belong to Ijaw communities and the basis of their survival. Post Express described these rights as natural rights of the people. Recommendations On the vexed issue of revenue allocation, the derivation principle should be applied on 50% basis as against the recommended 13% in the 1995 draft constitution. The 50% coming to the states from derivation should be shared as follows: 30% for the oil producing communities within the state and the remaining 20% for the remaining areas of the state. Also, on the environmental degradation of Ijaw communities, an effective recommendation programmes should be formulated and implemented by oil companies. They should introduce new practice, technology and environmental management systems which will largely prevent its operations from having any long-term negative impact on the environment around them.

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