



Non-State Violence, State Responses, and Implications for Human Rights and Security in the Niger Delta

Nelson Takon*

Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract: Bayelsa State – the heartland of the Ijaw ethnic group – is arguably the most important of the core states of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria in terms of the oil industry; and where incidences of both state and non-state violence were occurring regularly at the time of research. This paper seeks to empirically examine the role of contextual variables, like the mobilised Ijaw ethnic group, who are embedded in conflict in an area of Nigeria rich with oil resources. I argue that the role of Ijaw ethnic group could not be ignored, but that it changed the emphasis from ‘elite-led’ campaigns to the more popular and local level violent anti-state and anti-oil company agitations. Following on from this, I argue that post-2000 oil resource-related conflict and state responses resulted in serious human rights violations and a humanitarian disaster for the most vulnerable members of the population of the region, notably women and children.

Keywords: Niger Delta, Nigeria, state violence, non-state violence, Kaiama Declaration, oil, resource-related conflict, constructivist view of ethnicity in conflict.

*eirdcrutech@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

The focus of this paper is the socially-constructed ethnic identity which emphasises that individuals have multiple identities, which therefore compels an examination of the historical and cultural contexts of Ijaw ethnic group politics and violence. Thus a nuanced view of the role of ethnic politics – or the ‘constructivist’ view of ethnicity – in conflict is emphasised, taking into account Ijaw history and rhetoric in contemporary Nigeria. This suggests that the role of ‘politicised’ Ijaw ethnic politics can not be ignored in state and non-state violence in Nigeria’s Niger Delta region. In this context, mobilised ethnicity refers to the articulation of interests in the name of the Ijaw ethnic group, and the struggle to defend those interests. In this sense, ethnic identity is politically mobilised and then manipulated so that political and material grievances become ethnically defined – this is a useful entry point into this paper.

I argue that the role of highly ‘politicised’ Ijaw ethnic politics could not only be ignored by the end of the 1990s but that it also changed the emphasis from being elite-led and party-type campaigns about state creation and revenue allocation primarily at the national arena to the more popular and local level anti-state and anti-oil company agitations, elevating for example, oil-related environmental degradation – an objective grievance which forms but one layer in an onion-like ball of issues in Ijawland – to political orthodoxy; as a conflict issue in and of itself. In this sense, the Ijaw ethnic groups interpret environmental neglect to discrimination against them by the Nigerian federal system. Second, I contend that the changing dynamics of Ijaw ethnic politics were inevitable from the 1990s onwards – given local and

international variables. Third and lastly, I argue in this paper that more effective conflict resolution or peace-building is enhanced by good economic and political governance driven by human rights-driven peace initiatives rather than the 'old' and 'new' strategies of Ijaw politics, such as Kaiama Declaration and militarised state policy. Hence the Kaiama Declaration (see Appendix A) is presumably better analysed in the context of the changing historical antecedent of Ijaw ethnic minority discourse and response to Nigeria's federal system.

2. Background

Historically, different groups of self-governing peoples in the nineteenth century occupied the territories that became known as Nigeria.¹ These peoples were known to have established viable pre-colonial states, which included caliphates, empires, kingdoms and mini-city states across the present geo-political space of Nigeria.² Based on a World Bank estimation Nigeria is the most populated country and second largest economy on the continent of Africa. However, with the advent of the age of colonial rule in the second half of the nineteenth century, each pre-colonial society in the territories that became known as Nigeria was conquered and colonised from the Atlantic coast to the Sahara desert by the British.

Interestingly, scholars argue that decolonisation via the constitutional processes of the 1950s coincided with the end of the Second World War; an era that also witnessed increased anti-colonial struggles.³ Suffice to say that Great Britain drew on the benefits of popular democracy at home founded on the parliamentary system, as well as its experiences in North American colonies, to drive its favourable disposition toward constitutional and political reforms in the colonies. In this context, the pace of constitutional development in Nigeria quickened, especially between 1946 and 1960.

Importantly for this paper, pre-colonial societies were not principally distinguished by unequal population size but by their different socio-political organisations dictated by their different cultures, history, environment, and needs.⁴ The unequal size and population of the numerous ethnic groups in Nigeria was less of a subject of great importance in the early years of colonialism, and certainly not in pre-colonial societies. Arguably, this might have been because population size did not directly relate to political power in any significant sense at the time. However, the phenomenon of conflict along the size of ethnic groups in Nigeria, often termed the 'minority ethnic question' is arguably linked to a series of constitutional developments in Nigeria in the 1950s.

To this extent, the structural formation of that era reinforced ethnic loyalties in political organisations, which not only subordinated smaller demographic groups to their larger ethnic neighbours in each region, but also created minority fears of marginalisation in Nigerian politics. The perceived imbalance from the standpoint of ethnic minorities emanated from the link between 'power and numbers', which could not be entirely correct. More plausible was the politicisation that occurred around ethnic divisions, the practice of majoritarian democracy, and the fact that ethnic majorities voted on ethnic lines, and hence ethnic minorities could never 'win' in such a system.

Arguably, the implications of the emergence of minority ethnic politics since the constitutional development arrangement of the 1950s (and the instability of Nigeria's political history associated with it) provided a fertile background for the rise or take-off of a stronger and more vigorous Ijaw ethnic minority politics. Though the explanations adduced for political crises in Nigeria are diverse and differ – at least in their emphasis – as to Nigeria's ethnic background and heterogeneity, the minority question argument commands wide acceptance.⁵ This perspective asserts that Nigeria was carved out into three regions controlled by the dominant three ethnic groups; hence, each region had both 'big' and 'small' ethnic groups. Because power belonged to the regions, the 'big' ethnic groups and their political parties were perceived as having power in their hands at the expense of 'small' ethnic groups within their regions.⁶

1 Obaro Ikimi (ed), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books for Historical Society of Nigeria, 1980).

2 Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds), *History of West Africa*, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1988).

3 Ajayi, *History of West Africa*, (3 edn) vol. 1; and Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1999). These works capture Nigeria's diverse socio-political organisation in pre-colonial times, which ranged from the Oyo empire's remarkable 'checks and balances' between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin; the Hausa-Fulani's 'centralised bureaucracy' with the Emir at the head; the Igbo's 'village republics' to the 'mini-city states' that proliferated in the Niger Delta area.

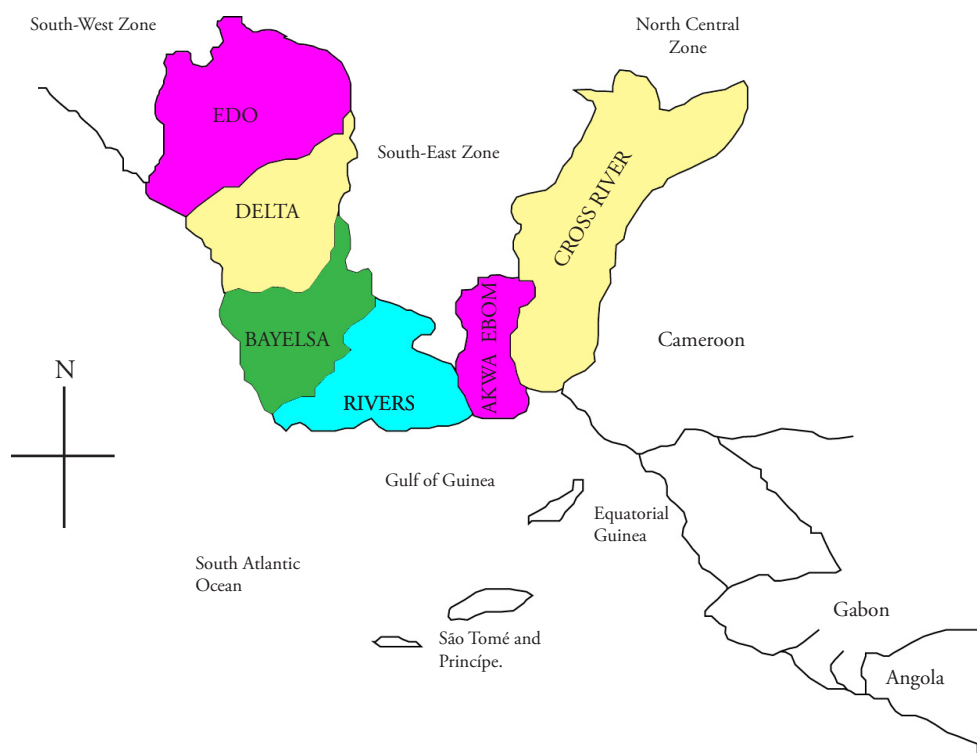
4 Obaro Ikimi, (ed), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books for Historical Society of Nigeria, 1980).

5 E. Osaghae, *Nigeria Since Independence: A Crippled Giant*, (London: Hurst, 1998); and Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prependal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

6 H. Willink, G. Hadow, P. Mason, and J.B. Shearer, *Nigeria: Report of the 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 Stationery Office, July 1958).

Figure A: Nigeria's Niger Delta and the adjoining Gulf of Guinea

Map of the South–South geo-political area and the oil-bearing countries in the Gulf of Guinea.



The ‘minority question’ was a part of politics before the rise in economic importance of oil resources for the Nigerian economy and government revenues found mainly in Ijawland.⁷ Geographically, Bayelsa State – the stronghold of Ijaw ethnic group politics – lies within latitude 4.15oN, 5.23oN and longitude 5.22oE and 6.45oE, and the state’s vegetation is classified as fresh water alluvial, rainforest, and saline mangrove, which are dissected by numerous rivers; mainly the Nun and Forcados rivers.⁸ In this Niger Delta geographic location, the Ijaw state is one of the six ethnic states of the South–South geo-political area. Bayelsa is surrounded by Delta State to the north and Rivers State to the east while west, and the southern frontiers of the state are washed by the Gulf of Guinea, which makes it the longest coastline in Nigeria. Furthermore the continental shelf of the Ijaw state (see Figure A) is part of the South Atlantic waters, which adjoins the Gulf of Guinea States, namely Angola, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Bayelsa’s location near the Gulf of Guinea means that this state has shared in the attention drawn towards the Niger Delta as a whole, due to the contribution the region is poised to make to the global oil supply in the coming decades.⁹ Thus beyond the Gulf’s geographical and historical meanings, the Ijaw state’s importance lies in the fact that it ‘houses’ significant oil infrastructure of the Niger Delta region due to the exploration and production of on-shore and deep-water oil resources. The latter are adjacent to its continental shelf and have the potential to produce conflict over the Exclusive Economic Zone close to its maritime borders. However, state and non-state violence and conflict in Ijawland are frequent and pose a significant threat to Nigeria’s oil-dependent economy and ‘fragile’ statehood.¹⁰

7 Douglas Rimmer and A. Kirk-Green, *Nigeria since 1970* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1981); and Sarah. A. Khan, *Nigeria: The Political Economy of Oil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). These works assert that the increasing profile of Nigeria’s oil economy effectively began in the 1970s after the 1974 oil price shock.

