Oil, conflict, and the dynamics of resource struggle in the Niger Delta: A comparison of the Ogoni and Ijaw movements

Mai-Bornu, Z.

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ABSTRACT

Conflict in the Niger Delta has attracted significant local and international concern and reactions. Although several theses have discussed the recurring structural facets of the conflict, such as resource governance, marginalization, and neglect, which serve as the bases for understanding the grievances, a crucial question has remained unanswered: why have the Ogoni and the Ijaw, who have shared common, lived experiences, reacted differently to the same regional problems? Why has one chosen violence and the other, a non-violent contestation? This article argues that the three factors narratives, leadership, and organization have determined the dynamics of the choice between the distinct courses of action taken by each group, and suggests that the Ogoni and the Ijaw have waged distinct wars and been fighting context-specific battles constructed and framed for their individual communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on conflict in the Niger Delta region have largely focused on debates from the perspectives of resource exploitation, marginalization, and neglect. Although significant, these discourses seem to present the conflict as representative of the region but neglect the impact of local understandings of the problem. To address this lacuna, this article explores the Ogoni and Ijaw movements which, despite sharing similar lived experiences, have each challenged the state through different courses of action: through Ogoni non-violence under the leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa, and through Ijaw confrontation with a fluid leadership style including both violence and non-violence.

Drawing on data from research carried out between 2014 and 2017,[1] this article argues that leaders' choices are more important than their unspoken intentions in framing narratives and collective identities. To understand the complexity and distinctiveness of the two movements, much narrower theoretical and analytical perspectives are necessary to focus particularly on the processes and mechanisms employed by the two sets of leaders in charting their specific courses of action. The article finds that while the Ogoni base their resource-related arguments on a discourse about internal colonialism tempered by a human and minority rights discourse which stresses human agency, the Ijaw perceive themselves as helpless victims of deliberate and calculated neglect. The Ogoni demonstrate a strong culture of collective agency in deciding that the best way to engage the state is in the form of non-violence, while the Ijaw claim that the state has denied agency to Ijaw people, leaves them with only with one option: to engage in violence. Having outlined the dynamics of choice between non-violence or violence, the article then links theoretical and conceptual underpinnings to framing and collective identity in the Ogoni and Ijaw movements. Section 2 reviews the two groups' historical narratives, Section 3 compares the nature of their leaderships, and Section 4 provides an overview of non-violent and violent struggles within the two groups.

1.1 Methodology and Scope

Studies that seek to explore and gain a deep understanding of why ethnic groups that share similar lived experiences and environments choose different steps in seeking solutions to their problems are based on the premise that the human world is an artifice,

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[1] I conducted 41 interviews with key actors who participated in shaping the movements, focusing especially on activists and scholars because of their wealth of knowledge.

suggesting that actors' perceptions of their actions are important (Kratochwil, 2006) in research. A crucial aspect of the current article is the use of social constructivism as a framework to focus on what constitutes our knowledge of the world and how it has been constructed (ibid). Drawing on Davidson (1963), Adler (1997) argues that people's actions are explained by "causes": when individuals act, they do so based on one cause or another. The idea of reacting or undertaking actions for a reason signifies applying an understanding of "what is called for" within a set of circumstances (Giddens, 1984: 345). This suggests a link with the identification of an underlying bond between ideas and material relations (Fierke, 2015; Melucci, 1994). Such an understanding is important, especially in appreciating how, in the process of reacting to similar structural issues, groups switch from one strategy to another (Fierke, 2015: 124). The emphasis in this article is on the collective understandings that represent the relevant facts (Melucci, 1994) and not merely observations constituted of the meanings that the Ogoni and the Ijaw have brought to their interactions (ibid).

Accordingly, this study employs a multi case-study approach as the most practicable method to arrive at answers to the research question. Case studies are crucial for description (King et al., 1994: 44): they allow for an understanding of the "why and how" in conflicts, particularly by viewing such conflicts from the perspectives of the key actors and parties that use various strategies to express their grievances. Given the complexity of the dynamics of choice in the case of the Ogoni and Ijaw movements, a broad approach was needed that would be suitable for identifying critical mechanisms and variables of interest that could explain why one group adopted non-violence and the other chose violence. A deep understanding of each distinct and unique case was imperative in determining the foundation for the analytical framework used in the cross-

case comparison (ibid.) of Ogoni non-violence versus Ijaw violence. This approach explains the similarities between the logic of the comparative method and that of other methods, embedded in its attempt to advance clarity by the "systematic manipulations of parameters and operative variables" (Smelser, 1976: 158; see also Lijphart, 1975: 160). The case-study method generates a rich, in-depth analysis, especially when it combines face-to-face interviews, as a form of oral history, with data from existing literature and other secondary sources. Employing the perspectives of key actors, I use case studies for description and understanding as well as to clarify complicated causal links in real-life interventions and to illustrate the real-life contexts within which contentions in the Niger Delta occurred.

During the fieldwork for the current study, it became clear that debates between the extractive industries and society in the Niger Delta have been shaped by developments both within Nigeria and internationally, and it was likely that international experiences had discernible impacts on the dynamics of choices made by leaders in the Ogoni and Ijaw ethnic groups. Thus, the construction of meaning in this article is historically and culturally specific and is examined in context by incorporating the self-conscious viewpoints of the key actors. Structured interviews with members of the elite were undertaken at four different sites, namely, Port Harcourt, Bayelsa, Abuja, and London, with informants and actors who were key to shaping the Niger Delta movements; the interviews produced a finely grained explanation of the different components of the struggles. I also consulted a wide range of literature, examining theoretical concepts such as contention, narratives, framing, collective action, and social movements. I drew certain conclusions on the importance of leadership as well as the role of narratives and

organization because of the ways that conflict and enemy were constructed in the two cases.

Niger Delta communities including the Ogoni and Ijaw have been characterized by a number of common lived experiences including marginalization and inequality, as well as environmental, socio-economic, and political arguments (Demirel-Pegg and Pegg, 2015; Isumonah, 2015; Watts, 1999, 2003, 2015). The power dynamics that developed after the Nigerian Civil War and as a result of the political economy based on the proceeds of oil exploitation are cited as root causes of the conflicts in the area (Demirel-Pegg and Pegg, 2015; Naanen, 1995; Okonta, 2008). These factors heralded deep-rooted divisions, which have manifested in several ways. Such contentious politics necessitate historical understandings that try to answer the question of "why movements integrate some decisive features" (Tilly and Wood, 2009: 3). Things come into being as the result of human acts of conception that occur within a "cultural, historical and political context of meaning", and become social facts because of the framing and meaning ascribed to them (Fierke, 2016: 182).

