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Causes of Conflict Between Niger Delta Communities (2003 –2014)

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By

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Abstract

The thesis evaluates the causality of inter-community conflict in the Niger Delta, notably in the core states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. In contrast to previous studies, this research uses its own detailed definition and delineation of Niger Delta Communities (NDCs), and the nature of inter-community conflict, to determine the social, economic and political factors that cause conflict between communities in the ND. A further key distinction between this study and previous research on the causality of conflict in the Niger Delta is the use of evidence and data gathered from leaders and residents involved first-hand in the conflict in the region. The study defines NDCs as *inherently* autonomous entities, since they were politically autonomous prior to colonisation. Non-native means of administration first introduced by European colonisers constrained these community's autonomy, most recently under the system of Local Government Areas (LGAs). Corruption and mismanagement in local administration has alienated NDCs who mostly no longer trust the LGAs and have fallen back on traditional means of interacting with their neighbours which can involve the use of violent conflict to settle disputes. Hence, at the heart of inter-community conflict in the Niger Delta is the tension between the 'traditional' represented by the NDCs' inherent autonomy and ancient practices and the 'modern' represented by the LGAs' constitutional authority. The current constitutional administrative system in the Niger Delta blurs community autonomy and forces communities to interact in the geographical, political and legal space created by the LGA. The inability of LGA's to provide adequate social, economic and political 'goods' for their citizens creates an environment where interaction between NDCs often involves competition for access to these goods leading to disputes which are often settled using traditional violent means.

Dedication

To my family and friends for their firm support throughout this long academic phase of my life.

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Acronyms

CDC – Community Development Committee

FGN – Federal Government of Nigeria

FRN – Federal Republic of Nigeria

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

LGA – Local Government Authority

LNG – Liquefied Natural Gas

MEND – Movement of Emancipation for the Niger Delta

MNC – Multi National Corporation

ND – Niger Delta

ND state – a state in the Niger Delta

NDC – Niger Delta Community

NDDC – Niger Delta Development Commission

NDPVF – Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force

NDV – Niger Delta Vigilante

NGOs – Non-Governmental Organisations

NNPC – Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation

OMPADEC – Oil & Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission

SPDC – Shell Petroleum Development Company

UNDP – United Nations Development Program

WEMFA – World Environmental Movement for Africa

YEC – Youth Executive Council

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Background

This thesis argues that Niger Delta Communities' (NDCs) inherently autonomous nature, rekindled by the tension between traditional versus modern administrative systems, drives communities to enter inter-community conflict over diverse social, economic and political factors. These include social prestige, employment and political influence. The thesis also explores the definition of an NDC as an inherently autonomous political unit that constitutes political and geographical parts of a Local Government Area (LGA), and, in some cases, clans or kingdoms. At the core of this argument is the premise that once NDCs are defined for the thesis as traditional and inherently autonomous units on the basis that they were politically independent prior to colonisation, the introduction of modern LGAs, which supress this autonomy, becomes problematic. It fuses them into one political unit, making them interactive units within a single LGA required to share social, economic and political resources. This scenario gives rise to tension between the NDCs' traditional, autonomous nature and independent way of dealing with one another, against the LGAs' modern constitutional authority that blurs the communities' autonomy and makes them socially, economically and politically part of the same overarching political and administrative construct without providing adequate benefits and amenities to ensure peaceful co-existence. The thesis argues that it is this conflict between the traditional and modern that is the driver of inter-community conflict in the Niger Delta (ND).

The researcher's interest in this topic arose from having grown up in the Niger Delta state (ND state) of Delta, and received a degree in Nigerian history from Delta State University (DSU). The researcher was understandably concerned about the persistent inter-community conflicts in his home region. These conflicts risked instability, disorder and under-development. Daily

activities and discussions on the topic made clear that conflict has meant under-investment in the region's wider economy. Only when conflict is addressed can large-scale investment in the region occur. However, for conflict management to take place there needs to be a concrete understanding of the causes of the conflict.

Inter-community conflict, also understood by this study as intergroup conflict, can be analysed within three broad areas: social, economic and political. Social theories explain inter-community conflict in terms of identity competition by focussing on the central role of identity in the inception and escalation of intergroup conflict, even when economic and political factors are also at play (Seul, 1999). Individual and group identity competition is considered a by-product of individuals' efforts to satisfy their basic human needs, which may be described as psychological. Thus, collective determination often serves these psychological needs more comprehensively and potently than other repositories of cultural meaning that contribute to the construction and maintenance of individual and group identities (Seul, 1999). Examples of violent intergroup conflicts instigated by this concept are those of the Balkans, Sudan, East Timor, and Sri Lanka. In other words, the concept of identity competition can be broken into three major sections: a sense of belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation; these are the major phenomena that stir individuals to form groups and which affords them social protection against competitors.

From the economic and political point of view, eco-political theories explain how economic benefits can be derived from achieving political power that subsequently fuels intergroup conflict. The government exercises prejudice about which economic benefits are conferred to different groups, and this is cited as the political rationale behind intergroup conflicts. Gudrun Ostby contends that groups form ethno-political organisations that are often used as symbols of shared identity and grievances, thus building a sense of common interest and enabling them to achieve their economic goals (2008). Lars-Erik Cederman et al. argue that countries with

high degrees of political exclusion are more likely to experience armed conflict between ethnic groups since the exclusion from political power of one group implies the economic degradation of its environment (Cederman et al., 2010). This idea is reinforced and exemplified by Arnim Langer, who states that in the Cote d'Ivoire in 1994 civil war erupted between the northern and southern regions because eco-political inequalities became prevalent. These inequalities were due to the denial of a northern presidential candidacy and a lack of allocation of funds to the north from the central government, which was ruled by southerners (Langer, 2004).

Inter-community conflict in the ND can be broken down into three categories: social interactions amongst NDCs: the economic structure of the ND region; and inadequate political attributes to alleviate tension emanating from the previous two factors. However, the existing literature has not been able to convincingly link NDCs' attitudes to social and eco-political theoretical explanations; therefore, it has not had any far-reaching effects on understanding the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND. Social theoretical explanations advanced by the existing literature as causes of inter-community conflict argue that social imbalance between ethnic groups is responsible for this conflict (Ukiwo, 2007). For example, inter-ethnic conflict between the Ijaws and Itsekiris is used to explain the conflict between the two NDCs emerging from each ethnic group. Social theories can also explain inter-community conflict through social injustice and inequity in the allocation of scarce resources by government officials and Multi National Corporations (MNCs) alike (Aghalino, 2009a).

Economically, the existing literature argues that individual economic interests are a major factor in disputes between NDCs (Ikelegbe, 2005). For example, individuals pursuing their own selfish interests use community goals as a pretext, to try and achieve their own aims. In other words, whilst NDCs are deemed to be violently engaging one another over economic gains, Augustine Ikelegbe argues that just a few individuals are responsible for instigating these fights for selfish gains (2006). Ukoha Ukiwo subscribe to the view that oil proceeds lead to

ethnic marginalisation, which deteriorates into inter-community conflict (2007). Thus, socially and economically, Ukiwo explains the causes of inter-community conflict from the perspective of inter-ethnic strife. Similar to Ikelegbe's economic argument, the existing literature argues that inter-community conflict occurs because individuals attempt to enrich themselves by gaining political power with the support of their community, which in turn gives them control over oil rents (Akpan, 2010). This exemplifies that what is viewed as political conflict between NDCs is in fact political conflict between individuals from different communities who are using inter-community conflict as a pretext.

The research is concerned with the causes of inter-community conflict in the ND over the period 2003-2014. However, there are limitations in the scope of the research. Firstly, although there are nine ND states in the ND region, the study was restricted to the three ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. The findings in the study are drawn from the views of respondents in these three ND states. Data from other sources were reviewed to triangulate the evidence and data given by the respondents.

Secondly, whilst some of the findings of the research might be applicable to other wider instances of inter-community and intergroup conflict, the research is focussed on the three states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The existing scholarly literature on the causes of inter-community conflict in the ND, whether in terms of social, economic or political relations, stresses the role of influential individuals and ethnicity. This research focusses, however, on NDCs as collective groups, arguing that the terms inter-ethnic or inter-personal conflict when used in analysis of the conflicts are really both referring to causes of inter-community conflict, and that this results from insufficient research into what constitutes a Niger Delta *Community*. Although inter-personal conflict is

perceived as a pretext through which certain individuals use community ambition to achieve their goals, that is, individuals pretending that they are representing the community's interests when they are igniting inter-community conflict for personal benefits, it has not been clearly differentiated from inter-community conflict that emanates from conflicted interests amongst NDCs understood as different independent groups. For example, two groups of individuals belonging to different NDCs engaging in violent conflict is often confused with two independent communities in dispute. Similarly, ethnicities are understood as groups, and the term inter-ethnic is understood as intergroup, which invariably means that it is confused with communities, which are another form of group.

The main aim of the thesis is to determine the causes of inter-community conflict in the Niger Delta between 2003 and 2014. To accomplish this over-arching aim, three objectives have been formulated:

1) To define and delineate Niger Delta Communities.

2) To determine the nature and scope of inter-community conflict.

3) To evaluate the social, economic, and political forces shaping inter-community conflict.

In turn, these subsidiary objectives have been further divided.

1)   To define and delineate Niger Delta Communities.

- The characteristics of an NDC.

- The difference between modern NDCs and ancient communities in the ND.

- The difference between discrete NDCs.

2)   To determine the nature and scope of inter-community conflict.

- The characteristics of the Niger Delta environment.

- The respective roles of the Local Government Areas and the NDCs in instigating conflict.

  The culture of governance in the ND.

3)   To evaluate the social, economic, and political forces shaping inter-community conflict.

- Social, economic, and political forces shaping inter-community conflict.

- Social, economic and political factors underpinning inter-community relations.

- The role of social, economic, and political factors that influences and leads to inter-community conflict in the ND.

1.3 Plan of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. This brief introduction sets out the main overarching aim, the subsidiary objectives and the core research questions. The second chapter presents a review of the scholarly literature including the broader issue of community conflict and the sub-set of inter-community conflict. It assesses the concept of community, as well as the types of conflict under research. It provides a historical context to the current traditional and organisational structure of NDCs and violent forms of dispute resolution, showing how the political economy of oil and dissatisfaction with the role of the elders brought the youths into the structure of community governance that subsequently fuels violence between communities. It goes on to explore why the causes of inter-community conflict in the ND remain under-researched, and constructed a definition of an NDC to achieve the aim of the study. The chapter then explores the current academic thinking regarding the nature and scope of inter-community conflict in the ND and the forces shaping the violence between two communities.

Chapter 3, builds on the under-examined areas identified in the preceding literature review, advances a fundamental analytical framework that acts as a hypothesis which will be tested in the subsequent analytical chapters. The second part of the same chapter focuses on a methodology suitable for understanding the causal factors behind inter-community conflict in the ND.

Chapter 4 describes an NDCs' relationship with the LGA and with other NDCs with an overview of the institutions surrounding LGAs and ND states, and how NDCs belonging to the same jurisdiction are dependent on LGAs for the regulation of their social, economic and political activities. It sets out the constitutional role of the LGAs, including the limitations of its jurisdiction over resolution of conflicts. It explores the relationship between inter-community conflict and intergroup conflict from the perspective of a community as a form of 'group'. Additionally, social, economic and political factors, analysed in relation to intergroup conflict, are applied to isolate the causes of inter-community conflict. It also highlights conflict activities within the core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers that are the geographical locus of the research and follows a timeline of key conflicts in the ND between 2003 and 2014. The chapter sets out that conflict starts either by inter-personal dispute i.e. conflict between opposing community members, disagreement between NDCs' ethnic groups, or a rational decision made by a community as an autonomous entity.

Chapter 5 explores the under-researched area of definition, analysing and evaluating the empirical evidence to move beyond the different definitional layers of an NDC to formulate a structural definition that will be functional for the study. The chapter will define NDCs from geographical, political, historical and cultural perspectives, through investigating arguments that go beyond scholars' understanding of NDCs as kinship units (Peterside, 2007), villages (Ite, 2004), towns (Omeje, 2004), clans (Bisina, 2003), kingdoms (Ibaba, 2009), sub-ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2006) and people with common interests (Frynas, 2000). It evaluates these

overlapping terms using data from the respondents interviewed as part of the study to disaggregate scholars' understanding of NDCs. The chapter also explores Alagoa's argument that ancient clans and kingdoms that existed prior to European advent remain communities in the ND (Alagoa, 1971). The chapter explores the argument that current NDCs are not the same as clans and kingdoms that existed prior to European advent in the ND, as claimed by Alagoa, but that both sustain similar characteristics of autonomy. It then evaluates the definition of an NDC by investigating whether modern communities are the same as, or constitute geographical and traditional structures of, ancient clans or kingdoms.

Chapter six analyses empirical data on the nature and scope of inter-community conflict in the ND by evaluating the characteristics of the Nigerian government as it relates to the nature and inter-relations of NDCs. It analysed and explored primary and secondary data on the relationship between LGAs and NDCs in the nine ND states, and determined that the constitutional practices and bye-laws in the states show that Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers have stronger ties with their NDCs than the other six ND states. In other words, inter-community conflict in Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers are more likely to be influenced by LGAs than the other ND states, since their LGAs are more active in inter-community relations. The chapter evaluates arguments that lay the blame for inter-community conflict in the ND on corruption, poor governance and poverty (Watts, 2007). It argues that there are other features that lead to violent inter-community conflict in the ND, including the inefficacy of LGAs' role in maintaining peaceful inter-community relations due to their untrustworthiness as a result of being artificial 'modern' constructs that becomes a relative factor that facilitates the social, economic and political factors leading to NDCs' resorting to traditional violent ways of settling disputes, and corruption within LGAs' which allows the marginalisation of one community by another due to the modern administrative system whereby NDCs now are forced by the Constitution to interact within the same LGA. The research argues that the combination of both

these realities help breeds the social, economic and political factors that causes inter-community conflict, and as such produces a dilemma of modernity against the traditional. The chapter analyses the direct impact of LGAs and ND states on NDCs and how NDCs have lost trust in these modern means of governance. The loss of trust on the LGAs is largely the result of the prevalence of corruption as an accepted culture that allows some NDCs to marginalise others over shared resources. The issue of the forced interaction of NDCs within the same LGAs necessitates an assessment of whether communities inevitably interact because of geographical proximity and the constitutional role of LGAs.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 analyse empirical evidence on forces shaping inter-community violence. Each of these chapters analyses the social, economic and political factors respectively, and how these force NDCs to interact considering their status as geographical and political subdivisions of LGAs. These chapters analyse social, economic, and political factors respectively, and explore how they interact. They evaluate arguments from scholars in this field from the social, economic and political perspectives respectively. Their arguments are based on the notion that inter-community conflict arises from differences in ethnicity or individual motives. For example, from a social perspective Ukiwo (2007) contends that inter-ethnic inequalities cause inter-community conflict; Ikelegbe (2005) argues that certain individuals ignite inter-community conflict for their selfish economic benefits; Akpan (2010) maintains that individuals attempting to gaining political power through the backing of their community, accounts for inter-community conflict. Chapter 7, 8, and 9 disagree with these scholars and analyses how NDCs' inherent autonomous nature rekindled by the traditional versus modern values can drive to inter-community conflict in the ND. Chapter 7, evaluates social factors such as community higher status and identity, and explores the traditional advantages why NDCs resort to violent means of settling disputes rather than believing in the rule of law; Chapter 8 scrutinises economic factors such as wealth, land and water resources; and Chapter 9

investigates political factors such as the contest for councillorship and chairmanship positions. These chapters analyse these factors from the same viewpoint that NDCs' inherently autonomous nature, ignited by tradition versus modernity, propels such actions.

Chapter 2: Understanding Inter-Community Conflict in the Niger Delta

Introduction

Concerns over marginalisation and conflict in the Niger Delta (Omonfonmwan & Odia, 2009) emerged soon after the discovery of crude oil in 1956 at Oloibiri. In the wake of this discovery and the subsequent exploitation of the oil reserves, regionalism introduced in the Nigerian 1954 constitution to tackle community and regional conflict were being challenged and new ideas and concepts introduced including the creation of new ND states, developmental programmes and a conflict resolution scheme (Omotola, 2007) which sought to focus on the alleviation of causality of inter-community conflict. The focus of this chapter is to scrutinise the literature on inter-community conflict and the theories connected to this conflict, identifying the gaps in this literature.

The chapter explores a variety of scholarly definitions of NDCs, delineates the environment in which conflicts occur, and explores existing rationales for inter-community conflict in the ND whilst critiquing the methods which scholars have adopted to study this phenomenon. It argues that the current literature undervalues NDCs as traditional and inherent autonomous units, and the role of modern Nigerian LGAs in blurring communities' autonomy and does not employ specific detailed methods to investigate the political processes intrinsic to inter-community conflict. These three elements are at the heart of the scholarly debate over conflict between NDCs, and they are used to explore the gaps in the existing literature.

The chapter is divided into four sections. Following a short introduction, the chapter categorises and defines where NDCs sit in the typology of Nigerian territorial entities, and the specific definition and nature of NDCs, including how the understanding of what constitutes a

'community' has evolved over time. It explores the historical context on how NDC's governance evolved from elderly patriarchy system to a democratic process that includes youth's participation, and how such evolution and crude oil activities influenced the situation of violent inter-community conflict in the ND. The following section explores the types of conflict prevalent in the ND, ultimately focusing on the nature of conflicts between communities. A further section explicitly assesses scholarly debates concerning the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND, highlighting gaps in the literature, which form the basis for the core research questions underpinning the aim, objectives and methodology of the thesis.

2.2 Conceptualising and Explaining Terminologies

To understand what constitutes a NDC it is necessary to acknowledge their existence within the territory of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN). The FRN is a sovereign state in West Africa that became independent from Britain in 1960 (Adamolekun, 2005), and consists of 36 states, including Abuja, the federal capital territory. Each of these states contains administrative districts, known as LGAs, with one LGA designated as a state capital. In this manner, each LGA has territories known as communities, with a community hosting the LGA's headquarters (Anyanwu, 1999). However, the FRN only recognises three constitutional tiers of government. The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) administers national affairs from the federal capital territory, while the states and LGAs administer their territories from their respective capitals and headquarters, rendering the community tier a more ambiguous and indefinite layer of 'governance'.

The FGN constitutes the central political unit with the president of the country as the head overseeing federal affairs. Next in the political hierarchy are the 36 states, with each having a governor as head, administering designated administrative sectors within the state's territory. These 36 states are spread over the middle-belt, northern, western, eastern and southern parts

of the FRN. Nine states – Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers – constitute the ND states and the ND region, referred to as the South-South geopolitical zone of the country. The third political unit of the FRN is represented by the LGAs located within each state, each having a chairman as its head (Adamolekun, 2005; Anyanwu, 1999). The nine ND states and their respective LGAs constitute the geographical boundary for this thesis.

The physical geography of the ND comprises coastal lowlands and water-marshland, tributaries, creeks and lagoons of the southernmost ends of Nigeria that drain the Niger River into the Atlantic at the Bight of Bonny (Ibeanu, 2000). At its core are the six riverine ND states of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Ondo and Rivers (Ukiwo, 2007). In 2000, the Obasanjo administration added three states – Abia, Edo and Imo – increasing the number of states in the South-South geopolitical zone to nine (Aghalino, 2009b). These nine ND states cover 112,000 sq. kms, and include 27 million people from over 40 ethnic groups, administered within 185 LGAs, including 13,329 NDCs. Around 94% of the NDCs have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants (NDDC Masterplan, 2006). The figure below shows the political map of the Niger Delta.

Figure 2.1 Political Map of the Niger Delta
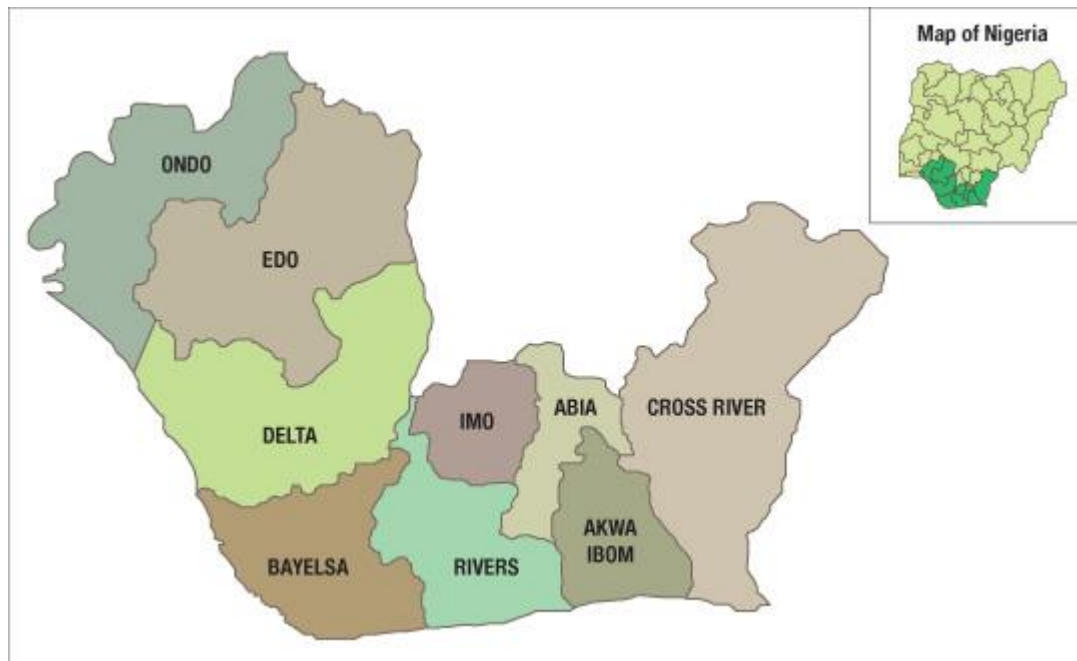
Source: ND Link (2017)

The ND is best known for the reserves of crude oil and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) within its borders, first discovered at Oloibiri in 1956 (Omonfonmwan & Odia, 2009). This oil and LNG has been the mainstay of the independent Nigeria's economy. This made the country, as at 2014, the largest oil producer in Africa, and the world's fourth leading exporter of LNG in 2012. Most of this oil and LNG goes to the United States and other Western oil-importing countries (EIA, 2014; Obi, 2009).

The relationship between oil and conflict has become a recurrent theme within the scholarly literature. Cyril Obi states that the 'resource curse explains causes of violent conflicts by demonstrating how huge natural resource endowments, rather than brighten the prospects for development, paradoxically motivate people to struggle over resources, or act as an incentive for armed groups to engage in conflict to exploit the opportunity to loot' (2009, p.6). He relates this to the intermittent violent turmoil in the ND when attempting to understand drivers of conflict in the region. In the same way, Augustine Ikelegbe, analysing causes of conflict in the

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ND, states that 'an economy of conflict has emerged characterised with an intense, violent and bloody struggle for the appropriation of oil resources and benefits from the oil economy and a thriving market of illegal trading and smuggling of arms, crude and refined oil' (2005, p.209). These scholars' linkages of oil resources and conflict in the ND not only indicate the huge importance of crude oil resources in the area, but also highlight the connections between oil production and violence within the main oil-producing states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. These are considered the most conflict-prone zones, recording the highest levels of community conflict amongst the nine ND states (UNDP Report, 2006). Accordingly, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 'Noteworthy Inter-Communal Conflicts in the Most Conflict-Prone States of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers' (UNDP Report, 2006, p.116) illustrates that Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers are the most conflict-prone ND states, with 56 conflicts between 1997 to 2006, which is double the number of conflicts in their sister states in the ND put together (Conflict Bulletin, 2014). Among these conflicts, inter-community conflict is a major concern regarding oil-related issues. Accordingly, Ikelegbe states that 'apart from issues of ownership of land and water, there have been conflicts between and within communities over the distribution and control of pay-outs and compensations by the Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) for appropriated and polluted land and water and related benefits' (2005, p.220). This indicates that NDCs constitute parties engaging in violent conflict in the area. However, before reviewing what motivates NDCs to engage in violent conflict, it is necessary to understand the scholars' definition of an NDC.