8 Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), (Abuja, Nigeria, 2000).

9 National Energy Policy Development Group, ‘National Energy Policy-Reliable, Affordable, and Environmentally Sound Energy for America’s Future’, (Washington, DC: The White House, 2001), pp.8-11; http://www.netl.doe.gov/publications/press/2001/nep/national_energy_policy.pdf [accessed 10 Dec. 2001]; and Rudolf Traub-Merz and Douglas Yates (ed), *Oil Policy in the Gulf of Guinea*. (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2003). These works acknowledged that Nigeria is the cornerstone of the Gulf of Guinea’s oil wealth, accounting for 60% of it.

10 J. Herbst, ‘Is Nigeria a viable State?’, in *Washington Quarterly* 19, no. 2, (1996), pp.151–172.

Bayelsa State – a wholly Ijaw state – was created on October 1, 1996 out of the ‘old’ Rivers State, as detailed by Ebiegberi Joe Alagoa.¹¹ Bayelsa is the heartland of the Ijaw ethnic group and politics; and it has been associated with ethnic minority politics since the constitutional development arrangement of the 1950s that prepared Nigeria for independence in 1960. Arguably they are the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria and the biggest ethnic minority group in the Niger Delta. From the standpoint of the Ijaw, the politics of state creation and revenue allocation had brought very limited gains to Ijaw ethnic minority aspirations, as I have illuminated within another forthcoming paper.¹² Despite the creation of Bayelsa State and the beneficial difference it made in the polity, there were compelling issues on the ground to easily instrumentalise Ijaw grievances.

This paper, however focuses on the Kaiama Declaration and youth groups and their link with non-state violence,¹³ which has become a significant feature of constructed Ijaw ethnic politics. ‘Youth’ in this context, is an Ijaw and Nigerian expression, which does not necessarily mean young people between childhood and adult age. Bassey’s work argues lucidly that ‘youth’ consists of school dropouts, the unemployed, and energetic people under 50 years of age who find ‘solace in a crisis situation as they consider such a situation as an opportunity to be engaged, or to be useful to themselves and their ethnic group’.¹⁴

3. The Kaiama Declaration of 1998 and aftermath: State responses to increase in non-state violence by militant and conventional groups in Ijawland

This paper was derived from my extensive research in the Niger Delta that sought to investigate whether or not oil resource-related conflict in Nigeria could be adequately explained by a political economy analysis that associates petroleum and other minerals in developing economies to negative development outcomes, such as violence. However, this paper steps down from the wider ‘resource curse’ debate into the era that was marked not only by increasingly militant activism as the main strategy of oil resource-related conflict in Nigeria, but also associated with the rise of a ‘new’ wave of popular-based Ijaw ethnic political associations using the language and rhetoric of Ijaw rights and emancipation.¹⁵

The political economy analysis of the link between natural resources and violence is instructive and seem to be relevant to the Ijaw case; however, current debate and scholarship strongly suggest that other variables might have played an equally important role in violence in the oil states of Nigeria. Arguably, the resource factor might have been reinforced by other contextual variables – like Ijaw ethnic politics – in non-state violence associated in Ijawland, which compels empirical research. In favour of this theory, I argue that the presence of natural resources in poor countries does not automatically lead to conflict as evidenced by the natural resources-endowed communities in Botswana, Gabon, Namibia and South Africa, which, at least in the last ten years, have been relatively conflict free. Or comparatively have experienced lower tensions than in the The Niger Delta. Also some scholars argue that the presence of ethnic groups does not necessarily translate into conflict as some of the most diverse countries like Tanzania in Africa, Malaysia in Asia, Belgium, and Switzerland in Europe are stable;¹⁶ and on the contrary, mono-ethnic or less diverse countries like Somalia either have experienced violence or remain potentially unstable.¹⁷

In this sense, violence and ethnically divided societies in Nigeria may not be related, especially since other variables such as the features of state failure abound.¹⁸ Thus David Leonard and Scott in their work argue against the resort to

11 E.J. Alagoa, *The Land and People of Bayelsa State: Central Niger Delta*, (Port Harcourt: Onyoma Research Publications, 1999).

12 Nelson Takon, ‘Distribution of Oil Revenue to Niger Delta of Nigeria in Post-2000: Is the debate more of good governance?’ submitted to the *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*

13 On December 11, 1998, youths of Ijaw ethnic minority origin numbering over five thousand and drawn from over five hundred communities of about forty clans gathered in Kaiama Town in Bayelsa State and issued the now famous Kaiama Declaration. See: The Kaiama Declaration: <http://www.moles.org/ProjectUnderground/reports/chevworld2.html> [accessed 10 December 2005].

14 Celestine O. Bassey et al, *Conflict and Instability in Niger Delta: The Warri Case*. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 2002), p.90.

15 <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk> ‘Behind Nigeria’s Violence’, [accessed 29 December /2005]. This report remarked that, though the Niger Delta has a long history of violence, the situation has gone from bad to worse with the emergence of armed militant groups willing to kill as part of their campaign.

16 Eghosa E. Osaghae and Rotimi T. Suberu, *A History of Identities, Violence, and Stability in Nigeria*, CRISE Working Paper, No. 6 (Oxford: OUP, 2005); and Ibrahim Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, ‘Why Are There So Many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violence’, *Journal of African Economies* 9, no. 3, (2000), pp.244–269; and D.C. Esty et al, *State Failure Task Force Report: Phase II Findings*, (McLean, Va.: Science Applications International Corporation, 31 July 1998).

17 Eghosa E. Osaghae and Rotimi T. Suberu, ‘A History of Identities, Violence, and Stability in Nigeria’, CRISE Working Paper, No. 6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

18 Ibrahim Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, ‘Why Are There So Many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violent’, *Journal of African Economies* 9, no. 3, (2000), pp.244–269; D.C. Esty (1998) et al, *State Failure Task Force Report: Phase II Findings*, (McLean,

'tribalism' often presented as the source of violent conflict in Africa. But, they also warn against dismissing the role of ethnicity since this would ignore the circumstances under which ethnic diversity becomes 'politicised' ethnic conflict.¹⁹ Bearing in mind the limitations of a simple linear relationship between ethnicity and conflict, this paper adopts a theory of the role of ethnic politics, which interrogates the convergence of constructed Ijaw ethnic group politics and oil resource-related non-state violence in the Niger Delta.²⁰ In this context, the former is politically mobilised and then manipulated so that political and material grievances become ethnically defined – a justification for my paper's research into the debate on non-state violence in Ijawland. Hence, the relevance of the ethnic politics debate from knowledge of Ijaw history or rhetoric and the contemporary political economy of Nigeria – way beyond the primordialist connotation – requires further empirical study and analysis.²¹ To this extent, a more nuanced understanding needs to appreciate the role of socio-political forces, like the Ijaw ethnic group, who are embedded in the conflict in the area where oil resources are found in Nigeria. Thus the role of Ijaw ethnic politics is brought to the fore, and cannot be ignored in the explanation of non-state violence in the Niger Delta since the Kaiama Declaration of 1998.

Arguably, the Kaiama Declaration was the epitome of mobilised Ijaw ethnic politics; and moved from non-violent protest, through violent protest, to warlordism and armed militia activities, and also made the Niger Delta almost ungovernable by federal authorities by the end of the 1990s.²² The goals of the multiple Ijaw movements may have been different, and distinguished one Ijaw ethnic group from the other. Nevertheless, Ijaw associations apply violent methods to achieving their ends, or approve of the use of direct action or both; and state responses pose human rights debate, which compels research and analysis. Thus this paper mainstreams analysis of the Kaiama Declaration of 1998, the embodiment of the 'new' mode of Ijaw politics and human rights violations by all parties in the conflict.

In the context of the long history of mobilised ethnic politics in general, and Ijaw ethnic group in particular, the Kaiama Declaration was peculiar and distinct from other ethnic minority agitations in the Niger Delta region and other regions of Nigeria in terms of the scale of violence and impact on the 'jugular' of the oil-centric revenue of Nigeria.²³ Interestingly, the Kaiama Declaration and its aftermath became synonymous with violent armed insurrection, proliferation of Ijaw political movements, criminal gangs, and warlords.²⁴ Other characteristics include: disruption of the oil industry and the crystallisation of Ijaw rhetoric around oil resources and local oil-related environmental issues.²⁵ Thus the Kaiama Declaration heralded the so called First Egbesu War (FEW) –from mid-1998 to January 1999 – and the beginning of the Second Egbesu War (SEW) – since 1999 – and underpins Ijaw ethnic politics and violence in the twenty-first century.²⁶

The FEW was marked by a series of events, which began with Ijaw youths storming Government House – the seat of government – in Bayelsa in 1998 and releasing youth leaders, one of whom was T.K. Ogoriba. Consequently, Ijaw youth leaders were arrested for circulating 'seditious' documents, which presumably raised questions about human

Va.: Science Applications International Corporation, July 31 1998); and David Leonard and Scott Strauss, *Africa's Stalled Development: International Causes and Cures*, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2003).

19 Leonard, *Africa's Stalled Development*.

20 Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976); and P. Yeros, (ed), *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa: Constructive Reflections and Contemporary Politics*, (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1999).