Frames symbolize representations of explanation allowing people to trace, comprehend, and label episodes within their life space and the world, with the sole purpose of organizing experience and directing action (Benford and Snow, 2000). Within the context of the Ogoni and Ijaw movements, frames identify and underscore the urgency and gravity of social problems, hence articulating claim-making among a range of functions (Benford and Hunt, 1993; Benford and Snow, 2000). Although, as Walton (2014) notes, social movements do not originate frames, in some cases, they are essential to achieving intended goals (Benford and Snow, 2000). Genocide, for

instance, is a very powerful frame, as are human rights and internal colonialism (Naanen, 1995; Saro-Wiwa, 1995a). Saro-Wiwa situated the Ogoni agenda within the frame of genocide, highlighting how billions of dollars' worth of oil and gas were carried away from Ogoniland (Saro-Wiwa, 1995a, 1992). Consequently, collective action frames emerge through an interactive and negotiated process whereby groups, drawing on and modifying existing cultural beliefs such as marginalization and inequality, deliberately mold their grievances and strategies for collective action (Melucci, 1994; Snow et al., 1986).

Motivational framing, for instance, provides a call to arms or a basis for engaging in corrective collective action, especially the construction of suitable vocabularies of motive (Benford and Snow, 2000). As Gamson (1992) suggests, collective action is mainly the outcome of negotiating shared meaning, while framed collective action constitutes a social dilemma related to individuals participating in movements because of perceived collective benefits in the form of "free-riding" (Olson, 1968). Although this is true, accepting that framing in movements serves as the link to understanding the past in relation to the present raises the question of how these frames are constructed to drive people to act in movements. *The Extractive Industries and Society* has published extensively on the Niger Delta, highlighting key problems related to resource issues and the community.[2] Most recently, Graham and Ovadia (2019) analysed the trends and development of oil exploration and production in Sub-Saharan Africa, exploring the increasing paradox of petro-development in several African countries, and emphasizing the inadequate and poorly implemented legal and regulatory frameworks. Employing a

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[2] See: Ako, 2015; Demirel-Pegg and Pegg, 2015; Idemudia, 2014; Isumonah, 2015; Iwilade, 2017; Naanen, 2019; Obi, 2014; Pegg, 2015; Senewo, 2015; Tantua et al., 2018; Watts, 2015.

subnational lens, Gutierrez Rodriguez (2019) examined the mechanisms of the relationship, if any, between oil wealth and internal conflicts. While all these contributions are important to an understanding of the Niger Delta, none of them has explored comparatively the dynamics of non-violence and violence in the Ogoni and Ijaw movements. This article therefore adds to the literature on the Niger Delta precisely by considering the typology of choice based on narratives, leadership, and organization. It provides a more nuanced understanding of the distinct nature of the two movements as forms of strategic choice in which leaders chose their tactics by gauging environmental opportunities and limitations, overlooking the basic reality that strategic options may be inherently appealing (Polletta and Jasper, 2001) in movements.

Life narratives are embedded in human experience, hence the importance of language to the negotiation of meaning and the social construction of identity in everyday life (Davis, 2002; DeCesare, 2013; Johnston et al., 1994). Narratives, especially those detailing political violence and painful pasts, can be regarded within three frames of connotations: the main actor, the event, and the socio-political context of the event (Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2001). The motivations and qualities of the perpetrator and victim of violence are framed within a narrative that justifies the inevitability of the confrontation (Smith, 1997). Therefore, historical reflections help people become aware of the dialectic of choice in recollecting and joining the past with the future by means of a present political project (Kratochwil, 2006: 8).

2. HISTORICAL NARRATIVES OF THE OGONI AND IJAW

Although the Ogoni and Ijaw live in similar topographical conditions and share common values and culture, the two groups' narratives are not indicative of a collective voice or representative of the region. The Ogoni ethnic identity constructed under the leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa in the 1990s, was based on their lived circumstances as a distinct nation challenged by immense economic and political difficulties (Okonta, 2008: 4). From the 1980s, the Ogoni realized that while their leaders had faithfully cooperated with the other Nigerian peoples, their faith had been seriously misplaced, as each ethnic group had its own agenda entirely unconnected to the notion of collaboration in a multi-ethnic country (Saro-Wiwa, 1992). Similarly, several Ijaw[3] leaders such as Dapa Briye and Claude Ake advocated and appealed for greater consideration for the environment, as well as autonomy, and fiscal federalism, but the state was not forthcoming.

Although the Ogoni narrative developed from the perception of exploitation for personal or ethnic benefits (Saro-Wiwa, 1995a), the Ijaw claim that despite land being at a premium and tied to its African inhabitants by a near-spiritual tie, it is expropriated by a government policy: "By instrument of government policies, our land is expropriated and the people are not directly or indirectly benefitting from its wealth. It is aggregated anger at that situation that gave rise to the charters of demand". [4]

Saro-Wiwa (1992) contended that the Ogoni had inherited a valuable portion of land endowed with the rich plateau soil that provided agricultural blessings, while the rivers

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[3] Benatari (1998) suggests that the formation of the Ijaw ethnic nation was a gradual process, dating back to the period 500 BCE to 700 CE, during which the proto-Ijaws or "ancient people" ancestors settled in the central Delta and merged with immigrants who came later.
[4] Interview with Lancelot, Ijaw leader, 2 August 2015.

flowing along the borders of the area were abundant with fish and seafood. Ijaw leaders'
dominant narratives refer to several complaints and appeals pre-independence to the
1990s, which yielded very few results. The emphasis on environmental degradation and
its disastrous consequences on the sources of both the Ogoni and Ijaw peoples'
livelihoods provided a new basis for forging closer ties around common problems
against the state.

Both the Ogoni and Ijaw regarded the colonial state as authoritarian and committed to
extraction rather than to development (Mamdani, 1996), compelling its subjects to
finance their own infrastructural development (Nwajiaku 2005). The process of
Nigeria's unification in 1914 saw several ethnic groups with diverse languages,
cultures, and histories forced together (ibid.). British colonialism imposed alien
structures onto the country and steered the Ogoni into domestic colonialism, with the
administration of Ogoni becoming part of Opobo division in 1908. The creation of
Rivers state in 1967 by the second military regime of independent Nigeria was seen by
Saro-Wiwa as a deliberate strategy to steer the Ogoni into extinction (Saro-Wiwa,
1995a: 73). Osha (2006, 2007) identified two main forms of colonialism in the Ogoni
context: one imposed by the British colonial regime and one pursued by the post-
colonial state.

