

“Gunning” for Security Governance in a Resource-Rich African State? Interrogating Militarization in a Democratic Nigeria (DRAFT, WORK IN PROGRESS)

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Abstract

This article interrogates the growing militarization of security governance in a resource-rich democratic African state. In spite of subscribing to a democratic constitution and several regional mechanisms advancing democratic values, security governance in Nigeria has been marked by the increasing use of the Armed Forces to respond to security threats posed by armed militias in the oil-rich Niger Delta. Some reports accuse the Nigerian military and police of massive human right violations against civilians, including extra-judicial killings. This paper examines the factors, politics, and actors that drive the growing militarization of security governance. It also raises several questions: Which conceptual approaches best explain the current trend in such security governance? What have been the human and economic costs of militarized security governance? How can prevailing policy choices and actions be transformed in ways that re-democratize society and de-militarize security governance in an oil-rich Nigeria?

Introduction

This paper explores the growing militarization of security governance in a resource-rich democratic African state, Nigeria, based on the case of the “politics” of the Niger Delta oil conflict. It posits that the securitization of oil—as a commodified natural resource of high strategic, political, and economic value, and the operations of security forces in the oil-rich Niger Delta region as a space of contested social relations around oil production reflect the nature of security governance in Nigeria and its broader ramifications. The analysis that follows involves a critical overview of various conceptions of security in the context of resource governance in the region “both in relation to the impact of oil politics and the globalization of oil extraction, production and resistance” (Obi 2017: 121-136).

While the notion of Nigeria’s security has partly responded to the changing trajectories of conflict in the region, dominant statist conception of ‘national security’ and defense, and developments linked to the most recent phase of globalization, particularly in relation to prevailing conceptions of global and transnational security threats, the resource governance-security nexus in the Niger Delta deserves some critical scrutiny. This paper posits that the Niger Delta is central to responding to the question of whether the transition from military authoritarianism to democratic rule has led to the transformation of the fundamental character of Nigeria’s security governance.

Since the mid-1990s, particularly following the military repression of the non-violent resistance of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) which had successfully mobilized the Ogoni and world opinion against the wanton oil exploitation and pollution in the Niger Delta, state ‘securocrats’, government, and military brass hats have focused largely on “gunning for the security of the resources of the region”. The securitization of the extraction and supply of oil has further grown with Nigeria’s return to democratic rule in 1999, and has been marked more by

continuity, and less by change along constitutional lines of civil engagement and rules. The huge military presence notwithstanding, the return to elected civilian rule paradoxically contributed towards opening the door to the emergence of militant insurgent movements in the region, notable among which was the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), that almost brought the oil industry to its knees with a combination of attacks on oil infrastructure, kidnapping of expatriate oil workers, and the manipulation of global media, and information technology (Watts and Ibaba 2011; Courson 2011; Obi 2014).

In spite of the post-amnesty phase that followed the 2009 peace deal reached between the Nigerian federal government and Niger Delta militias ostensibly fighting for natural resource (oil) control for the ethnic minorities of the region (Agbibo 2013; Obi 2014; Nwajiaku-Dahou 2012; Peterside et al 2011), the militarization of oil governance in the Niger Delta has continued to grow, characterized by a mix of the use of force, complex and exigent elite pacts involving the co-optation of militia leaders, and transnational alliances. The mix of guns with oil politics has underpinned governance and defined security largely in terms of recreating the conditions for the restoration of pre-conflict levels of oil production, and optimizing extraction and profit-sharing in the “no war, no peace” context of the Niger Delta. While many scholars have focused on the reality, or otherwise of post-amnesty peace in the oil producing Niger Delta, more so with the emergence of another insurgent militia, the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) in 2016, the real challenge is to unpack the role and dimensions of security governance, and the continued resort to “state-sponsored violence” as a modality for guaranteeing the conditions for oil extraction, production and revenue generation (and sharing) against the background of the complex insecurities of life in the region.