21 Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*; and P. Yeros, (ed), *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa: Constructive Reflections and Contemporary Politics*, (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1999). Constructivist scholars argue that ethnic identity is socially constructed, contextual, malleable, and politically mobilised. In this context, ethnic identity is politically mobilised and then manipulated so that political and material grievances become ethnically defined.

22 Mudiagu Ofuoku, "The Bomb Is Ticking", *Newswatch Magazine*, (Lagos: 17 May 1999). State and non-state violence in the Niger Delta has been notable since the 1990s; and culminated in the invasion and destruction of the village of Odi in 1999, and by the end of the 1990s hostage-taking and non-state violence have become a growing and regular phenomena in the Niger Delta region in general and Bayelsa State in particular at the time of study. See also: International Crisis Group, 'The Swamps of Insurgency: Nigeria's Delta Unrest', (Dakar and Brussels: International Crisis Group. Africa Report No113, August 2006); and O. Ibeanu & Robin Luckham, *Niger Delta: Political Violence, Governance, and Corporate Responsibility in a Petro-State*, (Abuja: Centre for Democracy and Development, 2006).

23 W. Isard and C. Smith, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria*. (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1999). For instance, earlier ethnic minority agitation in the Niger Delta region, such as MOSSOP adopted a relatively peaceful strategy in their campaign against perceived neglect in the Nigerian federal system and increase in oil revenue from the federal government.

24 Alice Hills, 'Warlords, Militia and Conflict in Contemporary Africa: A Re-examination of Terms', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol.8, no.1, (1997), Spring; and Mary Kaldor and B. Vashee (ed), *New Wars: Restructuring the Global Military Sector*. (London: Pinter, 1997). These works in a different case analysis characterise this kind of state and non-state violence 'new wars' in terms of political goals of mobilised Ijaw ethnicity, and the mode of warfare is sustained by parallel economy.

25 Augustine Ikelegbe, 'Civil society, oil and conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: ramifications of civil society for a regional resource struggle', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol.39, Issue 3, (September 2001), pp.437–469.

26 Interview with one member of MOSIEND, an Ijaw youth political organisation in Yenagoa on 22 January 2008. Egbesu is traditional Ijaw god. They ascribe it supernatural powers, such as protection during warfare (See: ERA, 'The Kaiama Declaration: the resolutions of the 11 December 1998 of all Ijaw Youth Conference', (January-March 1999)).

rights violations and probity of governance under military administrators.²⁷ The success recorded by this rare event and other antecedents culminated in a variety of outcomes in Ijaw political movements, such as confidence was inspired in more Bayelsa youths to engage in Ijaw ethnic politics (see next section);²⁸ akin to the Arab Spring in Middle-East and North Africa (MENA).

4. The Kaiama Declaration of December 11, 1998: An Arab-like awakening in Ijawland

The Declaration has been a concrete reflection of the intersection between natural resources and conflict, such as oil, on the one hand; and the role of mobilised ethnicity in conflict in Ijawland on the other. Regarding the latter, the Ijaw ethnic movements – youth groups and political elites alike – perceive themselves as enmeshed in ‘slavery, impoverished, and marginalised’ under the present Nigerian federal system.²⁹ The material and political grievances found expression in the Kaiama communiqué, which encapsulates the philosophy and strategies to bring about the fulfilment of the aspirations of Ijaw ethnic minorities.³⁰ Thus on December 11, 1998, youths of Ijaw ethnic minority origin under the umbrella of the Ijaw National Congress (INC),³¹ numbering ‘over five thousand’ and drawn from ‘over five hundred communities of about forty clans’ gathered in Kaiama and issued the now famous Kaiama Declaration.³² Kaiama is a town in the Kolokuma / Opokuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. It is the birth place of Major Jasper Adaka Boro, the legendary Ijaw revolutionary and nationalist, and was the first person in the post-colonial Niger Delta to have carried out recorded armed guerrilla insurrection against the Nigerian state and Shell/BP.³³

The 10-point demand (see: Appendix A) was signed by Felix Tuodolo, Isaac Osuoka (also known as Thomas Sakara), Kingsley Oboh, Maxwell Oko, Nelson Azibolaneri, T.K. Ogoriba, Timi Kaiser-Wilhem, and Von Dimeari Kemedi - the organisers of the Ijaw youth conference at Kaiama Grammar School (now a camp of the National Youth Service Corp). The spokespersons also established the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) to coordinate the struggle of Ijaw peoples for self-determination and justice.³⁴ The document denounced ‘social marginalisation and environmental damage by oil companies and called for the... withdrawal from Ijaw land of all military forces of occupation and repression by the Nigerian state. Oil companies employing the services of the national army were declared enemies of the Ijaw people, and given a 3-week ultimatum to stop all exploration and exploitation in the region’.³⁵

The demands of Ijaw youths translate to greater political recognition, self-determination, development, employment for the Ijaws in the oil industry, and environmental rehabilitation of polluted land and water. Other Ijaw demands were a direct share in the oil profits, and ownership of all oil and land resources in Ijawland. In this sense, the Declaration addressed economic, ecological, social and political problems, and hence constituted the first real threat to government control over oil resources in the Niger Delta, the mainstay of Nigeria’s economy since the 1970s.

In a more analytical sense, the Kaiama resolution denounced what was described as Nigeria’s ‘unbalanced’ federalism and threatened to disobey undemocratic decrees. In this context, Ijaw political mobilisation appears to have been shaped by a combination of factors. In response to these issues, which are material and political in nature and underlie mobilised Ijaw politics, a host of Ijaw political associations, especially some of the youth organisations engaged in militant activities since Kaiama and post-2000.³⁶ The youth movements, such as the Movement for the

27 Interview with one member of Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM) in Yenagoa on 29 January 2008.

28 Douglas Oronto and Ola Doife, ‘Defining Nature, Protecting Human Dignity- Conflicts in the Niger Delta’, In Monique Mekenkamp et al (ed), *Searching for Peace in Africa* (Utrecht: European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation in Cooperation, 1999). Oronto was a participant of the Kaiama Declaration. This was also about the time news of the death of the Head-of-State – General Sanni Abacha – broke out. This event heightened uncertainties, such as accentuated Ijaw demands to be more openly articulated.

29 ERA, ‘The Kaiama Declaration: the resolutions of the December 11, 1998 all Ijaw Youth Conference’, (January–March 1999), p.24

30 Ijaw Youths of the Niger Delta, The Kaiama Declaration: <http://www.dawodu.net/kaiama.htm> [accessed 12 October 2005]

31 The Kaiama Declaration: <http://www.moles.org/ProjectUnderground/reports/chevworld2.html> [accessed 12 October 2005]. Ijaw National Congress (INC) is the universal umbrella of Ijaw political movement. It was founded in 1990, perhaps by its first president, Rev. Dime. This Ijaw organisation articulated the nationalist objectives of the Ijaw people, such as resource control. Presently, it also gives formal recognition to local and international Ijaw organisations. The president of INC was Kimse Okoko, a university don, at the time of fieldwork research in Bayelsa State.

32 Kaiama Declaration.

33 Isaac Boro, *The Twelve-Day Revolution*. (Benin City: Idodo Umeh Publishers, 1982).

34 Kaiama Declaration. Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) developed from the initiative of Ijaw National Congress, the universal Ijaw political movement. The IYC was established on December 11, 1998 by Ijaw youth activist groups who wrote the Kaiama Declaration, a manifesto for anti-state and anti-oil company agitations. Thus a variety of youth militant groups that emerged in the aftermath of Kaiama Declaration have shaped their demands along the principles of Kaiama resolution.

35 Kaiama Declaration.

36 Okechukwu Ibeanu, ‘Oiling the Friction: Environmental Conflict Management in the Niger Delta, Nigeria’, *Environmental Change and*

Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND) and Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM) or their armed wings established relationships with militia groups.³⁷ For example, a fraction of the IYM, known as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), an alliance of local gangs led by Asari Dokubo might have emerged as a result of the culture of violence that has prevailed in Niger Delta since the 1990s. In this sense, the emergence of youth groups have been linked to criminal gangs and electoral politics, and often organised around a strong youth leader, such as Asari Dokubo. Also the Ijaw youth organisations did not seem to have completely ignored their historical roots, but from empirical examination, have re-defined their essence strategically from their interpretations of the failings of the past that emphasised elite politics and party-type campaigns primarily at the national arena, at the expense of local conditions, needs, and dynamics.³⁸

The violent method, which has distinguished Ijaw youth organisations from earlier Ijaw political movements, such as among youth groups earned them the name militias by state officials or insurgency by others, especially their communities.³⁹ On the latter, for example, one interviewee called themselves: "Mau Mau' or freedom fighters challenging mugu fall guy wack mentality of others against Ijaw people".⁴⁰

Interestingly, this narrative of Ijaw politics and violence could not be entirely correct. Historically, Mau Mau freedom fighters are associated with Kenya's political struggle against British colonial rule. This is not akin to the Ijaw case considering that Nigeria, consisting of heterogeneous peoples became an independent country on October 1, 1960; and more importantly the Ijaw have a wholly Ijaw state governed by Ijaw indigenes.

Nonetheless, from the point of view of the minority ethnic perception, the structural outcome of Nigeria's independence dictated the link between 'power and number', which was based on the size of ethnic groups, and the attendant fear of 'economic marginalisation' and 'powerlessness' among minority ethnic groups in the three regions.⁴¹ The other explanation is uneven rates of development among the various groups and regions, which underpinned the struggle for state power and regionalisation of politics, in particular party and electoral politics. Thus non-state violence in Ijawland culminated in the Egbesu Wars. One striking incidence of the Wars and the emergence of the Fourth Republic was the invasion of Odi in November 1999, which manifested a state and non-state violence that have become significant features of mobilised Ijaw ethnic minority politics since the Kaiama Declaration of 1998.