Domestic colonialism is located within the social relations that exist between the Ogoni
and other distinct, culturally varied groups; it is based on domination and exploitation,
and socio-political inequalities within a given territory. Ogoni leaders often referred to
the actions of the post-colonial state as a type of internal colonialism, amounting to the
substitution of foreign colonialism with a local version (Mitee, 1999). Naanen (1995)

contends that internal colonialism arose in Nigeria not based on economic domination but through a skillful pursuit of control critically facilitated by numerical predominance:

> The traditional system at some point started to buckle under when oil operations started from the 70s when we were battling with internal colonialism, by our neighbours. Ogoni was treated virtually as a colony by the larger numerically more preponderant ethnic neighbours especially the Igbo. [5]

For many Ogoni leaders, internal colonialism remains a valid description of their situation. While internal colonialism as a Marxist concept originated in the 1960s, Ogoni leaders linked it to issues of human and minority rights in the 1990s, arguing that it had to be confronted by peaceful means rather than revolutionary means. Naanen clarified:

> Internal colonialism may not necessarily be Marxist, and it could be liberal. It wasn't originally a pure Marxist approach but you could apply that to class, even the division of the world into rich nations and the peripheral nations, in which the periphery is exploited for the benefit of the metropolis. But basically the way that Hechter did it, was a liberal formulation. [6]

Naanen was struck by Hechter's (1975) description of the British experience in which England was regarded as the core and Scotland and Wales as the fringes of the British system:

> It analysed the English domination of the United Kingdom. We applied it to the Ogoni cause whereby the local ethnic communities dominated the Ogoni right from the beginning of the 19th and the 20th centuries. Through the migration of ethnic communities into the area and how they imposed their rule and their supremacy on the Ogoni. That was part of the origin of the domination, which people consolidated in the post-independence years under the post-colonial state. [7]

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[5] Interview with Professor Ben Naanen, Ogoni leader, 31 July 2015.
[6] Interview with Ben Naanen, 29 July 2016.
[7] Ibid.

In contrast to the Ogoni view of the state in terms of internal colonialism, the Ijaw construct their marginalization outward against the central Nigerian state and the dominant Igbo ethnic group. The Ijaw argue that their underdevelopment began with British discriminatory and anti-Ijaw policies (Osaghae, 2008). The state, they argue, was not extracting to replace; rather it was creating an infrastructure of wasting the land, which is violence on nature. Ijaw leaders branded the peaceful Ogoni struggle a failed strategy, vindicating the need to resort to violence. The two narratives convey the sense of a critical historical juncture represented by Saro-Wiwa's execution in 1995 by the then military administration of General Sani Abacha, an event argued to be one of the most significant factors that transformed the conflict into one characterized by militia activities (Comfort, 2002; Isumonah, 2004). The narratives indicate that the killing of Saro-Wiwa was not seen as solely an Ogoni issue; it was constructed as shared, especially by the young people in the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) who launched their operation climate change as a response to his execution. However, it can also be argued that the representation of violence in earlier narratives by the Ijaw leaders, as being constitutive of the nature of the state's actions, had paved the way for justifying a violently confrontational struggle.

Although the Ijaw leaders interviewed during this research project did not speak in terms of internal colonialism, their examination of the state bore many similarities with the Ogoni. The Ijaw situation could be seen as a form of internal colonialism, but for the fact that the Ogoni narrative suggests a sense of agency, that there is something to be done about the Nigerian state's actions by linking up with international struggles. For the Ijaw, in contrast, a distinctive sense of desperation, frustration, and impotence seems to characterize their perspective.

Both the Ogoni and Ijaw lay claim to the oil in their territories, seeing it as both a blessing and the major reason for their troubles (Idemudia, 2014; Iwilade, 2017; Obi, 2014; Tantua et al., 2018). Oil, they argue, has been utilized to the benefit of a few and to the detriment of the vast majority, given its negative impacts on the environment. From the late 1980s, the Ogoni situated their claims within a global discourse of social justice and human/environmental rights, aimed at controlling oil resources and achieving a right to self-determination (Isumonah, 2015; Obi, 2009). In the 1990s, Saro-Wiwa highlighted, for instance, the UN regulations Procedure 1503: "if a case is presented and the UN investigates and sees a consistent pattern of rights violation, a reference will be made to the Nigerian government and action will start from there" (Saro-Wiwa, 1993b). The inference, therefore, is that the main Ogoni aim was to use references to clear-cut UN issues to attract specific international attention and legitimization. According to Comfort (2002), such struggles for environmental rights relate to fights for environmental conservation, indicating the deep contestation of international models of development responsible for growing inequality. However, despite having some validity, this argument fails to explain the relation between the inclusions of these rights and the non-violent nature of the Ogoni struggle.

Internationalism and transnationalism played key roles within the Ogoni struggle, especially regarding the emphasis on human and minority rights violations. The deliberate adoption of a narrative acceptable to the UN gave the Ogoni the edge they needed to attract international attention. Because of its insistence that its members forswear violence in their struggles, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) held great appeal for the Ogoni (Saro-Wiwa, 1995a). Saro-Wiwa

mobilized the Ogoni to recognize the negative impacts of an abused environment by emphasizing the importance of never using violence. Interviewees also mentioned how Saro-Wiwa found philosophical inspiration: "Ken followed the examples of philosophers like Thomas Paine who wrote the famous *Rights of Man*, John Locke on *People's Right to Self-determination*, people's rights to existence. They are affirmations of several other international declarations of human rights". [8]

The inclusion in the Ogoni struggle of narratives linking the powerful concepts of internal colonialism and human rights in ways that support non-violence has often been overlooked by scholars, although some have explored specific dimensions of internal colonialism and human rights (e.g. Okonta, 2008). According to Naanen:

> The discourse between internal colonialism and human rights took place simultaneously, the internal colonialism actually predates the human rights issue. Right from the beginning of the century up to the time of the civil war, and it even continued under the new regimes in Nigeria, but the human rights issue was mostly associated with the Babangida and Abacha eras. [9]

Naanen suggests a narrative of clear understanding, choice, and the strategic inclusion of human rights in the Ogoni agenda. Thus, what emerges is a sense of positive agency indicating the framing of Ogoni issues within environmental justice and showing similarities to ethnic politics that works toward a new social construction revolving around environmental justice (Saunders, 2013).