Earlier analysis of resource governance in Nigeria’s Niger Delta have largely been limited to the nature of the contestations around oil production and its adverse impact(s) on host-communities, particularly the marginalization of local communities, contestations over access to, or the distribution of oil revenues accruing to the state as a result of payments by its partners—International Oil Companies (IOCs), and oil exports. Focus has also been on the zero-sum nature of conflicts between the Nigerian federal government (in partnership with oil transnationals) and oil producing communities that have in turn have fed into a state versus human security binary (Ibeanu 2000, 2002, 2006; Owolabi and Okwechime 2007; Uzodike and Isike 2009). A key element of this situation is not only the deployment of state coercion, but what Ibeanu (2000: 20), identifies as opposing perspectives to security:

For oil-bearing communities, security means the maintenance of the carrying capacity of the fragile Niger Delta environment...State officials and petro-business, on the other hand, see security in terms of uninterrupted production of petroleum irrespective of environmental and social impacts.

This is similar to the observation of Uzodike and Isike (2009: 104), about the “clash of two divergent, but mutually reinforcing conceptions of security” in relation to the Niger Delta. As argued elsewhere, the focus on the contradiction between state and community security is problematic for a number of reasons (Obi 2017). Apart from giving the impression of a homogenous “state” conception of security posed against an undifferentiated “community” or human approach to community, it does not sufficiently interrogate the nature of security

governance in the context of an oil-rich region, to see how violence is instrumentalized as a tool of governance by those keen on continuously negotiating the preserving the conditions for the production of oil and the sharing of the “spoils”. Rather than a situation that can be addressed by adjusting or correcting an “imbalance between the state and its citizens conception of security”, the Niger Delta faces a more complex challenge when violence—or the “gun” has become the tool for negotiating or seeking to enforce the security of oil extraction and the sharing of its benefits.

The boundaries between security and resource governance become blurred both by the structural violence that underpins the complex elite politics over resource control of oil (currently the exclusive preserve of the federal government) and connections to globally-led oil extractors and private security actors, formal and informal, and a plethora of local armed groups operating in the grey areas of local resistance, opportunism, and criminality. Amidst growing national defense budgets and international military security arrangements and joint exercises in the Niger Delta and the adjoining Gulf of Guinea aimed at curbing kidnapping, piracy, large-scale oil theft (illegal oil bunkering), and transnational criminal gangs, resource governance in a democratic Nigeria paradoxically retains a militarized face, with far-reaching implications for peace and security in the Niger Delta.

In the light of the foregoing, the state-human security binary simplifies a more complex phenomenon, in which the spatial dimensions, global-local interconnections, class and power relations find expression at various levels and forms within complex politics of resource governance in the Niger Delta. Security governance in this oil-rich context reflects the ambivalence and contradictions of the politics of the Nigerian state, international actors, elites, and the people of the region. The “democratic governance of the armed forces” or the “democratic content of the security sector” (Mustapha 2013: 13), has not altered the militarized nature of resource governance in the Niger Delta. If anything, it has reinforced it. The issue of “whose security” takes precedence is layered, transcends the issue of “us versus them”, and highlights the power of those with access to the federal and regional levers of the petro-state, and how they use and deploy (state) power in complex struggles for access to, and power over oil.

This paper is framed around three questions: Which conceptual approach best explains the current trends in security and resource governance in the Niger Delta since the return to democratic rule? What have been the human and economic costs of militarized security governance in a resource-rich region? How can prevailing policy choices and actions be transformed in ways that demilitarize security governance in an oil-rich Nigeria? In setting about the task of responding to the following questions, the paper is divided into four sections.

The introduction provides an overview of the critical issues in security governance in a resource-rich Nigeria Delta. It is followed by a conceptual section that explores the nexus between security and resource governance, explaining the trend towards the militarization of security governance particularly the ways in which it reflects the contestations over the power to control oil, and the connections to transnational and global forces, actors and processes. This dovetails into the third section which critically analyzes the militarized securitization of resource extraction and the politics of distribution, and how this reinforces the rule of the gun in negotiations for access and control, and the expression of power over oil extraction. The fourth and concluding section sums

up the arguments and proffers an alternative approach for more equitable and sustainable security in Nigeria's Niger Delta.