5. Emergence and activities of Ijaw political movements in the 1990s and post-2000: signpost of the Arab Spring

This section mainly attempts to answer the question: what was the rationale for generational organisations that met in Kaiama, the central focus of this paper's analysis? How were they formed and who were their leaders? What was their *modus operandi* on December 11, 1998? How did they mobilise? What have they done since the Kaiama ultimatum? And lastly, what are their relationships with Ijaw state politicians, political parties, militant groups, and criminal mafias, and human rights violations? These questions are woven around an empirical analysis of the Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), one of two Ijaw youth militant formations identified in Bayelsa State for this study. The other group of these mass representative organisations was Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM).⁴²

Security Project Report, Issue 6, (2000), Summer. See also: HRW, 'Rivers and Blood: guns, oil and power in Nigeria's River State', A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, (February 2005).

37 Augustine Ikelegbe, 'Civil Society, Oil and Conflict in the Niger Delta region: ramifications of civil society for a regional resource struggle', in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Volume 39, Issue 03, (2001), pp. 437–469. A more detailed analysis of Ijaw youth organisations focussing on MOSIEND and IYM, the youth groups identified during fieldwork research to Bayelsa State has been published in another work by the author. Some of the criminal activities associated with youth factions include kidnapping / hostage-taking, theft of crude oil / attacking oil infrastructure, and rigging of elections.

38 Onigu Orite, 'Ethnicity and Class in Plural Society: Nigeria', in C.B. Marcelt and C.Leggion (ed), *Research in Race and Ethnic Relations*, vol. 1 (Connecticut: JAI Press, 1979). This work focuses on identities, distinguishing between ethnic and 'civil ties'. In this sense, the Niger Delta region and Ijaw youth movements by the end of the 1990s have been uniquely civic or generational, and also known to have strong ethnic complexions.

39 J. Fearon and David Laitin, 'Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War', *American Political Science Review*, 97, 1, (2003), pp.75–90.

40 Interview with one member of MOSIEND, an Ijaw representative mass organisation and a militant formation in Odi on 14 March 2008.

41 Osita Agbu, 'Re-inventing Federalism in Post-Transition Nigeria: Problems and Prospects', in *African Development*, Vol. XXIX, No.2, (2004), pp. 26–52.

42 C. Ifeka, 'Oil, NGOs, and Youths: Struggles for Resource Control in the Niger Delta'. *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 87, (2001), pp.99–140. MOSIEND is said to have masterminded Kaiama Declaration, and its leader T.K.Ogoriba was one of those detained in Bayelsa State Government House, and whose rescue by Ijaw youth groups signposted a new dimension in youth activism.

Suffice to say, multiple Ijaw political movements that were festering beneath the surface presented themselves at Kaiama in response to the clarion call by the signatories of the Kaiama Declaration.⁴³ They include: the Ijaw Council for Human Rights (ICHR), the Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), and the Movement for the Reparations to Ogbia (MORETO). Others are the Chikoko Movement, National Union of Bayelsa Students, the Nembe 1895 Movement, and the Supreme Egbesu Assembly (SEA). Membership of the political movements was proliferated mainly by 'youth', backed by powerful and influential local ethnic warlords who became active in post-Kaiama Ijaw political activities.⁴⁴

MOSIEND and other Ijaw youth organisations, such as IYM this study identified, is a 'metaphor' of a decentralised broad alliance of local resistance group engaged in what Clarkson, an interviewee, terms 'liberation struggles' in Ijawland.⁴⁵ The group's aims and membership overlap, such as community vigilante, armed political movements, and they are engaged in criminal activities across the Niger Delta region, where the country is most vulnerable because of its dependence on oil resources. A variety of youth groups, like MOSIEND may have been thrown up by socio-economic challenges facing Nigeria at the time. Nonetheless some of the youth group leaders also belong to cult groups existing in universities and are courted by state and national governments in the struggle for power since the introduction of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

In a more analytical sense, the Ijaw political movements developed into conventional and militant organisations. Under this broad classification of Ijaw associations, three categories can be teased out based on Ikelegbe's work,⁴⁶ namely:

- first, apex Ijaw movements that represent and speak for a variety of Ijaw communities in Bayelsa State, which are composed of political elites and elders.
- second, a plethora of youth associations, such as IYM and MOSIEND, the foot soldiers of Kaiama Declaration.
- third and lastly, specialised Ijaw associations, which mobilise Ijaw people for specific interests, such as environmental rights, and women's group interests. They also include pan-ethnic Ijaw movements in the diaspora or exile groups with extensive organisational structures that lend sophisticated support to local youth groups, and also articulate Ijaw ethnic minority politics across the states of the South-South Geopolitical Area in the national and international arena.

The generational groups that proliferate among Ijaw ethnic movements at Kaiama, according to a study constitute the 'actual players or instrument of violence' in the confrontation with oil companies and state security forces.⁴⁷

Similarities can also be drawn from the earlier role of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) led by Ken Saro-Wiwa in Rivers State, another Niger Delta state east of Bayelsa State. This sister group for instance, midwived the formation of the National Youth Council for the Ogoni people (NYCOP), which redefined itself as (MOSOP), thereby leaving lessons for the Ijaw youths, such as MOSIEND, to mastermind the Kaiama Declaration. Arguably, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in Rivers State, from where Bayelsa State was carved out in 1996, might have been a precedent or perhaps an inspiration. Interestingly, in the wake of Ken Saro-Wiwa's campaigns for the Ogoni and his judicial murder by the federal government, numerous ethnic-based organisations, such as MOSIEND, have sprouted to demand environmental justice from the federal government and oil companies operating in Ijawland. Though the rationale for the formation of generational groups in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria since the 1990s requires further interrogation, it is suffice to remark that they might have been based partly on the logic of existence, and to draw attention to their objective conditions.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, according to one member of the MOSIEND youth group:

43 ERA, 'The Kaiama Declaration: the resolutions of the December 11, 19998 all Ijaw Youth Conference', (1999), January-March, p.24.

44 C. Ifeka, 'Oil, NGOs, and Youths: Struggles for Resource Control in the Niger Delta'. Review of African Political Economy, No. 87, (2001), pp. 99-140. Thus youth groups overlap: criminal gangs, political movements, and community vigilante.

45 Interview with one member of MOSIEND in Yenagoa on 22 January 2008.

46 Augustine Ikelegbe, 'Civil society, oil and conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: ramifications of civil society for a regional resource struggle', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Volume 39, Issue 03. (2001), September.

47 Thomas Imobighe (ed), *Civil Society and Ethnic Conflict Management in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2003), Chapters 4-9.

48 Celestine O. Bassey et al, *Conflict and Instability in Niger Delta: The Warri Case*. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 2002); and Interview with one member of Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM) and an activist in Port Harcourt on 26 February 2008.

in response to Ken Saro-Wiwa's hanging, T.K. Ogoriba, D.D. Kalsuo, Asari Dokubo, Owei Beresendi, and Young Bekeweri galvanised Ijaw ethnicity to fight for the emancipation of the Ijaw people –nation.⁴⁹

Thus MOSIEND organised press conferences and peaceful protests on one level, and on another, extremists among the youth group were involved in 'shutting down flow stations belonging to AGIP and Shell, and were quick to take hostages', and hence violated human rights.⁵⁰ In this context, the group was a mixture of genuine individuals involved in legitimate agitations against perceived political and material grievances and criminal gangs within their rank and file engaged in a war economy in the Niger Delta.⁵¹ As a matter of fact, since the Fourth Republic, MOSIEND, IYM, and a number of other youth groups, some of them faceless, such as Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) have been operating across the Niger Delta, based in ethnic communities from where they draw their support and loyalty.⁵²

An analysis of MOSIEND shows that its quasi-organisational structure has at the head the president, T.K. Ogoriba, and the secretary-general, who runs the movement's organisation on a daily basis and during crisis. Like many other Ijaw political movements, MOSIEND claimed its aim was to bring to an end perceived 'oppression and degradation of the Ijaw'.⁵³ It is not surprising that, its members became the 'think tank' of the Kaiama Declaration and its aftermath, and their ideas contributed to the birth of an umbrella Ijaw youth group, known as Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) with Felix Toudolo, living in the United Kingdom at the time of study as its first president.

SD (real names withheld), an Ijaw activist I interviewed, recounts a version of the origin of militancy in 'old' Rivers State, which is shared by MOSIEND members interviewed, that:

The first hostage-taking was to attract international attention to their grievance because of their influence on oil companies (mainly multinational) operating in Ijawland, who they find more loyal to the Federal government than the peoples and communities where they do business.⁵⁴

That said, two wrongs cannot make a right, since hostage-taking infringed upon the human rights and freedom of the victim. Nonetheless, the activism of the Ijaw youth movements, which are a reflection of the changing nature of Ijaw politics, is manifest in vigorous local debates, either in their tacit support for or the increase in the activities of militia groups within their ranks. Arguably, perceived failings of a range of government intervention strategies through regulation, enforcement, and to some extent unsustainable community-based participation have left most members of the Ijaw groups, especially the youth, at the margins of oil wealth in Nigeria. In this light, the aims, objectives, methods and processes of Ijaw ethnic politics and violence have been converted to a broad and participatory struggle in the aftermath of the Kaiama Declaration.

In the wider context, the opinions of key Ijaw participants - educated and uneducated political elites and youth leaders alike, and rank and file of Ijaw people who are not members of formal activist groups - are broadly similar and find common ground. For example, MOSIEND members as well as other Ijaw elite movements consider the Kaiama resolution as the "Ijaw Bible", and that the document contains the *Egbesu* spirit, the Ijaw god.⁵⁵ In the words of a key Ijaw participant and member of the Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM):

Kaiama is the compass of Ijaw struggle, a working document that gives effect to Ijaw claims yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Kaiama means everything, which includes total emancipation of the Niger Delta.⁵⁶ Yet another Kaiama participant and member of MOSIEND is of the opinion that:

Kaiama is a document of Ijaw grievances against the Federal government and oil companies.⁵⁷

49 Interview with one member of MOSIEND in Yenagoa on 22 January 2008.

50 Interview with one civil servant in Amassoma on 25 January 2008.

51 ECON, Economic driving forces of violent conflict and war. Econ Report, no. 27 (2001).

52 Ike Okonta, 'Niger Delta: Behind the Mask, Ijaw Militia Fight the Oil Cartel', Niger Delta Economies of Violence Paper, 11, (2006), September.