Defining and determining the nature of NDCs has been controversial and problematic, especially when there seems to be a difference between current and ancient communities, that is NDCs that existed during and after the Nigerian colonial era and those that predate colonialism. Currently, NDCs are not recognised as constitutional municipalities with administrative powers by the Nigerian constitution, although Joab Peterside has described them

as units that have their own social, economic and political structures (2007). Accordingly, Peterside states that a NDC consists of 'general characteristics of a customary system including inalienability of land, the head of the community, chieftaincy house or family holds land in trust for his people and his consent is essential to any disposition of land…these rules are not framed in abstract, rather reflecting the social and economic, sometimes political structure and perspective of communities' (2007, p.10). He also argues that a NDC's membership is understood to be in the form of kinship, which he describes as 'a cultural system whereby social identity derives from membership of a group who trace their origin or descent to a common ancestor, and this membership or arrangement with members of a group provides access to land and resources' (Peterside, 2007, p.8). Thus, the identification of NDCs having social, economic and political structures suggests that they have some system of administrative units within them, and the idea of membership in the form of kinship depicts an organised territorial group. Communities in the ND are also classified as sub-ethnic groups which occupy a given territory within the wider ethnic group to which they belong (Ikelegbe, 2006). Further scholarly attempts to define NDCs include describing them as clans or kingdoms composed of families, or extended families with kinship lineage, sharing the same dialect, territory, administrative structures, policies, and clan heads or kings. In other words, NDCs have been described as kinship units (Peterside, 2007), villages (Ite, 2004), towns (Omeje, 2004), clans or kingdoms (Ibaba, 2009), sub-ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2006), and people with common interests (Frynas, 2000). Although scholars describe NDCs in different forms, their definitional status remains blurred, with the terms used by scholars having little or no similarities.

Ebiegberi Alagoa describes the above terms as follows. A village is mostly found in rural areas, and consists of a small group of 15 to 20 houses, normally traditionally built using raffia or mud, with bamboo sticks serving as the roof top. A town is understood to be a densely populated area, larger than a village and smaller than a city; a town is more inclined towards

modern socio-economic activities using modern technology, rather than the traditional non-mechanised methods used in the countryside. Major metropolitan areas known as cities, with modern and diversified commercial activities, are busier than towns. In the ND, 'cities' include Port Harcourt, Warri, and Yenegoa (Alagoa, 2005). Similarly, Ikelegbe describes a clan or kingdom as a group of people with a common identity headed by a clan head or king, depending on the case. For example, the Biseni clan has a clan head, while the Itsekiri kingdom has a king, with both self-identifying a unique language, culture and tradition. Aside from clans or kingdoms, there are ethnic or tribal groups located within LGAs, known as sub-ethnic or sub-tribal groups possessing characteristics such as the same language, culture and customs, and conflict between such groups is popularly described as inter-community (Ikelegbe, 2005), thereby indicating that NDCs are sub-ethnic groups. Referring to NDCs as comprising people with common interests, George Frynas implies that these 'interests' reflect the physical and human environment of the communities that the people inhabit: rural village communities or oil-producing communities (2000). In a different way, Peterside understand the context and definition of a NDC: through its intrinsic administrative structure, it is administered by a presiding elder male chief with the assistance of other co-equal elder chiefs (2007). Thus, current NDCs are understood to consist of administrative sections of elder chiefs and youths, with scholars, as previously mentioned, describing a community as kinship units (Peterside, 2007), villages (Ite, 2004), towns (Omeje, 2004), clans (Bisina, 2003), kingdoms (Ibaba, 2009), sub-ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2006) and people with common interests (Frynas, 2000). Although this description of current NDCs is hard to grasp in terms of what defines it, ancient communities appear to have had different characteristics.

Ancient NDCs are understood to be those communities that existed prior to the Nigerian colonisation and its current political dispensation. Alagoa (1971), Gwylim Jones (1963) and Robin Horton (2013) argue that NDCs are ancient ND clans or kingdoms settled in village

structures prior to the arrival of Europeans in the region. These NDCs evolved over time to become present-day communities with their own territories, administrative structures and policies. Accordingly, ancient NDCs in the central western part of the ND, prior to European contact in the fourteenth century, were communities or clans/kingdoms based on the village structure, exercising political autonomy in a politically anarchic world, and relating with one another diplomatically to avoid or mitigate inter-community conflict (Alagoa, 1971). Similarly, Jones analysing the history of the south-eastern ND people, regarded the Ijaw and Ibibio sub-ethnic groups (understood by Ikelegbe in the present-day ND as communities) as primitive sovereign states lacking central authority, wherein their settlement structure is understood to be a system that constantly witnesses contested territorial boundary control (1963). Horton complements this view in his assessment of the eastern ND political development during the early period of trading with the Europeans, by stressing that the region comprised a quasi-confederation consisting of diverse groups with equivalent political sects upholding a monocratic system of its own, which an influential political leader tries to dominate and turn into a confederation. Consistent failures to establish confederations by influential political leaders resulted in these groups coalescing into communities whose autonomy is tied in with their identity (Horton, 2013). These historical analyses suggest that communities in the ND often predate the advent of colonialism and the current Nigerian political dispensation, and that they were autonomous at that time. This then presents a disparity between current and ancient NDCs. Thus, whilst current NDCs are not autonomous, but under the jurisdiction of LGAs, ancient communities were autonomous with no overarching political government at that time. Accordingly, ancient communities are described as having a complete autonomous administrative system.

Alagoa, analysing the Ijaw communities in the central ND, argues that ancient NDCs were self-contained and autonomous political units operating a patriarchy system. Politically, he

describes the autonomous community structure to be the *Amagula* (village assembly), comprised of adult males forming the highest political unit, presided by the *Amaokosowei* (oldest male) and supported by a handpicked *Ogulasowei* (executive leader). Spiritually, the village was led by the *Orukarowei* (priest), and economically, farmlands resided in (wari) family lineages. Village or community political autonomy was complete, with inter-village disputes being settled by the *Pere* (high priest) of the *Ibe* (gods), but the high priest had no overall political leadership and significance to the villages involved (Alagoa, 1971). Thus, Alagoa's interpretation of the pre-colonial community indicates that, although autonomous, a high priest would mediate in times of inter-village dispute. Though he states that the high priest had no overall political influence over the villages involved in dispute, the idea of settling disputes suggests that the high priests wielded some sort of influence over the villages, thereby undermining ancient communities' complete autonomy. However, it is necessary to understand that Alagoa's work concerns the Ijaw ethnic group in the central ND, which is a section of the ND, and the high priest's significance is viewed as being more religious than political.

Jones, analysing political development of the south-eastern ND in the eighteenth century, argues that:

> Whether it be the Ibo, Ibibio, or other peoples of the hinterland, or the Ijaw and Andoni of the delta, one finds them dispersed over the territory in a vast number of relatively small and virtually independent local communities, which today average 5,000 Ibo people, about 500 Ibibio and 250 or less among the Ijaw…each of these units, which one can call either village groups or villages according to their size, had its own territory and government (Jones, 1962, p.16).

Emphasising Alagoa's argument of community autonomy in the ND that predates colonialism, Jones reiterates the same quality of autonomy in the south-eastern region, stating that

eighteenth-century communities were independent, with their own territory and government. Although, it should be noted that the high priest in Alagoa's description of inter-village or community dispute does not apply to Jones' explanation of independent communities, hence ancient NDCs are perceived to have different types of autonomous political structure from one part of the ND to another.

In the eastern ND, Horton argues that ancient communities before transatlantic trade' 'defined their village by its territorial isolation from other communities, by its political autonomy under a distinctive body of village laws, and above all by its possession of a distinctive culture or way of life' (2013, pp.41-42). Thus, the western, central, south-eastern and eastern ancient ND communities were politically autonomous, with their own unique laws and distinctive culture, embodying their peculiar administration. These autonomous ancient villages, communities or political groups are claimed to be what are now the present-day NDCs of Nembe Ogbolomabri, Nembe Bassambri, Opuama, Ofonobiri, Okpoama, Ewoama and Okere, located in the ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers (Bisina, 2003; Ibaba, 2009). These predate European encounters, and have engaged in violent conflict with one another. However, the nature of the NDC as autonomous is muddied by the existence of current non-autonomous communities founded in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Although the term 'community' is used to describe territorial units before and after the advent of European colonisation of the ND, there is a clear distinction between the nature of ancient and current communities regarding their autonomy. Thus, whilst ancient communities are regarded as autonomous, current NDCs are viewed as not having autonomy, since they are subjugated to LGAs under the Nigerian constitution. Such subjugation is perceived by Walter Rodney as being the ultimate result of changes to the traditional governance practices introduced by Europeans arriving along the Nigerian coastal areas that are not part of the ND region (2012). The European activities in the Nigerian coastal areas influenced the nature of

its inhabitants as they evolved over time (Curtin, 1973; Diffie, 1977). Thus, clarity on the evolution from ancient to current NDCs necessitates understanding the term 'community' and how it applies to different phenomena, as well as the changes applied to it over time.

To understand the evolution of the term 'community', Ferdinand Toennies and Jose Harris's theory of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, or* community and society, is adopted. Thus, whilst *Gemeinschaft* represents the local, traditional, small-scale kinship and neighbourhood-based communities, *Gesellschaft* represents broad-scale competitive societies (2001). In other words, the evolution of the word 'community' is the evolution of society, thereby interchanging the terms. For Toennies and Harris, evolution of a society or community means a shift from equanimity to competitiveness (2001). Other scholars of social change such as Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels refer to the constant evolution of 'society', with tradition and religious practice naturally replaced by modernity and rationality (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999). Others sought to impose a chronology on societal change: 'underdeveloped', 'developing' and 'developed' (Bender, 1978; Parsons, 1966). However, *Gemeinschaft*, for Toennies and Harris, implies qualities such as small numbers of people, familiarity and emotional bonds, all of which are found in a small village community where people live like extended family. *Gesellschaft*, on the other hand, implies many people, unfamiliarity and competition, found typically in modern society (Toennies & Harris, 2001). In this light, the word 'community' in the wider aspect is perceived to be ever-evolving, and therefore involves complex characteristics as time passes. Accordingly, these views indicate that whilst ancient communities reflect simple activities, current communities involve complex societal life, with changes contingent on activities that transpired during its evolution.

Thus, relating simple activities and complex societal life to understanding ancient and current NDCs suggests that resounding changes have occurred over time, subsequently affecting their evolution. These changes can be viewed from the notion that there is a distinction between the

'political' and 'cultural' life of NDCs before and after contact with their European counterparts. The Europeans, notably the British, brought cultural artefacts such as written documents and libraries, in other words European education, that was in stark contrast to existing political and cultural processes of the Nigerian people (Alegbeleye, 1998). Prior to contact with European education, ND indigenes were mostly illiterate, and history was communicated to generations through memory and story-telling, with individual story-tellers playing a vital role in storing and transforming information (Meyer, 2005). Thus, the introduction of European education to the ND's story-telling practice is considered an evolutionary process, introducing complexity to ancient NDCs. Apart from the introduction of European education, there was also the emergence of a new political system involving colonialism and constitutional rule, to which the inhabitants were not accustomed.

Colonialism brought about the amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria, and stripped ancient NDCs of their autonomy, subjecting them to British colonial rule. The constitutions of Lord Lugard (1914), Macpherson (1922, 1946, 1951) and Littleton (1954) recognised the role of constitutional chiefs as community and traditional leaders, but did not provide them with any political power. The 1954 constitution also established the then Crown Colony of Nigeria's regional political structures, which the FRN continued to employ after gaining independence in 1960 (Otite, 1975; Rodney, 2012). This is indicated by the newly introduced educational and political activities which brought complexity to ancient NDCs, as well as the evolution of their traditional autonomous pre-European patriarchy system of government, practised by old ND villages, replaced by the democratic and dependent administration practised by current NDCs.

The historical context to the current organisational structure of NDCs and traditional forms of dispute resolution date to pre-colonial times. This structure has evolved over time in ways that demonstrate how the dissatisfaction with the older generation's inefficient leadership, encouraged younger people into community governance. More so, the involvement of the

youth in community organisation came after colonialism had ended, and when the exploration of oil was exacerbating conflict in the ND (Obi, 2009), thereby heightening the willingness of NDCs to engage in inter-community conflict. Though NDCs' current traditional organisational structure is dependent on the constitutional administration of LGAs, the introduction of democratic governance is mainly associated with the youth. As mentioned earlier in this section, current NDCs are administered by a presiding elder male chief with the assistance of other co-equal elder chiefs (Peterside, 2007). These elder male chiefs are recognised as the heads (older males aged 50 and above) of the larger extended families who trace their origin to a common ancestor, thereby making it difficult for the youth and non-descendants of a dominant lineage to become chiefs (Peterside, 2007).

The administrative duties of these male chieftaincies lacked authority in the colonial constitutions of 1914, 1922, 1946, 1951 and 1954, as well as the post-colonial FRN constitutions of 1979, 1993 and 1999, leaving NDCs as units within LGAs. Community leaderships are integrated to the FRN as an administrative extension to address detailed NDC issues (Peterside, 2007). However, as an institution, the chieftaincy had played an active administrative role during the colonial period when, as part of the indirect system developed by the British, chiefs had acted as warrant chiefs, tax collectors and customary law jurists (Afigbo, 1972; Ikime, 1968). Following independence, these chiefs, who were mostly elders of a kinship lineage, continued to claim compensation in the form of cash, employment, security and development contracts from the FGN, as well as the MNCs, from 1960 until the early 1990s. For example, in 1998, Elf's project in the Obite community and Agip's operational compound in the Egbema community were known to pay money, often categorised as 'corporate social responsibility' to the local chiefs of their respective host NDCs (Human Rights Watch, 1998). These payments have been the focus of accusations of mismanagement

and corruption directed towards the respective elder male chiefs, who sometimes used it to enrich themselves.

Thus, according to community members, contractors, and oil industry employees spoken to by Human Rights Watch, 'much development spending gets diverted into the pockets of oil company employees or local contractors or chiefs, or is spent to pay off those who might otherwise be troublemakers' (Human Rights Watch, 1988). In 1990, this personal enrichment, at the expense of the inhabitants of the NDCs that the elder male chiefs were meant to represent, led to demands, backed by menaces from marginalised youths within the NDCs, for the dismantling of the hierarchical chieftaincies. This led to the establishment of democratic youth administrative sections comprising a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Provost and Treasurer elected by members of the community in all NDCs. Ostensibly, this was to ensure a fair share of community benefits for all NDC residents, and notably to ensure that wealth percolated down from the layer of preferred elders to the deeper community (Peterside, 2007). These youth administrative sections are outside the constitutional governance arrangements, but are nevertheless recognised as part of the political life of the community, and have become a key delineator of the heightened violent dispute between NDCs.

The injection of youths into the power structure has added the enthusiasm and vigour of youth to the way NDCs deal with one another. Such youthful vigour, however, can easily transmute into militancy and, is not immune from corruption (Zalik, 2004). This stems from the notion that it is the youth that make up the clear majority of the membership of the militant groups in the ND whose main motivation is to access oil money. Historically, youths made up the soldiery of precolonial communities, the ones would raid neighbouring NDCs for slaves to be traded in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade (Aghalino, 2009). The involvement of youths in both precolonial and current times of inter-community dispute has an association with illegal and/or illicit commercial activities. Conflicts driven by greed are hard to handle.

In the historical context NDC governance, the approach to traditional forms of dispute resolution between communities has often been more violent than diplomatic. In precolonial times, the communities in the central ND with peaceful relations are usually those communities with strong trade ties (Dike, 2008). Disputes about boundaries, cultural differences and trading rights with precolonial European traders were often settled with violence with the victor winning the right to trade, whilst the vanquished community is excluded (Aghalino, 2009). The diplomatic approach was mainly adopted when the NDCs involved in the conflict perceived themselves to be militarily equal, with the diplomacy conducted in the context of military deterrence. For example, the dispute between the Ijaw communities and Itsekiri communities over trading rights with the precolonial European Trans-Atlantic traders in the seventeenth century were settled by separating the sea ports (Aghalino, 2009).

Precolonial dispute resolution between NDCs reflect of the current situation where NDCs' self-interest drives them to marginalise one another to fulfil their social, economic and political ambition. The peaceful resolution of disputes often occurs when those involved have the capacity to militarily engage each other.

However, what status do NDCs created under, or even since, colonialism hold? For example, NDCs such as Okere-Urhobo, founded in 2003 after Nigerian independence, and Kilama, founded in 1927 during colonialism, cannot be said to have had an autonomous status prior to colonialism, as they did not officially exist at that time. Clarification is required in the form of a holistic definition of NDCs suitable for achieving the aim of the thesis, which will aid understanding of what constitutes ancient and current communities, in terms of how they differ, remain the same or are juxtaposed. This constitutes a major task of the thesis to be undertaken and addressed in chapter 5, whilst subsequent chapters evaluate how the NDC's definition relates to the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND. However, it is necessary to comprehend the kind of conflict the thesis seeks to understand.

According to Roy Lewicki et al., 'conflict implies incompatible goals between interdependent people and interference from each person(s) in realising those goals' (1992). This kind of conflict involves a scenario where one person seeks personal interests at the expense of another, and therefore differs from Stuart Schmidt and Thomas Kochan's (1972) view, defining conflict as opposing interests involving limited resources, thus, in the process of achieving these interests, frustration becomes an inevitable result. From a different perspective, Karen Jehn and Corinne Bendersky (2003) view conflict as incompatibilities between involved parties, just as Morton Deutsch et al. (2011) explain conflict as incompatible activities where one person's actions obstruct the other. From these scholars' viewpoints, conflict is a negative phenomenon which is understood and demonstrated by violence, break-ups, sanctions and destructive factors during the process of individual parties pursuing their personal interests.

To the contrary, drawing on Deutsch and Robert Krauss, Dean Tjosvold argues that conflict can be constructive in structuring relationships when it is managed cooperatively (Tjosvold, 2006). Cooperative factors provide opportunities to enable consensus, whilst the competitive factors produce the disagreements that withhold these opportunities (Deutsch & Krauss, 1962). Tjosvold (2006) suggests that cooperative conflict helped Hong Kong managers to resolve major budget issues by discussing their divergent issues cooperatively, which led them to deal with their prejudice effectively and consequently resulted in effectively utilising available limited financial resources. Similarly, Joseph Nye and David Welch's (2013) idea of cooperation in relation to conflict is concerned with conflict management, thereby positioning Tjosvold's concept of cooperative conflict as a better means to manage conflict and not to define it. Nye and Welch, in analysing the term, identify it as any time two or more entities (a person, people, groups, communities, states, nations and organisations) have different preferences as to what constitutes conflict; some of these conflicts escalate into violence, while some manifest more peacefully (Nye & Welch, 2013). Whilst Tjosvold's concept of conflict

mainly concerns how it can lead to cooperation and subsequent positive outcomes, Nye and Welch's view is that conflict can bring about cooperation as well as disagreement, which can result in a positive or negative outcome.

Conflict in the ND can be understood through Nye and Welch's notion of 'different preferences', which bring violent conflict between parties with negative outcomes. Different preferences are understood to be differences in interests, wants/needs, orientations and ideas embedded in all levels of economic and social interactions in daily life. Relating to daily interactions, conflict is perceived as a necessary creative mechanism, constructing change by constraining and creating incentives in human relations from which new outcomes are achieved (Okoh, 2007). These outcomes can be defined in negative or positive terms, the former when the outcome is undesirable and violent, which tends to be destructive, and the latter when it is peaceful and wisely handled, which often leads to economic and social progress (Okoh, 2007). Undesirability often results from improper handling of difference in preferences, thereby constituting a menace, whose result is the violent conflict that ushers in destructive tendencies, bringing about social and economic retrogression. Conflict understood in this way underlies the force driving the scholarly debate.

Thus, inter-community conflicts have hindered development in the ND, rendering the area unsafe for foreign investors, damaging existing investment, instilling a sense of insecurity, destroying infrastructure, displacing inhabitants and reducing the possibility of a better life for the people therein (Bisina, 2003). Conflicts between communities in the ND depict the epitome of underdevelopment, given its destructive tendency in the area. Inter-community conflicts often hinder the construction of roads and housing infrastructure in areas of contested boundaries between two communities; the underlying factor is that the communities involved constantly demand development levies, termed 'development fees', from the contractor, whether foreign or local, which has gained the contract for that particular construction

(Ikelegbe, 2005). Thus, this becomes a major problem concerning who is entitled to collect these levies in areas of contested boundaries, which led to the inter-community conflict between the Enerhen and Effurun communities (Ijaw Monitoring Group, 2008; Osagie et al., 2010), resulting in the abandonment of developmental projects in the area, leading to further underdevelopment in the region. In a bid to resolve the numerous problems precipitated by inter-community conflicts in the ND, scholars have opened a debate over which factors lead to inter-community conflict in the ND. Before joining this debate on the causality of inter-community conflict, it is necessary to review the broader context regarding the causes of community conflict in the ND.

2.3 The Broad and Narrow Context of Community Conflict in the ND

Community conflict in the ND spans the NDC–FGN conflict through the NDC–MNC conflict to inter-community conflict in the ND. Prior to Nigerian independence in 1960, the discovery of crude oil in the present ND state of Bayelsa in 1956 led the British Secretary of State for the Colonies to appoint the Willink Commission to investigate the concerns of ND minorities (Willink, 1958). Shola Omotola, analysing institutions set up to tackle social, economic and political issues with the aim of developing the region and reducing violent conflict, refers to the Oil & Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) established in 1992 and introduced by the then military administration, and the present Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) established in 2000 by the Obasanjo government (2007). Both institutions are accused of falling short of expectations, described as being plagued by 'institutionalised corruption', implying that corruption has been officially incorporated into public activities (Aghalino, 2004). The consequent results of these failed institutions have been violent conflict between the population of the ND and the federal government.

Kenneth Omeje, analysing the violent conflict between NDCs and the FGN, coined the term 'oilification of extra-oil conflict', meaning that the FGN has sought to connect all disputes in the ND to oil to securitise the region with military action, using the elites in the area to secure oil zones for their own selfish interests (2004). From a different perspective, John Ejobowah evaluates counter ownership claims to petrol and gas resources, by both the FGN and NDCs in the ND, as the reason for the parties being in dispute (2000). The conflicting interests of both parties led to the Odi massacre, a notorious example of ethnic cleansing in which FGN soldiers were ordered to shoot on sight any young male indigene from Odi in retaliation for the murder of seven police officers protecting local oil facilities (Albert, 2003). The FGN and NDCs also became embroiled in conflict when oil flow stations were shut down by indigenous community members operating as part of the Movement of Emancipation for the Niger Delta (MEND) in Rivers and Bayelsa (Obi, 2010). Scholars continue to dissect possible causes and solutions to the violent conflict between the FGN and NDCs.

Alongside the FGN–NDC conflict, exists a NDC–MNC conflict. Bright Oshwofasa and David Anuta argue that bad governance and corruption have resulted in the absence of effective environmental law operating in the ND (2012). In this vacuum MNCs have secured their own economic interests at the expense of the citizens of the ND, and the spoliation of the local environment. The failure of the MNCs to alleviate the consequences of crude oil activities by actively fulfilling their corporate social responsibilities in the region through providing roads, health facilities, income-yielding ventures and electricity, has been held as the reason for violence by members of NDCs towards MNCs in the area. Engobo Emeseh analyses such violence from a legal perspective, arguing that the failure of NDC residents to receive compensation for MNCs' social irresponsibility, notably the environmental degradation to the region because of their oil drilling activities, has led to NDCs adopting extra-legal and self-help strategies (2011). Manifestations of violence in the region have included acts such as

kidnapping MNCs' employees, shutting down flow stations, vandalising pipelines, as well as causing deaths and thefts in the area (Omofonmwan & Odia, 2009). Often, MNCs respond by paying a large amount to the FGN's military personnel to guard their employees at their residences and work places against possible attacks. When MNCs will not or cannot pay for military protection they often withdraw. This can be seen in cases such as the Bomu Bonny section of Owokiri, located in Rivers, in July 2013, where Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) had to shut down the pipeline in the area due to vandalism, and the Nembe-Basambri community in Bayelsa where an SPDC flow station was shut down due to the unavailability of security (Guardian, 2013). Scholars have had conflicting views on the debate regarding the NDC–MNC conflict, with Uwafiakun Idemudia and Uwem Ite dismissing environmental factors as the proximate causes of violence in the region, ascribing the root causes to the willingness of the NDCs to use theft as a means of enriching themselves, in this case through pipeline vandalism and looting of crude oil (2006).

Violent conflict between NDCs, or inter-community conflict, has hindered development in the area, making it unsafe for foreign investors, damaging existing investments, destroying infrastructure, displacing inhabitants and reducing the possibility of a better life for the people of the ND (Bisina, 2003). Fierce conflicts between NDCs reported through the media appear to be the epitome of underdevelopment. Protracted inter-community conflicts continue between the Itsekiri and Urhobo communities in Delta since 2003; the Ogoni and Okrika communities in Rivers since 2003; and between the Itsekiri and Ijaw in Delta since 2013 (Bisina, 2003; Vanguard, 2013). Other conflicts recede and then re-emerge such as the inter-community wars between the Ogbe-ijoh and Ogidigben communities in Warri Southwest LGA in Delta, which started in 1997 and have resurfaced in successive decades (Daniel, 2010).

This propensity to violence has resulted in the spread of small arms, which exacerbates insecurity in the region (Bisina, 2003; Osagie et al., 2010). Inter-community conflict has

resulted in widespread hooliganism and the creation of the phenomenon of the 'area boy', a term for violent protagonists between the ages of 16 to 40 (Momoh, 2003). Area boys become so steeped in violence that they continue to engage in violence and crime even when their communities are not involved in inter-community conflict. The result is endemic insecurity in the region (Momoh, 2003).