Conceptual Issues: Militarizing Security Governance in an Oil-Rich Context

Securitizing Since the end of the Cold war (Obi 2008: 185), there has been shifts in security thinking and practice. While there was an expansion of the concept to include non-state, environmental and human-centered dimensions, the centrality of the state did not disappear as initially expected by proponents of a "hyper-globalized" perspective to security. What is emerging are two tendencies—the mutation of state, trans and inter-state cooperation on security matters, and a trend described by Abrahamsen and Williams (2009: 3), "global security assemblages; settings where a range of different global, and local and private security agents and normativities interact, cooperate and compete to produce new institutions, practices and forms of security governance".

Within Africa, and in spite of democratization, the security sector in most countries has largely remained hierarchical with a centralized command, formally under civil control, but in practice a formidable power bloc that usually often fused to hegemonic ruling elites, but hardly ever accountable to citizens. Also, the existence of a securitized global context in the face of concerted efforts to fight terrorism, counter violent extremism, and curb transnational crime, the security sectors have considerable leverage through international agreements and joint operations to avoid close scrutiny by democratic institutions or civil society. Also, the increased activities of foreign Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs), either as contractors to international companies, or consultants to governments, largely take place outside of the close scrutiny of democratic institutions and civil society.

The nexus between democracy and security, when measured in relation to the democratic oversight over the security sectors is rather problematic. This becomes clearer when the "democratic content" of security institutions is critically examined. Beyond the power of the elected president to appoint the heads of security institutions (subject to the approval of national parliaments), the picture becomes more complicated when the military and other security institutions are subjected to critical examination in relation to 'accountability, legitimacy, professionalism, civil-military relations, respect for human rights, and response to the demands of civil society' (Mustapha 2013: 13).

The foregoing shows that security governance is neither neutral, nor does it automatically subject itself to complete democratic oversight, or popular participation. This is more-so in contexts such as Nigeria where military and political elites are fused within political pacts and arrangements that recognize and accommodate their common interests in political configurations of power. For instance, since 1999, two of Nigeria's military heads of state have been elected as presidents, and retired military brass hats occupy top positions in federal and state legislature, and business, underscoring the relationship between military and civilians elites within the ruling bloc. It is a relationship that has implications for security governance, and crucially, resource governance. In this regard, security governance is partly a reflection of the nature of the state, but more

fundamentally, it reflects its politics, including the distribution, and balance of power between the factions of the ruling elite.

A Political Economy of Resource Governance

Security governance in Nigeria cannot be fully understood outside of a nuanced understanding of natural resource governance. Since most of Nigeria's oil revenues comes from the Niger Delta and the adjoining off-shore oil-fields, national security, though initially referred the protection of the state—its core values, institutions and territory, it cannot be fully grasped outside of the governance of oil—as a strategic and economic resource. This implies that those who control the petro-state—a key player in the security, democratic and governance spheres play a similar role in relation to resource governance. Rudra and Jensen (2011: 640-641), define resource governance as “the interactions among a (formal and informal) body of rules, processes, and traditions that determine how power and responsibilities are exercised, how decisions are made, and how or to what extent citizens or other stakeholders may have a say in the management of natural resources”. While they do not expressly mention what constitutes the “body of rules, processes and traditions”, it could be surmised that this is a (contested) space of power and politics mediated by a petro-state that is itself partisan to controlling oil revenues in favor of ruling coalitions.

While many scholars have critiqued resource governance in the Niger Delta from the perspective of an “oil curse”, noting that it had paradoxically fueled corruption and violent conflict, and subverted development (Obi 2014), thereby fueling insecurities, major shortcomings of such views lie in the ways they tend to gloss over the highly politicized nature of resource governance, and the structural distortions embedded in Nigeria's political economy (Obi 2017: 611-616). Of note also is the observation that resource governance is a highly contested terrain, in which “the struggle involves extractive social forces, represented by the petro-state and oil companies, seeking to maximize profits, and social groups and people excluded from access or whose livelihoods are threatened by oil exploration, production and pollution, seeking inclusion/compensation or an end to the destruction of their ecosystem(s)” (Obi 2017: 612). Resource governance in this regards goes beyond “designing appropriate legislations, guidelines and policies” (Bappah 2016:6), or identifying key stakeholders and ways they can work together to achieve set goals, to the politics and social relations that underpin the power over natural resources. It is therefore useful to explore the politics of resource governance