53 Interview with one member of MOSIEND in Yenagoa on 22 January 2008.

54 Interview with one Ijaw activist in Port Harcourt on 26 February 2008. He shed light on current criminal activities in Bayelsa State.

55 Interview with one Ijaw activist in Yenagoa on 28 February 2008. His belief in the efficacy of the Egbesu ritual is strong. The Egbesu cult or god is the Ijaw spirit in times of war.

56 Interview with one member of Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM) in Yenagoa on 29 January 2008.

57 Interview with one member of MOSIEND in Yenagoa on 22 January 2008.

Hence, the immediate outcome of the gathering together of mobilised Ijaw ethnic groups at Kaiama was a heightening of rhetoric and tensions, which snowballed into a direct confrontation between the Federal Government of Nigeria and oil companies operating in Bayelsa State with many implications for human rights.

On December 30, 1998, when the ultimatum given to the federal government and oil companies operating in Ijawland expired, the Ijaw youth organisations initiated a series of activities in stages that subsequently changed the dynamic of protest marches into violence. Through non-violent means MOSIEND and other members of the pan-Ijaw Youth Council engaged in singing and dancing of the traditional Ogele dance in Ijaw towns and villages to sensitise and mobilise Ijaw ethnic groups for the Ijaw cause.⁵⁸ These songs were sang in the streets of Yenagoa, the capital city of Bayelsa State, and conveyed messages of solidarity, justice, and invocation of the Egbesu spirit, axiomatic of a cultural resistance. According to one activist:

In the face of eminent confrontation with the Federal Government, the Ijaw people fell back to their traditional religion to protect them, and when the rituals are done and participants adhere to the rules, the *Egbesu Spirit* works.⁵⁹

The wave of activism was manifest in the increasing activities by Ijaw youth groups, and the trend whereby women from oil communities also participated in the *Ogele dance* and – by extension – the storming of oil platforms, which presents a relationship between ‘civil’ and ‘ethnic’ identity perspectives of non-state violence in Niger Delta.⁶⁰ The relatively no-peace no-war process was not destined to last for very long. Informal alliances with international environmental, civil society, and human rights groups, who are adept at using skills, media, and other avenues in spreading their message, gave Ijaw movements allies who were skilled in manipulation of the mass media;⁶¹ similar to what is taking place in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as I write.

In the context of this paper’s analysis, the youths generated increasing political pressure on the state by eventually taking justice into their own hands for a variety of reasons. First, the inability of the federal military government to react creatively to the demands by the Ijaw youth organisations; hence they felt encouraged to enforce their demands. Second, generational control of the Ijaw political movements at the time underpins the radical approach adopted in achieving their aims and objectives, which tapped into decades of Ijaw material and political grievances.⁶² Thus the so call ‘Ghandhi’ perspective of non-violence initially conducted around environmental, economic, and social issues was replaced by more popular and local level violent anti-state and oil company agitations.⁶³ Third and lastly, MOSIEND, for instance, in this day and age has ready access to information dissemination and communication tools to draw widespread attention to the Niger Delta. Hence, the Ijaw youth groups drew support from members of the Niger Delta Diasporas, and effectively engaged in series of media campaigns, protest marches, and direct action taking advantage of their familiarity with the Niger Delta’s geomorphology.⁶⁴

Instructively, the criminal activities of some Ijaw youth groups are condemnable according to a scholar on Ijaw politics, who asserts that:

some of the youths abused the process of legitimate demands, which elevated individual and parochial interests at the expense of the collective Ijaw cause.⁶⁵

For instance, a faction within Ijaw Youth Movement – the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) – led by Asari Dokubo, a university drop out and a former ally of Dr. Odili (the governor of Rivers State at the time) became

58 ERA, ‘The Kaiama Declaration: the resolutions of the December 11, 1998 all Ijaw Youth Conference’, (1999), January-March.

59 Interview with one politician and member of Ijaw National Congress (INC) in Yenagoa on 8 February 2008.

60 New York Times 13 August 2002; and Nonmistsu Onishi: in New York Times 22 December 2002. ‘As oil riches flow, poor village cries out’. <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/natres/oil/2002/1223nigeria.htm> [accessed on 25 June 2003]. See also: Niger Delta Women for Justice for the role of women in advancing the struggle <http://www.ndwj.kabissa.org/ArticlesResearch/AB2/ab2.html> [accessed on 19 February 2004]. This was the first time women spearheaded demonstration against the oil giants for the lack of community ownership of programmes and response to exclusion.

61 Ukoha Ukiwo, ‘From Pirates to Militants: A Historical perspective on Anti-state and Anti-oil company mobilisation Among the Ijaw of Warri, Western Niger Delta’, *African Affairs*, 106, (2007), p.425. See also: The Economist, February – 29 October 2011. ‘The Arab Spring’.

62 Bassey et al, *Conflict and Instability in Niger Delta*, p.91. This work illustrates the crisis of ‘confidence that characterises the youth-elder relations. The elders are perceived to be too conciliatory’.

63 David Crystal (eds), *The Penguin Encyclopedia*, (London: Penguin Books, 2006).

64 Nicholas Shaxon, *Poisoned Wells: The Dirty Politics of African Oil*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

65 Interview with one Ijaw political elite in Yenagoa on 28 February 2008. His condemnation of criminal elements acting within Ijaw youth organisations against the ethos of the mainstream groups does not adequately explain some of the origins of this phenomenon.

more militant and a fighting force engaged in oil pipeline vandalism and abduction of oil company employees.⁶⁶ Since oil communities became inundated with small arms and arming militia groups, resentment among youth groups began to draw support across and beyond the communities.⁶⁷

The NDPVF group has been linked to criminal elements involved in oil bunkering but the group's leadership claim they were simply taking that which belongs to the Ijaw people [the oil].⁶⁸ According to reports, highly organised conglomerates of oil bunkers comprising of expatriate and local businessmen, high-level politicians and military personnel, and even employees of the oil companies have also recruited youth leaders and their organisations for ends that were no less criminal.⁶⁹ An interviewee also contributed to the prevalence of human rights violations and criminal activities linked to youth groups in Ijawland:

Criminal gangs are supported in their communities because they channel their 'loot' into filling the social gaps abandoned by various governments' responsibility to its citizens. For example, the militants support community healthcare centres with financial resources, they fund students to sit for university entry examinations, and award scholarships to individuals to study for university degrees in Ghana and Western universities.⁷⁰

A study elsewhere argues that where armed groups dominate, youth become not only important instruments in the use of force but leaders as well.⁷¹ These activities of social or conflict actors in Ijawland might have been complementary to the country's democratisation process that began in the 1990s and is evident in adopted strategies of non-state violence in Ijawland.⁷² In this context, grassroots discontent in Niger Delta was converted to a comprehensive struggle expressed in oil pipeline vandalism, abduction of oil company employees, reprisals against groups considered allies of the state and oil companies, and hence a lack of respect for human rights.

In a more analytical sense, Ijaw youth organisations were driven by the principles espoused in the Kaiama Declaration of 1998, which articulated the all-embracing issues of Ijaw minority marginalisation. However, their composition, conduct, and pronouncements on Ijaw rights and oil-led environmental damage also raised other issues, which arguably flagged the question of whether the Ijaw youth groups introduced and politicised environmental degradation issues with which the oil communities had co-existed for decades? Or was the changing dynamic of politicised Ijaw ethnic politics since the 1990s constructed into a struggle for environmental rights and oil resource control as a convenient platform for a 'new' politically motivated violence in Ijawland? The Kaiama document signposted the convergence of oil and environment as significant popular issues, which require further analysis (see next paragraph) since oil-led environmental debate interfaced with broader Ijaw ethnic politics.

Arguably, Ijaw youth organisations became more environmentally and socially conscious of their world in the 1990s, and the environment-related subject and its connection with oil operations in Niger Delta was made a prominent issue in the Kaiama resolution of 1998.⁷³ This subject easily mobilised Ijaw ethnic politics – ordinary Ijaw folks and activist groups alike – by attributing oil-led environmental degradation to neglect by the Nigerian federal system. Table 1.1.3A shows some activity and impact of oil operations in Bayelsa State. The Kaiama participants formulated ideas around the fusion of oil resources and environment to mobilise Ijaw sentiments, which transformed the oil-related environmental subject to a conflict issue in and of itself. Though environmental damage from non-oil causes abounds

66 Human Rights Watch, 'Politics as War', (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008). This work reports that during the run-up to the 2003 elections, Asari Dokubo was recruited by Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) officials to organise electoral violence and ensure the successful rigging of the polls. This youth group (NDPVF) changed the dynamics of conflict in Bayelsa State with his group's adoption of political rhetoric, which identified them in opposition to the perceived marginalisation and neglect of the Ijaw by the Nigerian federal system. This group was the precursor to the faceless Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), an amalgam of existing armed groups in the region.

67 This Day Newspaper, Lagos, 09 June 2008. This paper reported about the allegation that the Nigerian Army and Shell Petroleum Development Company Nigeria Limited are involved in the proliferation of arms and ammunition in the Niger Delta.

68 Human Rights Watch, Interview with Asari Dokubo, (Port Harcourt: HRW, 2004), November 21.

69 WAC, Peace and Security in the Niger Delta: Conflict Expert Group Baseline, Working Paper for SPDC, (2003), December; and Report of the Special Committee on Oil Producing Areas, submitted to President Olusegun Obasanjo, (2002), February.

70 Interview with one civil society activist on Niger Delta issues and Nigerian politics in Calabar on 16 February 2008.

71 A. Sawyer, *Beyond Plunder: Torn democratic governance in Liberia*. (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005). Thus Asari Dokubo, who was a former ally of the state political elites with links with the governor and his political party, fell out of favour and adopted a militant stance by forming the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDVF) engaged in criminal activities across the Niger Delta region.

72 Augustine Ikelegbe, 'Civil society, oil and conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: ramifications of civil society for a regional resource struggle', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Volume 39, Issue 03, (2001), September.