2.4 Causes of Inter-Community Conflict in the Niger Delta: The Scholarly Debate

There are five core strands seeking to explain inter-community violence in the ND running through the scholarly literature: corruption and oil resource conflict; social causes; economic causes; political causes; and the empirical perspective.

Michael Watts argues that the ND is largely ungovernable due to the inability of government to manage the needs of the local indigenes. He blames this failure on corruption which subsequently makes governmental institutions unable to contain inter-community conflict in the area (2007). He argues that the ND is highly insecure due to hostage taking and active violent conflicts, both of which are rooted in the pervasiveness of corruption within the ND states (Watts, 2007). Watts argues that the ND governmental institutions are crippled by corruption, hence the area has become ungovernable. Ungovernability of the ND represents all types of chaos and violent conflict in the area, essentially precluding peaceful relationships between NDCs. In a recent study based essentially on a meta-analysis of secondary materials, Anthony Agbegbedia ascribes the causes of the inter-community conflicts between Okere-Itsekiri and Okere-Urhobo in 2003 and between Ogbe-ijoh and Ogidigben in 1997 to the issue of legitimate claims to ownership of Warri (2014). This is contingent on the notion that each of these groups or communities' lays claim to the ownership of Warri – the capital of crude oil activities. Agbegbedia and Watts analyses are rooted in oil resource conflict, since 85% of the

ND's income comes from the exploitation of the region's crude oil resources (Wall Street Journal, 2015).

In a recent study, Obi also argues that oil is instrumental to the high levels of violence between communities in the area. He connects this to causes of inter-community violence by emphasising historical construction of social inequalities and injustices, the nature of state–society relations, and the linkages between the local–national–global actors in the globalised extraction of oil from the ND (Obi, 2014). This illustrates global actors' domination of oil activities in the ND through sophisticated oil-drilling technology. He argues that local communities have only limited input into this process and are reduced to fighting amongst themselves over the marginal assets that remain in the oil-producing region (Obi, 2014).

Social forces precipitating inter-community conflict are also perceived to be a by-product of oil resource conflict. From a social perspective, Ukiwo argues that some ethnic groups living in the same geographical territory tend to be disadvantaged by resource allocation decisions and policies, and this has often led to frustration and aggression that instigates inter-community conflict (2007). This is contingent on the view that certain ethnic groups hold a monopoly on key institutions that control the ND's resources which invariably connotes social imbalance between communities belonging to different ethnic groups. It should be noted that Ukiwo's view cuts across social, economic and political perspectives, as these factors tend to motivate NDCs to strive for balance. Samuel Aghalino argues that social factors, such as social injustice and inequity in the allocation of scarce resources by the Nigerian government and MNCs, are the main cause of inter-community conflict between Oleh and Olomoro communities. He suggests that the conflict erupted because of frustration on the part of Oleh over the sharing formula for waste pipes imposed by SPDC taken as being in favour of the Olomoro community (Aghalino, 2009a). In 2003, Oleh's frustration with this perceived injustice converted to violence and its members attacked Olomoro triggering inter-community conflict. Social

conflict of this type is the result of frustrated individuals within an NDC, mindful of the status of their status vis-à-vis other NDCs, allowing their frustration to translate into aggression.

Similarly, Judith Asuni argues that in the early 2000s, NDCs belonging to the same ethnic groups as the Ijaws, Urhobos and Itsekiri in Delta went into conflict against one another through a desire to retain social prestige by exercising their rights and control over petroleum facilities located along blurred borders of conflicting NDCs (2009). She further stresses that in Rivers, NDCs split between the Okrika and Ogoni ethnic groups have a history of being torn apart by socially driven power struggles. Thus, the people in each of these communities are united by a sense of grievance about the exploitation of their region, which they perceive as an infringement on their social status. Hence, they go into conflict with neighbouring NDCs, who they consider perpetrators taking what rightfully belongs to them (Asuni, 2009). Exemplifying this, Ukiwo analyses the 1976 inter-community conflict between the NDCs of Gbaramatu and Ugborodo over ownership of oil bearing locations, suggesting that intergroup inequalities and ethnic marginalisation accounted for the former fighting for its social identity in an unfriendly, marginalised environment (Ukiwo, 2007). His analysis of causality of the conflict is based on the view that the FGN had accorded a higher social status to Ugborodo over Gbaramatu, by placing strategic locations and MNCs' headquarters in Ugborodo zones, whereas the drilling and hazardous activities took place in Gbaramatu areas. Hence, members of Gbaramatu sought to exercise self-determination in an unfriendly environment of community status differences by engaging in violent conflict with members of Ugborodo. This social struggle emanating from grievances over MNC headquarters is related to economic motivation, which can also be a factor that drives self-determination.

From an economic perspective, Aghalino, assessing inter-community relations in the ND prior to colonialism, describes relations as peaceful with people trading local commodities amongst themselves, exchanging fish from the coastal parts of the ND for land harvests such as palm

nuts from the hinterlands. For Aghalino, this peaceful co-existence was fatally destabilised by the introduction of the slave trade to the region by the Europeans, together with the concomitant influx of weapons, leading to communities fighting each other for access to a portion of the profits (Aghalino, 2009a). He cites the raids that took place between the Itsekiri and Ijaw communities in the Warri area at the time of early European contact in the fifteenth century as paving the way for the colonisation of the region. The co-option of local communities into these imperial projects led to competition between communities to become the preferred partners of the European arrivals.

Ikelegbe, arguing from a different perspective, contends that the 'economies of war' have been a major driver of conflict between NDCs in the region (2005). 'Economies of war' describes the deliberate involvement of the high-level economic interests of stakeholders, willing to condone violence to secure economic advantage from the delta's oil and minerals. He emphasises the establishment of an, essentially, anarchic environment in the region as favourable to a cynical strategy that is accepting of violent activities such as pipeline vandalism and oil bunkering that results in oil scarcity leading to price inflation that ultimately leads to higher profits for oil companies and stakeholders. Ikelegbe cites the inter-community conflict between Nembe-Basambri and Nembe-Ogbologbomabri in 2003 as being caused by the illegal oil business inciting false rumours and propaganda, during which period the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) announced that 114 pipelines were vandalised and a high quantity of crude oil diverted to black markets for sale at higher prices (Ikelegbe, 2005).

Johnson Osagie et al in a quantitative study, associated inter-community conflict with the deprivation of ND citizens from the dividends of oil proceeds in the region (Osagie, 2010). He discovered from feedback from the project's respondents that youths from across all social backgrounds blame the unfair allocation of the dividends of oil exploitation as the prime reason for violence between NDCs. Eghosa Osaghae et al. from a different viewpoint, argues that

inequity driven by elite manipulation of the political system, linked to environmental degradation and persistent unemployment as the main cause for inter-community conflict (2007).

Nseabasi Akpan's study, drawing on government statistics, argues that that inter-community conflict is largely a result of rent-seeking by unprincipled politicians who use their communities as the facilitators of personal political power (2010). He contends that NDCs have a vested interest in the success of their own politicians and that inter-community violence is directly linked with inter-community competition over access to oil rents. Thomas Imobighe traces the drivers of inter-community conflict in the ND to the politicisation of financial resource control in 1993, whereby the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) became responsible for disbursing funds to develop oil communities in the ND (2004). The emphasis on oil communities meant that only those NDCs where oil was produced would receive developmental assistance. Accordingly, Von Kemedi argues that, the immediate outcome was violent conflicts between NDCs contesting ownership of lands where oil was present so as to benefit from OMPADEC funding (2003). For Von Kemedi, the connection between the designation of an 'oil community' has become a fundamental factor engineering envy and disagreement among different NDCs.

The frustration–aggression hypothesis originally proposed by John Dollard et al. argues that where an entity's expectation is blocked by another entity, there is bound to be an aggressive confrontation between the entity responsible for the blockage and the frustrated entity (1939). Darren Kew and David Phillips link the frustration–aggression hypothesis to the poverty of most NDCs, describing them as communities living in failed conditions, hence their residents lash out against the surrounding environment including neighbouring NDCs and the government alike (2013). Denied basic human needs, the frustration of these NDCs increases leading to conflict with neighbouring NDCs perceived to be responsible for blocking access to

these needs. Olubayo Oluduro and Olubisi Oluduro (2003) combine the frustration–aggression hypothesis with Rasheed Draman's (2003) relative deprivation analysis that proposes that not only does conflict lead to poverty but that poverty leads to conflict. Oluduro and Oluduro argue that,

> the frustration-aggression theory and the relative deprivation theory, both of which suggest that individuals become aggressive when there are obstacles-perceived and real- to their success in life, becomes important to the Niger Delta conflicts in Nigeria…democracy means nothing if people do not have access to nourishing food, good health care, good education, access to resources for a good life (2003, pp.56-57).

From a different perspective, Samuel Ibaba describes the frustration–aggression trap, where NDCs trapped by environmental degradation and ethnicity-based political domination have no option but to enter violent conflict with the NDC perceived as responsible for the trap (2011). He cites the example of inter-community wars between Ijaw NDCs in the 1990s. These NDCs are built on crude oil reserves, yet fail to provide basic needs.

Chukwuma Okoli argues that the conflicts between NDCs are the result of a struggle for self-determination and self-preservation in a hostile environment that is indifferent to their well-being. He ties this in with the theory of existentialism, a belief that humans possess an innate need for freedom, self-determination and responsibility (Okoli, 2013). The individual is taken to be isolated in a hostile and indifferent world, yet free to select the direction of his destiny and responsible for his actions. Okoli applies existentialist thinking to ND community relations and violent conflict, notably the conflict between Ijaw communities in Delta and Bayelsa in the 1990s, concluding that is this innate need for freedom and self-determination that underpins the propensity for inter-community conflict.

2.5 A Critique of the Existing Literature

Inter-community conflict in the ND has attracted a degree of targeted research. However, a fundamental limit to the existing research is the limited attention paid to accurately defining what constitutes a Niger Delta *community*, and how that term is understood in the ND itself. This section focuses on the definition of NDCs, the characteristics of inter-community conflict, and the facilitating social, economic and political factors that are the underlying causes of conflict between NDCs.

As previously indicated, NDCs are defined as kinship units (Peterside, 2007), villages (Ite, 2004) and towns (Omeje, 2004). Other scholars describe them as clans or kingdoms that possess the structure of a well-organised municipality (Bisina, 2003; Ibaba, 2009), and sub-ethnic groups with their own unique culture (Ikelegbe, 2006) or as communities based on common interests (Frynas, 2000). Other scholars delineate NDCs as ancient autonomous villages and city states that predate the encounters with Europeans in the region (Alagoa, 1971; Jones, 1963; Horton, 2013). This variation in definitions implies that scholars have not yet arrived at a consensus on a definitive definition of an NDC. The existing literature fails to link ancient to current NDCs in order to determine the exact nature of the 'autonomy' that current communities claim in the light of the autonomy of ancient communities and the existence of communities established during the colonial and independence eras. The salience of the distinction between ancient and current NDCs is not stressed by scholars researching inter-community conflict in the ND. To determine the vestigial influence of ancient NDCs' pre-colonial autonomy on contemporary conflict in the region, a more detailed and focussed understanding of the distinctions between NDCs than currently exists is required for the purpose of this study.

The causes of inter-community conflict in the ND are multi-faceted. However, the existing literature is narrow in focus. Studies often analyse only the external nature of the conflict such as the immediate causes triggering inter-community conflict like ethnic marginalisation or the role of politically ambitious individuals. Theoretical explanations such as Ibaba's frustration–aggression trap (2011) and Ikoli's employment of existentialist thinking (2013) bring to bear philosophical and sociological tools to understand the causation of inter-community conflict, in this case in the ND. This study, however, concentrates on the specificity of the relationship that the contemporary communities in the ND have with the idea of a vestigial autonomy related, in multiple ways, with pre-colonial communities. Thus, Ibaba and Okoli's theories, whilst potentially helpful, explain group or individual behaviour in a community with a defined status, rather than a community whose definition is not fixed.

Ikelegbe argues that the greed of *individuals* underpins conflict in the ND (Ikelegbe, 2005), whilst Aghalino emphasises competition between *ethnic groups* going back to rivalry for control of the slave trade (Aghalino, 2009a). However, whilst both these approaches cast light on some dimensions of some inter-community conflicts within the ND, they only offer narrow and discrete understandings of causality in particular cases. This research moves beyond these particulars to examine NDCs as collectives, in so doing seeking to move beyond discrete explanations of causality to a more general understanding of inter-community conflict in the ND.

A detailed examination of existing literature on inter-community conflict in the ND suggests that most studies rely on meta-analysis of secondary sources and quantitative data. These studies rely on data from three main sources: journal articles and books, data on inter-community conflict gathered by the UNDP, and data from reports in newspaper articles. Although this allows for generalisation, there are criticisms regarding the employment of quantitative data to analyse inter-community conflict since this data is rarely consistent or

reliable, and hence provides a distorted perspective of events on the ground. There is also a tendency for studies that use quantitative data to select the data that fits their own position (Grix, 2002). Likewise, while this data can be useful in analysing the conflict between NDCs, the data rarely focusses on the different dimensions to inter-community conflict. For example, the statistical data does not specifically provide insight into the complex political processes involved in these conflicts. A detailed qualitative study is better suited to provide practical insight (Cousin, 2009).

The originality that this study brings to the literature on inter-community conflict in the ND is the richness of the primary evidence and data collected from stakeholders who have not previously contributed to the scholarly debate, and critical analysis and evaluation of this primary evidence and data. Oliver Treib concludes that '…unless the problems associated with quality and form of available data used in quantitative research designs have been solved, scholars are advised to rely on qualitative case studies' (2008, p.18). The premise of the study that NDCs are traditional and inherently autonomous groups in a vulnerable ND administrative system that provokes conflict over social, economic and political dynamics. NDC nature and behaviour have not been researched explicitly or in detail. It is against such a backdrop that the thesis seeks to address gaps, using a detailed understanding of the traditional nature of NDCs in relation to modern LGA governance, as an empirical tool to detect factors causing inter-community conflict, and therefore representing the originality of the research project.

Thus, by using a concrete understanding of the nature of NDCs, as well as comprehending the characteristics of inter-community conflict in the ND, the thesis will employ a qualitative empirical approach to determine the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND. The thesis seeks to add to the understanding of how weak governance can allow for conflict amongst the governed. It strives to explain how the tension between tradition and modernity has exacerbated the inherent autonomous nature of NDCs, giving them the status of traditional inherent

autonomous communities tantamount to independent states. This is juxtaposed with the modern Nigerian LGA administrative system which blurs a community's autonomy since it is constitutionally forced to share social, economic and political resources. In many ways this then replicates a realist interpretation of an anarchic world system in a national, or indeed, regional, microcosm. The thesis' scholarly contribution is complementary to existing work on intee-community conflict, as well as providing a concrete base for building solutions to the problems of ND inter-community conflict.

Conclusion

This chapter reviews the scholarly literature on inter-community conflict in the ND. It argues that definition, conceptualisation and nature of NDCs, and hence the causes of inter-community conflict, rather than other types of conflict such as conflict with the FGN and MNCs, in the ND, have not been adequately explored in the scholarly literature to date. The concentration in the literature on the role of individual personalities and/or ethnicity undervalues the underlying tension between NDCs' traditional nature and the modern administrative environment within which inter-community conflict takes place. A review of the literature indicates that there has been only limited effort made to reach out to the leaders and residents of NDCs in conflict-prone states in the ND and to incorporate their analyses, evidence and data into the wider understanding of inter-community conflict in the region.

The next chapter outlines the methods used in gathering evidence and data from these communities and sets a working analytical framework to be tested in the subsequent analytic chapters.

Chapter 3: The Analytical Framework & Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on the causes of inter-community conflict. This chapter, using the absence of a functional understanding of the term Niger Delta Community required to achieve the aim of the study as a starting point, develops an analytical framework based on analysis and evaluation of the evidence and data collected for the study to act as a working hypothesis of the causes of conflict in the Niger Delta. The framework contributes to the existing scholarly debate by investigating, exploring and analysing the bases of NDCs and how their inherently autonomous nature, in conjunction with the ND's modern governance, influences, affects or catalyses inter-community conflict in the region. The study argues that NDCs' inherently autonomous nature, rekindled by a contemporary struggle between traditional versus modern values, drives communities to engage in inter-community conflict over social, economic and political factors. These factors include prestige, employment opportunities and political authority which affords economic privileges. This is a form of collective action by community members rather than by a whole ethnic group or influential individuals within a community, as argued by other scholars. Moreover, this collective action is motivated by the lack of welfare support for citizens from the LGAs and ND states, which reinvigorates the inherent autonomous nature of each NDC instigating competition that can lead to violence. In this way, the research makes a direct contribution to the scholarly literature on the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND, as well as to the wider literature on intergroup conflict beyond the ND.

In the continuing debate, no obvious link has been made between the causes of inter-community conflict and the definition, nature and environment of NDCs. Similarly, the existing literature argues that conflict between communities is either caused by the marginalisation of

one ethnic group by the other (Ukiwo, 2007), or by certain individuals who seek profit from business activity and desire social, economic, and political power (Ikelegbe 2005; Osaghae 2009; Aghalino, 2009a). Even though these are valid arguments, they are not supported by substantive empirical evidence that investigates in detail these conclusions; the factors that necessitate such actions; or the actual effect and relevance the arguments have on communities, understood as a group of people engaging in inter-community conflict in the ND. Furthermore, the focus of much of existing research is limited in scope, with the definition and context of NDCs' traditional nature functional for this study lacking, the implications of the inherent differences between and amongst communities unexplored, and the effect of modern ND governance being detached from the circumstances of the people involved unexplored. It is perhaps assumed that since NDCs are combined under one LGA this automatically makes them autonomous with individuals seeking their self-interest inside the LGA. This chapter aims to explain how the thesis will seek to fill gaps in the literature by scrutinising the connection between the inherent and autonomous traditional nature of NDCs, and the ND's colonial and post-colonial governance. This will then be used as the foundation for investigating the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND in the later analytical chapters.

This chapter is split into three sections. A first section delineates an analytical framework, or hypothesis, in which the causes of inter-community conflict are not necessarily individually motivated, but instigated by the self-awareness and self-interest of the communities involved. A second section outlines the main research question. The final section sets out the methodology used for this research.

3.2 The Analytical Framework

By drawing on ideas derived from the research process, it is possible to develop an analytical framework that will act as a working hypothesis to explain the relationships between and

amongst communities in the region, as well as setting out the factors that are crucial in explaining the process of how and why inter-community conflict occurs. To investigate the causes of inter-community conflict in the ND, a multi-theory approach is adopted. This approach combines theories of community conflict in the ND and theories relevant to general intergroup conflict. The analytical framework below is a schematic of the process of governance in the ND, setting out the factors that trigger inter-community conflict in the region based on a critical analysis and evaluation of the evidence and data collected during the field work in the ND. As such it forms a graphical representation of the research's hypothesis which will be tested in the subsequent chapters.

Figure 3.2.1 The Causality of Inter-Community Conflict
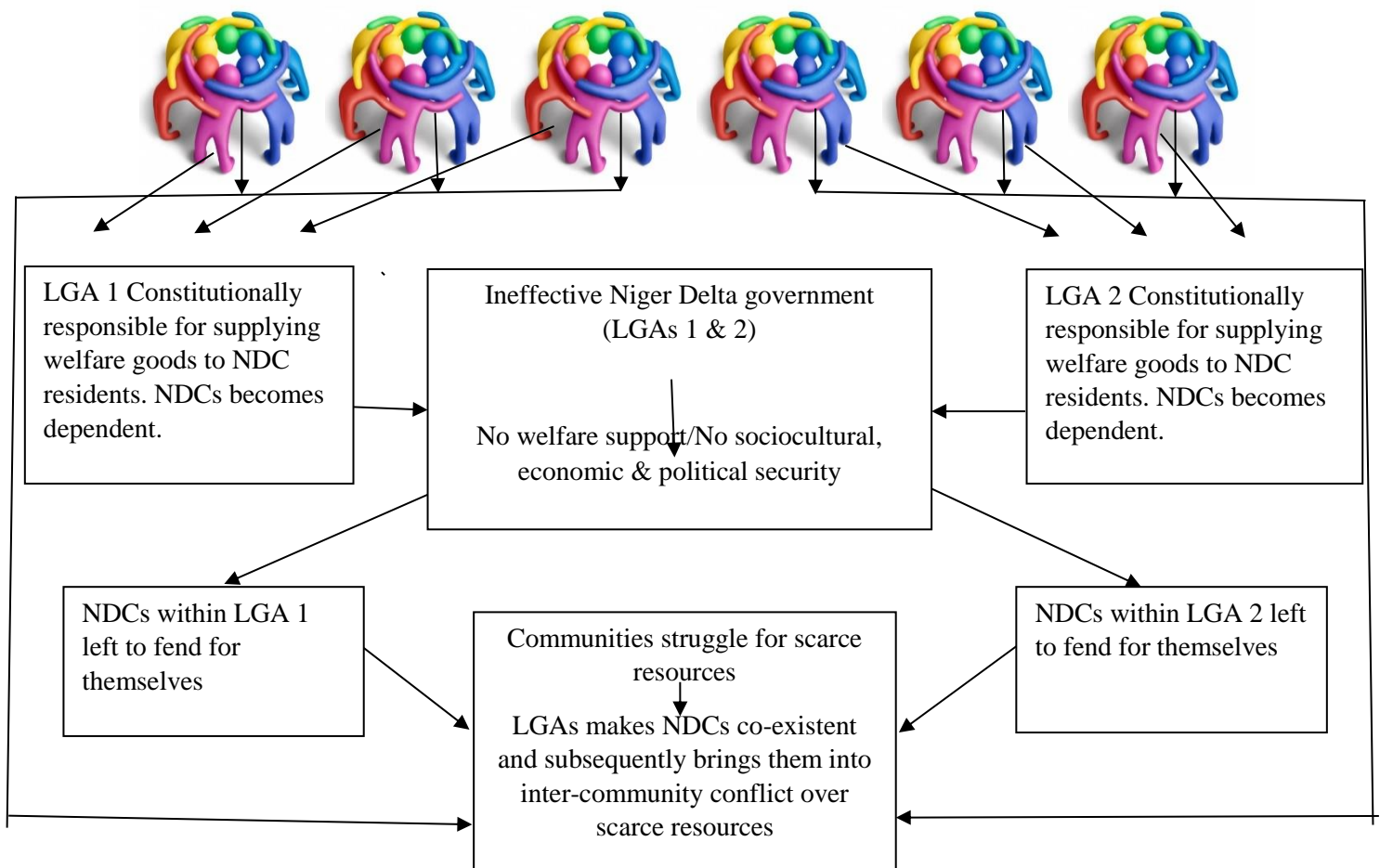
At the top of the framework is a symbol representing six standalone communities demonstrating the autonomy and independence they possessed before colonisation. The introduction of the LGA as the means of providing for local administration in the ND eroded the autonomy and independence of NDCs, establishing NDCs' dependency, which is understood to be the constitutional subjugation of ND communities to LGA authority, interacting in that they must share resources within the LGA of which they are constituent communities. The large majority of LGAs have proved to be ineffectively administered, corrupt and incapable of supplying the governmental needs of NDC residents. This has led to NDCs fighting amongst themselves over scarce social, economic and political resources. This is the result of the constitutional requirement for NDCs to sit within a LGA. NDCs' residents are forced to depend on the community for welfare. The failure of the LGA system to supply basic needs has reinforced the ancient traditional identities of NDCs, strengthening their perceived pre-colonial, hence inherent, autonomy. Pre-colonial NDCs have been described by scholars as autonomous villages that engaged in inter-village wars to settle disputes (Alagoa, 1971; Horton, 2013). This traditional autonomy is expressed through rivalry with other inherently autonomous NDCs, a rivalry that can lead to violent conflict.

The thesis argues that the inherently autonomous nature of NDCs is instrumental in instigating conflict between communities. This is facilitated by the inability of the LGA system to provide a more effective alternative than this inherent autonomy of individual NDCs. An example of this is the disbursement of funds from the Warri South LGA headquarters in Effurun to its sixteen constituent NDCs. As such, this kind of scenario makes constituent NDCs belonging to the same LGA interact to some extent, since the chairman and top officials of the LGA must emerge from certain communities in the jurisdiction (Deltastate.com, 2014). For instance, the LGA's strategic officials consist of a chairman, vice chairman, treasurer and speaker (Ukiwo, 2006). These personnel decide the direction of funds allocation and other important welfare

packages such as employment and scholarships among the nine NDCs in the LGA. The indication of this is that some NDCs, who do not produce any of these important personnel, must depend on favourable decisions emanating from the officials who are from other communities, hence the interaction. This scenario becomes conspicuously vulnerable when the LGAs' officials are designated as institutionally corrupt (Aghalino, 2009b), thereby relinquishing every form of legitimate reliability and trustworthiness from NDCs' members. Thus, the issue of interaction results in inter-community conflict when certain communities feel marginalised over scarce resources, as seen in the bottom box of the framework.