The situation with the Ijaw was rather different: "From 1997 to 1998, we didn't do any international campaigns. At the time we started, everything we did was within Nigeria

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[8] Interview with Dr Desmond Alubabari Nbete, Ogoni, 27 July 2015.
[9] Interview with Ben Naanen 31 July 2015.

and later with Friends of the Earth and Human Rights Watch".[10] Although the Ijaw as a whole did not engage in transnationalism or internationalism in this period, the IYC did: in 1999 the IYC wrote to former American president Jimmy Carter (IYC, 1999a): "One was our official letter to former president Jimmy Carter and he also replied supporting our option for peaceful engagement with the government and his offer to also speak with the military government at that point in time" (Interview: 31 January 2017).[11]

The IYC's letter to former president Jimmy Carter dated 2 March 1999 was a response to his visit to Port Harcourt indicating his recognition of Ijaw grievances (IYC, 1999a). Human rights were part of the issues the Ijaw dealt with internationally:

> We needed organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to monitor the environmental impact of oil production, and the human rights abuses occasioned by civil protests and the reaction of the state especially the military, the extra judicial killings.[12]

The 1999 HRW report, "The Price of Oil: Corporate Responsibility and Human Rights Violations in the Niger Delta", was the result of Ijaw attempts to draw attention to the situation. An open letter to the state, entitled "The World is Watching", highlighted extreme concerns about the movement of armed troops in the Ijaw area; it was signed by approximately 500 organizations and well-known individuals from around the world and thus indicated international support for the Ijaw movement:

> In 1999, about 500 organisations and notable personalities around the world carried a full-page advert in the Guardian newspaper expressing concerns about steps taken by the government and the military onslaught against Ijaw youths in the aftermath of the Kaiama Declaration.[13]

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[10] Interview with Ijaw leader (confidential source) 2, 29 July 2015.
[11] Interview with Patterson Ogon, Ijaw 30 July 2015.
[12] Interview with Patterson Ogon, a member of the IYC 25 March 2017.
[13] Ibid.

In Canada, Oronto Douglas, an Ijaw leader, made further attempts at internationalizing the Ijaw cause (Bob, 2014; Watts, 2015). In a speech at the "Petrolio ambiente e diritti umani" Conference in Rome in May 1999, Oronto suggested that Italian petroleum company Agip might be involved in human rights violations and in practices against the environment (Eni Agip Letter, 1999), which had quite an effect:

> Oronto also had the opportunity of addressing some members of the European Parliament, which led to the visit of some members of the Italian parliament to review the activities of Agip. I took them round for one month to explore areas where Agip does its operations. It resulted in their interactions with the management on our behalf. [14]

After these peaceful Ijaw activities, however, the establishment of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) marked a turning point away from non-violent protests to armed insurgency (Obi, 2012; Watts, 2015). This could be attributed to the 1999 Odi massacre, during which the village of Odi was destroyed in the biggest internal military operation ever witnessed, igniting local and international condemnation for the then President Olusegun Obasanjo. The armed forces spent 14 days in Odi, leaving behind raped women and a death toll of more than 2,000 people including women and children of varying ages (HRW, 1999; Omotola, 2006, 2009). It is possible to argue that these excesses were the trigger for Ijaw violence.

3. NATURE OF THE OGONI AND IJAW LEADERSHIP

Leaders are fundamentally important because of the indispensable role they play in shaping movements (Ganz and McKenna, 2017; Morris and Staggenborg, 2004;

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[14] Interview with Patterson Ogon, 25 March 2017.

Nepstad and Bob, 2006) through their social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991; DeCesare, 2013). The first Ogoni struggle, initiated by Paul Birabi in the early 1940s, focused on the need for community-based educational programmes as the ideal route to advance the Ogoni community and, at the same time, raised Ogoni political consciousness (Okonta, 2008). Elites and demobilized Ogoni soldiers such as S.F. Nwika, Paul Birabi, and F.M.A. Saronwiyo (Okonta, 2008: 64) founded the Ogoni Central Union (OCU) as a social and cultural platform for all Ogoni, to unify the groups with an emphasis on socio-economic advancement. However, the OCU became inactive due to its key leaders, including Birabi, going away for further studies. Birabi recognized that the Ogoni were not united around a common political platform; for administrative autonomy to take place, he felt that the Ogoni had to be politically mobilized and thus able to sway the regional government's policies (Okonta, 2008). This heralded the birth of the Ogoni State Representation Assembly (OSRA) in 1950 with Birabi as president, while the OCU was disbanded. The OSRA was created to further the advancement of a common Ogoni ethnic identity and to foster the interests of all Ogoni (Isumonah, 2004: 440). In a tour of villages in 1952 and 1953, Birabi, under the umbrella of OSRA, was particularly noted for his full participatory discussions. Okonta (2008) concludes that through such grassroots dialogues, Birabi instilled not only the need for unity within Ogoniland but also the importance of obtaining formal education. Despite the stirrings of political enlightenment in Ogoniland under Birabi, however, the 1950s were largely overshadowed by Nigeria's quest for independence (ibid: 71).

After Birabi's death in 1953, no significant struggle was recorded in Ogoniland until Ken Saro-Wiwa emerged, determined to pick up where Birabi had left off. In 1962,

after the collapse of OSRA, the Ogoni Divisional Union (ODU) was set up as an avenue to advance Ogoni interests, leading to the creation of Rivers state in 1967 (Isumonah, 2004, 2015). While the ODU had preserved the Ogoni minority awareness within the state, it was replaced by two much less political Ogoni ethnic organizations — the Ogoni Club, which comprised young Ogoni graduates, and the Kagote Club, which comprised the Ogoni elite (Isumonah, 2004: 442) — and only later by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). Saro-Wiwa, who, in various roles, had been part of the government, emerged to challenge the central state and the multinational oil companies such as Shell over the region's environmental degradation, exacerbated by resource extraction (Okonta, 2008; Osha, 2007). Unlike that of Adaka Boro (see below), Saro-Wiwa's movement was predicated on the principle of intellectual judgement through constructive criticism and dialogue. In the wake of the earlier Ogoni drives toward a broader unity, the consequences of environmental damage and the lack of development in the region had become obvious, promoting the recognition of common threats and goals (Cayford, 1996: 187). Because Saro-Wiwa took advantage of his insider experience to press for environmental justice and a non-violent path to social change, his political development could be described as both logical and contradictory (Comfort 2002: 232).