73 See items in the Kaiama Communiqué: The Kaiama Declaration: <http://www.moles.org/ProjectUnderground/reports/chevworld2.html> [accessed 12 October 2005]

in the Niger Delta, environmental-related resentment only seems to have become a subject of strong concern in Ijaw political rhetoric since the Kaiama Declaration.⁷⁴

Nigeria's national revenue since the 1970s has come mainly from oil resources, obtained with damage to the environment. In respect of the environmental debate, it was the activities of neighbouring Rivers State elites that began to articulate the issue and connection between oil-led environmental damage and human rights in the Niger Delta region well before the creation of the Ijaw state in 1996.⁷⁵ In this context, substantial work on oil and the Niger Delta argues that oil communities in the region are victims of public choices from *laissez-faire* policies and official actions by the government, which have contributed to the damage and neglect of the environment.⁷⁶ Arguably, Ijaw political movements might have focussed attention on the new global environmental management, which elevated the sustainable development debate, and coalesced with identity politics in the context of the Niger Delta region.⁷⁷

The shifting ground and emphasis of identity politics was now moving away from the visible planks of minority agitations associated with Ijaw ethnic politics in the past, and crystallised with the inner-logic of the Kaiama resolution of 1998. Though Bayelsa State suffers from erosion, flooding, and rising sea levels resulting from direct and indirect causes, the link between oil and environmental damage was taken up by Ijaw political elites and youth groups at the end of the 1990s, which interfaced with wider Ijaw ethnic politics articulated by Ijaw youth groups.⁷⁸ Local and national oil-related environment issues resonated with Ijaw youth groups at Kaiama, as captured in a study on land use and land cover changes in the Niger Delta region.⁷⁹ Hence, claims of oil communities that the oil business polluted their air and water, and disrupted their sense of community, were made in the context of the trajectories of Ijaw politics and perceived human rights abuses.

Another interesting angle in this analysis is that the ground for environment and politics-related agitation had become favourable in the face of countrywide demands for democracy, and the insistence on good governance in Nigeria during the 1990s.⁸⁰ Ikelegbe contributed to this brand of debate at the time by his assertion that the era coincided with the flowering of civil societies in the global arena in the popular struggles for democratisation and respect for human rights that converged with the annulment of the presidential elections in Nigeria in 1993.⁸¹ This era thus coincided with the transition from military rule to civil rule in Nigeria, which culminated in the Fourth Republic of 1999. Given this and other developments illuminated in the previous paragraph, the Ijaw ethnic movements were enkindled to 'talk' the complex but now fashionable language of democracy and human rights and to link them to their environmental situation.⁸²

Significant for this research was that the Kaiama Declaration digressed beyond the problem of environmental degradation from hydro-carbons to also denounce other issues, which included social marginalisation by central government and repression by state armed forces.⁸³ The latter has ignited the debate about excessive use of force on

74 Vanguard Newspaper, Lagos: 13 June 2008, reported that 300 families were affected by flooding in Yenagoa, the capital city of Bayelsa State in June. Thus flooding is one of the non-oil environmental occurrence in Bayelsa State. Other non-oil types of environmental problems in the Ijaw state are coastal and river bank erosion.

75 Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria: The Ogoni Tragedy*. (Port Harcourt: Saro Publishers, 1992); and C. Obi, 'Globalisation and Local Resistance: The Case of the Ogoni Versus Shell', in *New Political Economy* 12, no.1 (1997). The near-non-violent campaign associated with Ken Saro-Wiwa has been replaced by armed protest in Bayelsa State by the end of the 1990s.

76 Michael Watts, 'Contentious Politics and Petro-Capitalism: Extraction, Environmental Process and Large-scale Violence in Nigeria', Paper delivered to the Institute of International Studies, Harvard University, (2000), October. See also: Friends of the Earth, 2004 'Lessons Not Learned: The Other Shell Report 2004' http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/lessons_not_learned.pdf [accessed 24 January 2005] According to this report, despite the legal prohibition of gas flaring in Nigeria since 1984, for example, Shell has continued with this method of disposing of the by-products of its oil-drilling activities, causing severe environmental and health problems for the residents of the Niger Delta.

77 Michael Watts, 'Contentious Politics and Petro-Capitalism: Extraction, Environmental Process and Large-scale Violence in Nigeria', Paper delivered to the Institute of International Studies, Harvard University, (2000), October.

78 Ijaw Youths of the Niger Delta, The Kaiama Declaration: <http://www.dawodu.net/kaiama.htm> [accessed 12 October 2004]. See also: Rob Nixon, 'Pipe Dreams: Ken Saro-Wiwa, Environmental Justice and Microminority Rights', in Craig W. McLuckie and Aubrey McPhail (ed), *Ken Saro-Wiwa: Writer and Political Activist*. (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000)).

79 T. Agbola and T.A. Olurin, 'Landuse and landcover change in Niger Delta', a Research Report presented to the Centre for Democracy and Development, (2003), July.

80 C. Obi, *The Changing Forms of Identity Politics in Nigeria under Economic Adjustment: The Case of Oil Minorities of the Niger Delta*, (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikanstitutet, 2001).

81 Augustine Ikelegbe, 'Civil Society and Conflict in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: Ramifications of Civil Society for a regional resource struggle', in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39, 3, (2001), September, pp.437-469.

82 Interview with Morris Alagoa, the project manager of Environmental Rights Action (ERA), local NGO based in Yenagoa on 14 February 2008. See also: O. Ibeanu, 'Oiling the Friction: Environmental Conflict Management in the Niger Delta, Niger', Environmental Change and Security Project Report, Issue 6, (2000), Summer.

83 Cyril Obi, *Changing Forms of Identity Politics in Nigeria Under Economic Adjustment: The Case of the Oil Minorities of the Niger Delta*.

citizens relating to human rights violations, an important focus of this paper's analysis on state responses. Nonetheless, the adoption of the Kaiama Declaration by Ijaw movements cascaded the entry of Ijaw youths into the political domain, and provided a platform for them to arguably consider their political rights within the Nigerian federal system.⁸⁴ For example, Ijaw youth movements repudiated the conventional 'more state creation' approach, which has been associated with Ijaw politics since the 1950s as conciliatory.⁸⁵ To this extent, the Ijaw ethnic minorities were mobilised politically to challenge government and oil companies for perceived neglect and lack of development in their communities. In this context, the potential for non-state violence festered side by side with a variety of claims by Ijaw political associations that honed politicised minority-related notions of disadvantage, self-determination and equity, and a growing preparedness to respond to the militarism of central government and the complicity of oil companies.⁸⁶

Evidence from fieldwork research in the Niger Delta suggest that items in the Kaiama Declaration of 1998 have not been addressed in any significant sense since the emergence of Fourth Republic – considering that development issues in Ijawland remain of great concern, and many of the issues, such as oil-led environmental damage, resource control, poverty, and corruption are still prominent. As regards the latter, for example, one interviewee told me that, if Alamieyeseigha (one of their own) could 'steal from us and from posterity, and mismanage our resources, we excuse others for thievery in the Ijawland'.⁸⁷ D.S.P. Alamieyeseigha was elected the first civilian governor of the Ijaw state with Goodluck Jonathan (now President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria) as his Deputy in 1999. Under his watch, more commonplace tendencies in African governance emerged – such as corruption and the near-extinction of opposition political parties. In 2005, Alamieyeseigha became the first to be impeached among 35 governors in the country for corruption offences and poor economic governance against his own people.⁸⁸

6. Post-Kaiama Declaration: State and Oil Company responses to non-state violence in the Niger Delta

The attempt to engage in cultural resistance as seen in Ijaw youth protest marches, and mass action against oil companies as they elevated security around their operations, resulted in the federal government increasing deployment of the military in oil communities – with all the implications for human rights violations to date. According to Frynas' work, state and oil company approaches to non-state violence in Ijawland were conventional and geared towards managing conflict, and three generic strategies were discernible.⁸⁹

They included: 'new' development intervention regimes by the state (see another paper by this author for a more detailed analysis);⁹⁰ the use of public relations especially by oil companies operating in Niger Delta;⁹¹ and the 'militarisation' of Ijawland by the central government.⁹² Concerning the latter, and since this was under military dispensation, the government's policy response to youth mobilisation after the Kaiama Declaration was predictable. Based on this, the Bayelsa State military administrator at the time, Lt Col. Edor Obi (1998-1999) declared a state of emergency and arrested the signatories of the Kaiama document.⁹³

On another level, the Federal Military Government under General Sanni Abacha (and after his regime) reinforced the military strategy by deploying troops or set up special military task forces in Bayelsa State to contain the potential

(Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikaninstitutet, 2001b).

84 Augustine Ikelegbe, 'Civil Society and Conflict in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: Ramifications of Civil Society for a regional resource struggle', in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 39, 3, (2001), September, pp.437–469.

85 Bassey et al, *Conflict and Instability in Niger Delta*.

86 Ike Okonta and Orono Douglas, *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights and Oil in the Niger Delta*, (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 2002).

87 Interview with one member of MOSIEND – an Ijaw youth group - in Yenagoa on 22 January 2008.

88 The Guardian Newspaper, Lagos: 27 September 2005. For instance, the Chief Priest of Egbesu Cult – Werinipe Noel Digifa – alleged that Alamieyeseigha had swindled the Ijaw state of money through eight non-existent companies.

89 J.G. Frynas, 'Political instability and business: focus on Shell and Nigeria', *Third World Quarterly*, 19 (3), (1998), pp.457–487; and Scot Pegg, 'The Cost of doing Business: transnational corporations and violence in Nigeria', *Security Dialogue*, 30 (4), (1999), pp.473–484. For instance, the major oil companies operating in Bayelsa State were compelled to provide security for their workers and facilities against militant attacks and increasing cases of water-borne robberies in the aftermath of Kaiama.

90 Ibaba S. Ibaba, *Understanding the Niger Delta Crisis*. (Port Harcourt: Amethyst & Colleagues Publishers, 2005); and Khan, Nigeria: *The Political Economy of Oil*.