The analytical framework has been constructed based on evidence and data collected from key stakeholders in the local government and NDC environments and indicates the fundamental relationships between NDCs and LGAs. The drivers and rationales for these relationships are explored in detail in the substantive analytical chapters of the thesis. This involves assessing the nature of NDCs and the ineffective LGA system that allows this self-perceived inherent autonomy to endure and how social, economic and political factors are managed and mismanaged by NDCs and LGAs in such a way that often leads to inter-community conflict.

3.3 Main Research Questions

The aim and objectives are supported by core research questions linked with the analytical framework above which serves as a working hypothesis. The research questions are not the same as the aim and objectives and are not reformulations of the aim and objectives, but rather are questions that allowed the researcher to test the analytical framework when conducting the field work. These questions also seek to fill the gaps in the research isolated in the literature review. The questions investigate how the tension between traditional versus modern values facilitate diverse factors that cause inter-community conflict. The relationship between NDCs' inherently autonomous nature, ND governance and diverse factors is shaped not only by

contextual elements but also by exogenous criteria. To comprehend the endogenous as well as exogenous factors that catalyse causes of inter-community conflict, the study adopts a multi-theoretical approach to answer the following main and sub-questions.

The main research question is: Does the causality of inter-community conflict conform to the drivers of traditional versus modern values?

The research question will be answered by developing a detailed understanding of what constitutes a NDC, and how communities interact.

The main research question is supported by a series of sub-questions:

- What constitutes a NDC?
- What are the characteristics of inter-community conflict in the ND?
- Do communities fight over social, economic and political factors?

3.4 Methodology

The hypothesis represented by the analytical framework above is based on a critical analysis of evidence and data gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. During these interviews, a range of individual analyses and opinions were expressed by the divergent respondents who were willing to be interviewed for the study. The hypothesis is the result of an analysis and evaluation of this evidence. As such it provides what Rachel Ormston et al. describes as a 'peripheral reality', intended to be free from the opinions and understanding that people hold (2014). This peripheral reality can only be comprehended and adopted into the lives and views of individuals through socially constructed meanings (Ormston et al., 2014). The approach in the study to the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND is informed by the epistemological norm of human social life, understood as the experiences of different individuals and the meanings they attach to them, which sum up their

belief (Neumann, 2008). A complete understanding of the factors that instigate conflict between NDCs requires the adoption of the diverse perceptions of what characterises reality. The core evidence on which the conclusions of this study are based is derived from detailed semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and actors in NDCs. Thus, the methodology adopted for this study prioritises the analyses, perceptions and interpretations of highly informed and engaged stakeholders and participants.

The approach adopted for this study is immersive in that, contrary to a positivist position, the researcher recognises the value of consistent interaction with the phenomenon under investigation, in this case inter-community conflict in the ND. This interaction includes the process of data collection, which has an effect on both the researcher and the respondents (Creswell & Clark, 2007). There has been some criticism of qualitative studies as being reliant on subjective analysis of social phenomena to draw conclusions. This study seeks to address this by adopting a mixed-data collection method in the form of semi-structured interviews and observations to triangulate the data (Yin, 2013).

The Design of the Case Study

In social research, the study design involves the entire process of organising a research project, which is concerned with a logical sequence that connects the empirical data to the research questions as well as the conclusions (Yin, 2013). Thus, empirical data, which originates from single or multiple case studies, are essential for effective research projects in social research (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The study examines a multiple case study of NDCs engaging in inter-community conflict in the ND, meaning it is enriched by comparative analysis, unlike a single case study that lacks objectivity. This indicates that a comparative approach, using similar cases of inter-community conflict from the three ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers provides more examples and helps to demonstrate that the factors impelling conflict are

applicable to the whole ND regions, as well as to other places with similar conditions. However, since it is beyond the scope of this research to investigate in detail places above the ND, the study restricts itself to the analysis of primary evidence and data gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. Due to limited time and resources, the research restricted itself to the analysis of secondary data on the other six ND states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and Ondo which it used in a comparative analysis to the three core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. From the comparative analysis, the study analyses the effect of LGAs as a relative factor that instigates other factors, i.e. social, economic and political phenomenon that instigates inter-community conflict in the ND. The study's limitation to gather primary data on the other six ND states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and Ondo, makes these ND states an area for further research.

Regarding the research design, the study applies a qualitative method, which requires analysis from evidence and data extracted from semi-structured interviews and observation, informed by primary and secondary source material. This design is adopted in preference to, for example, an experimental design which would require the researcher to remain detached from the context. This is not appropriate when seeking an empirical explanation (Yin, 2013). The adoption of a survey design would limit the number of variables and predetermine the respondents of the research, thereby resulting in an ineffective evaluation of contextual issues. Thus, since the behaviour of stakeholders in the respective NDCs cannot be influenced by the researcher, it is not good practice to apply an experimental or survey research method to explore the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND.

The research uses qualitative data gathered through fifty semi-structured interviews with local leaders and politicians in NDCs. The interviewees have been chosen as their communities have been involved in inter-community conflict in the three ND states of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers.

The study uses the semi-structured interview technique as most suitable for data making, meaning making and data gathering. It also follows Jody Miller and Barry Glassner's interactionist position which refutes the 'objectivist-constructionist' continuum (1997). Miller and Glassner argument is that interviews make meanings in the original sense, yet defend the researcher's authority to shape the interview and the analysis of the data to understand an element of the social world (1997).

The scrutiny of the causality of inter-community conflict is essentially a close inspection of political processes. However, such processes are encompassed within complex experiences that are not always framed by documentation, making their study difficult. Grappling with complex experiences, as Glynis Cousin reasons, requires detailed interviews to obtain layers of meaning (2009). Likewise, Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin explain, 'you could measure poverty by counting the dollar income people earn, before taxes, but you would learn little about how people survive on their income, whether they share apartments with boarders, whether they fix the plumber's car in exchange for plumbing services…' (2005, p.2). Such complex experiences lack documentation, as Rosamond Tansey points out, either because people feel that their actions are not important enough to merit recording them, or because they feel that they are too sensitive to document in written form (2007). The use of semi-structured interviews shines a light on meanings in complex experiences, by conceptualising them as a 'third space' where the interviewer and respondent work together to develop understandings and bypass the problem of insufficient documentation, by acquiring knowledge that is not available in written form. This contributes to our understanding of the incentives and reasoning behind political processes. For inter-community relations in the ND, the use of semi-structured interviews becomes a necessity given that NDCs' members rarely put down in document form positions that are already accepted within a community. Similarly, semi-structured interviews can assist

in exploring incentives behind NDC leaders' and followers' actions, as well as the impact that social context has on their perceptions on conflict between NDCs.

Semi-structured interviews are structured in an open-ended question format: the wordings of the questions are flexible; the level of the language is adjustable; and the interviewer may answer questions for clarification purposes (Berg, 2009). The interview is structured around a set of themes that serve as a guide to facilitate interview talk (Cousin, 2009). The open-ended questions allow the respondents to organise their answers within their own framework, which in turn increases the validity of the responses (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002). Thus, unlike the structured interview, the interviewer is expected to adapt, modify and add to the laid down questions if the flow of the interview talk suggests it. Rubin & Rubin offer a structure of interview questions that breaks them down into main questions, probes and follow-up questions (2011). This allows for facilitation, with the main question setting the stage for the interview in the form of a structured question that allows the participants to respond, and with the probes helping to manage the conversation by regulating the length of responses and amount of detail, clarifying vague statements, and keeping the conversation in line with the subject. All of this is successfully concluded with the ability to follow hunches, hints and openings through judicious follow-up questions (Cousin, 2009). Thus, semi-structured interviews, whose task is mainly to grapple with complex experiences associated with the data needed to undertake research and draw conclusions, constitute the appropriate methodology for researching the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND. As one NDC view could differ from another, a semi-structured interview that allows NDCs' members to respond in an information facilitation manner is essential for the success of the project.

Apart from favouring the qualitative method of semi-structured interview over experimental and survey techniques, the choice of the most appropriate case study design was also challenging. In a bid to overcome such a challenge the researcher carried out an investigation

on different case studies and their suitability in social research projects. Thus, the researcher adopted Robert Yin's analysis of single and multiple case studies which he disaggregated into unitary and multiple units. He states that a single case design and a multiple case design can be holistic or embedded (Yin, 2013). In a holistic case study, the case has one unit of analysis for each case, while an embedded case study has multiple units of analysis. The unit of analysis of each case is that part that is relevant to answering the main research question (Yin, 2013). Amongst these disaggregation, the study of inter-community conflict rests within the frame of a multiple case study with embedded units. In this regard, the study will investigate multiple cases of inter-community conflict in the ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers respectively. The embedded case design will tackle the main research question and the logical sub-questions that are relevant for answering the main question (Yin, 2013; Creswell & Clark 2007). Thus, the thesis' main research question is; does the causality of inter-community conflict in the Niger Delta conform to drivers of conflict emanating from traditional versus modern values? The sub-questions are: i) what constitutes a NDC? ii) what are the characteristics of inter-community conflict in the ND? and iii) do communities fight over social, economic and political factors?

Notwithstanding the application of multiple and embedded case designs, the choice of respondents was crucial. This choice is contingent on the notion that samples make inferences about a larger population from smaller ones (Berg, 2009). Such extrapolations stem from inferential generalisation, that is, empirical generalisation communicates the outcomes of a research to the wider populace from which the original sample was selected. This is referred to as figurative generalisation. Thus, the sampling method adopted is 'purposive sampling'. This is choosing the number of respondents based on shared characteristics, which is relevant to the inquiry on causality on inter-community conflict in the ND.

The respondents include community leaders including elder chiefs and youth executives, NDC local political activists, and LGA Chairmen and Ward Councillors in the three ND states of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers. They number fifty in total and they all have direct responsibilities for the welfare of the NDCs. The elder chiefs and youth executives constitute a NDC administrative segment that deals with neighbouring NDCs; NDC local political activists are indigenes from these NDCs that campaign for the socio-political rights of NDCs from local to national level; and LGA Chairmen and Ward Councillors constitute the third-tier constitutional political administrative segment of the FRN, after the FGN and state government. The LGAs are the administrative areas in which a NDC is situated, making a Local Government Chairman (LGC) the FRN's constitutionally elected official presiding over and responsible for the affairs of the communities located in his/her municipality. The Ward Councillors are subordinate to the LGC, acting as representatives of different sections of the LGA (Adamolekun & Rowland, 1979). These represent the NDC elite who influence political, and often social and commercial, affairs in the community and are instrumental in decisions over whether to enter conflict with other NDCs. Cousin (2009) sees 'purposive sampling' as a useful tool for qualitative researchers as it identifies a set of people that can inform the inquiry. However, the group of people selected for interview for this research work is not intended to exhaust any possible variation, but is chosen as the key source of variation to add to the depth and plausibility of the analysis.

A full list of respondents, their roles and geographical locations is given in Appendix1.

The Region and ND States Selected

The researcher selected the ND as the principal case for the study of inter-community conflict. The choice of the ND was based on empirical and practical reasons. The ND is the epicentre of oil-related and community-related conflict. Prior to the onset of the Boko Haram terror

campaign in northern Nigeria, the ND was the most conflict-prone Nigerian region, its environment drastically polluted and neglected and much of its people impoverished. The researcher is from the ND state of Delta and is familiar with the area's social and political system. Practically, this also offsets accommodation and transport costs during the research process. Familiarity also helped with gaining access would-be respondents and give credibility to the snowballing technique used to expand the reservoir of respondents.

Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers are the most historically the most politically and economically active ND states. The decision to base the research in these states was made for several reasons. Firstly, the respondents in the three ND states were easier to access to than in the other six (Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Cross Rivers, Edo, Imo, and Ondo) since the researcher already had established relationships in these areas. Secondly, the literature on inter-community conflict in the ND argues that these three ND states represent the most conflict-prone zone in the region, with 56 inter-community conflicts between 1997 and 2006 (Conflict Bulletin, 2014; Obi, 2009). Lastly, these three ND states were also the states in which there has been the most activity by militant groups including MEND and the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), instrumental in stirring inter-community conflict in the ND.

Methods and Data Collection

The methods applied for gathering data were semi-structured interviews, observation, and analysis of primary sources including newspaper articles, official reports and national laws on community affairs. Field work was preceded by an extensive meta-analysis of the relevant scholarly literature. This literature review was conducted to familiarise the researcher with the existing level of knowledge and understanding of community conflict in the ND. Academic monologues and journal articles were accessed in the Lanchester Library at Coventry University, the British Library in London, and community-related publications retrieved from

the Nigerian National Library. The literature review re-assured the researcher that there was a relevant and sufficient scholarly literature regarding inter-community conflict in the ND, and a continuing debate between academics and practitioners over the causes of this conflict. The researcher also identified areas that required further research and it is these gaps that the study seeks to fill.

The field visits were carried out using the semi-structured interview technique based on a research guide developed by the researcher to focus the study on areas for research relevant to the gaps in the literature. The researcher adopted a flexible approach and was willing to revise this research guide in response to the evidence and data he was receiving from the respondents.

The respondents were guaranteed in writing that the information obtained from the interviews would be used solely for the research study. In addition, the respondents were asked for their consent prior to participation. They were interviewed between March and April 2014 and November 2016, with the researcher inviting prominent NDC leaders, activists and academics to suitable locations for interviews. During the period of March to April 2014, the researcher collected the Niger Delta Development Commission's (NDDC) minutes of meetings on NDC affairs, as well as its mandate on developing communities in the ND. The minutes and mandates are unique documents in that they contain highly focussed and relevant, albeit sensitive, evidence and data on inter-community conflict in the ND.

Semi-structured Interviews

The researcher used the interviews to consolidate the information gathered from the meeting and mandates. Owing to the qualitative method of collecting data, the researcher had to choose between structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The researcher adopted the semi-structured interview method as it allows different techniques for gathering data such as recorded audio/video interviews, field notes or both. Secondly, semi-structured interviews can

take the form of face-to-face interactions, telephone conversations or video conferencing. The decision over which technique would be used in any instance was made based on convenience for the respondent, as well as costs and timing (Creswell, 2013).

The method of data collection was also guided by the epistemological approach adopted by the study. Interviews, field notes, and face-to-face interactions suit the approach of the interpretive philosophy adopted to effectively understand social interactions (Yin, 2013). Thus, inter-community conflict in the ND comprises social interactions and complex experiences that require an interpretivist approach (Cousin, 2009). Structured and unstructured interviews are designed as, respectively, formal and informal methods of gathering data. For instance, structured interviews are usually formal and mainly used for in surveys that demand the researcher use a representative sample. This also requires that that the researcher is scientifically unbiased. Alternatively, unstructured interviews are informal, and do not adopt a survey format; they rely on informal interactions and conversations between the interviewer and respondents to collect data suitable for addressing the research questions (De Vaus, 2013). Following the nature of the research subject of inter-community conflict, which consists of social interactions and complex experiences (Cousin, 2009), semi-structured interviews were adopted for as they helpfully sit between structured and unstructured interviews. Thus, semi-structured interviews are a technique for collecting data that require the researcher to make a research guide. This constitutes a list of topics that guide the discussion, conversation, and interactions between the interviewer and respondents. The guide illuminates the aspects that need to be discussed during the interview. In this way, semi-structured interviews allow the interview to follow an informal but logical style that generates information in an orderly and formal manner (Bryman, 2015).

The semi-structured format adopted in the study entails broad, open-ended questions about inter-community conflict in the ND. Each question has sub-questions that guide the direction

of interview. This allows the questions to be broken down into different segments that inform the causality of inter-community conflict. These were included in the guide, which helped the researcher to introduce follow-up questions to the initial open-ended questions.

The use of semi-structured interviews, though appropriate for this study, presents some challenges. Firstly, NDC leaders most usually communicate in Pidgin English and their own ethnic languages. The researcher is not fluent in pidgin and there were concerns about translation. However, following discussions with the respondents, and given that all respondents have a reasonable level of education in the English language, it was agreed that all interviews would be conducted in English. Secondly, the semi-structured interviews were guided by open-ended questions, which allowed participants from NDC administrative sectors to talk about the nature of the relationship they had with conflicting communities. In this regard, participants sometimes wanted to also discuss relationships with third parties such as MNCs, as well as focusing on inter-ethnic and intra-community conflict, moving beyond the scope of the study. To maximise the efficiency of the interview process, the researcher developed inter-personal skills to persuade, without being impolite, the respondents to focus on inter-community conflict. Thirdly, some respondents preferred to communicate with a 'yes' or 'no' response or a very brief explanation, undermining semi-structured interview technique. The researcher dealt with respondents who were unwilling to elaborate their responses to the question, by breaking down the questions into further segments to gather a fuller picture of these respondents' analysis and opinion.

Document Review

The documents reviewed included secondary data on community conflict in the ND. These constitute an important source of data for the study of causes of inter-community conflict as they can help to unveil concepts and contexts in the subject area. This helped in the validation

process and with the triangulation of the data. These documents were collected from NDDC, Nigerian and British libraries, and journals on the internet. The documents reviewed consisted of NDDC mandates on community development in the ND, interviews, legal documents, newspaper articles, media reports, academic books, and journal articles deliberating on relevant subject matter. The collection of these documents continued after the field work.

Observation

Observation of inter-community conflict was adopted as a supplementary method. Observation in a case study is contributory as it takes place with key actors (Yin, 2013). The objective of observation is to triangulate the data collected by applying other methods. Observation in the study was carried out in an informal way with no laid down protocol (Creswell, 2013). It was descriptive and focused on the behaviour and reactions put forward by NDC respondents whose communities are, or were, in conflict. Often the manner and tenor in which the respondent answered the interview questions betrayed and/or underlined their emotional response to the topics under discussion. However, this kind of observation can distract from the subject matter and lead to prejudice in data analysis (Yin, 2013). Thus, during the observation process, the researcher made efforts to curb the prejudice that observation can generate. For instance, the researcher made notes on peculiar demonstrations and body language produced by the respondents when asked certain questions about their rival NDCs, in order not to deviate from the questions that were being asked.

Data Analysis

Once primary data has been collected, the next step is to analyse it. This process involves interrogating the data for themes, developing categories, and interpreting the data. These activities are broken down into data management, data generation, data interpretation, and data presentation (Yin, 2013; Creswell, 2013).

Data management involves the process of managing raw data by storing it in a safe and secure environment, as well as making sense of it. Such activities entail scrutiny of the raw data for completeness and coherence to begin the interpretation of the data. The management of data started whilst the researcher was in the field during the period of March to April 2014. The exercise continued after the research exercise was complete with the transcription of the interviews.

The transcription of the interviews was carried out by the researcher. During this process, the researcher included all observations made during the interview such as exclamations, pauses, laughter, etc. The transcribed data produced over 300 pages of single spaced A4 sheets. The raw data and A4 sheet transcripts were kept secure. The analysis process involved the identification of recurring issues and themes including the isolation of recurring key words and phrases from the transcripts bearing on the relationship between communities, the environments in which they are governed and factors that instigate conflict in the ND. These key words and phrases were used to generate categories and themes that underpin the analysis and evaluation and ultimately underpins the argument advanced by the thesis.

Key words and phrases obtained from the data to generate categories and themes were coded. The coding process included making inferences and adopting an open coding system. This process allowed the researcher to tag the data applicable to the three research questions, scrutinising the different categories and themes that contribute to inter-community conflict, and disaggregating similarities and differences. The disaggregation allowed the preliminary findings to be evaluated in more detail, thereby generating further relevant categories and themes.

The coding process produced a directory file containing the categories and themes with links to the interview transcripts. This directory file consists of a 70-page document. This facilitated

the retrieval of data and helped with the accurate referencing of the respondents' interviews during the analysis and evaluation phase. More fundamentally, the directory file, by breaking down the data into categories and themes, helped the researcher to perceive the contours of the debate over the causes of inter-community conflict from the perspectives of those involved in the conflict.

The interpretation stage is the key step in an effective data analysis process. The data embedded in the directory file was grouped according to the coding exercise which led to the establishment of categories and themes. In all, five major categories and themes with sub-categories and sub-themes were developed from the directory file that underpinned the analysis. The major categories and themes that emerged from the coding process are: the definition and nature of NDCs; the characteristics of inter-community conflict; the governmental environment of the ND; social, economic and political relations within and between NDCs and relations between communities in the region.

Data presentation relates to the procedure through which the data is shown in a way that enables the researcher to draw conclusions from the data (De Vaus, 2013). At the time of the collection, transcription and interpretation of the data, the researcher adopted a tabular pattern to allow the data to be exhibited in a modest and vivid way. The table simplified the data by alleviating the final output into five categories and themes that appeared differently, but were connected by the general research aim and preliminary findings that were gathered from the interpretive section.

Research Assessment

Once the data is presented, there needs to be assessment of the reliability and validity of the presentation. The idea of reliability and validity is prominent in qualitative research to determine the viability of the research findings (Creswell, 2013). In other words, these

measures reflect how well the phenomenon being assessed suits the construction that the researcher adopted for the study (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2015). Whilst reliability relates to if the findings could, or would, be repeated if another study were to be carried out with the same method, validity is associated with the possibility of generalising the qualitative data. The aspect of generalisation seeks to acknowledge whether the findings of the study are relevant beyond the context of the research. This is tested in two ways via empirical and theoretical generalisations. Whilst empirical generalisation concerns itself with applying the findings of a research study to the bigger population within which the original sample was drawn in a representational and inferential manner, theoretical generalisations are inferences and theories developed from the findings of a research for more universal applications such as causal relations (Miller & Brewer, 2003).

Thus, critics have levelled allegations against qualitative research and the case study design for not being capable of meeting standards of empirical and theoretical generalisations (Creswell, 2013). This assumes that qualitative research lacks the statistical samples that would pass for generalisations of research findings. In response, qualitative research is not intended to be statistically representative, but rather it is intended to generalise findings to theory by applying interactive or theoretical sampling (Yin, 2013). This indicates that research should be directed towards allowing the appraisal of findings from one context to another. Thus, the reliability and validity of the qualitative research data is further analysed.

Reliability of Data

The perception of reliability in qualitative research is embedded in a comprehensive explanation of the methods adopted by the researcher for the field work, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and presentation of the research findings. This differs from reliability in quantitative research, which adopts tools that produce consistent results. Thus, the

study adopts qualitative research methods on causes of inter-community conflict in the ND, by presenting the process in an honest and transparent way. This includes delineating the preparation for the field work session, the procedures and processes of data collection, data analysis, data interpretation and data presentation for any audience and reader to imaginatively replicate the research (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). To be specific, the researcher carried out various steps to ensure the reliability of the study: the concept of triangulation was adopted by applying multiple methods: semi-structured interviews, observation and document review; the model of iterative approach was applied, when the researcher employed the initial data analysis as a foundation for making decisions on further data collection and analysis. These steps ensure that the research study adopted a qualitative method of honesty and transparency to ensure reliability of data.

Validity of Data

The validity of the study centres on allowing the comparisons of findings from one context to another that lies above the research focus through the application of a broad description. Thus, an elaborate description of the research findings allows academics reviewing a study to examine whether the results depict any shared characteristics that can allow for the findings to be generalised above the study (Miller & Brewer, 2003). The study adopts this approach by expressing how inter-community conflict is synonymous to intergroup conflict by highlighting how the nature of NDCs reflects that of sovereign states, autonomous regions and groups i.e. city states and religious groups. It further compares the features of the ND environment where NDCs are located to that of the international system that comprises sovereign states. This also extends to the association of similarities between the factors that facilitate conflict between NDCs and those that trigger violence between sovereign states, as well as autonomous regions and groups. These were captured in the concept of traditional versus modern values, with the

traditional reflecting the nature and characteristics of NDCs and the modern that of sovereign states and autonomous groups in an ineffective governmental environment.

Ethical Review

A credible social research demands that it conforms to four ethical principles regarding voluntary participation, informed consent, avoiding hazard to participants, and confidentiality and anonymity (De Vaus, 2013). Social research ethics demand that the researcher guarantee that the profits of the study would dwarf any potential hazard, and that the study is supervised by an institutional research committee (Creswell, 2013; De Vaus, 2013). The study on causes of inter-community conflict in the ND was sensitive to the principles of moral research ethical practice in respect to the expectations, norms and character of the participants in relation to the data collection activity.