Saro-Wiwa's clear observation and understanding of the prevailing political conditions in the United States of America and Western European states strengthened his acceptance of a number of universally valid generalizations regarding political actions of the state (Nbete, 2006: 164). His philosophy can be contextualized in terms of his efforts to reterritorialize his area of expertise to the grassroots in galvanizing communal backing and involvement (Tam-George, 2010: 298). This may have contributed to

Saro-Wiwa's determination to offer philosophical resolutions to Nigeria's problems —

a determination that created several divisions within the group and led to conflicts with

the state, including the murder of four prominent Ogoni elites in Giokoo and the arrest

and detention of Saro-Wiwa along with nine others. However, mobilizations (Mccarthy

and Zald, 1977) within Ogoniland at that time were very troubling because, whether

the Ogoni leaders appreciated it or not, their non-violent approach threatened the

survival of the Abacha regime. The reactions of the Abacha administration could be

interpreted in two ways: first, as a defiance of both the Ogoni and the international

community that had reacted to the Odi massacre; and, second, as a signal to other groups

(Isumonah, 2015) in the Niger Delta of what would befall them if they took the path of

the Ogoni.

After the execution of Saro-Wiwa in 1995, Ogoni leadership passed on to Ledum Mitee

in 1995, to Ben Naanen in 2012, and to Legborsi Pyagbara after 1 year. At the time of

writing, a leadership tussle is ongoing, and the leadership is yet to be determined.

Naanen served as the secretary general of MOSOP from 1992 to 1999, becoming

Chairman, Provisional Council, only after Ledum Mitee was removed from office in

2012. Pyagbara is the current president. Like Saro-Wiwa, Mitee also had leadership

issues. Some in Ogoniland saw him as a sell-out, but he led the organization for 10

years without violence, making his period of leadership significant. In the interviews,

several Ogoni elites mentioned leaders whose style did not match that of Saro-Wiwa:

> Subsequent leaders after Saro-Wiwa adopted a leadership style that falls
> short of what should have been the model of leadership. This is supposed to
> be a grassroots movement and Ledum adopted some kind of elitist approach,
> he was insulated from the people. He became closer to the government, the
> very people that you are supposed to confront. To us that compromised the

fervor of his confrontation with the state. The present leadership falls far short of what we had under Ledum. [15]

Although accused of failing to unify the Ogoni as Saro-Wiwa did, Mitee ensured that the Ogoni used language very powerfully as a motivational tool in uniting the Ogoni. The use of phrases such as courage, discipline, and resilience in the face of agonies created a non-violent undertone which mirrored Saro-Wiwa's leadership style.

The Ogoni leaders' outlook has rested on the understanding of global environmental debates and specifically the deliberate adoption of non-violence and the principles of ethnic autonomy, resource and environmental control (ERECTISM). Saro-Wiwa connected ethnic autonomy to resource and environmental control (see Watts, 2015; Osha, 2007), based on the correlation between natural resources, the physical environment, and the international importance of the environment (Nbete, 2006). Interviewed leaders stressed that environmental justice was not the only goal the Ogoni people were fighting for, but Saro-Wiwa recognized the increasing global awareness of environmental protection issues and tapped into international discourse (Bob, 2002; Isumonah, 2015):

> Ken understood the need to protect the environment, there was so much talk about global warming, and ozone layer depletion. He keyed into the global narrative, so even the issue of political marginalization, which was a major factor, was kind of subordinated to the environmental pollution and the Ogoni caught international attention. [16]

In the course of his leadership (Barker et al., 2001), Saro-Wiwa seemed to use two arguments: first, he stressed the importance of being principled, emphasizing the

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[15] Interview with Ogoni leader, 31 July 2015.
[16] Interview with Nbete, 27 July 2015.

principles of non-violence as advocated by Gandhi; second, he used a pragmatic argument based on his knowledge of the small number of Ogoni indigenes within Rivers state.

It can be argued that the Ogoni leadership benefitted from higher levels of social and educational capital compared to the Ijaw leadership. The Ogoni leaders, taking advantage of this, gave a prominent role to agency in charting the Ogoni agenda (Nepstad and Bob, 2006: 3). Indeed, the Ogoni leaders' level of education, work experience, exposure, and world view helped them articulate their grievances to the kinds of networks that could enhance their engagement in and maintenance of non-violence. Saro-Wiwa, for instance, gained international attention and recognition as a writer, publisher, environmentalist, and human rights activist (MOSOP, 2004: 1). Most of the subsequent Ogoni leaders have been graduates and some hold post-graduate degrees, some from international universities; they have had professional jobs or high-ranking positions as civil servants. The leaders' wide-ranging education has helped them to critically assess and articulate their specific problems. This is an illustration of "universalistic cultural capital" — the knowledge of the ideals, empathies, cultural principles, and political trends within the wider publics they aim to connect with (Nepstad and Bob, 2006: 4). The example of the Ogoni leaders shows that persuasive rhetorical abilities and the use of strategic knowledge to recognize opportunities and overcome barriers in their political grounds are essential for movement leaders (ibid.).

The Ijaw movement is interesting for the fluid shifting of its position between violence and non-violence. In the 1960s, it conducted a short-lived violent rebellion under the leadership of Boro; in the l990s, it turned non-violent, similar to the Ogoni; while in

2003–2004, the struggle again became violent under radical armed leaders such as Asari Dokubo (Tantua et al., 2018). The Ijaw national struggle for self-determination began with a violent rebellion in the Niger Delta, in the form of a 12-day revolution in 1966 spearheaded by the late Ijaw patriots Issac Adaka Boro, Samuel Owonaru, and Nottingham Dick from the Kaiama community in Rivers state, under the group known as Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) (Watts, 2003). Boro's ascent to Ijaw leadership was based on the premise that a fairer share of the oil revenues was a right of the Ijaw. This idea for the rebellion came from the conviction that a majority of Ijaw youths were frustrated by the general neglect of their communities, and ready for any action that would liberate them from the central Nigerian state. Boro's primary intention was to create an independent Niger Delta state, thus solving the human and infrastructural developmental challenges (Omotola, 2009). To secede from the Nigerian state, Boro declared the Niger Delta Republic on 23 February 1966 (Darah, 1995). Boro's rhetoric was clearly violent: he did not shy away from what he intended to do. However, the rebellion was crushed by the state on 7 March 1966 after 12 days of fighting. Notwithstanding Boro's early death in 1968, his revolutionary initiative became a model for struggles of national resistance against perceived oppression and exploitation by the state and multinational oil companies (Darah, 1995: 1). All subsequent Ijaw militia groups paid tribute to the Boro rebellion.