A lot of the literature on oil politics and conflict in the Niger Delta reflect the “greed versus grievance binary”, or point to the complex roots or trajectories of violent conflict, and focus on the role of the state, IOCs, elites, and insurgent militias/criminal gangs. When linked to the debate around resource governance, such analyses tend to either focus on how such governance has fueled inequality, corruption, criminality and violent conflict, or how the resource curse can be reversed through (governance) reforms capable of promoting transparency, accountability, restitution for environmental degradation and pollution, and corporate social responsibility.

In a recently published article, Schultze-Kraft (2017) adds a relatively new perspective by calling attention to the relationship between “political settlements and organized violence and crime”. Building on earlier work on the role of elite-coalitions in Niger Delta oil politics (Obi 2014), he

argues that a “political settlement involves elites and other powerful groups who through processes of bargaining and compromise establish a political equilibrium in which the distribution of power and political resources is congruent with the distribution of income and rents” (2017: 614). Based on this political arrangement, he further observes that “it is impossible to dissociate the renegotiation and reproduction, indeed robustness and stability of Nigeria’s extractive political settlement from organized violence exercised by political, economic, and military elites associated with the centre as well as a range of state and non-state actors in the oil bearing delta regions, including the militant groups” (2017: 624). The routinized use of violence to contest and negotiate power over oil reflects both its role in the politics of resource governance, and the space and limitations of security governance in an oil-rich context. However, in spite of its innovativeness, Schultze-Kraft’s effort perhaps stops short of demonstrating how political settlements, include, connect, or reflect the interests of specific actors linked to local, transnational or global capital. While providing a basis for understanding the role of violence in complex elite political configurations and how this coheres with the militarization of security governance in the context of high oil stakes, there is still some difficulty in unpacking the balancing of political settlement versus state-led coercion.

The foregoing conceptual discussion clearly establishes a broad basis for a radical approach to security governance that goes beyond the mainstream expression of state-led governance of security sector institutions, by paying attention to the political and economic context, and power relations that influence who ultimately have control and access to, and profits from the oil resources of the Niger Delta. The case of the region underscores the centrality of violence as a tool of governance, political bargaining and accessing power. This fuels both the continuation of the militarization of security governance in spite of the return to democratic rule, and the securitization of resource governance in ways that privilege optimal extraction of resources by a state-global business alliance over the rights of local people. It is a context that hardly opens up security governance to democratic participation. The fundamental question that remains about who ultimately governs security and has the power to securitize resource extraction remains inextricably connected to the politics of the petro-state, the ruling elites, local actors, IOCs, global powers, local and transnational non-state actors

Gunning for Security in the Oil-rich Niger Delta:

The Niger Delta case illustrates how security governance has increasingly become militarized over time, involving the production and deployment of “institutionalized” and “irregular” forms of violence in the region. With roots in Nigeria’s colonial past, the notion of security has historically been statist and preoccupied with maintaining law and order and protecting the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, preserving core national values, economic assets and infrastructure. This has meant the security has until recently, when some private security contractors arrived on the scene, been the exclusive preserve of the state’s coercive institutions, ranging from the military/defence forces to the various law enforcement and intelligence forces/agencies.

The strategic and economic importance of the Niger Delta to the security of the Nigerian state precedes the country's independence. Given its location adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean and international sea lanes, the region has been critical to global maritime trade, and geopolitics as a natural boundary and gateway to the country. The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta 1956, followed by the rapid expansion of the oil industry in the decades that followed, making Nigeria Africa's largest oil producer and exporter has reinforced the region's centrality to the national economy, and global energy security, even though it has paradoxically remained impoverished and marginalized.

Two factors are critical to the militarization of the Niger Delta: the legacy of the Nigerian civil war where the federal (military) government defeated the claim of secessionist Biafran claims over the territory, and its status as the source of crude oil and gas and logically the host-region to the countries multi-billion dollar oil industry. Both factors have been further reinforced by its political circumstance as an ethnic minority region, with a history of protest against ethnic majority and federal domination, and waves of (non-violent and violent) agitation against the marginalization, exploitation and marginalization of their region.