The researcher ensured that the study met ethical standards by carrying out the following steps. Firstly, the researcher applied for and was granted ethical clearance by Coventry University's ethics procedures and processes before embarking on the field work. Secondly, a consent letter and participation leaflet, outlining the purpose of the research, requests for consent to participate, rights of withdrawal from participating at any time, and the basis for selecting participants, were given or sent to all participants. Thirdly, interviews conducted with participants and community leaders were arranged in suitable and safe locations, as well as commencing with a salutation in the respondent's language to establish a friendly atmosphere. Fourthly, the researcher paid careful attention to sensitive issues such as ethnic division, language affiliation and political inclination.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the analytical framework, as well as the methodology adopted for the research. Each of these were specifically formulated and designed because of the limited response of existing research to the causes of inter-community conflict in the ND. Firstly, the analytical framework consists of connections amongst characteristics such as NDCs' inherent autonomy, the vulnerable environment and the circumstances of community governance in the region, as well as the relationship amongst communities in order to investigate causes of inter-community conflict in the ND. In other words, the framework stipulates that the inherent autonomy of NDCs, propelled by the contrast between traditional and modern values, accounts for why communities collectively engage one another in violent conflict over social, economic and political resource factors. This framework becomes the backdrop used to assess, evaluate, and interpret the case study adopted to investigate the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND. This allowed the research to formulate as well as outline the information needed to address the overall research question: does the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND conform to the drivers of conflict emanating from traditional versus modern values? Secondly, to address this question, lapses found in the existing literature suggest that the qualitative research design is best suited to exploring political processes synonymous to inter-community conflict in the ND. This informed the methodology for managing, collecting, analysing, interpreting and presenting data in the research. The techniques adopted for gathering data on the case study necessary for addressing the research question were semi-structured interviews, observations and a documentary review.

Chapter 4: The Context of Inter-Community Conflict in the ND

Introduction

The analytical framework in the previous chapter argues that NDCs are 'inherently autonomous'. It further argues that NDCs' traditional way of handling relations with other NDCs differs from, and is parallel to, the LGA's current 'modern' approach to the administration of communities within their authority. Arguably, this instigates inter-community conflict, whereby communities are willing to fight to maximise access to the benefits of social, economic and political goods under the control of the LGA's administrators. This chapter explores the nature and causes of inter-community conflict in the ND, notably in the most conflict-prone states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers.

The chapter seeks to accomplish this with an overview of the institutions surrounding LGAs and ND states, and how NDCs belonging to the same jurisdiction are dependent on LGAs for the regulation of their social, economic and political activities. It sets out the constitutional role of the LGAs, and how the ND states reserves the constitutional authority to limit or expand LGAs' jurisdiction over the resolution of inter-community conflict and NDCs' social, economic and political affairs. Additionally, social, economic and political factors are analysed in relation to intergroup conflict, demonstrating its relevance from the perspective that a community is a peculiar form of group. The chapter concentrates on the scope of the three ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers, as well as analysing the number of key inter-community conflicts that occurred in these states from 2003 to 2014. It then sets out that conflict starts either by dispute between opposing community members (inter-personal conflict), hostility between NDCs' ethnic groups, or a rational decision made by a community as an autonomous entity, after which the chapter concludes.

4.2 An Overview of the Niger Delta's Institutions

As analysed in the literature review, the ND comprises nine states: Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. These constitute the ND states. These ND states consist of 185 LGAs that contain 13,329 NDCs (NDDC Masterplan, 2006), with a varying number of LGAs in each ND state. For example, Bayelsa has 8 LGAs, Delta has 25 LGAs and Rivers has 23 LGAs (Deltastate.com, 2014). Constitutionally, LGAs are administers with the support of wards that acts as congress. Each LGA is administered by a local government council consisting of an LGC, who is the chief executive, alongside elected members known as councillors, who are representatives of their respective wards (Ukiwo, 2006). However, wards are vaguely designated to the extent that ordinary people often struggle to distinguish one from another, especially given that wards are popularly denoted by coded numbers. The more familiar traditional administrative entities such as clans, kingdoms, ethnic or tribal groups, and communities within an LGA are popularly known by their names. Amongst these familiar traditional entities, a community is always located within an LGA (Deltastate.com), whilst a clan, kingdom, ethnic or tribal group can extend to two or three LGAs depending on their sizes.

Within and between LGAs, are ethnic or tribal groups delineated by language, culture and customs. Walter Opello and Stephen Rosow recognise traits including language, culture and customs as the fundamental definitional characteristics of an ethnic group, which, whilst not necessarily inhabiting a single bounded territory, also define an autonomous group or nation:

> A third historical rival to the nation-state is the ethnic group. An ethnic group is a non-territorial social group composed of numerous extended families grouped into clans, which are believed to be related to one another by being the descendants of a common mythical ancestor. Social solidarity is based on ties of

blood and kinship, not territorialized national identity. Governance of the ethnic group is in the hands of a hereditary chief from one of the families or clans, usually assisted by a council of elders or warriors. The clear majority of human beings who have ever lived on the planet have lived in ethnicities. Ethnicities exist today, especially in Africa, but have been surpassed and overlain by the nation-state. Occasionally an ethnic group is given a state of its own (e.g., Botswana, Swaziland); more typically, however, a state contains many ethnicities (e.g., the Yorubas, Ibos, and Hausa-Fulani in Nigeria), or a straddle the borders between one or more states (e.g., the Kurds in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran). (2004, p.10)

Opello and Rosow recognise that there are instances where ethnic groups are coterminous with a bounded territory such as in Botswana and Swaziland. This is mirrored as a microcosm in NDCs.

In practice, within the ND, the terms ethnicity, clans, kingdoms, villages, towns, cities and communities are interchangeable. A ND indigene might interchange these terms, hence confusing their meaning, since definitions continue to be amorphous and ambiguous. However, despite this confusion, ethnicity, clans, kingdoms, villages, towns, cities and communities as constructs are familiar to indigenes, whilst LGA wards are not. Moreover, the number of wards and NDCs in an LGA are often not the same; for example, in Port Harcourt LGA there are 20 wards and 23 NDCs (NDDC Masterplan, 2006). Thus, some LGA wards can contain more than one NDC.

The constitutional role of LGAs is delineated by their political and geographical jurisdictions. Each LGA has authority in a wide spectrum of activities that reflect the day-to-day life of a community. The limitations of LGAs' jurisdiction over the resolution of inter-community

conflict is set out in the latter part of this section. Section 7 of the General Provisions Act defines the constitutional roles of an LGA as follows,

> Economic recommendations to the state; collection of taxes and fees; establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds, and homes for the destitute or infirm; licensing of bicycles, trucks (other than mechanically propelled trucks), canoes, wheel barrows and carts; establishment, maintenance and regulation of markets, motor parks and public conveniences; construction and maintenance of roads, streets, drains and other public highways, parks, and open spaces; naming of roads and streets, and numbering of houses; provision and maintenance of public transportation and refuse disposal; registration of births, deaths and marriages; assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for levying such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of a State; control and regulation of out-door advertising, movement and keeping of pets of all descriptions, shops and kiosks, restaurants and other places for the sale of food to the public, and laundries and; licensing, regulation and control of the sale of liquor (General Provisions Act, SN (1999) C1, S 7).

Formally, an LGA's authority extends to the administration of the social, economic and political activities of its constituent NDCs. Also, according to section 7 of the General Provisions Act, the constitutional role of an LGA council includes participation in state government of in the following areas,

> The provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education; the development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of materials; the provision and maintenance of health services; and; such other

functions as may be conferred on a local government council by the House of

Assembly of the State (General Provisions Act, SN (1999) C1, S 7).

Therefore, as can be seen from the extensive roles and tasks assigned to LGAs by the General Provisions Act, each LGA has a wide-ranging input into many aspects of the local communities' daily life. This includes conflict resolution. However, there are important limitations to the role that LGAs can, and do, play in addressing inter-community conflict. LGAs' constitutional function that may be conferred by the State's House of Assembly include the resolution of conflict between NDCs. In the states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers, resolution of conflict between communities are the responsibilities of LGAs and the states. Whilst the state governments give directives to their respective commissioners of police to enforce the law, local governments being the governmental tier closest to the communities, set up conflict resolution forums including leaders of involved parties (Akinsanmi, 2013). Examples of this include the 2006 inter-community conflict between Akassa and Egwema communities when the Brass LGA set up a conflict resolution forum involving leaders from both NDCs (Peterside, 2007). The constitutional role of conflict resolution between NDCs by the core ND states' governments is also intrinsically limited by the necessity for LGA leaders to collaborate with state governors who exercise authority over the forces of order that operate across all NDCs with a state's boundaries.

Another limitation of LGAs' jurisdiction is the ultimate overriding power of the FGN over ND states and LGAs. According to section 1 of the General Provisions Act, the federal government reserves the power to overrule the constitutional authority of state and local governments where there are conflictual interests or in a situation where that requires intervention to protect the national interest (General Provisions Act, SN (1999) C1, S 1). In addition, the constitutional role of the ND states on conflict resolution between communities by giving directives to the commissioner of police to enforce peace is restricted by the FGN (Akinsanmi, 2013). For

example, section 2 of the General Provisions Act states that the commissioner of police, before enforcing the directives of a state governor, reserves the right to seek the approval of the president of the FGN on matters concerning federal properties before carrying out such directives (General Provisions Act, SN (1999) C1, S 2). Such restrictions, limits both the ND states and LGAs power over conflict resolution in their constituent's NDCs.

The limitation of ND state governors' power to direct the police force necessarily limits the LGAs' authority over conflict resolution between communities. This is based on the notion that ND states and LGAs for logistic and personnel reasons must work closely together to resolve community conflicts. Conversely, LGAs and FGN do not work together directly, but rather communicate through state governments (Akinsanmi, 2013). Such limited communications between LGAs and the FGN makes conflict resolution a more complex and protracted process. This is particularly the case in inter-community conflicts that require the intervention of the military which are under the direct command of the FGN. An example of this is the militarisation of Warri city in 2003 following conflict between Okere-Urhobo and Okere-Itsekiri (Agbegbedia, 2013). Often ND state governments request military intervention early in the course of a conflict, effectively limiting the capacity of the LGA to influence mediation. However, although limited by constitutional and jurisdiction boundaries, LGAs still exercise a key and highly sensitive role in conflict resolution. They are the entities responsible for the setting up of forums that bring the warring parties together. More trenchantly, LGAs represent the layer of administration closest socially, economically and politically to the NDCs.

As set out above, the administration of the social, economic and political activities in NDCs constitutionally requires LGAs to provide and sustain the welfare of those who live in their constituent NDCs. The inability to provide and sustain members' welfare can instigate conflict in cases where marginalisation is perceived to be inflicted on one NDC by another. Such scenarios often stem from the prejudicial administration of an LGA by the executive and chief

administrator of that LGA who prefer their own NDCs to the detriment of the social, political and economic welfare of other NDCs. It is this inefficient, unfair and/or prejudiced management of these key sectors that can easily lead to conflict.

As stated previously, the concept of inter-community conflict is violent conflict between two NDCs, and is based on group or community-identity conflict. Group or community identity conflict argues that intergroup conflict is synonymous with inter-community conflict. This is based on the definition of NDCs as identified groups operating in the form of communities. For example, the Ugbokodo and Gbaramatu are two different groups that identify their settlements with their respective community names (Ukiwo, 2007). The Okere-Urhobo and the Okere-Itsekiri are two different groups (Agbegbedia, 2013) which split the defunct Okere community when both were created in 2003 as separate communities. Group identity in the ND has often been associated with the discovery of crude oil in a part of the ND, and has become key to gaining access to the economic benefits from exploiting these finds. The intergroup conflicts between Bayelsa's Ofonobiri and Opuama in 2002 (Ibaba, 2009), Delta's Itsekiri and Urhobo in 1997 (Obi, 2010), and Rivers' Ogoni and Okrika in 1994 (Okolo, 2008) can be understood as groups of individuals coming together to share an identity for the common interest of securing such benefits. Whilst Ofonobiri and Opuama are perceived as NDCs (Ibaba, 2009), Itsekiri, Urhobo, Ogoni and Okrika are viewed as ethnicities (Obi, 2010; Okolo, 2008). Though the word 'group' goes beyond NDCs and ethnicities, and could also mean nation-states, continental regions and religions (Cederman et al., 2010), what is deduced here is that they all constitute intergroup conflict, with each group having a peculiar definition. As peculiar as different groups' definitions may be, intergroup conflicts appear to have similar social, economic and political implications. From a social perspective, Jeffrey Seul argues that it is the overarching concept of identity competition that depicts intergroup conflicts as resulting from social factors. His concept of identity competition maintains that social identity theory

plays a central role in the inception and escalation of intergroup conflict, even when economic and political factors are also at play (1999). Individual and group identity competition is considered a by-product of an individual's efforts to satisfy basic human needs, seen as psychological. Thus, religions often serve these psychological needs more comprehensively and potently than other repositories of cultural meaning that contribute to the construction and maintenance of individual and group identities (Seul, 1999).

This implies that religions supply cosmologies, moral frameworks, institutions, rituals, traditions and other identity-supporting content that answers to individuals' needs for psychological stability in the form of a predictable world, a sense of belonging, self-esteem and even self-actualisation. Seul argues that the 'peculiar ability of religion to serve the human identity impulse thus may partially explain why intergroup conflict so frequently occurs along religious fault lines' (1999, p.553). He gives examples of this overlap of ethnicity and religion in the conflicts in the Balkans, Sudan, East Timor and Sri Lanka. The concept of identity competition can be broken into three major attributes: a sense of belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation; identity is the main rationale behind the forming of groups providing a sense of social protection against rivals. However, does group identity underpin the conflicts between communities in the ND in the same way as in the Balkans, Sudan, East Timor and Sri Lanka? This is to be investigated in a later chapter of the thesis. Thus, just as identity competition underpins the social aspect of intergroup conflict, economic and political factors also abound.

Ostby (2008), Cederman et al. (2010) and Langer (2004), defines a group to mean ethnic, religious and continental regions that went into intergroup conflict due to economic and political reasons. Ostby analyses 39 developing countries, measuring economic polarisation to imply average household assets owned by members belonging to different groups, and concluding that the higher the level of economic polarisation between two groups, the higher the risk of intergroup conflict (2008). Similarly, Cederman demonstrates that groups with

wealth levels either poorer or richer than the country's average are more likely to experience intergroup conflict (2010). Langer likewise explains intergroup conflict in Ivory Coast in 1994 as a result of the economic grievances of the northern population, who felt economically discriminated against by the southern-dominated government (2004).

These three scholars also explain the connection between economic discrimination between groups and political rationales for conflict. For Ostby, groups form political organisations as symbols of shared identity, and shared grievances, to build a sense of common interest in order to achieve economic goals. He cites the higher levels of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita than the national average in some Indonesian regions as the main reason for continued intergroup conflict (Ostby, 2008). Likewise, Cederman et al. claim that countries with high degrees of political exclusion are more likely to experience armed conflict between ethnic groups, since the exclusion from political power of one group implies its economic downturn (Cederman et al., 2010). In addition, Langer argues that the political schisms in Ivory Coast in 1994 were predicated on economic disparity between the north and south (2004).

Ostby, Cederman and Langer's conception is that the attempt to regulate the economic scale and political relevance between groups belonging to same region is the primary reason for intergroup conflict. In other words, regulating economic scale means poorer regions attempt to balance the situation or overcome the richer regions, or the richer regions attempt to protect or increase their monetary status, or when both are at the same level, one seeks a higher status. All of this infuriates the other party and subsequently triggers intergroup conflict. Political irrelevance becomes a major centrepiece with which these regions or groups feel negligence, marginalisation and inequalities in terms of their relationship with the dominant groups. These eco-politico connotations give motivation to the dominated group to fight back through armed conflict (Ostby, 2008). Whilst a country has an average national GDP, those groups that fall below this, while also excluded from power at the same time, are likely to instigate civil wars

(Cederman et al., 2010). This is noted for instigating inter-ethnic conflict between the north and south of Ivory Coast in 1994 (Langer, 2004). Conversely, in countries where one group is economically privileged and the other has political power, such as Malaysia, conflict seems to be less likely (Barrow, 1976). In other words, Ostby (2008), Cederman et al. (2010), and Langer (2004) suggest that in regions where both economic benefits and political authority belong to one set of groups, there is bound to be intergroup conflict, due to the agitation of the marginalised or the determination of the dominant to continue to protect their status.

Thus, intergroup conflict understood as fight between two groups is analysed to illuminate how communities, which are a type of group, can become motivated by social, economic and political factors in starting inter-community conflict. However, it is not certain whether the analysis of ethnic groups, religious groups, regional groups, social groups, economic groups and political groups conforms to community groups. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 will investigate how social, economic and political factors affect the causality of inter-community conflict. This section is not intended to compare how these scholars' intergroup analysis conforms or contrasts with social, economic and political factors affecting inter-community conflict. However, it demonstrates how they can be relevant in understanding the causality of conflict between NDCs, considering that communities are a peculiar type of group found in every part of the ND region. Thus, though there are nine ND states forming the region, the thesis concentrates on the most conflict-prone states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers.

4.3 Conflict Scenarios in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States

The present composition of the ND region is a pragmatic one, bringing together all oil-producing ND states in the Nigerian Federation. Historically and cartographically, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers made up the Palm Oil Rivers, which was the British Oil Rivers Protectorate from 1885 until 1893, when it was expanded and became the Niger Coast Protectorate

(Coombes, 1994), later becoming known as the ND (Willink, 1958). In 2001, the president of the World Environmental Movement for Africa (WEMFA), Stephen Siniktiem Azaiki, stated in a report to the President of the FRN:

> We have studied the position papers of the Bayelsa Leaders of Thought, the Movement of Concerned People of the Niger Delta, Major Isaac Adaka Boro's papers and they hold almost the same views as the report of the WEMFA study on the Developmental Needs of 1995. It is our understanding that the Niger Delta, of truth, historically and cartographically is the present Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States (Azaiki, 2003).

These three core ND states, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers, are the states most prone to conflict between their constituent communities (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Noteworthy inter-communal conflicts in the most conflict-prone ND states up to 2006

ND state of Bayelsa	ND state of Delta	ND state of Rivers
Okpoama vs. Ewoama	Oleh vs. Olomoro	Emohua vs. Ogbakiri
Twon-Brass vs. Okpoama	Isama vs. Gbarigolo	Okrika vs. Elesa-Eleme
Liama vs. Beletiama	Ogidigbe vs. Okerenkoko	Bille vs. Ke
Emadike vs. Epebu	Odimodi vs. Ogualagha	Ekunuga vs. Okolomade
Egweama vs. Beletiama	Olota vs. Oboro	Soku vs. Kula

Source: UNDP 2006

More recently, other sources such as the Niger Delta Watch have indicated that violent conflict continues to increase in these three ND states. Figure 4.1 shows the number of violent incidents that occurred between January 2007 and December 2012 across the ND region.

Figure 4.1 Violent incidents in the ND between 2007 and 2012
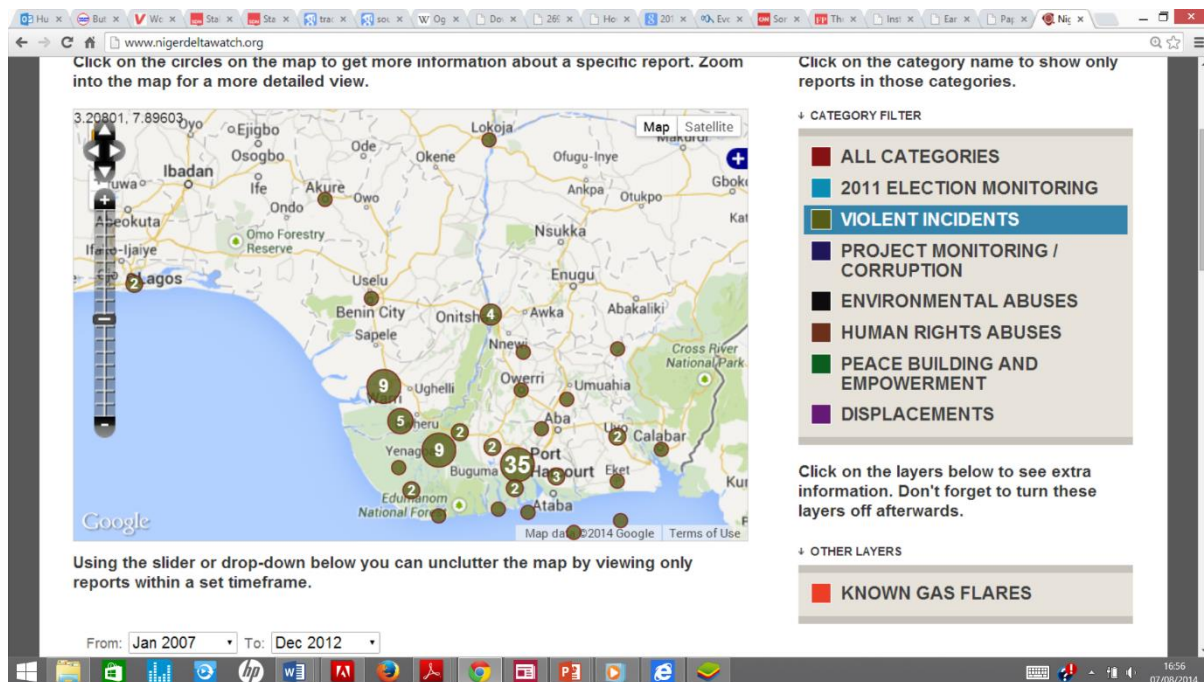
Source: Niger Delta Watch (2014)

The map shows that the ND state of Bayelsa, consisting of Yenagoa, Buguma and Edumanom, had a total of 16 violent incidents. The ND state of Delta, consisting of Sapele, Ughelli, Warri and Uwheru, had a total of 14 violent incidents. The ND state of Rivers, consisting of Port Harcourt and Ataba had a total of 44 violent incidents. The number of incidents in these three states significantly outnumbers the total number of violent incidents in the other ND states.

Bayelsa shares boundaries with Delta to the west, with Rivers to the east, with these two ND states bordering the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. With 1.7 million people, Bayelsa is one of the smallest Nigerian states by population, yet produces 30–40% of Nigeria's crude oil and natural gas. In addition to the petroleum sector, the state has a commercial fishing

industry and produces palm oil, raffia palm, rubber and coconut (Conflict Bulletin, 2014). Figure 4.2 indicates the conflict risk factors and insecurity per capita by LGA in Bayelsa from 2010 to 2014.

Figure 4.2 Bayelsa conflict risk factors and insecurity per capita by LGA
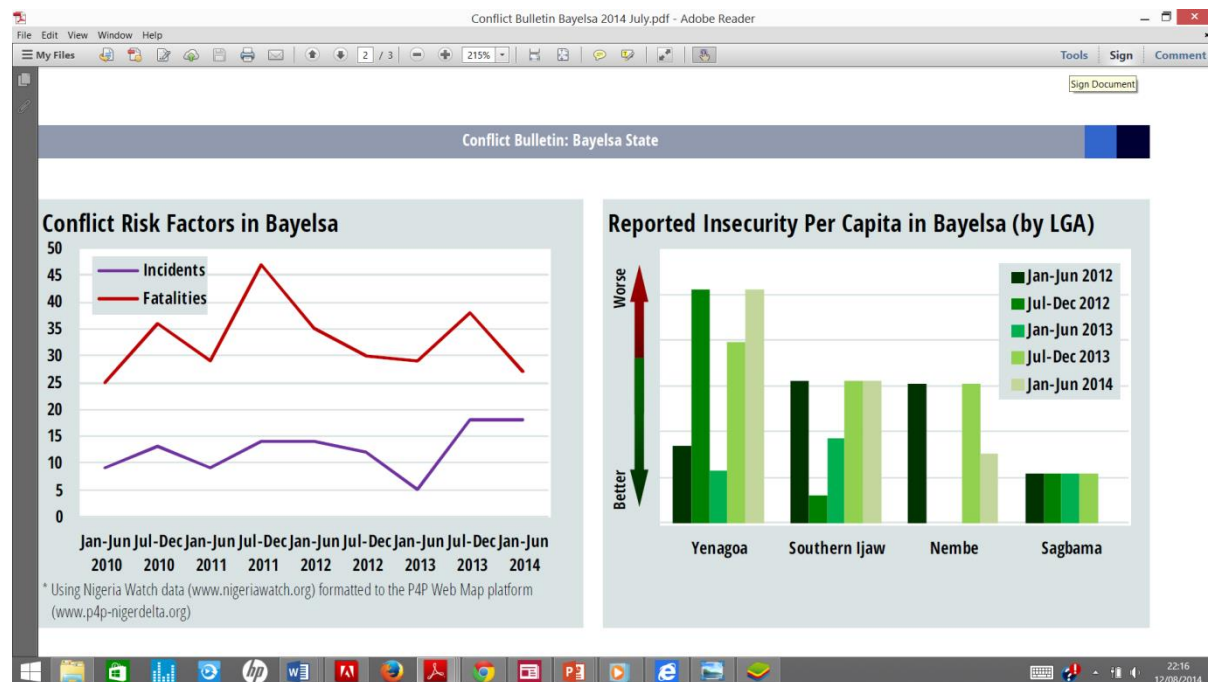
Source: Conflict Bulletin (2014)

Though the fatality rate appears to be declining, the number of violent incidents continues to rise, leading to the destruction of infrastructure and thwarting opportunities for development. Conflict risk factor incidents in Bayelsa soared in 2013, with a steadily increasing pace in 2014. This implies that conflict is on the rise in different LGAs. In the state of Bayelsa, inter-community conflict is identified by the Conflict Bulletin to be the most destructive type of conflict (Conflict Bulletin, 2014). Ibaba (2009) comparing the most destructive types of conflict in Bayelsa argues that inter-community conflict is the most destructive. He determines that 62.4% of all conflicts in Bayelsa are inter-community conflicts, 27.4% are conflicts between NDCs and the FGN, and 12.9% are conflicts between NDCs and MNCs. Similarly,

NDCs in the Ogbia and Yenagoa LGAs of Bayelsa have a high probability of engaging in inter-community conflict, due to their strategic location in the oil fields and the large oil-derived financial allocations from the FGN (SDN, 2014). The state of Delta has a similar profile.