The moderate Ijaw youth leaders of the late 1990s, such as Oronto Douglas, Felix Tuodolo, and Isaac Osuoka, were more concerned with the development of the region. They were neither militants nor insurgents but predominantly enlightened citizens and members of the intelligentsia (Afinotan and Ojakorotu, 2009). These youth leaders drafted the Kaiama Declaration in the form of demands to the state. In 2003 and 2004,

however, notable radical militant leaders including Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo), Asari Dokubo, and Ateke Tom came to power. This second phase of leadership had links to groups of criminal cult gangs created and financed by political godfathers to threaten and intimidate political opponents, kidnap for ransom, and commit crude oil theft (Mukoro, 2010: 82). In the Ogoni history, by contrast, there is no record of such armed militant leaders, which serves as further evidence of the Ogoni choice of non-violence.

The classification of leaders into different categories raises the question of the actual motive behind the Ijaw armed struggle, supporting Demirel-Pegg and Pegg's (2015: 660) assertion that accepting greed as the major reason for the escalation of the conflict is too simplistic. They presented a more compelling perspective of the perceived failure of the non-violent methods of collective action as the key factors responsible for the violence. Although the Ijaw struggle from the 1960s started with violence and then shifted to non-violence in the late 1990s in an attempt to mirror the Ogoni outlook, the fragmented and fluid nature of the Ijaw leadership allowed the non-violent community protest to turn into a full-blown violent insurgency. The Ogoni's failed non-violent efforts led to a debate among Ijaw leaders on whether to maintain non-violence:

> We've made non-violent efforts, and you see the response. How can we continue to follow this non-violent method? Some sections of the group decided that the more effective way to deal with these issues is to go violent, but there were some who decided to stay the course of non-violence. [17]

There was, therefore, a juxtaposing of non-violence versus violence before the violent option was adopted. While moderates spearheaded the struggle toward established

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[17] Interview with Ijaw leader 1, 28 July 2015.

forms of collective action, smaller and newer groups became uncompromising, engaging in fierce rhetoric and strategies in a bid to clearly distinguish between themselves and the moderates (Demirel-Pegg and Pegg, 2015):

> We know when it is time to change our tactics, why should we remain peaceful, when government has forgotten about Ijaw suffering? Whose mandate is it to tell the Ijaw people to remain calm when all they can see is suffering? We have to reclaim what is rightfully ours with our strength not with words but with our military style. [18]

The Ijaw felt the need to adopt a different strategy to stand up to a state that was noted for the use of force to suppress agitations and opposition, especially in the Niger Delta, as seen in the Ogoni case:

> We had to change our way since our rights are not given to us. Violence is the only way we can use to tackle the Nigerian state because they understand it better than us. [19]

> We blow up stations because that is the source of government money. The best way to tackle government is to destroy these instalments before we go one on one (Interview with Boyloaf Vanguard Newspaper, 2008).

As a founding member of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) in 1998, Asari Dokubo started as its vice president, but his commitment, stamina, and leadership abilities facilitated his promotion to president in 2001. When he left the IYC presidency in 2003 to set up the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, Dokubo's leadership style became directly confrontational. In an attempt to justify his leadership, the 2004 NDPVF handbill cited the aims and objectives of "the fundamentals of justice and equality, truth, conscience, logic and facts, love for humanity as well as sanctity of life" (Etemike, 2009: 159) as key to being an Ijaw leader. In particular, Dokubo's declared political ideology was to advance Ijaw rights through commanding control over their God-given resources.

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[18] Interview with a confidential source, August 2015.
[19] Interview with Andrew Azazi, 10 August 2015.

Dokubo's depiction of himself as a victim and the NDPVF as the solution to the Ijaw's problems fitted strategically into the prevalent sense of local grievance (ibid.: 90), indicating that the NDPVF represented the straightforward refutation of non-violent political movements in the Delta. To Dokubo, the Ijaw had to avoid falling into the throes of what Adaka Boro foresaw forty years ago, stressing the importance of remaining resolute in the pursuit of the ideals of their fallen heroes such as Isaac Adaka Boro and Ken Saro-Wiwa (Dokubo, 2009). Dokubo argued that, if the people of the Niger Delta did not take up arms and fight the federal government, they would remain poor and become even poorer in the future (ibid.).

These examples suggest that the voices and actions of the radical leaders were louder than those of the moderate leaders because their groups were formed with a clear intention of violence. On the one hand was a leadership that attempted to make the most of its assets; on the other hand, as seen in Dokubo's style, was a leadership that was unable to do the same (Nepstad and Bob, 2006: 4) due to differences in social status. The intention here is not to present the educated as non-violent, but rather to show that the less educated and less well-travelled are more closely tied to the local situation and probably more likely to express their feelings of rage and frustration through increasingly radical representations of local demands.

For a period in the 1990s, Ijaw agitation was organized on a more intellectual level by Ijaw graduates of local and international universities, similar to the organization of the Ogoni movement. The possession of such a degree of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) enabled them to identify the major issues affecting the Ijaw. The IYC and the Kaiama Declaration indicated the Ijaw leaders' awareness of strategic international trends, within which they inserted their issues in a non-violent discourse. Thus, the educational

and professional capacities and the intellectual abilities of the Ijaw leadership serve as an interesting angle from which to examine the social standing of the group and its impact on central and common concerns. Here the similarity between the leaders is clear regarding the understanding that the contacts one can make relate to the kind of discourse one can promote in order to engage with and gain international recognition. The second group of Ijaw leadership did not have the same level of leadership capital and was incapable of making effective use of their position (Nepstad and Bob, 2006: 4). Rather, their close links to the grassroots led them to a line of thinking and action that were more concerned with ways to stand up for and defend their people from state forces.

4. NON-VIOLENT AND VIOLENT STRATEGIES: AN OVERVIW

4.1 Ogoni Bill of Rights

Saro-Wiwa embarked upon a systematic campaign of persuasion to show the Ogoni the path and strategy that had to be adopted. He organized the campaigns in a structured way that institutionalized the Ogoni into different groups for the purpose of communication. The Ogoni strategy of non-violence is evidenced by the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) of 26 August 1990 (see Saro-Wiwa, 1992). Detailing a historical narrative of neglect and local misery (Ako, 2015), the OBR addressed the question of Nigerian federalism and minority rights and called for active involvement in state affairs (Watts, 1999, 2003: 22). Senewo (2015: 665) highlights the strategic importance of the OBR as the most important tool used to push forward the struggle for Ogoni survival, as well as a framework employed by other groups agitating for their rights (HRW, 1999; Okonta and Douglas, 2001).