It is significant that the first attempt at secession in post-independent Nigeria occurred in the Niger Delta in February 1966, when Isaac Adaka Boro, an ethnic minority Ijaw activist led a small group of insurgents to declare the "Niger Delta Republic" in protest against decades of exploitation and marginalization of the ethnic minority region. Boro's rebellion was crushed by the federal army and police, and he and his co-travellers were arrested, put on trial and found guilty of committing treason. Following the July 1966 military counter-coup, the new military government granted Boro amnesty, and he later joined the Nigerian army in what he believed was defending the oil in the Niger Delta from Biafran claims, and died fighting on the federal side during the Nigerian civil war.

Although the federal military government carved up the Niger Delta into several regional states to assuage the age-old quest for self-determination, it consolidated its control over the oil and waters of the region through a set of military decrees that effectively gave the central government control over oil production and the collection and sharing of oil revenues. With the region becoming the basis of Nigeria's fiscal federal and economic mainstay, and a source of global energy, the stakes in controlling power at the federal level, and over the region grew, both for the military government, the international oil companies that "produced" the oil from the region. From this point onwards the military assumed the role of state custodians of oil.

The strategic and economic importance of oil both to the Nigerian project and global energy security, including the profit motives of transnational oil corporations has been fully explored elsewhere and will not be addressed in much detail here. What is important to note is that the high stakes in controlling oil, particularly following the quadrupling of international oil prices in the 1970's and the recessions of the 1980s, 1990's and the current decade have translated into the direct securitization of the oil-rich space—and the privileging of state violence to guaranteeing the uninterrupted extraction and flow of oil over rights of those living in the region.

The Nigerian petro-state, backed by its laws and coercive apparatus steps in to protect conditions for maximizing oil extraction and profits (often against the protests of excluded, marginalized and dispossessed inhabitants of the Niger Delta), on the grounds of protecting strategic national interests, making the state and transnational oil interests conterminous with national security. State security involves leveraging the role of security forces in protecting the state's control and ownership of oil in the region.

By the late 1980s, following decades of military rule, there were pressures from within society for democracy. These voices became more strident particularly in a post-Cold war moment marked by the collapse of one-party states in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the worldwide promotion of human, including minority rights. This period also coincided with growing domestic resistance against prolonged military rule. Such 'pressures from below' also connected to global discourses of human, minority and environmental rights that local resistance movements often organized along communal or ethnic minority identity lines in challenging the state-oil partnership, initially through petitions, and non-violent protest. The earliest of such groups was the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which successfully waged an international campaign against Shell and the Nigerian state in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

MOSOP successfully welded local grievances on to global rights and self-determination discourses (Obi 1995) and put tremendous pressure on the Nigerian state and Shell, an oil multinational that accounted for almost half of the country's total oil production. Things got to a head when MOSOP successfully mobilized Ogoni people to block some Shell sites in Ogoniland, successfully campaigned against the State and Shell's poor human rights records, and sought to lead a boycott of national elections in Ogoniland. The region was occupied by military and security forces. Following an incident that resulted in the murder of four allegedly pro-government Ogoni chiefs by a mob, nine MOSOP leaders, including the charismatic Ogoni activist and writer, Ken Saro-Wiwa were hanged on the orders of a special tribunal set up by military decree. The executions were followed by a well-coordinated security operation against MOSOP members and supporters involving the Rivers State International Security Task Force (RSISTF). RSISTF was led by the

military which occupied Ogoniland, repressed the Ogoni, forcing some MOSOP sympathizers to go into exile. The activities of the RSISTF are well documented and will not delay us here (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch).

Since the 1990s the military have remained in the Niger Delta. Part of the effect of the military occupation of the region has been the militarization of social life, and the emergence of several generations of young people that have had no experience of living in a demilitarized society, with some socialized into violence as a way of making claims and negotiations, and prying open political opportunities. In spite of the presence of the military across the region, the latter part of the 1990s saw the outbreak of inter and intra-communal violence, and the resurgence of (anti-state and anti-oil company) protests by groups such as Chikoko Movement (CM) and Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), even as the military government gave way to an elected democratic government in 1999.