91 Environmental Rights Action, *Shell in Nigeria: Public Relations and Broken Promises*, (St. Andrews, 1997). See also: A. Rowell, J. Marriot, & L. Stockholm, *The Next Gulf: London, Washington and Oil Conflict in Nigeria*, (London: Constable, 2005).

92 Human Rights Watch, *The Price of Oil – Corporate Responsibility and Human Rights Violations in Nigeria's Oil-producing Communities*, (New York: HRW, 1999); and J.G. Frynas, 'Corporate and state responses to anti-oil protests in the Niger Delta', in *African Affairs*, 100, (2001), pp.27–54.

93 ERA, 'The Kaiama Declaration: the resolutions of the December 11, 19998 all Ijaw Youth Conference', (1999), January-March.

of violence spreading through the region. The task forces include: Bayelsa State Internal Security Task Force, Operation Salvage, Operation Flush, National Coast Guard, Operation Restore Hope and Niger Delta Vigilantes.⁹⁴ Thus the proliferation of special military task forces, a mechanism aimed at achieving a military solution has been one of government's response to Ijaw politics and violence in Bayelsa State, as well as designed to keep and/or enforce peace-building in the state.

The increased deployment of the military in oil communities has led to negative implications and outcomes, such as human rights violations for the communities' most vulnerable people.⁹⁵ Inevitably, this outcome is exacerbated when oil communities become support bases for armed militia groups engaged in bunkering and other violent activities.⁹⁶ However, the military interventions by the state attest to the government's dilemma in the face of new developments by which militia groups could meet government forces in kind ('fire for fire'), and in some cases government forces in the Niger Delta region colluded with militants.⁹⁷

According to one interviewee, the relationship between military personnel and armed groups also reinforces criminality in Ijawland:

The potential wealth generated in Bayelsa State sustains the temptation for officers and men deployed to the Ijaw state to be part of the criminal gangs rather than to stop them. For example, a soldier who is on a poor salary of about 7,000 Naira a month can be offered one-tenth of the price of illegal crude (\$60) from criminals and he is greatly better off than if he withdrew support for armed groups operating in the creeks.⁹⁸

To lend credence to this interviewee's view point, the Nigerian military authority recently, through a general court-martial in Kaduna, sentenced an Army Officer and five soldiers to life imprisonment for illegal arms supply to militant groups involved in criminal activities in the Niger Delta region.⁹⁹ Arguably, cases like this are few and far between; more isolated than systemic.

Remarkably, the Federal government's military approach to Ijaw politics was complemented with the creation of the Institute for Peace-Building and Conflict Resolution in the Presidency in Abuja in 1999, perhaps due to the recognition of the limitations of a military solution. This idea was therefore part of the institutionalisation of conflict-resolution mechanisms of the Federal Government of Nigeria to address protracted social conflict in the country in general and Ijaw politics and non-state violence in the Niger Delta region in particular. Among its many roles, this body, in conjunction with multilateral and bilateral organisations undertook a conflict assessment of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria in 2002.¹⁰⁰ The organisations were DFID, the EU, UNDP, USAID, and the World Bank.

Arguably, ample empirical evidence suggests that protracted social conflict tends to be associated with uneven patterns of development.¹⁰¹ Similarly, Tom Woodhouse et al argue that grievances resulting from need deprivation are usually expressed collectively and cultivate a niche for a protracted social conflict;¹⁰² and Paul Gready argues that denial of human rights is a structural cause of conflict because basic human needs are not met, signposting non-state violence in Ijawland.¹⁰³ In sum, the Kaiama Declaration of 1998 – termed the Ijaw 'Bible' – produced the watershed

94 Human Rights Watch, *Crack Down in the Niger Delta*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999b).

95 Save the Children, Briefing Report: Lifting the Resource Curse: Extractive Industry, Children and Governance. (London, UK: Save the Children, 2003). See also: Funmi Olonisakin, 'Children and Armed Conflict in West Africa', in Adekeye Adebajo and Ishmail Rashid (eds), *The Challenges of Building Peace in West Africa*, (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004). This work illuminates the human cost and implications for violence among women and children.

96 Human Rights Watch, *The Price of Oil*.

97 Evidences of intensifying conflict are captured in strategies in 'Project Ploughshares: Armed Conflicts Report 2003' in Nigeria: <http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/ACRText/ACR-Nigeria.html> [accessed 5 May 2005]. See also: The widely disseminated US National Intelligence Council reported on the collapse of Nigeria in 2015 suggests it would be driven from oil resource-related conflict in the Niger Delta region. http://www.cia.gov/nic/NIC_globaltrend2020_es.html [accessed 29 May 2005]. These reports variously describe the situation in the Niger Delta region as the 'keg of gunpowder' waiting to explode.

98 Interview with one church leader in Yenagoa on 2 March 2008.

99 The Guardian Newspaper, Lagos: 19 November 2008.

100 Oshita O. Oshita, 'Conflict, Security and Development', in *Development Studies Network*, Vol.3, No.2. (2003), pp.251–263. In October 15, 2001 a Bill was generated, which sought to establish this body to promote research and facilitate conflict prevention, management and resolution.

101 A. Schmidt, 'Early Warning of Violent Conflicts', In P. Schmidt (ed), *Violent Crime and Conflicts*. (Milan: ISPAC (International Scientific and Professional Advisory Council of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, 1997).

102 Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse et al, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

103 Paul Gready and J. Ensor (ed), *Reinventing Development? Translating Rights-Based Approaches from Theory into Practice*. (London: Zed Books, 2005).

in 'mobilised' Ijaw ethnic politics and violence; and more importantly illuminated the rapid shift of such politics since the Kaiama Declaration and post-2000.¹⁰⁴

7. Conclusion: Building Peace and Protecting Human Rights

This paper is an attempt to analyse Ijaw ethnic politics and their changing dynamics, focussing on the rise of state and non-state violence since the Kaiama Declaration with all the implications for human rights in a variety of ways. First, violence destroys potential development processes by the minimisation of much-needed investments in the Niger Delta in general and Ijawland in particular. Second, violence scares away participation in harnessing the vast economic potential in the Niger Delta region beyond its oil economy. Third and lastly, the violence perpetuates a humanitarian disaster and in-region migrations for the most vulnerable, such as women and children. Some of these cases were widely acknowledged by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights; and hence, internally displaced peoples are created by the consequences of conflict and compounded by militarisation in the region.¹⁰⁵

Drawing therefore from an empirical analysis of Ijaw politics, Ijawland is underdeveloped compared to many parts of Nigeria.¹⁰⁶ Thus Ijaw ethnic politics was mobilised around triggers, which were material in nature and underpinned perceived neglect by the Nigerian federal system. In this sense and in the context of this paper's analysis, the main conflict resolution strategy – which could remove the sources of conflict – is development, the parameter of mobilised Ijaw ethnic politics. Thus inclusive peace building requires targeting attention on growth at the local level of the phenomenon of youth militancy, and their relationships with state political elites and conglomerates in exacerbating violence in the region,¹⁰⁷ such as Kaiama and its aftermath. Hence, more effective conflict resolution – fair and nuanced – has to focus on the development of human capital, and physical infrastructure such as roads, housing, electricity, and water in the oil region. Though decades of development intervention regimes were meant to address these issues, their performances have been inadequate for a variety of reasons, such as corruption on all levels of government and a lack of sufficient political will.

In addition, oil companies may have to address issues beyond reactive incidences of oil exploration and production activity according to a report commissioned by Shell, by being proactively engaged in the communities where they have their businesses and investments.¹⁰⁸ This is relevant because a 2005 report indicted six of eight major oil exploration and production companies surveyed in Nigeria for their non-compliance with the principles of Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) and NEITI – the country's version of the international initiative.¹⁰⁹ The recommendations in this section will contribute to strengthening of social reforms and accountability geared at improving how budgetary allocations are spent, with a view to stemming corruption and focussing resources on re-development of the Niger Delta region.¹¹⁰

Political and material grievances underpin Ijaw ethnic politics and violence. The grievances attracted a rational response in ethnic settings by stoking the power of Ijaw history and contemporary rhetoric, which does imply an 'us'

104 International Crisis Group, 'The Swamps of Insurgency: Nigeria's Delta Unrest', (Dakar and Brussels: International Crisis Group. Africa Report No113, 2006), August. See also: This Day newspaper Lagos: 09 October 2008. This paper reports that since January 2006, thirty-seven British nationals (including two children) and more than two hundred other foreign nationals have been kidnapped in the Niger Delta region.

105 Integrated Regional Information Network (2002). The African Commission on Human and People's Rights in a rare verdict accused the Nigerian government at the time of human right abuses in The Niger Delta. See also: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/tncs/01/corp.htm> [Accessed 25 June 2006]; and <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/nigeria3/Nigeria1002.htm> [Accessed on 17 November 2006].

106 International Crisis Group Africa Report, Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis, No.118, (2006), September 28.

107 J.P. Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1995). Conflict resolution options have to be comprehensive and directed at the political and material grievances underlying mobilised Ijaw politics and violence.

108 Africa Confidential, 'Shell-Shocked', London, Vol.45, No.13, (2004), p.5. This Paper reported that Shell is both a victim and a prime cause of the social calamity in the Niger Delta, and it must change to maintain the trust and confidence of the communities in which it operates. See also: Malcom Wicks, MP, Minister of State for Trade & Industry, 11 October 2005. The Minister asserts that a good company in the 21st century takes sustainable development seriously and takes responsibility for its environmental, social and economic impact.

109 Save the Children, 'Beyond the Rhetoric, Measuring Revenue Transparency: Company performance in the oil and gas industries', (UK, Save the Children, 2005).