Delta shares boundaries with the ND state of Edo to the west, with Bayelsa to the east, the state of Anambra to the north, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. With 4.1 million people, Delta is the second most populous ND state after Rivers. It produces 35% of Nigeria's crude oil and a considerable amount of its natural gas. It is also rich in tuber crops such as potatoes, yams, cassava and cocoa yams. The area has a legacy of community, ethnic and political tensions that have been exacerbating since 1997 (Conflict Bulletin, 2014). The area is documented for its conflict risk factors and insecurity per capita by LGA.

Figure 4.3 Delta conflict risk factors and insecurity per capita by LGA
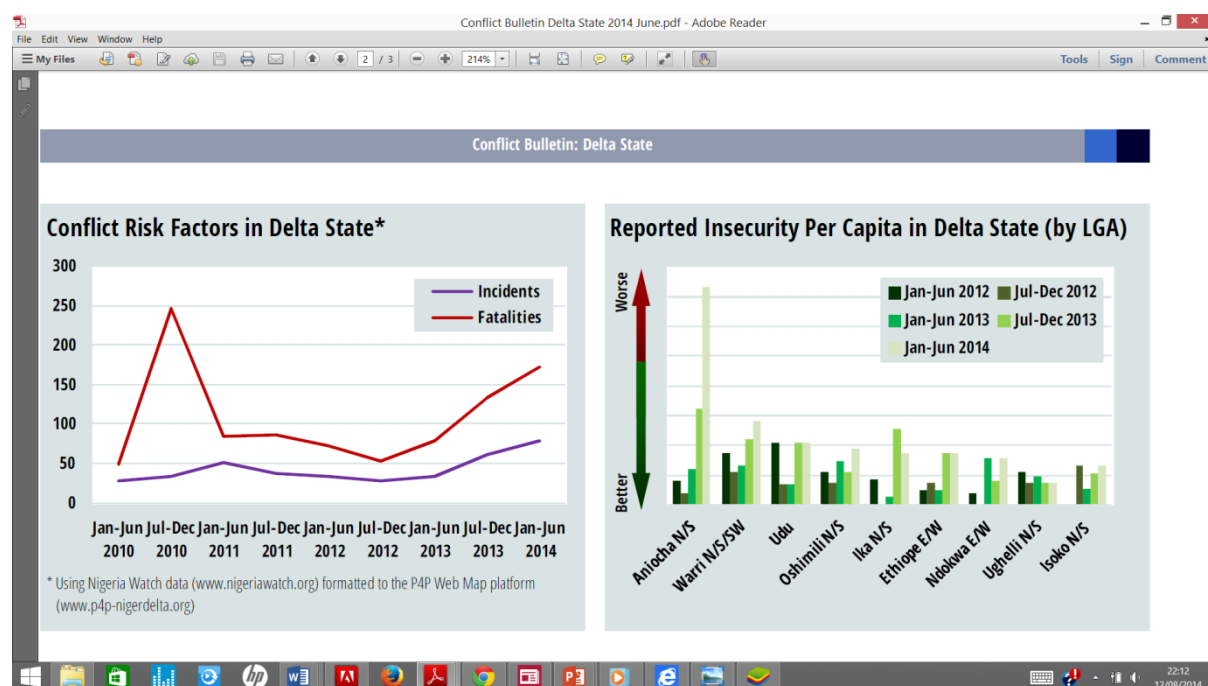
Source: Conflict Bulletin, 2014

Unlike Bayelsa, Delta's fatality rate and conflict incidents have been steadily increasing from mid-2012. This shows that conflict activities in the area need urgent attention to halt their

steadily increasing pace. Moreover, conflict activities appear to be evenly spread across the indicated LGAs, with Aniocha North and Aniocha South recording the highest figures from beginning to mid-2014. The indication of high conflict risk factors in Delta implies that inter-community conflict will be a major factor. Among the conflict risk factors in Delta, ethnic conflict is highlighted to be the most widespread in the area (Conflict Bulletin, 2014; Ikelegbe, 2006). Ethnic conflict in Delta has often been argued to degenerate into inter-community conflict, since the larger ethnic group is not committed to fighting a course that concerns an NDC within that ethnic group. In the light of this, Agbegbedia (2014) argued that the deadly Warri crisis in 2003, between the ethnic groups of Itsekiri and Urhobo, was indeed an inter-community conflict between the NDCs of Okere-Urhobo and Okere-Itsekiri, of Warri South LGA, Delta. His words were

> nevertheless, there seems to be diversity about the crisis in Warri. This is since some Urhobos believe the crisis is concerned with only a family lineage that is fighting the Itsekiris. These families are fighting for their own selfish end and not for the interest of the whole Urhobo ethnic nation (Agbegbedia, 2014, p.346).

This was also the view presented by Okolo (2008) when he explained that the quest to establish boundaries between the ethnic groups of Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri in Delta have instigated more than 12 inter-community conflicts between 1992 and 2005 in the area. An inter-community conflict associated with this view is Esanma vs. Gbarigolo in 1997. Esanma is of the Ijaw ethnic group in Burutu LGA, Delta, and Gbarigolo is an NDC of the Urhobo ethnic group in Ughelli South LGA, Delta. Likewise, Kpakiama vs. Olodiama in 1992, where the Kpakiama community is of the Ijaw ethnic group in Bomadi LGA, Delta, and Olodiama belonged to the Urhobo ethnic group in Ughelli South LGA, Delta (Okolo, 2008). It should be noted that while these NDCs in conflict are in different LGAs in the ND state of Delta, it would

be irrational to call it inter-LGA conflict. It is in this same sense that Okolo saw ethnic conflict in Delta as inter-community conflict. Thus, inter-community conflict becomes paramount in the Delta, as NDCs from different ethnic groups involved in violent disputes with each other end up fighting their own course, just as NDCs within the same ethnic group are involved in fierce conflict against each other in order to defend their interests. Such enormous violent disputes between NDCs in Delta are also evident in the ND state of Rivers.

Rivers shares boundaries with Bayelsa to the west, Delta to the north-west, the ND state of Akwa-Ibom to the east, the ND state of Abia to the north-east, the state of Imo to the north, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. With over 5.1 million people, Rivers is the most populous ND state. It produces 48% of Nigeria's crude oil and a considerable amount of its natural gas. It is rich in farm lands and fisheries, and has the second largest commercial and agricultural centre, as well as the second largest seaport in the country after the state of Lagos (Lawnigeria.com, 2017). The area had been at the heart of the ND militancy until 2009, when it became ravelled with a different array of issues, as some former combatants turned to criminality, since uneven economic development continued to present a problem to sustainability and human security (Conflict Bulletin, 2014). The area is documented for its conflict risk factors and insecurity per capita by LGA.

Figure 4.4 Rivers conflict risk factors and insecurity per capita by LGA
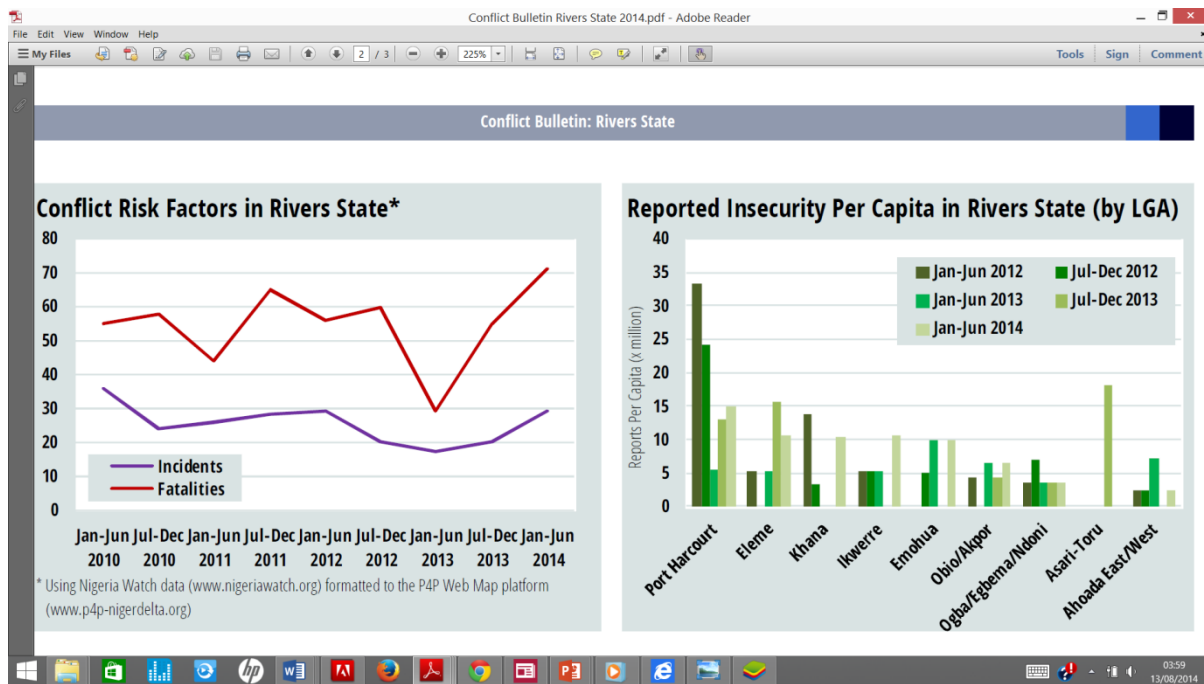
Source: Conflict Bulletin 2014

Like Delta, Rivers' fatality rates soared at an alarming level, and its conflict incidents increased at a steady pace from mid-2013 to mid-2014. This shows that its conflict risk factors are worrisome, with the indicated LGAs having more insecurity than those of Delta. The worrisome insecurity level results from conflict activities, of which inter-community conflict is included. Thus, the alarming rates of conflict risk factors and insecurity in Rivers are said to be aggravated by political tensions, cult violence, militancy and inter-communal disputes. Inter-community conflict is among such factors and rampant in the LGAs of Port Harcourt, Khana and Gokana, where communities are engaged in disagreement over land ownership and oil locations (SDN, 2014; Vanguard, 2013). The percentage at which inter-community conflicts occur in the area is summed to be even (Conflict Bulletin, 2014). These inter-community tensions have different timescales, with their intensity fluctuating around the timeline of key events on inter-community conflict in the ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers.

4.4 Timeline of Inter-Community Conflict in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers

The timeline of key events spreads across the three ND states, with violent incidents relating to inter-community tensions springing up at different intervals in diverse locations. The period of 2003 to 2014 unveiled six key cases (1 in Bayelsa, 3 in Delta and 2 in Rivers) of inter-community conflicts in the ND according to the timeframe in the three ND states, which this section analyses on a quarterly basis.

In the ND state of Delta, the NDCs of Okere-Urhobo and Okere-Itsekiri in Warri South LGA engaged in violent conflict in 2003 (Agbegbedia, 2014). The violence began on the weekend of January 31/February 1, 2003, during the lead up to the Nigerian state and FGN elections held in April and May of the same year. The fight was alleged to have been aggravated by the primary election being held for the Delta South senatorial district by the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the incumbent party both in Delta and at the federal level (Human Rights Watch, 2003a). The dispute centred on the number of wards forming the district, and the boundaries between the wards, which the Okere-Urhobo community alleged disadvantaged them. According to local accounts and press reports, Okere-Urhobo youths attacked the Okere-Itsekiri area on the afternoon of January 31, and began to loot and burn properties (Human Rights Watch, 2003a). The Okere youths then converged at the Warri township football stadium, where the primary voting was taking place, and retaliated in response to reports of the raid. Over the next couple of days, most of the large housing estate belonging to Chief Benjamin Okumagba (the traditional ruler of the Okere-Urhobo community) was destroyed (UNDP, 2006). Estimates of the number of dead people during the conflict ranged from 200–1,200, with over 6,000 inhabitants displaced (Human Rights Watch Interviews, 2003). These damages caused by violent conflict brought about the shutdown of crude oil activity in the

Warri area, as the then ND state Governor Chief James Ibori declared a state of emergency (Natufe, 2006), which halted other commercial activities. Warri South LGA, being the centre for crude oil and commercial activities, commonly experiences inter-community conflict over lands enriched with crude oil minerals. This view motivates Kemedi to argue that the location of oil productions has become a factor engineering envy and disagreement among different NDCs regarding land that makes an oil community (Kemedi, 2003). Thus, the root of the conflict can be traced to ownership of the oil-rich Warri land.

In mid-2003, the benefits accrued from oil lands were to cause the major incident that kicked off the conflict between the NDCs of Nembe-Ogbolomabiri and Nembe-Bassambiri in Nembe LGA, Bayelsa. The conflict was the result of stiff competition over control of the oil industry, which can be traced back to the late 1980s, when the Nembe Council of Chiefs acquired the power from their king to negotiate benefits with the MNCs in the area (Kemedi, 2005). Nembe, being a kingdom and an LGA at the same time, had Nembe-Ogbolomabiri and Nembe-Bassambiri, among others, as their constituent communities, which led to the negotiation of oil benefits to be perceived by Nembe-Bassambiri as a process of marginalisation, since Nembe-Ogbolomabri had more chiefs in the council (Human Rights Watch, 2003b). This is due to the notion that the word 'Nembe' in its actual sense means Ogbolomabiri. This automatically presents the NDC of Nembe-Ogbolomabiri as the rightful owner of the kingdom and LGA, which provides them with more chiefs in the council, while Nembe-Bassambiri contends that Nembe is a common heritage to which any one community cannot lay claim (Kemedi, 2005).

This long-standing bitterness between these NDCs in Nembe was to intensify between mid-2002 and mid-2003, when a group from Ogbolomabiri arrived in Bassambiri to collect the election materials for the Nembe LGA Chairmanship seat. The Nembe-Ogbolomabiri residents reported that they heard gunshots, and the group that had gone to collect the materials made quick calls back to Nembe-Ogbolomabiri to report that they had come under attack by means

of broken bottles and sticks. They were told to return to Nembe-Ogbolomabiri as quickly as possible. One young man, a speedboat driver who was in the group sent from Nembe-Ogbolomabiri to Nembe-Bassambiri, reported that some youths from Nembe-Bassambiri started beating them, and that most of the group, which was unarmed and not prepared for attack, ran off. A friend from Nembe-Bassambiri helped him escape across the water in a speedboat back to the jetty on the Nembe-Ogbolomabiri side (Human Rights Watch, 2003b). Thus, the contention over controlling the oil-rich land of Nembe has seen properties and lives destroyed in the area.

As contentious as oil lands may seem, in November 2003 the violent conflict between the NDCs of Owhor and Effurun-Otor, both in Ughelli South LGA, Delta, appeared to take a different perspective, being triggered by an emotional affair between two parties from opposite communities. It was reported that the two neighbouring communities locked horns in fierce battle after a minor disagreement concerning a love relationship matter at a burial ceremony (Vanguard, 2003). A news report revealed that trouble broke out when two male youths had a disagreement over a female friend, whom they both desired to accompany. The clash of interests led to a violent conflict, which subsequently resulted in the solidarity of people from both sides (the two communities represented). At the height of the conflict, three people were reportedly killed and several others wounded (Vanguard, 2003). Other inter-community conflict in the ND, the root causes of which can be traced back to late 2007, snowballed and triggered into the following decade.

From late 2007 to the end of the decade, the Bangha kingdom of the Ogoni ethnic group, in Khana and Gokana LGAs, Rivers, encountered a series of farmland disputes between its constituent communities of Kere-bangha and Nyowi-bangha. These disputes were alleged to have been instigated by SPDC, resulting from oil spillages that degraded the farmland of indigenes (Opukri & Ibaba, 2008). Though SPDC is not seen as the immediate cause of the

conflict, its crude oil spill caused environmental degradation in the area, reducing available fertile soil, thereby leading to Kere-bangha and Nyowi-bangha fighting over the limited available fertile soil. Unlike purely crude oil-driven conflict, in 2008, the inter-community strife between Ogunu and Ugbuwangue, in Warri South LGA, Delta, re-ignited after its initial kick-off in 1976. This resulted when the families of E. A. Okorodudu from Ogunu and A. V. Deduwa from Ugbuwangue contested the ownership of a piece of land on the Ogunu and Ugbuwangue borderline in the Supreme Court (Vanguard, 2008). Though the conflict was not infamous, as no fatality was recorded, it has been noted in terms of the intermittent violence carried out by both NDCs' youths.

In June 2011, physical confrontation ensued between the communities of Luusue-Sogho and Kaani 1, both of Khana LGA in Rivers, leading to the loss of two lives (Social Action Group, 2013). This was reported to have emanated from the land grab of the boundary land bordering both NDCs by the Rivers government for the purpose of a banana plantation project in collaboration with a Mexican company (Ogoninews, 2013). It was alleged that, while many communities refused to give up their land for such a project, a few others were cajoled into succumbing. Among these is the Luusue-Sogho, who received meagre compensation for their crops. This differing response between the communities in Khana LGA was said to be exploited by the Rivers government to create conditions that resulted in inter-community clashes, with the view that members of Luusue-Sogho led government agencies to survey lands belonging to other communities in the area (Social Action Group, 2013). The intent of the ND state government to grab the 200,000 hectares in the Khana LGA (Ogoninews, 2013) pioneered the encroachment of one community on another's land. The trend of inter-community conflict in the ND continued to escalate in other areas within its most conflict-prone zones at different times.

There are a number of common instigators of conflict between communities in the ND. The question of whether these instigating factors can be considered as 'rational' depends on the specifics of each factor. The key causes of inter-community conflict in the ND - boundary disputes, oil revenue disagreements, social imbalance, economic and political manoeuvring – impact both individuals and communities (and wider constructs such as ethnic groups) as a whole. According to Ukiwo, ethnic marginalisation is the fundamental driver of conflict and conflict is propelled by the wider ethnic group (Ukiwo, 2007). On the other hand, Ikelegbe and Akpan argue that it is individuals that initiate inter-community conflicts for economic (Ikelegbe, 2006) and political (Akpan, 2010) reasons. Ethnic groups constitute an identity wider than the community and multiple NDCs exist within the territorial extent of an ethnic group (Alagoa, 2005), therefore two ethnic groups engaging in conflict will be rightly described as inter-ethnic conflict. However, such inter-ethnic conflict according to Ukiwo can degenerate into inter-community conflict, thereby establishing one way in which inter-community conflicts start. For example, the inter-community conflict between Okere-Urhobo and Okere-Itsikiri in 2003 is described as an inter-ethnic conflict between the Urhobo and Itsekiri ethnic groups that degenerated into violent conflict between their two constituent's communities (Ukiwo, 2007; Agbegbedia, 2013).

Another way in which conflicts start, whilst similar to the first, is conflict between individual members, which can be termed inter-personal conflict. According to Ikelegbe and Akpan, this inter-personal conflict can escalate into inter-community conflict when a whole community are involved. For example, from an economic perspective, Ikelegbe argues that MNCs' stakeholders and politicians instigate conflict between NDCs through raising false rumours, i.e. offensive and alarming information that infuriates communities, in order to maximise their profits through scarcity of petroleum products and inflation of prices which becomes possible under conflict circumstances (Ikelegbe, 2006). According to him, such individuals' (MNC's

stakeholders and politicians) interests clashes when they belong to different communities thereby leading to inter-personal dispute. Thus, whilst a few individuals instigate conflict, it is the NDCs that finds themselves involved in violence. Similarly, from a political viewpoint Akpan contends that politician sets up conflict between NDCs for them to prove a point of insecurity which they use as a campaigning advantage against their incumbent opponent by promising to instil peace if they are voted into power (Akpan, 2010). This exemplifies an inter-personal dispute between politicians that manifests in the form of inter-community conflict.

The ways in which inter-personal disputes do, or in some cases do not, transmute into inter-community conflicts depends on the particularities of the communities, personalities and causes of conflict. For example, the Okere-Urhobo and Okere-Itsekiri inter-community conflict in 2003 centred on a dispute between both communities over the numbers of wards accounting for votes needed to acquire the Delta South Senatorial district seat; the Nembe-Ogbolomabiri and Nembe-Bassambiri inter-community dispute in mid-2002 and 2003 over ownership of the oil rich land of Nembe; the violent contention between Kere-bangha and Nyowi-bangha in 2007 over farmland; and the fierce conflict between Luusue-Sogho and Kaani 1 in 2011 over land grab blamed on Luusue-Sogho administrative members. In these cases, communities made conscious and rational group decisions to enter into conflict in order to protect their status. Access to oil-rich land and farmland.

On the other hand, examples such as the Owhor and Effurun-Otor inter-community conflict in 2003 which started as a result of a minor disagreement concerning a love relationship between two male youths that had a disagreement over a female friend, whom they both desired to accompany; and the inter-community dispute between Ogunu and Ogbuwangue in 2008 over the disagreement between the families of E. A. Okorodudu from Ogunu and A. V. Deduwa from Ugbuwangue on the ownership of a piece of land on the Ogunu and Ugbuwangue

borderline are cases where communities become drawn into conflict that were started by a few of the communities' members.

However, even conflicts that have their origin in inter-personal disputes can become long-standing and virulent inter-community disputes, the Ogunu and Ogbuwangue conflict began in 1976 (Vanguard, 2008). There is an element of rationality and self-interest on the part of the community in supporting what began as an inter-personal dispute in that the whole community benefits from the oil operations' levy paid by the relevant MNC to the community. Also, since 2001 violent confontations have occurred between Owhor and Effurun-Otor communities over disputed boundaries (Vanguard, 2003), which triggers inter-community conflict over minor issues like love relationship conflict between members from opposite NDCs. The rationality for Owhor and Effurun-Otor to support this is that both NDCs have a history of conflict and a community pride that they constantly protect. Thus, whether it is a rational decision made by a 'community' as an autonomous entity, instigated by the ethnic group or communities drawn into conflicts that have already been started by a few of its members, the underlying factor is that NDCs engage themselves in conflict for the benefits of the entire community irrespective of the immediate causes.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates how the ND's local government system of LGAs, forces NDCs to socially, economically and politically interact within the same geographical and political space. It sets out the constitutional obligations and limitations LGAs usurp over the resolution of inter-community conflict and NDCs' social, economic and political affairs. Furthermore, it explores the connectivity between the concepts of intergroup and inter-community, and explains how social, economic and political factors can motivate intergroup and/or inter-community conflict. The chapter investigates why the ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers are the most conflict-prone areas in the ND and as such represent a highly suitable case for the study of inter-community conflict. It examines the timeline of key events from 2003 to 2014, and explores how inter-community conflict has a destructive impact in the ND. Finally, it analyses whether it is a rational decision made by an NDC as an autonomous collective entity set up by the ethnic group or a few of its members that draws a community into conflict. The chapter determines that inter-community conflict erupts either through the rational decision made by an NDC, ethnic disagreements or that a community is drawn into conflict by a few of its members engaging in inter-personal disputes with members of a rival community.

The following chapter marks the beginning of the chapters analysing the empirical data on the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND. It defines and delineates communities in the ND, showing how they resemble, and at same time differ, from other forms of groups. Chapter 5 investigates how the study's contextualising of NDCs' nature contrasts to existing scholars' views in the subject area. The next chapter seeks to contribute to the definition of NDCs.

Chapter 5: Defining Niger Delta Communities

Introduction

The previous chapter discusses the setting within which NDCs exist in the ND. It sets out the institutional context, LGAs' constitutional role and limitations of jurisdiction over inter-community affairs, the relationship between intergroup and inter-community conflict, explores the specifics of the most conflict-prone ND states, outlines a timeline of inter-community conflict in the ND and sets out how inter-community conflict starts. However, to make sense of this context, a concrete understanding of what defines and delineates an NDC is required for the study. This chapter seeks to define NDCs by exploring gaps in the scholarly literature on community conflict in the ND. The existing literature's definitions – that NDCs are villages, towns, clans and kingdoms, family kinship units, sub-ethnic groups, or based on common interests, as well as the understanding of NDCs as pre-colonial autonomous villages – are diverse and did not connect ancient and modern communities needed to achieve the aim and objective of the study. The literature does not take into consideration either the NDCs' traditional and political delineations, or the difference between their status prior to and after contact with Europeans. These two elements are at the heart of this study's critique of the existing scholarly conceptualisation of NDCs.