The Ogoni wanted political autonomy to participate in the affairs of the state as a distinct and separate unit, including rights to control and use a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for their development (see Saro-Wiwa, 1992). The lack of response to the OBR from the state and from the multinational company Shell led the Ogoni leaders to request support from the international community through an Addendum to the OBR in 1991 (ibid: 97). The Addendum expressed dissatisfaction over the state's refusal to grant the Ogoni people an audience and demanded that MOSOP be permitted to make a presentation to the UN and the international community (ibid: 98). The OBR indicates a deliberate choice of non-violence, and the addition of the Addendum attracted immediate interest and prompted non-governmental organizations and human and environmental rights organizations such as Amnesty International to support the Ogoni plight (Senewo, 2015: 666). Although in the OBR the Ogoni leaders deny asking for secession from the Nigerian state, the question of why the Ogoni had a flag and a national anthem arises. Isumonah (2004: 444) notes that there was a proposal to fly the Ogoni flag alongside the Nigerian flag and simultaneously demand an Ogoni state as the "minimum for staying within the Nigerian Federation" (Saro-Wiwa, 1994: 17). This separatist attitude may have necessitated a violent suppression by state operatives who viewed it as a pursuit of Ogoni sovereignty (Isumonah, 2004: 444). Saro-Wiwa himself referred to the Ogoni anthem as a liberation song, as self-determination does not mean secession (Saro-Wiwa, 1993).

4.2 MOSOP

MOSOP was established in 1990 as a mass movement and an umbrella organization.[20]

The all-encompassing membership of MOSOP possibly explains why the Nigerian state under the administrations of Generals Babangida and Abacha could not ban it (Isumonah, 2004: 442). Okonta (2008) highlights a major flaw within MOSOP, in that the movement concentrated on ideologically minded and educated entrepreneurs like Saro-Wiwa without a working consensus with other influential political and economic elites. Similarly, Watts (2003: 23) observed that, notwithstanding MOSOP's notable record, its ability to act as an integrated pan-Ogoni movement remains an open question. Divisions within the Ogoni emerged in June 1993 when the Nigerian state called for presidential elections which, under MOSOP directives, the Ogoni decided to boycott. Tam-George (2010: 302) argued that for the Ogoni to take part in such an election would be to participate in a process that would take control of their lives and resources and to agree to be submissive to that authority. Some Ogoni elites, however, did not accept the election boycott, causing further divisions within MOSOP. Mitee recounted that the proposal to boycott was advanced by Saro-Wiwa in a meeting:

> In the meeting which we held in Dr Leton's house, Ken made that proposal, that whether we vote or not, Ogoni votes will have nothing to do with the presidential elections, but if we do that, it will attract attention to our cause. Most of us the younger folks bought that idea, we wanted something that was exciting which most of our leaders didn't like. There were those who felt that we were with the government and those who felt if you were with the government you are not with us. [21]

The decision to boycott the elections developed into an "us versus them" issue, showing that individual and group interests played a significant role. The problems within

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[20] MOSOP comprises 10 affiliated bodies: the National Youth Council of Ogoni People; Ogoni Council of Churches; Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers; Ogoni Students Unions; National Union of Ogoni Students; Ogoni Teachers Union; Federation of Ogoni Women Associations; Ogoni Central Union; Committee of the Leaders of Thought; and the Council of Ogoni Professionals (see Okonta, 2008).
[21] Interview with Ledum Mitee, Ogoni leader, 2 August 2016.

MOSOP led to the resignation of some of its leaders in 1993, causing serious disagreements between some of the remaining leaders and Saro-Wiwa (Okonta, 2008).

Watts (1999, 2003) suggested that Saro-Wiwa made use of the over 50 years of Ogoni unification and built upon decades of anger to provide a critical mass and to stir a youth-driven ardor within an indigenous subject, in a space that was highly debatable and challenging. Watts also challenged Saro-Wiwa's claim of having the support of 98 percent of Ogonis, claiming that, because clear differences and divergences existed between Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni elites, MOSOP exemplified a fractured and increasingly divided "we". Bob and Nepstad (2007: 1387) argued that Saro-Wiwa tried to depict the Ogoni movement generally as a struggle for environmental justice and human rights instead of for "complex, regional ethnic minority rights". They criticized the framing of the entire Ogoni cause within environmentalism and human rights as a "weaker" foundation for unified engagement (ibid.: 1389).

Mitee recounts that the Ogoni leaders deliberated on the options available to them:

> We clearly looked at all the options, the question of armed struggle, the Nigerian system is so violent that the only thing that they listen to is violence. After hours of arguments we rejected all that based on two main considerations, first is that of our terrain, ours is just a flat land, so where do you run to? Secondly is the philosophical angle, if the Nigerian system is this violent, then what do you do? We decided to take an option that would bring out the contrast between us and at the same time get public sympathy locally and internationally. [22]

According to certain informants, women in Ogoniland played a key role in ensuring that non-violence became the norm in the struggle; they contributed significantly to the massive Ogoni protest (Barikor-Wiwa, 1997: 1). Women frequently led MOSOP

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[22] ibid.

demonstrations, parading at the front to call attention to the demonstration's peacefulness (Demirel-Pegg and Pegg, 2015: 658).

4.3 Ijaw Kaiama Declaration

Frustrated by economic and political marginalization exacerbated by environmental pollution, the Ijaw youth came together in an "All Ijaw Youth Conference" on 11 December 1999 and issued the Kaiama Declaration in the Kaiama community of Bayelsa state. The conference, themed "Regaining Control of Our Destiny", recorded the attendance of more than 5,000 Ijaw youths from over 500 communities of about 40 clans within the Ijaw nation (IYC, 1999b). They considered the way forward to safeguard the uninterrupted existence of the indigenous Ijaws. Imitating the Ogoni, they confirmed their unceasing membership of the Nigerian state (MOSOP, 2008: 42) but, unlike the Ogoni, they demanded self-government and control of resources (IYC, 1999b: 10). The Kaiama Declaration proclaimed that, being the basis of their survival, all land and natural resources within the Ijaw territory should belong to the communities. They declared their non-recognition of all decrees enacted without their agreement that robbed the Ijaw of the right to ownership and control of their resources (ibid.).