Gunning for security governance since the return for democracy: 1999-

While the return to democracy initially raised expectations within the Niger Delta that the region will reap the dividends of the opening up of the democratic space to its elected representatives, and demilitarize social life as a step towards addressing long-standing grievances of the people, such optimism gradually gave way to despondency and renewed agitation as the status quo largely prevailed. By 2006 a motley group of the insurgent groups, including a coalition of militias, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) waged a violent campaign targeting state security forces, oil installations and kidnapping expatriate oil company personnel. Its primary aim was to forcibly gain the attention of the state-oil business alliance by disrupting oil production, and using violence to elicit a response to their grievances. The response of the state primarily consisted of co-opting the regional elite into a national ruling bloc, giving them access to the spoils of oil, while also deploying more force in the attempt to crush the threat posed by MEND to the oil industry.

There is no evidence that successive military responses to MEND, led by the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) codenamed “Operation Restore Hope”, followed by “Operation Pulo Shield”, went through the National Assembly or was subjected any real legislative oversight. The JTF fought pitched battles with MEND, even as the latter inflicted serious damage on oil infrastructure and resulting in severe cuts to Nigeria’s daily oil production. A last ditch effort in attacking the hometown of a leading militia commander in Okerenkoko in the Western Delta, resulted a major destruction and displacement, but failed to capture him. However, it helped leverage efforts by mediators facilitating dialogue led by then Vice President Goodluck Jonathan (of Niger Delta

origin), between government, oil companies and militants. Although some politicians of Niger Delta origin played key roles in negotiations between the federal government and militants, legislative houses at the state and federal levels were not directly involved in the peace process, nor was the Presidential Amnesty the outcome of legislative deliberations. Rather it was proclaimed by Presidential fiat.

Even after the granting of the Presidential Amnesty, the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as the first Nigerian President from the Niger Delta, and his exit from power after losing the 2015 elections, the oil war between the military and Niger Delta militias resurged in 2016 with the emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) (Onuoha 2016: 4-7). The oil war continues to rage episodically with the Nigerian army launching two new military operations codenamed “Operation Crocodile Smile I and II”. In a recent report on October 31, marking the end of a military exercise under Operation Crocodile Smile II, the Chief of Staff of the Nigerian Army was quoted as declaring that the military had “crushed militancy, oil theft and related crimes in the Niger Delta region” (Onoyume 2017), even as he promised that military operations would continue. By November 3, however, the NDA called off its ceasefire with the Nigerian government (Ogundipe 2017).

The trajectories of the oil war in the Niger Delta reflect the mix between the military and political response to resource and security governance in the region, both of which reflect severe democratic deficits, and the preponderant use of violence for bargaining or deterrence. In all this, democratic politics, has offered a platform for the Niger Delta governing elite to access federally distributed oil revenues at state and local government level, and to mobilize for a greater share of oil revenues derived from the oil produced in the region. It has not extended as far as moderating or providing oversight to the actions of the military whose presence has at best reduced the level of attacks on infrastructure and criminality, but has failed to reduce it substantially. Some have even argued that the military brass hats are benefiting from the “no war, no peace” situation, including participating in criminal activities, but outside of access to growing federal security allocations and the opportunities for patronage and self-enrichment, there is only unproven circumstantial evidence of collusion of a few military elements with criminal gangs.

In between President Buhari’s order to the military to “crack down” on the NDA (Soriwei, Adetayo and Akinloye 2016), and estimated loss of revenues put at ‘over N1.5 trillion at a result of the vandalization of oil assets in 2016’, the Nigeria state has spent an estimated N4.62 trillion in 5 years between 2011 and 2015 (Olufemi 2015). According to figures obtained by *Premium Times*, “the figures for 2011 and 2012 were N920 billion and N924 billion respectively while N923 billion each was thrown at the sector in 2013 and 2014” (Ibid). The opacity of security spending suggests