The chapter is structured to investigate arguments that go beyond the understanding of NDCs as kinship units (Peterside, 2007), villages (Ite, 2004), towns (Omeje, 2004), clans (Bisina, 2003), kingdoms (Ibaba, 2009), sub-ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2006) and people with common interests (Frynas, 2000). It evaluates the divergent interpretations of these scholars, and incorporates the evidence and data gathered from respondents interviewed as part of the research for this study to disaggregate the plethora of overlapping terms for NDCs. To accomplish this, it explores synonymous features found in the disaggregation, and connects

them in terms of how they reflect the formation of LGAs' geographical and political structures. It then deliberates on arguments that current NDCs are not the same as ancient autonomous communities in the ND, as claimed by Alagoa, but that both sustain similar characteristics of autonomy. This is explored by examining communities that existed prior to European advent, which introduced the current regime of LGAs presiding over present NDCs. It also explores Alagoa's argument that NDCs are ancient clans or kingdoms (Alagoa, 1971) by investigating the relationship between the two – whether modern communities are the same as, or constitute geographical and traditional structures of, ancient clans or kingdoms. Furthermore, the chapter scrutinises the argument that NDCs are formed based on characteristics such as overpopulation, disagreements between groups, drive to maintain certain traditions, and administrations. This goes beyond Peterside's argument that communities are only formed out of kinship lineage (Peterside, 2007), and Ikelegbe's claim that they are essentially shaped by sub-ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2006). To consolidate the investigation, the research analyses NDC formation processes and the forces that necessitate their subsequent emergence. The chapter also proposes that the thesis' definition and delineation of an NDC is aimed at achieving the aim and objectives of the thesis. It then concludes by bringing the analysis together, drawing conclusions and at the same time providing the necessary background information for the following Chapter 6, which seeks to analyse the characteristics of inter-community conflict in the ND.

5.2 Assessing Divergent Definitions of Modern Niger Delta Communities

The term 'community' is an existing phenomenon familiar both to those who live in the ND and scholars exploring the nature of conflict between these communities. Whilst limited literature exists on conflict between NDCs, there is a continuing problem of definition, with individual scholars defining NDCs as villages, towns, clans and kingdoms. Ite, arguing in favour of Shell as a major development facilitator in the area, uses the term 'community' to

mean 'village', referring to Ughotun village as a community that has benefited from Shell's activities (2004). Omeje, while exploring conflict between the FGN and NDCs as the 'oilification of extra-oil conflict', meaning that the FGN connects every uprising in the ND with oil in order justify the militarisation of the region, uses the term 'community' to mean a 'town' when he refers to Odi town as a community (2004). Thus, NDCs are understood by Ite and Omeje to be either villages or towns. This does not correspond with the understanding of the ordinary ND indigene, since a village or town can be hardly distinguished from a kinship unit, clan, kingdom or city in the region. For example, as analysed in Chapter 2, clans and kingdoms are described as possessing the same characteristics, meaning they could easily be interchanged depending on whether the group in question has a king or clan head arrangement. Moreover, some clans or kingdoms signify particular ethnic groups, e.g. the Itsekiri kingdom is also known as the Itsekiri ethnic group, since all Itsekiri ethnic indigenes belong to the same kingdom. Thus, apart from NDCs being taken to mean villages and towns by scholars, they are also viewed as clans and kingdoms that have various meanings, thereby presenting the usage of the term 'community' as faulty and inaccurate.

The use of the term 'community' in the scholarly literature seems arbitrary, and individual scholars do not seek to justify their use of the term. Whilst Ikelegbe (2005) considers Otorogu, Egbema, Agalabiri and Agbichiama to be communities, Joel Bisina (2003) understands these to be clans. Bisina uses the clan of Odimodi and the kingdom of Ogulagha to mean communities, as he writes that both communities entered into violent conflict in 2001 over the ownership of the oil terminal in Forcados, operated by SPDC (2003). This differs from Ibaba, who, when analysing community violence and sustainable development in Bayelsa, describes NDCs as kingdoms, mentioning Nembe-Ogbolomabri and Nembe-Gbasamabri as engaging in inter-community conflict in 2003 (Ibaba, 2009). In contrast, Ikelegbe equates communities to

sub-ethnic groups when he states that the protests of the Ogoni sub-ethnic communities in Rivers were suppressed between 1990 and 1996 (2006).

Although 65% of ND community leaders classify villages in the region as NDCs, there appears to be no proper definition as to what differentiates villages from towns. According to Chris Nalaguo a Niger Delta community activist, a group of people can dictate whether their community should be a village or a town.

> The Nembe areas are towns, while the Apie areas of Agudama and Akenfa are villages. So, it depends on what the people want to identify themselves as. There are people who prefer calling themselves towns instead of villages. There is no proper definition of what distinguish a town from a village, so that is it. Importantly, they are discrete communities (Nalaguo, April 2014).

Accordingly, Bright Okumagba the Secretary of Okere-Urhobo Community, Warri South LGA, ND state of Delta, stresses that a community can be referred to as a town, citing places such as Etegene, Okpokiti and Edjeba (Okumagba, March 2014). Contrarily, Henry Hope a Community Development Officer, Academic Associates Peaceworks, ND state of Delta, believes that once a village is subsumed by a town, it automatically becomes a community, but remains a village if isolated (Hope, April 2014). The significance of Hope's interpretation is that towns can have a group of villages within them.

Whilst respondents put forward conflicting views of what defines a town and a village, in the context of defining a community it seems that both can be considered a NDC, depending on their characteristics. This further confuses the use of the term 'kingdom' in the context of defining communities. Ibaba uses the term 'town' to describe Nembe-Ogbolomabri and Nembe-Gbasamabri when describing an inter-community conflict in 2003 (2009). Contrarily, these towns/NDCs of Nembe-Ogbolomabri and Nembe-Gbasamabri are also designated as

kingdoms (Nalaguo, April 2014), which makes determining what characteristics a place as a community complex. Apart from the view that these two Nembe towns/kingdoms do not have a village status, places that claim to have village status in the ND have also been described by Emmanuel Onobrakpeya the President General of Okere-Urhobo Kingdom, Warri South LGA, ND state of Delta, as no more than a cluster of extended families living in a part of the village (Onobrakpeya, April 2014). Thus, since the descriptions of these terms differ from one another, the characteristics that could portray a village, town or clan/kingdom as an NDC depend on the features they share, and that equally represents a community in the ND. However, such features will be difficult to prove, as villages, towns, clans and kingdoms can extend to two or more LGAs, which goes beyond an NDC normally located in one local government jurisdiction (see section 4.2). Considering this, it is possible that some villages, towns, clans or kingdoms could portray an NDC whilst others would not, i.e. in the case of any of these categories extending to two or more LGAs, it would be considered as going beyond the community status, which should normally be in one LGA. However, further analysis of NDCs' ambiguity is needed to determine a valid definition.

A further layer of ambiguity relates to the geography of the ND. The status of villages, towns, clans and kingdoms in the ND differs from one place to another. What is a kingdom to the Ijaw ethnic group could be a town to the Itsekiri ethnicity, and consequently, could occupy more than one LGA.

> The Itsekiris do not name their communities as clans or kingdoms, they only have theirs as towns. For instance, in Warri Southwest and Warri North LGAs, the Eweres from the Itsekiri ethnic group call themselves the Ewere town wherever they are located. But, the Ijaws have four kingdoms in Warri Southwest LGAs, namely Gbaramatu, Ogbe-ijoh, Sagba and Teburu. Each kingdom has its own town.

These Ijaw kingdoms also extend to places in Bayelsa state, and are called clans in those places (Hope, April 2014).

This indicates that in areas where ethnic groups such as the Itsekiris dominate, there are mainly towns rather than kingdoms or clans (Hope, April 2014), unlike the territory that is dominated by the Ijaws, consisting of kingdoms and clans such as the Nembe kingdom and Biseni clan (Ikelegbe, March 2014; Nalaguo, April 2014). This then forms a complex scenario when generalising the definition of an NDC as a village, town, clan or kingdom. In the ND, clans and kingdoms are terms used interchangeably, with an area having a clan head understood to be a clan (Igiran, April 2014), and a place having a king described as a kingdom (Ikelegbe, April 2014). However, not all clans appear to have just one ruler. A clan may be a federation or centralised system of governance, where the ruling class are members of the several communities that make up the clan (Ikelegbe, April 2014). Thus, the meaning of clan in the ND is different from the dictionary meaning that states it to be a group of people of common descent. As stated previously, in the context of this research, and in keeping with Alagoa, clans in the ND are understood to be a group of people with common identity such as language, culture and tradition, as well as being headed by a clan head (Alagoa, 2005). In this manner, a clan can also mean a sub-ethnic group, which further complicates the understanding of an NDC when referring to it as a clan or sub-ethnic group. Since clans share similar characteristics with sub-ethnic groups, it is important to recall the study's understanding of an ethnic group as a large communal group possessing characteristics such as the same language, culture and customs (Ikelegbe, 2005).

'Ethnic' in this sense connotes the dictionary meaning, 'a people belonging to or deriving from the same racial, religious or linguistic traditions' (Dictionary.com, 2017). Ethnic groups are bigger entities, which encompass clans and kingdoms, although ethnic groups that are clans or kingdoms themselves abound, i.e. as analysed earlier, the Itsekiri ethnic group is also a

kingdom. Examples of other ethnic groups include the Ijaws, Urhobos, Ogonis, Bini and Ikwerre (Ojuwu, March 2014; Otavie, April 2014). Some of these ethnic groups have one clan head or king with various communities under them. An example of this is the Olu, or king, of the Itsekiri ethnic group, where all the Itsekiri communities are under him (Iniku, April 2014). This is different from the Ijaw ethnic group, which has the Apie, Biseni, Okordia and other clans containing communities under them (Nalaguo, April 2014; Nengi, April 2014; Tamunor, April 2014), as well as the Urhobo ethnic group, which has various kingdoms such as Jesse, Agbarha, Olomu and others having communities under them (Okpeya, March 2014; Okumagba, March 2014; Oyoroko, March 2014). Figure 5.1 shows examples of ethnic groups in the ND state of Delta.

Figure 5.1 Ethnic groups in the ND state of Delta

Source: Global Security News (2007)

Extrapolating the respondents' comments, ethnic groups can be classified as clans or kingdoms, which invariably overlap with sub-ethnic groups, or parts of an entire ethnic group. Thus, except for ethnic groups such as the Itsekiri, which constitutes a kingdom, the Ijaw and Urhobo sustain sub-ethnic groups that are also classified as clans and kingdoms. For example, the

Urhobo ethnic group has Okpe kingdom, Uvwie kingdom and Udu kingdom. What can be deduced here is that, though these categories vary in status from one place to another, there are villages, towns, clans, kingdoms and sub-ethnic groups that can be classified as NDCs and those that cannot. However, scholars such as Peterside, Ukiwo and Frynas, who do not utilise such terms, view NDCs as smaller units such as kinship units, people settled in locations bearing identified names, and those that came together based on common interests.

Peterside argues that NDCs are composed of kinship units having the same dialect, living in their own territory, and administered by a presiding elder male chief with the assistance of other co-equal elder chiefs (2007). This contends that NDCs represent a kinship lineage that can trace its descent to one origin; however, it is pertinent to note that NDCs exist in the ND, just as cities, states and countries exist around the world with known names. Ukiwo's assessment of the causes of the violent strife between the Ugborodo and Gbaramatu NDCs in 1976 is an example of a situation where the author acknowledges that the names of these places are the Ugborodo and Gbaramatu communities, since they have their names on signs at their entrances (2007), as is the convention of other towns around the world. Frynas, scrutinising community conflict erupting from anti-oil protests in the ND, mentioned community categories as village communities, rural communities and oil-producing communities (2000), thereby separating communities based on common interest. Such a basis of common interest indicates that communities can either be in a village, rural or oil-producing structure. Thus, though scholarly debates ensued regarding community conflicts in the ND, the definition of NDCs has often been confused by these scholars with kinship units and places with community signposts, as well as interest groups. The problem ascribed to such complex misunderstanding is that the word 'community' connotes a group, and both are considered abstract in themselves. Thus, communities and groups being abstract terms highlights the definitional ambiguity of NDCs.

Respondents associate definitional ambiguity with the NDCs' lack of constitutional status. For many leaders from the NDCs, it is the absence of constitutional authority that marginalises their communities, with precedence resting with LGAs, the states and the FGN (Odje, March 2014). Taking this further, it might be argued that the Nigerian constitution deliberately negates political powers previously exercised by NDCs prior to colonisation, reducing the communities to 'traditional' vestiges (Eyakade, March 2014). Moreover, NDCs are not given the legal authority to sue, unless they are being represented by or acting under a registered organisation, company or other governmental body (Duumaa, April 2014). These voices from the NDCs emphasise the perceived absence of salience imposed by the constitutional vacuum regarding NDCs. Accordingly, sections 1 and 2 of the Nigerian constitution and the Supreme Court in Abia state uphold that the country is made up of 36 states of the federation and the 778 local governments, with no subsequent politically constitutional municipalities (General Provisions Act, SN (1999) C1, Ss 1&2). The ramification of this judgement is that NDCs are of a different quality in law from LGAs, states and the FGN, whose status and powers are clear in Nigerian constitutional law. Thus, the constitution is of little help when it comes to accurately defining what constitutes an NDC.

The use of the term 'community' by Peterside, Ukiwo and Frynas is contingent on the notion that it is an English word, rather than a translation of a word(s) from a local language(s). The dictionary definition of the word 'community' is 'a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common' (Oxford Living Dictionary, 2017). Thus, the term 'community' in the sense of Niger Delta *Community* has become a catch-all in the scholarly literature to incorporate villages, towns, kingdoms, clans, sub-ethnic groups, kinship units, places with identified names, and people with common interests. This broad understanding of the term 'community' extends to those leading and living in NDCs. One respondent understands an NDC to be a group of people dominating a fishing and/or farming settlement

with clearly defined boundaries from one another (Eyakade, March 2014). Others define NDCs as a group of people having common identity such as culture, dialect and descent (Iniku, April 2014). Another describes NDCs as geographical entities within an LGA (Ighoriemuse, April 2014). NDCs such as Agudama and Akenfa of Yenagoa LGA in Bayelsa are described by another as 'district autonomous villages', which belonged to the Apie sub-ethnic group before the creation of states in Nigeria (Nengi, April 2014). Nengi's definition stresses the fusion of communities into ethnic groups or towns. Others are contentious about such a view, envisaging that there are communities within communities, giving the notion that community is all-embracing, and that community and the interpretation of its conceptualisation is subjective (Nalaguo, April 2014).

Should the term NDC be taken as articulating a multi-faceted, complex concept or should the term be a catch-all that does not have a strict definition? Section 28 of the Nigerian constitution states that 'a Nigerian citizen belongs to a community that is indigenous to Nigeria' (General Provisions Act, SN (1999) C1, S 28), thereby seemingly recognising communities as concrete entities in law. According to Mudiagha Odje, a Niger Delta human rights advocate, the constitution does not define a community, but the Supreme Court has held a community to be people of common interests, genealogy and pedigree over a relative time, or even from time immemorial, who have the same characteristics, tradition and culture and who still share and have a common interest (Odje, April 2014). The perception of Odje and other respondents in the last two paragraphs regarding what constitutes an NDC can be construed as villages, towns, kingdoms, clans, sub-ethnic groups, and people with common interests that combine to make up the territory of a LGA. In other words, places that do not make up the territory of an LGA, irrespective of their status, cannot be NDCs. For example, a large kingdom that cuts across LGAs or ND states, such as the Itsekiri kingdom, cannot be termed an NDC, whilst a small kingdom such as Effurun-oOor, which is a constituent part of territory of the Ughelli South

LGA, is considered a community. The same scenario applies to the other categories such as villages or towns.

This analysis builds on the ambiguities found in the scholarly literature, which define NDCs to be villages (Ite, 2004), towns (Omeje, 2004), clans (Bisina, 2003), kingdoms (Ibaba, 2009), ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2006), family units (Peterside, 2007) and groups with common interests (Frynas, 2000). Respondents subscribe to the above categories as representing NDCs; their perception suggests that these categories differ from one place to another. A village in Delta can be a town in Bayelsa. However, the key mutual defining characteristic is that, regardless of the specific descriptor, NDCs should constitute a part of the territory of a single LGA.

The third tier of Nigeria's governmental authority, after the FGN and states, are LGAs; there are 185 LGAs in the ND containing an estimated 13,329 communities (NDDC Masterplan, 2006; Deltastate.com, 2014). The complexity of the relationship between communities within an LGA is demonstrated by the location of the administrative hub. For example, Gokana LGA in Rivers consists of seventeen communities, with the Kpor NDC as its central hub (Uzoribarima, April 2014). Among other NDCs forming the Gokana LGA are the K-Dere and B-Dere communities (Tombare, April 2014). Similarly, the Yenagoa LGA of Bayelsa is structured into seventeen constituent communities, with the Yenagoa town serving as its central administrative hub (Nengi, April 2014). Respondents' comments suggest that Yenagoa town is a name that emerged owing to its fast-emerging growth as a metropolis. However, it is composed of the Apie and Atissa communities, which together, alongside Agudama, Akenfa and other NDCs, constitute the Yenagoa LGA (Nengi, April 2014). Among these communities located in Yenagoa town, Apie is said to be the location of the central administrative hub (Nalaguo, April 2014). This type of scenario is reflected in Warri South LGA, which has the constituent NDCs Okere-Urhobo, Okere-Itsekiri, Ogunu, Ekuruode-Urhobo, Ekuruode-

Itsekiri, Ugbuangbue, Agbassa and Igbudu, yet has Warri town as its administrative hub (Okumagba, March 2014). Warri town itself is composed of the Okere-Urhobo and Okere communities, with the latter being the location for administrative activities (Ojuwu, March 2014).

The location of the administrative hub can be a source of friction between NDCs. The Warri Southwest LGA comprises multiple NDCs, known locally as *Isenaibes* (Hope, April 2014), with the Ogbe-ijoh community serving as its administrative hub. Thus, the attempt to relocate the Warri Southwest LGA administrative hub from the Ogbe-ijoh community to the Ogidigben community in 1997 sparked a major crisis (Agbegbedia, 2014). Whilst the instances of Ogbe-ijoh and Kpor are examples of NDCs serving as administrative hubs of their respective LGAs, towns such as Yenagoa and Warri go beyond the status of NDC and, at the same time, act as the administrative hubs of the Yenagoa and Warri South LGAs. However, whilst the towns of Yenagoa and Warri contain multiple communities, the actual location of administrative activities is within a certain community – the Apie community in Yenagoa town and the Okere-Itsekiri community in Warri town. Thus, evaluation of the analysis determines that NDCs constitute the geographical and political parts of LGAs. Furthermore, the analysis of NDCs as the geographical and political parts of LGAs shows that the former does not have independence from the latter.

Referring to NDCs' dependence on LGAs, Odje notes that 'Niger Delta Communities have different characteristics, laws and administration but they are not actually autonomous…they, to some extent, share their dependence because they do not have independence from the local government' (Odje, April 2014). Other respondents state that community leaders are consistently agitated regarding NDCs' political independence from the LGAs, going so far, on occasion, as to sequester oil found within their boundaries (Eyakade, March 2014; Otavie, April 2014). This is with the aim of creating a further layer of administration in Nigeria,

whereby NDCs maintain a relationship with their respective LGAs akin to the relationships between the LGAs and the states, and the states and the FGN (Anyanwu, 1999). Due to the NDCs' agitation regarding community participation at the level of constitutional governance, the Nigerian government tasked what is called the Community Development Committee (CDC) – a body that deals with external matters such as business with MNCs, private companies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and government development projects – to meet such ambitions (Odje, April 2014). Further effort by state governments to address community agitation regarding constitutional authority brought about the ND state of Rivers' creation of administrative units under its LGAs, in the form of a chieftaincy unit, headed by a government-recognised ruler called Amenabo, with the assistance of community chiefs, the CDC and the Youth Executive Council (YEC) (Variside, April 2014). Thus, the recognition of NDCs' agitation regarding constitutional autonomy by the Nigerian government, suggests that the former has distinct spheres of authority and activities within itself, even though they do not have political independence from the LGAs. Thus, whilst the three tiers of Nigerian government, namely the FGN, states and LGAs, are the constitutional political structures, the recognition of NDCs' agitation for municipal powers is borne out of the notion that communities were autonomous prior to the existence of the current governmental arrangements. This suggests that NDCs' nature in the past and present shows substantial differences of autonomy and non-autonomy.

5.3 NDCs' Nature: Past and Present

According to Alagoa (1971) and Horton (2013), prior to the first contact with Europeans in the fourteenth century, clans and kingdoms in the ND were communities with settled village structures (Alagoa, 1971), each exercising political autonomy, operating in isolation using diplomatic practices to avoid inter-community conflict, as no supreme political unit to bind them existed at that time (Horton 2013). Thus, Alagoa and Horton claim that communities were

politically autonomous prior to the arrival of European settlers. Alagoa concentrates on the western and central ND, whilst Horton focuses on the eastern ND, with both arguing that communities' autonomy in the ND predates encounters with the Europeans, and the ensuing impact of missionaries, international trade, slavery, imperialism, colonialism, and the subsequent establishment of the FGN, the states and LGAs (Horton, 2013; Alagoa, 1971).

Alagoa, analysing community development in the western and central ND prior to the European encounter, argues that unity within an ND community had lain primarily in the possession of a common dialect and culture (Alagoa, 1971). These communities constituted autonomous political units operating a patriarchy system with the village assembly, or *Amagula*, comprising adult males as the highest political authority (Alagoa, 1971). Jones, assessing the history of the south-eastern ND people, argues that pre-colonial Ijaw and Ibibio's communities, currently located in Rivers, were primitive sovereign states in an anarchic environment, consistently involved in boundary disputes (Jones, 1963). Although inter-village disputes were often mediated by the *Pere* (High Priest) of the *Ibe* (gods), his role was more religious than political (Alagoa, 1971). Nonetheless, it gives credence to the comparison between these communities and proto-sovereign states capable of engaging in diplomatic practices. This seemingly supports Horton's assessment of the pre-colonial eastern ND region as a quasi-confederation comprising political sects upholding a monocratic system of its own, which an influential political leader tries unsuccessfully to pull together (Horton, 2013). Thus, these groups understood to be current NDCs are described as autonomous clans and kingdoms classed as ancient communities in the ND. These postulations by Alagoa, Jones and Horton are confusing and incorrect, as current NDCs do not precisely reflect autonomous clans and kingdoms. If there is any relationship between current NDCs and ancient autonomous clans and kingdoms, it is that the NDCs are considered geographical and traditional parts of the ancient autonomous clans and kingdoms.

According to Iniku a compound Chief in Luusue-Sogho community, Khana LGA, ND state of Rivers, clans and kingdoms can be ethnic or sub-ethnic groups that inhabit their own territorial communities (Iniku, April 2014). Others perceive NDCs as sub-ethnic groups that occupy a given territory within the overarching territory of the ethnic group to which they belong (Nalaguo, April 2014; Okpeya, March 2014). Accordingly, some respondents argue that some ethnic groups such as the Urhobos, Ijaws and the Itsekiris more closely resemble sovereign states than NDCs (Omoseye, November 2016). Instead, NDCs are viewed as subordinate and owing allegiance to the larger ethnic group to which they belong (Omavonwa, November 2016). Thus, as clans and kingdoms are categorised as ethnic or sub-ethnic groups depending on their size, NDCs are classed as smaller versions of sub-ethnic groups. However, clans and kingdoms are perceived to be in different categories, as some have NDCs as their geographical territories, while others are NDCs themselves. Comments from NDC leaders indicate that clans and kingdoms have communities as their geographical territory. Thus, Bekesu states that 'Kilama is among the 10 communities under the Biseni clan that came into existence long before I was born, that is how they normally call it, Biseni Oyakri meaning Biseni is in 10 places' (in Bayelsa) (Bekesu, April 2014). Similarly, Okumagba comments that 'Igbudu, Agbassa, Otegene, Okpokiti, Edjeba, Ogunu, are communities within the Warri axis that are under the Agbarha kingdom' (in Delta) (Okumagba, March 2014). Variside a youth secretary of the Luusue-Sogho Community Council of Chiefs, Gokana LGA, ND state of Rivers, states that the 'Luusue-sogho community is one of the six communities that make up the Sogho clan, we are predominantly farmers, a part of the Gokana LGA council' (in Rivers) (Variside, April 2014). Together, these accounts support the idea that NDCs are geographical and traditional sections of clans and kingdoms.