A year earlier, on 29 and 30 December 1998, in the states of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers in the Niger Delta, demonstrations and protest marches had been met with the full might of the Nigerian state security apparatus (Nwajiaku, 2005: 457). The formation of MOSOP and IYC and the rejection of the elders' perceived actions by the two groups represents another similarity in terms of the youths taking over the struggles. However, unlike Saro-Wiwa in the Ogoni struggle, no particular leader headed the Ijaw struggle;

rather, it was led by a group of Ijaw youth. There were no intensive Ijaw mobilization campaigns; instead, a conference was held and the decision to engage the state was made there. Furthermore, where the Ijaw formed two principal umbrella organizations, Ijaw National Council (INC) and IYC, the Ogoni relied on one umbrella organization, MOSOP. The right to Ijaw self-determination as a unique and equal nation became central to the formation of IYC, encompassing all Ijaw progressive nations of the world and stakeholders. Although Nwajiaku (2005: 470) asserted that the INC was mainly tasked with the mobilization of past, present, and potential future political personalities, the IYC stood for those youth who contested the way in which members of the Ijaw political class had acted in the past. Similarly to the Ogoni MOSOP, IYC was set up to coordinate the Ijaw struggle for self-determination and justice (IYC, 1999b). It demonstrates the importance of the formation of a non-partisan, socio-cultural, revolutionary political organization tasked with the promotion, preservation, and protection of the Ijaw political destiny, language and history, culture and custom, the environment, and natural resources, as cited in the IYC constitution.

The Kaiama Declaration was also met with repression by the state; this enabled certain Ijaw leaders to use the repression as a legitimation for turning to violence. Okonta (2006: 24) described MEND as the violent outcome of decades of intentional limitations of the social space in the Niger Delta, whereby the people had been denied their public and political rights in their lawful quest for material and social welfare. MEND emerged in 2004 to call international attention to the plight of the Ijaw people (see Okonta, 2006). Its visibility increased after the arrest and detention of Asari Dokubo and Chief Ebitimi Banigo and after the impeachment and detention of D.S.P. Alamieyeseigha; together these three episodes constituted attempts to break and

humiliate the Ijaw (Ukiwo, 2007: 605). The group's key strategy in drawing attention to their activities included sending out pictures of heavily armed youths in masks, with helpless oil workers at their mercy (Okonta, 2006: 4). The militia leaders were organized in camps, with camp 5 under Tompolo's control being the core. Located in creeks, these military-style camps were separated from the main communities: "There were about 140 camps in the different states, a lot of discussions took place in camp 5, it was the camp vice president Jonathan went to on June 28 during the amnesty negotiations". [23]

The establishment of these camps was a clear indication that, as far as the militia groups were concerned, there was no longer any alternative to the option of violence. The camps also meant a shift in the character of the violence: the militia actions became organized rather than an indiscriminate type of guerrilla violence. The situation compelled the deployment of a joint military task force including the police to conduct an operation code-named Operation Hakuri[24] to maintain peace in the region.

5. CONCLUSION

This article has established that narrative, leadership, and organizational structure have been key elements in the strategic choices of the Ogoni and Ijaw movements. Historical understanding of the Ogoni and Ijaw movements allows us to make sense of several episodes that are difficult to explain without employing the lens of leadership narratives. Through the construction of narratives, the two groups of leaders situated

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[23] Interview with Timi Ogoriba, Ijaw leader, Abuja, 10 August 2015.
[24] Hakuri is a Hausa word for patience.

past history within factual frames of events relating to their identity; thus, the past became directly linked to the construction and reconstruction of collective meanings (Feldman, 2001; Touraine, 1981, 1985). The social construction of reality was used to analyse the structure of facts that determined the directions the different narratives charted. Even more crucial is the positive engagement with non-violence in the relationship between the self-determination of groups and the political strategies they adopted to determine the choice of non-violence (Cunningham, 2013).

Undertaking actions for reasons meant applying an understanding of "what is called for" (Giddens, 1984: 345) by the Ijaw and Ogoni leaderships within a set of situations. Here, a link emerges with the identification of an underlying bond between ideas and material relations (Fierke, 2015: 121), as the Ogoni systematically pitched their struggle to fit internationally recognized narratives of minority issues such as internal colonialism and human rights. Although the Ijaw did not explicitly regard their situation as internal colonialism, a sense of internal colonialism was evident in the interviews, in the narratives of exclusion and domination by the more powerful ethnic groups.

Closely related to the dynamics of choice is the type of leadership responsible for the different courses of action undertaken by the Ogoni and Ijaw. The discourses and political practices championed by Ken Saro-Wiwa humanized the enemy, and being purposive, he organized and coordinated the Ogoni in an attempt to compel the state to transform the status quo through civil disruption and international pressure (Sharp, 2005). The Ogoni demonstrated a more disciplined and intellectual leadership, while the nature of Ijaw leadership has been less well-coordinated and unified. There have been different types of Ijaw leadership, one comprising the non-violent, intellectual

youth leaders, and the other, the less educated, more radical and violent militants. A clear insight has been provided into the often-ignored fluid and fractured nature of Ijaw leadership, which had a major impact on the character and nature of the movement as it shifted from a non-violent to a violent armed struggle.

The differences in social status between the Ogoni and Ijaw leaders form a further distinction. The adoption of narratives outlined the salience of linguistic aspects employed in violence: "in order to practice violence, you need to talk violence, and dehumanize the other in the language" (Apter, 1996: 2). In the non-violence scenario, campaign leaders employed contingent and context-specific methods depending on the structural conditions in which they operated (Chenoweth and Ulfelder, 2015). The backgrounds and experiences of Ogoni leaders provided well-informed platforms from which they operated with a collective sense of agency. The Ijaw outlook, on the other hand, was based on the state's denial of agency, leaving them with no other choice than to engage in violence. This article has ascertained that while the Ogoni have continued to press their demands through the OBR, the Ijaw's Kaiama Declaration remained relevant for only a few months and quickly became lost in the transformation from non-violence to violence embodied by the emergence of MEND. The combination of the "why" and "how" discussed here also explained how groups navigated through different conflict options available to them to achieve their goal; thus, the fact that the Ogoni maintain their non-violent stance to the present day, while the Ijaw have embraced a cocktail of violence and non-violence, serves as a good example of the importance of using different theoretical concepts to better explain why the Niger Delta conflicts evolved the way they did. Despite their shared lived experiences, the Ogoni

and the Ijaw fight context-specific battles constructed and framed for their particular communities.

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