that it is exceedingly difficult to know what proportion of the defence budget has been allocated to the Niger Delta, even as the “heads of the country’s security agencies have repeatedly claimed allocations to the sector were insufficient to equip the armed forces and make them operationally efficient to deliver on their mandates”. Whichever way it is viewed, security governance is taking a huge chunk of Nigeria’s national budget, which goes to state security officials, military brass hats, security consultants/contractors and politicians. Underlying this is the thinking that the capacity to provide security is tied to the ability to acquire weapons/equipment and provide the requisite training to use this in neutralizing or confronting perceived threats. It is not a thinking that lends easily to democratic oversight. Thus, security sector reform following Nigeria’s military-democratic transition has not lent itself fully to the transformation of civil-military relations, and remains wedded to the dominant interests that shape extractive resource governance. Ultimately, security governance is defined largely by the ‘rule of the gun’, which similarly reflects the character of resource governance in the Niger Delta.

Tentative Conclusion

The foregoing analysis points to the reality of continued militarization of security governance since Nigeria’s return to democracy in 1999. This much is gleaned from the role of security forces in the ‘oil wars’ in the Niger Delta, and the scant evidence of democratic oversight over military and security operations in the region. The deployment of state violence in guaranteeing optional conditions for the extraction is paradoxically confronted with the mobilization of violence by non-state actors—Niger Delta militias seeking opportunities both for fiscal redress in the form of greater access to an increased share (or control) of oil revenues, or being co-opted into factions of the regional elite with access to the spoils of oil. It is a security and political logic that fuels a cycle of the militarization of politics, which is in turn integrated into the power relations that underpin governance.

The Nigerian petro-state continues to define the region as being of critical national and global strategic importance. The Niger Delta as the source of the government’s chief revenue earner, oil, remains critical to Nigeria’s economic survival and prosperity, as well as the country’s continued integrated into global energy markets in a period of growing oil demand, and shrinking oil supplies. It therefore prioritizes maintaining security in the highly valued globalized space of the oil-rich Niger Delta, and is also keen to assure international partners for whom Niger Delta oil is of strategic value to their energy security interests that the Petro-state is capable of securing the flow of oil destined for global markets. For such global actors, particularly oil companies, global powers, and private security companies keen on ensuring uninterrupted supplies of oil and gas from the Niger Delta, supporting the sovereignty of the Nigerian state over the source of supply

becomes a basic tenet of their energy security interests. It also means providing the Nigerian state with military aid, training and hardware for addressing the threats posed by militias and gangs operating in the Niger Delta.

Beyond the notion of contested securities—a site from which to grapple with the ways ethnic minority identity politics challenge to the authority of the Nigerian nation-state and its control of the allocative powers over oil, lies the real issue that democracy has neither opened up socio-economic space, nor addressed the structural inequalities within the Niger Delta or the larger Nigerian society. The persistence of structural inequalities also imply that while several layers exists in the security sphere, these are complicated by competing and contradictory interests, that continue to drive up the stakes in controlling oil, and end up fuelling a security complex that thrives on nurturing further securitization and reproduction of structural violence.

The conditions spawned by structural inequalities and the high stakes in controlling access to oil suggests that ‘resource governance remains a hegemonic project of the Nigerian state and its partners—the international oil companies and continues to be geared towards ensuring and securing the conditions for the optimal extraction of natural resources (such as oil) destined for the global market’ (Obi 2017: 616). Given the evidence so far of the havoc that securitization continues to wreak in the Niger Delta, applying maximum use of force to contain threats may lead to new unanticipated threats, or be complicated by the politics of settlement by ruling coalitions.

Rather than forcibly legitimizing the control of resources by the state and corporate interests, the challenge of deepening democracy and transforming civil-military relations calls for a radically different approach. The challenge lies in seeking ways to transform security governance by addressing the structural inequalities that define structural violence in the Niger Delta. It will require renegotiating the power relations over the oil-rich ecosystem in which the object of resource governance is connected to people’s quest for justice, freedom and equality. This calls for an inclusive social democracy as a political project aimed towards building a socially just, safer and more peaceful oil rich region. Demilitarizing Nigeria’s democracy is an important step towards transforming security and resource governance based on a collective vision of security as equal freedom.

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