110 Africa Confidential, London, Vol.46, No.24, December 2005. See also: Human Rights Watch, Chop Fine: The Human Rights Impact of Local Government Corruption and Mismanagement in Rivers State, Nigeria, HRW, vol. 19, no. 2 (A), (2007).

and ‘them’ mentality in ethnic terms by some, such as one interviewee’s claims regarding ‘discrimination’ against Ijaw ethnic minority.¹¹¹ However, another interviewee’s position and other key Ijaw participants interviewed echoed that:

The Ijaw are not engaged in an ethnic struggle against ethnic majorities. The government and oil companies owe my community development, and not treat us as ‘lepers’ in our own land.¹¹²

On balance, Ijaw political elites and youth groups alike articulate their collective grievances from a multiplicity of reasons, which have ethnic complexion. Interestingly at the time of my field research to the Niger Delta, it has become obvious that Ijaw political elites and youth leaders have debated themselves into a *cul-de-sac*. They had a wholly Ijaw state in 1996, and governed by Ijaw since 1999 – Alamiyesegeha (1999-2005), Goodluck Jonathan (2005-2007), and Timipre Sylva (2007-present) – and produced the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the 2007 election and the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in April 2011.¹¹³

Suffice to state that despite these developments, Kaiama and its aftermath are yet to go away, and possibly the parochial objective of self-serving electoral politics in Nigeria at all levels inflame the goals of the wider mobilised Ijaw ethnic minority politics.¹¹⁴ From the standpoint of some Ijaw political elites, their Kaiama strategy is more a means to stir other groups for national development, rather than the prevailing and dangerous habit of all ethnic groups in Nigeria perpetually waiting for federal allocation, which is largely from oil revenue. Though more research is necessary to authenticate the accuracy of this position, my paper suggests that the ‘frontline’ actors of Ijaw politics mobilise Ijaw ethnic populations by pushing the ‘ethnic’ button, and fighting in the name of a community is one way to situate Ijaw cause in a nobler framework.

Arguably, uneven rates of development among the various groups and peoples in the country underpins the struggle for state power and regionalisation of politics in Nigeria. Thus peace building and protecting human rights in the Niger Delta can be enhanced by a better understanding of Ijaw ethnic minority politics, and crafting human and infrastructure development in Ijawland. In the context of this paper’s analysis, human rights-centred development perspective is a *sine qua non*; that translates into widespread opportunities and address neglect, and hence a key remedy to oil resource-related conflict in Nigeria.¹¹⁵ In this sense, Sen’s work illuminates the correlation between development and freedom;¹¹⁶ and the former arguably underpins state and non-state violence and Ijaw politics associated with it in Nigeria.

Appendix A: Kaiama Declaration

Introduction:

We, Ijaw youths drawn from over five hundred communities of about 40 clans that make up the Ijaw nation and representing 25 representative organizations in Kaiama to deliberate on the best way to ensure the continuous survival of the indigenous peoples of the Ijaw ethnic nationality of the Niger Delta within the Nigerian state. After exhaustive deliberations, the conference observed:

That it was through British colonization that the Ijaw nation was forcibly put under the Nigerian State.

That but for the economic interests of the imperialists, the Ijaw ethnic nationality would have evolved as a distinct and separate sovereign nation, enjoying undiluted political, economic, social, and cultural autonomy.

111 Interview with one member of Ijaw Youth Movement (IYM) in Yenagoa on 29 January 2008.

112 Interview with one Civil Servant of the rank of Director in the State Civil Service in Yenagoa (Bayelsa State Civil Service Commission) on 17 January 2008. See also: SPDC, People and Environment. Annual Report, SPDC (2004). Though SPDC in 2002 and 2003 spent officially just under one hundred million US-Dollars as its own contribution to Community Development Programmes according to its account, Shell, like other oil companies claim they meet their obligation to government, hence, should not take the place of government and its responsibility to its citizens. Friends of the Earth, UK, however, had noted that Shell might have been overstating its social and environmental performance just as the company confessed to overstating its reserves in Nigeria in 2004. <http://www.shellfacts.com/PR.062304.html> [accessed 14 January 2006].

113 The Economist, 26 April 2007; and This Day Newspaper, Lagos: 15 December 2006.

114 Human Rights Watch, ‘Testing Democracy: Violence in Nigeria’, vol.15, No.9 (A), (2003), April.

115 Paul Gready and J. Ensor (ed), *Reinventing Development? Translating Rights-Based Approaches from Theory into Practice*. (London: Zed Books, 2005).

116 Amartya Sen, *Development and Freedom*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

That the division of the Southern Protectorate into East and West in 1939 by the British marked the beginning of the balkanisation of a hitherto territorially contiguous and culturally homogenous Ijaw people into political and administrative units, much to our disadvantage. This trend is continuing in the balkanisation of the Ijaw into six states –Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Ondo, and Rivers – mostly as minorities who suffer socio-political, economic, cultural, and psychological deprivations.

That the quality of life Ijaw people is deteriorating as a result of utter neglect, suppression, and marginalization visited on Ijaws by the alliance of the Nigerian state and transnational oil companies.

That the political crisis in Nigeria is mainly about the struggle for the control of oil mineral resources, which account for over 80% of GDP, 95% of national budget and 90% of foreign exchange earnings. From which 65%, 75%, and 70% respectively are derived from within the Ijaw nation. Despite these huge contributions, our reward from the Nigerian state remains avoidable deaths resulting from ecological devastation and military repression.

That the unabating damage done to our fragile natural environment and the health of our people is due in main to uncontrolled exploration and exploitation of crude oil and natural gas, which has led to numerous oil spillages, uncontrolled gas flaring, the opening up of our forests to loggers, indiscriminate canalization, flooding, land subsidence, coastal erosion, earth tremors etc. Oil and gas are exhaustible resources and the complete lack of concern for ecological rehabilitation, in the light of the Oloibiri experience, is a signal of impending doom for the peoples of Ijawland.

That the degradation of the environment of Ijawland by transnational oil companies and the the Nigerian state arise mainly because Ijaw people have been robbed of their natural rights to ownership and control of their land and resources through the instrumentality of undemocratic federal legislations such as the Land Use Decree of 1978, the Petroleum Decree of 1969 and 1991, the Land (title vesting etc) Decree No.52 of 1993 (Osborne Land Decree), the Waterways Authority Decree No.13 of 1997 etc.

That the principle of Derivation in Revenue Allocation has been consciously and systematically obliterated by successive regimes of the Nigerian state. We note the drastic reduction of the Derivation Principle from 100% (1953), 50% (1960), 45% (1970), 20% (1975), 2% (1982), 1.5% (1984) to 3% (1992 to date), and a rumor 13% in Abacha's 1995 undemocratic and unimplemented Constitution.

That the violence in Ijawland and other parts of the Niger Delta area, sometimes manifesting in intra- an inter-ethnic conflicts are sponsored by the State and transnational oil companies to keep the communities of the Niger Delta area divided, weak and distracted from the causes of their problems.

That the recent revelations of the looting of national treasury by the Abacha junta is only a reflection of an existing and continuing trend of stealing by public office holders in the Nigerian state. We remember the over 12 billion dollars Gulf War windfall, which was looted by Babangida and his cohorts. We note that over 70% of the billions of dollars being looted by the military rulers and their civilian collaborators is derived from our ecologically devastated Ijawland.

Based on the foregoing, we, the youths of Ijawland hereby make the following resolutions to be known as the Kaiama Declaration:

8. All land and natural resources (including mineral resources) within the Ijaw territory belong to Ijaw communities and are the basis of our survival.
9. We cease to recognize all undemocratic decrees that rob our peoples / communities of the right to ownership and control our lives and resources, which were enacted without our participation and consent. These include the Land Use Decree and the Petroleum Decree, etc.
10. We demand the immediate withdrawal from Ijawland of all military forces of occupation and repression by the Nigerian state. Any oil company that employs the services of the armed forces of the Nigerian state to "protect" its operations will be viewed as an enemy of the Ijaw people. Family members of military personnel stationed in Ijawland should appeal to their people to leave the Ijaw area alone.

11. Ijaw youths in all the communities in all Ijaw clans in the Niger Delta will take steps to implement these resolutions beginning from 30th of December 1998, as a step toward reclaiming the control of our lives. We therefore, demand that all oil companies stop all exploration and exploitation activities in the Ijaw area. We are tired of gas flaring, oil spillages, blowouts and being labelled saboteurs and terrorists. It is a case of preparing the noose for our hanging. We reject this labelling. Hence, we advise all oil companies staff and contractors to withdraw from Ijaw territories by the 30th December, 1998 pending the resolution of the issue of resource ownership and control in the Ijaw area of the Niger Delta.
12. Ijaw youths and peoples will promote the principle of peaceful co-existence between all Ijaw communities and with our immediate neighbour, divisive actions of the Nigerian state and transnational oil companies and their contractors. We offer a hand of friendship and comradeship to our neighbours: Edos, Ekpeyes, Ibiobios, Ikwerres, Ilajes, Isokos, Itsekiris, Ogonis, and Urhobos etc. We affirm our commitment to joint struggle with the other ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta area for self-determination.
13. We express our solidarity with all people's organization and ethnic nationalities in Nigeria and elsewhere who are struggling for self-determination and justice. In particular we note the struggle of the Odua Peoples Congress (OPC), the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Egi Women's Movement, etc.
14. We extend our hand of solidarity to the Nigerian oil workers (NUPENG and PENGASSAN) and expect that they will see this struggle for freedom as a struggle for humanity.
15. We reject the present transition to civil rule programme of the Abubakar regime, as restructuring of the Nigerian federation does not precede it. The way forward is a sovereign National Conference of equally represented ethnic nationalities to discuss the nature of a democratic federation of Nigerian ethnic nationalities. Conference noted the violence and killings that characterized the last local government in most parts of the Niger Delta. Conference pointed out that these electoral conflicts are a manifestation of the undemocratic and unjust nature of the military transition programme. Conference affirms, therefore, that the military are incapable of enthroning true democracy in Nigeria.
16. We call on all Ijaws to remain true to their Ijawness and to work for the total liberation of our people. You have no other true home but that which is in Ijawland.
17. We agree to remain within Nigeria but to demand and work for Self-Government and resource control for the Ijaw people. Conference approved that the best way for Nigeria is a federation of ethnic nationalities. The federation should be run on the basis of equality and social justice.

Finally, Ijaw youths resolve to set up the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) to coordinate the struggle of Ijaw peoples for self-determination and justice.

Excerpts from the Resolutions of the December 11th, 1998 all Ijaw Youths Conference, held in Kaiama, Bayelsa State of Nigeria.