Other respondents argue that not all kingdoms have communities as their geographical and traditional sections. A kingdom such as Effurun-Otor possesses no constituent community

within its territory. Thus, Bernard Eyakade the Vice President General of Effurun-Otor Community, Ughelli South LGA, ND state of Delta, believes that 'Effurun-Otor is simultaneously a kingdom and a community, unlike neighbouring kingdoms such as Olomu that have 14 communities and Oghieanvwen that controls 30 communities' (Eyakade, March 2014). Such a type of kingdom, which is perceived as having a community status, is typical of an emerging community that attains the status of a kingdom, such as the Okere-Urhobo NDC, which became independent of the Okere community in 2003. In Okumagba's words, 'the Otorere, the Okis, the Iyaras are families and compounds that constitute the Okere-Urhobo community which is also a kingdom' (Okumagba, March 2014). Thus, Effurun-otor and Okere-Urhobo are considered kingdoms because both have kings at their administrative apexes, and are perceived as NDCs based on the notion that they do not possess communities that serve as their geographical and traditional sections. The lack of communities acting as geographical and traditional sections within both kingdoms makes them NDCs themselves, because such conditions meant that they become geographical and political segments of a single LGA. For example, the absence of communities acting as their geographical and traditional sections ensures that, whilst Effurun-Otor is a geographical and political subdivision of the Ughelli South LGA, Okere-Urhobo represents the same status in the Warri South LGA, hence both kingdoms are NDCs themselves.

This differs from other types of clans and kingdoms that have NDCs, which do not only serve as their geographical and traditional sections, but also serve as the geographical and political subdivision of different LGAs or ND states, as the case may be. An example of this is the Itsekiri kingdom, which has NDCs serving as its geographical and traditional sections, spread over the Warri South, Warri Southwest and Warri North LGAs, as well as between the ND states of Delta, Edo and Ondo, respectively (Bisina, 2003; Deltastate.com, 2014). Similarly, the Apie clan have communities serving as its geographical and traditional sections in the likes

of the Apie, Agudama and Akenfa in Yenagoa LGA in Bayelsa, as well as the Obiama NDC in Rivers (Nalaguo, April 2014). This indicates that NDCs – whether bearing a clan or kingdom status – are categorically subdivisions of LGAs. Thus, clans and kingdoms that are not classified as communities, such as the Apie clan and Itsekiri kingdom, have NDCs as their geographical and traditional sections, which are also geographical and political subdivisions of LGAs. It is these clans and kingdoms that Alagoa, Horton and Jones claim to be ancient NDCs that predate the advent of Europeans in the ND, which at the time were completely autonomous in their political and administrative activities. Thus, Alagoa, Jones and Horton's definitions of ancient communities in the ND do not represent what defines current NDCs, because clans and kingdoms now includes NDCs as its geographical and traditional sections. There are exceptions, as in the cases of the Effurun-Otor and Okere-Urhobo kingdoms, which are NDCs themselves based on the notion that they lack geographical and traditional communities, making them geographical and political subdivisions of LGAs. However, the difference between ancient and current NDCs is that whilst ancient NDCs do not constitute the subdivisions of LGAs, current communities do.

Notwithstanding, current NDCs appear to sustain the same autonomous feature of ancient communities, with the view that they both possess the same characteristics, except ancient communities in the ND existed prior to the advent of Europeans, which introduced the present supreme political authority of the FGN, states and LGAs. Thus, clans and kingdoms that existed prior to European advent in the ND had the same structure as current NDCs, with most becoming the way they are, having constituent communities due to growth and expansion over the years (Alagoa, March 2014). Whilst such expansion accounts for clans and kingdoms having constituent communities, kingdoms such as Effurun-Otor, which predated European advent in the ND, remained at NDC status because it failed to expand in terms of having constituencies, as others did. This means that whilst some ancient clans and kingdoms

expanded from ancient NDC status into having traditional independent constituent communities, those that failed to expand continue to maintain a community status. This highlights the idea that new NDCs are formed out of old NDCs, and therefore establishes the parent and child community, which are completely independent of one another. This will be elaborated upon in a later section of the chapter.

Moreover, respondents' comments conveyed that current clans and kingdoms have no constitutional powers over their constituent communities, and that NDCs are administratively independent from clans and kingdoms. Thus, Oyoroko the President General of Owhor Community, Ughelli South LGA, ND state of Delta's statement was that:

> The Owhor-Olomu community is autonomous. The laws that govern the community are made by the community itself. The constitution it abides by is quite different from other communities situated within the Olomu kingdom. If there is a conflict between two communities in the Olomu kingdom, it can be resolved by the council of chiefs at the kingdom level. Otherwise every community is autonomous and is not liable to the kingdom, under the Nigerian constitution. (Oyoroko, March 2014).

The nominal nature of clans and kingdoms over NDCs is also indicative in Odje's statement: 'in Nigeria, the basis for interaction by government and agencies is between the local, state and federal governments…traditional kingdoms, clans or communities are not given legal capacity to sue, unless they are represented by a registered organisation, company or governmental body' (Odje, April 2014). Thus, clans and kingdoms are considered dormant in usurping political authority over their geographical and traditional constituencies, and NDCs are viewed as partaking as constituents of the clan or kingdom with the mere reason of keeping the traits of their origin (Bekesu, April 2014; Laka, April 2014). Analysis shows that current NDCs

would have maintained the same ancient community autonomy if they had not been subjected to current LGAs introduced by Western political systems. This is contingent on the notion that newly emerged NDCs possess the same characteristics of ancient autonomous kingdoms or clans, and they also constitute a geographical and political part of a single LGA. Considering this, the absence of LGAs in the ND would mean newly emerged and current NDCs would be autonomous, because there would be no superior authority curtailing their independence. Thus, since the nature of current NDCs characterises ancient autonomous and independent clans and kingdoms, current NDCs are inherently autonomous.

Based on the analysis of respondents' evidence regarding the similarities and dissimilarities between current and ancient NDCs, communities are categorised as having the same features of clans and kingdoms in the ND. Augustine Ikelegbe a Principal Lecturer at the University of Benin, ND-state of Edo, attempting to explain the features of old and new NDCs, expresses that:

> Most of the current communities we are talking about are old communities, they were already existing before the Europeans came to Nigeria. However, the new communities that started existing after the advent of Europeans were already in Nigeria, and regarded as settlements that existed within ancient communities. (Ikelegbe, April 2014).

This suggests that current NDCs existed prior to European advent, accruing autonomous status before the introduction of LGAs. However, new NDCs such as the Okere-Urhobo, created in 2003, existed within the Okere community (Uku, April 2014), as well as the Kilama community, founded in 1927, which existed within the Biseni clan as part of the Tein community (Igiran, April 2014). It is believed that before these communities emerged as independent communities, they were a group of people that constantly moved from one place

to another (Hope, April 2014). This carries the notion that this group of people existed prior to the advent of Europeans, and therefore existed within parent communities that predate recent political dispensation.

However, there are NDCs who historically were part of other communities due to agricultural practices. Among the Ijaw sub-ethnic group, there were communities located along the ND coastal line that became independent because of internal conflict between settlement leaders within the NDC to which they belonged. Therefore, certain groups within the Ijaw sub-ethnic group moved to separate places in order to maintain peace, thereby creating their own independent communities from the parent community to which they initially belonged (Otavie, April 2014). This shows that, although these communities have the same lineage, the parent community has no constitutional authority over the community that emerged. Thus, over time the newly emerged community has become a parent community to other NDCs. These parent communities are also described as clans or kingdoms when they have a clan head or king, which can also be the case for newly emerged communities if they find themselves in the same situation. An example of a newly emerged community that attained kingdom status is the Okere-Urhobo community (Okumagba, March 2014), with its parent community being Okere, an NDC without clan or kingdom status, since it has no lone clan head or king. On the other hand, the Kilama community, which was founded in 1927 from the Biseni clan, did not attain the status of a clan or kingdom since it did not have a clan head or king (Igiran, April 2014). Thus, a newly emerged NDC can attain the status of a clan or kingdom while its parent community remains a community, while, also, a parent NDC can have the status of a clan or kingdom while its newly emerged NDC maintains community status. Therefore, what distinguishes an NDC from clans or kingdoms is that NDCs are geographical and political parts of LGAs, as well as the geographical and traditional parts of clans or kingdoms; some NDCs are clans or kingdoms themselves: a clan or kingdom expanding over two or more LGAs is not

considered a community. This being the case, current NDCs are perceived as characterising ancient autonomous clans and kingdoms, and are considered inherently autonomous, since it exists in their nature. Current NDCs being inherently autonomous means that it naturally exists within them, and that such autonomy is curtailed with the introduction of the current political dispensation that divided NDCs into different LGAs and ND states for administrative convenience by the European colonial powers.

As discussed previously, in the fourteenth century, Europeans brought Christianity, international slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, and Western education and political economy to the area. In 1960, Nigeria became independent and adopted Western politics that saw the introduction of FGN, ND states and LGAs, which subsequently undermined the traditional and political powers of NDCs. Thus, the political idea of LGAs and ND states in the ND are not home-grown, but were introduced by the Europeans and adopted by the Nigerian government, which saw the subjugation and separation of the same ethnic groups, clans, and kingdoms under different political units (Rodney, 2012). Considering the respondents' comments, the effect of separating these groups into different LGAs and ND states was to force the emergence of a whole new NDC, in the form of geographical and political constituents of the new political system of LGAs (Nalaguo, April 2014). The new political system is accused of curtailing and subduing the traditional and political autonomy that NDCs previously exercised (Igiran, April 2014). However, not all NDCs were said to have exercised political autonomy as some new communities like Okere-Urhobo were existing within the Okere-Itsekiri with no autonomy of their own (Iniku, April 2014). Thus, whilst such cases abound, it should be noted that prior to the colonisation of Europeans and the introduction of the new political dispensations in the area, ancient communities were politically autonomous (Alagoa, 1971). As an example of this, the Okere-Urhobo community, which emerged during the period of the current political dispensation, could have been taking a politically autonomous stance if

it had emerged prior to the arrival of Europeans in the area. This suggests that Okere-Urhobo, which currently holds a kingdom as well as an NDC status, would have been independent from any political subjugation. However, such political independence is currently blurred, considering that the current political dispensation does not recognise NDCs as autonomous or as having a governmental authority.

NDCs political autonomy is considered blurred because they inherently perceive themselves as independent due to their experience prior to the introduction of LGAs and ND states. NDCs' experience of political autonomy and subjugation prior to and after the Europeans' arrival in the area is reflected in Iniku's words when he said that,

> before the white men came we had traditional autonomy, but the arrival of the Europeans brought Christianity and new political administration. Although the Niger Delta man was not educated then, we were enlightened, and the only way they could curb us was to bring an umbrella of administration, a colony, so that they can control and subdue us into submitting to their whims and caprices (Iniku, April 2014).

What can be deduced from the NDCs' experience prior to and during the new political dispensation is that groups began to respond to the authorities of LGAs and ND states by consolidating themselves into newly identified communities, which since then have lost independence. In this way, several characteristics can be deduced from the way that an NDC is formed in the new political dispensation. Such characteristics include but are not limited to overpopulation, strangers living alongside a kinship lineage with the same dialect, having their own territory made up of streets or quarters, separated from one another by boundaries, different cultures and languages, community laws and administration, as well as constituting the constituents of LGAs and clans/kingdoms. Whilst these are being argued and examined as

characteristics that constitute NDCs, it is also viewed that they sustain inherent political autonomy that has been submerged by the new political dispensation. The above characteristics are the distinctive features that define an NDC as being functional for the study, differently from and as an expansion of the existing literature's understanding of what forms and defines a community in the ND.

5.4 The Establishment of a Niger Delta Community

The existing literature definition claims that NDCs are constituted or composed of kinship units having the same dialect and their own territory (Peterside 2007), and that they are essentially formed of sub-ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2006). This kind of composition can be considered as rational characteristics that make up a community in the ND. However, community leaders' comments suggest that the characteristics that make up an NDC go beyond Peterside and Ikelegbe's views. Among such characteristics put forward by respondents include that of overpopulation. The view of NDC leaders is that the factor of overpopulation is a valid reason for forming a community in the ND. As Peterside argues, communities are formed by families that are related and who trace their origin to the same descendants (Peterside, 2007). However, the respondents' comments suggest that overpopulation has forced certain people from the same family origin to separate, with some making decisions to relocate to another part of a town or to form a new community (Okumagba, April 2014). Furthermore, Okumagba implies that the Okere-Urhobo community traces its origin to Okpara-Olomu, which is in the Ughelli South LGA of Delta state, but that it relocated to its present location in Warri South LGA because of overpopulation (Okumagba, April 2014). Similarly, overpopulation is ascribed to be the main reason why the Kilama community in Yenagoa LGA exists today. This is exemplified in Rankin Igiran the Paramount Ruler of Kilama Community of Yenagoa LGA, ND state of Bayelsa words' when he said that 'initially, there were three communities namely Tein, Tebere, and Tuwon…we later had a big population expansion after 1926 whereby my

community (Kilama) was founded' (Igiran, April 2014). This type of overpopulation leading to community establishment is also described as community expansion.

The respondents' comments convey that overpopulation has seen different communities that had settlements together later become separated because of an increase in population growth that widens their location gap. The bigger communities where the smaller settlements emanate from are identified as a parent community (Otavie, April 2014). This correlates with Nalaguo,

> there are a few new communities which because of commerce, the development of new townships, oil exploration and exploitation have been founded, but it is the same people with ancestral ties from older communities. They call them new communities, new fishing villages, new farming villages but they have their origins next to them often from older communities (Nalaguo, April 2014).

Thus, this suggests that one community is formed out of another due to overpopulation. However, what is significant to each NDC, whether designated as parent or child, that makes each a community, are segments that make up an NDC. These segments are how a community is constituted, with different constituent units within each NDC having its own law.

As mentioned earlier in this section, the existing literature's definition claims that NDCs are constituted of kinship units having the same dialect, and their own territory (Peterside 2007), and that they are essentially formed of sub-ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2006). However, the respondents' comments suggest that, depending on its size, NDCs' constituents go beyond blood ties to the number of streets, quarters and divisions with strangers living therein. Thus, the Owhor community is made up of eleven streets (Ikipi, April 2014), the Okere community contains five main quarters (Uku, April 2014), and the Okunno community is constituted of three divisions that are understood to be different large families, namely Eketepe, Imije, and Ejikie, which do not have the same descendants (Oyolo, March 2014). According to Ikipi the

secretary of Owhor Community in Ughelli South LGA, ND state of Delta, these streets have strangers residing therein, but they are still part of the Owhor community (Ikipi, April 2014), while quarters and divisions are described as family lineage mixed with strangers (Uku, April 2014; Oyolo, March 2014).

Quarters and divisions are given family names, and can become independent communities when there is overpopulation (Otavie, April 2014; Nalaguo, April 2014). This view, shared by Jeremiah Otavie a Community Development Officer of Academic Associates Peace Works, ND state of Rivers and Nalaguo, correlates with Okumagba,

> the Okere-Urhobo community is made up of five major families. The Olodi, the Oki, the Ighogbadu, the Imakro and the Etifo families…our history makes these families a quarter of their own, we are not even in the same place. For example, we have the Ighogbadu quarter residing around Iyara and other areas of Warri, while the Olodis resides in Otolori which is the administrative hub of the community (Okumagba, April 2014).

The families that make up the Okere-Urhobo NDC are already identified groups with names that could become a community in the future when there is overpopulation. These family names, which are used to identify the quarters and divisions of a NDC, are its constituencies that together make up one community in the ND. For example, Ayimebele community is made up of three different families together with strangers who have lived on the land since 1932 (Tamunor, April 2014). These family lineages, together with some strangers, agree to uphold and abide by the community's laws.

The respondents argue that a community's 'laws' are understood to be the rules and regulations that govern each NDC, and depending on the community in question, this is called its 'traditional constitution' (Bekesu, April 2014) or 'native laws' (Otavie, April 2014). These are

described as unwritten laws that are passed on from generation to generation through oral means (Iniku, April 2014). This extends the notion that prior to the arrival of Western education, the ND indigenes were mostly illiterate with the history of the region being passed on by oral communication through storytelling stored in people's memory; indeed, people with good memories play a vital role in storing and disseminating information (Meyer, 2005). Thus, such dissemination of information on the community's laws has been a continuous process for years, with each NDC practising and understanding their different laws. Nengi's view on the practising of community's laws is that,

> everything is obtained by practice over centuries, so that is how it has been in our communities. Nothing is written down, but there is a general understanding between the various language groups and various individual communities or villages, that this is how we should conduct ourselves (Nengi, April 2014).

Although the system of passing information on the code of conduct of each community from one generation to another is the same, the laws differ from one NDC to the other. Thus, Otavie states that 'in the rule of law, the law binding the Akumoni community is different from that of Ayimabele community and the Agbongbe community, we have our rules and regulation that is only binding on Akumoni community' (Otavie, April 2014). Similarly, Lucky Mahone youth president of Akumoni Community, Yenagoa LGA ND state of Bayelsa, argues that 'communities differ in terms of the laws that binds them, for example in Akumoni community where I am the youth president, if a thief is caught, we punish him/her by flogging, but in another community, that might not be done based on their leadership system' (Mahone, April 2014). Similarly, Otavie contends that,

> in most communities, they have their norms and practices. And these norms are distinctly just for them. However, because of political governance, the Nigerian

constitution also binds on them but any other law that is different is based on their

traditional beliefs (Otavie, April 2014).

Thus, each NDC differs in terms of the laws that they abide by. However, given that all NDCs fall under the Nigerian government, the national constitution, which gives political power to the states and to LGAs over their constituent NDCs (Anyanwu, 1999), means that whatever constitution LGAs uphold is imposed on NDCs. This means that the Nigerian constitution is supreme and binding on all NDCs, while all traditional laws and customs of NDCs, clans or kingdoms are not constitutionally binding or recognised by the Nigerian government, but are only apply to the members of a specific community. For example, the traditional laws of Owhor-Olomu community are only binding on its indigenes, whilst the Nigerian federal law abounds in all communities.

Similarly, some NDCs that emerged from parent communities continue to play the role of subjects to these communities, while maintaining other laws that are only applicable to their indigenes. Thus, the scenario in the Owhor community is that,

the Owhor community have a parent community where we emerged from that is called Okpara-Olomu community, which is the administrative hub of Olomu kingdom. We have a king who supersedes all 15 communities. Any traditional and festive practice that is carried out by the kingdom is what we abide by, and that is a general tradition for the kingdom. Then each community has its own ruling councils and laws, which it abides by (Ikipi, April 2014).

Similarly, Silva Ofughara the Chairman of Ekpan Community Development Committee, comments that 'the king is the ruler of Effurun community, however, the laws of Nigeria state that a Councillor [the lowest elected political office] is higher in authority than that king, therefore a community cannot be viewed as a sovereign unit because the Nigerian government

supersedes its authority' (Ofughara, November 2016). Another respondent argues that, 'the awareness or recognition of communities in the Niger Delta came up because of the emergence of politics…that is when these politicians came into power in local governments, they use communities as a means of political administration, meaning that communities are automatically under the supervision of the politicians' (Omoseye, November 2016). The significance and similarity between the respondents' evidence are that NDCs' administrative structures are not autonomous, but are subjected to the LGA political administration. Another respondent argues a similar point from a different perspective when he comments that NDCs do not have their own law enforcement, but rely on the Nigerian police authority, which does not take directives from community leaders (Ojuwu, November 2016). Thus, though respondents perceive communities in the ND to be subject to the Nigerian government's administration, this administration does not solely define what characterises a NDC, as there exist community administrative units. Thus, apart from the supremacy of the Nigerian national constitution, which binds all NDCs, and those communities who together have strong affiliations to one parent community, each community has its own peculiar laws that are administered independently of one another.

From one NDC to another, the administrative structure is different, with each upholding independence from the other. Some consist of three structural hierarchies, while others are made up of two or one. According to Igiran, communities in the ND state of Bayelsa usually consist of three stages of administrative structures: the council of chiefs with the paramount chief at the apex, the CDC with a presiding chairman, and the YEC with a president as its head (Igiran, April 2014). This differs from most communities in the ND state of Delta, which are structurally composed of two parts with different forms, such as the elders' council, which is presided over by the chairman of the traditional council of chiefs, and the youth body, which is run by a democratically elected government having a youth president at its peak (Popo, April

2014). Like the ND state of Delta, in the ND state of Rivers, NDCs mainly consists of two types of governance structure: the traditional and the executive structure. In the traditional arrangement, there is the king or chief who passes and makes laws on behalf of the community, whilst the governance structure is headed by the CDC, which has its chairman, secretary, and other executive members that executes the law (Duumaa, April 2014). Apart from these three to two structural governance systems, NDCs like Effurun-Otor in the ND state of Delta maintain a one-structure pattern where they have a king at the apex with palace chiefs assisting him in the daily governance activities (Eyakade, March 2014).

These diverse structural governance patterns are independently run by each NDC. Regarding NDCs' governance structures, Jelicho Okpeya the eldest man and ruler of Okunno-Jesse community, Ethiope West LGA, ND state of Delta states that,

> each community has its own ruler. Like in Okunno community, where I am the head as well as the most elderly man, we have chiefs and youth leaders who combine to run the day to day activities in the community. This is different from the way Otumara community operate their administrative activities (Okpeya, March 2014).

This view differs from the administrative structure, but is commensurate with the independent nature of the Okere-Itsekiri NDC. Thus, Godwin Uku the Secretary General of Okere-Itsekiri community, Warri South LGA, ND state of Delta's words,

> the administration of the Okere-Itsekiri community is made up of the Ogeboro, which is the highest authority of the council. Ogeboro in council is made up of elders from various quarters that make up the community. Next is the advisory council which advices the Ogeboro. The Ogeboro then administers the community with the help of advisers (Uku, March 2014).

Thus, the notion here is that the Ogeboro as the head of the community is independent of other NDC administrators that constitute the Warri South LGA. This idea is buttressed by Olu-fubara a news reporter from the Yenagoa Broadcasting Station, 'Akenfa community have a chief to rule its community, the Okutukutu community also have a chief to rule its community, so these are the things that makes them different' (Olu-fubara, March 2014). Thus, as these NDCs are administratively independent, the different structures within the NDCs' administrative setting have different roles to play in fulfilling the administration's duties.

The responsibilities of taking overarching administrative decisions rests on the council of chiefs, the elders' council, and the traditional peak level, which usually are at the apex of a community's governance. Similarly, Lucky Duumaa, the Head of Community Development, at the Academic Associate Peace Works, argues that 'traditional structures consist of the chief ruler who oversees how the cultures and norms are decided in the community' (Duumaa, April 2014). Accordingly, Samuel Ighedu, former Secretary of Ugbuangbue community, states that 'in Ugbuangbue community, the Olaraja is the head, he is the paramount ruler as well as the most elderly man of the community… so, all administrative operations take directives from as well as report to him (Ighedu, April 2014). Apart from such high-ranking decision makers, there are the CDCs who represent the community externally, discussing with third parties such as private companies on matters relating to MNCs (Otavie, April 2014), as well as taking charge of affairs relating to infrastructural development (Bekesu, April 2014). Following this is the YEC, which serves as a spokesperson and a militia going to war (Alagoa, March 2014; Bekesu, April 2014), as well as representing those who labour and carry out environmental sanitation duties (Oyolo, March 2014). Thus, these different duties carried out by the various structural sects work together in showing that their NDCs are distinct from other communities, thereby laying emphasis on where their administrative border ends.

NDCs being administratively independent means there exist administrative borders within communities that demarcate one administration from the other through geographical boundaries. Accordingly, Uku states that,

> geographically, in the olden days, two communities can be two miles apart. But, with civilisation and modernisation it is becoming difficult to know where the boundaries of these communities are. Only the core traditional communities where you have ancient structures on the ground can easily identify such boundaries (Uku, April 2014).

Thus, geographical boundaries, though they exist, can be blurred. Thus, Nzorka Tombare youth president of K-Dere community in the Gokana LGA in Rivers, conforms to Uku's view of difficulties in identifying community boundaries,

> typically, you will not see much of a difference in the community settlement in Gokana LGA, because of the way we are settled. It is quite difficult to even differentiate two communities. For example, it is just a major road that demarcates K-Dere and B-Dere communities (Tombare, April 2014).

However, others disagree that community boundaries are blurred, but claim that they can be easily identified. Atutu a youth president of Okunno community, states that 'my community Okunno has a boundary with Otumara community by an electric pole' (Atutu, March 2014), while Variside emphasised that 'we Luusue-Sogho community have boundaries with the communities of Kaani 1, Tamba, and Kpom by a massive banana plantation' (Variside, March 2014). The ability of these NDC indigenes to identify their boundary patterns urged Ibaba to say that 'the indigenes know where their boundaries lie and that affects their trading relationship with other communities, as well as defining their resource control patterns' (Ibaba, March 2014). Thus, since natural resources are geographically located on land, they have

become a major feature that clearly demarcate one NDC's border from another's. A typical example is the Kato NDCs, which demarcate themselves from neighbouring NDCs solely because they have MNCs drilling oil on their lands. As such, each community has its own land and boundaries, and are different from one another in terms of landmarks. Such differentiation indicates the distinction between one NDC and another.

This distinction occurs in various ways, one being cultural differences. Uku states that, 'it has been the structure that we have various communities with different names, thinking, reasoning and ways of doing things' (Uku, April 2014). Similarly, Duumaa states that,

> Nyonkuru community, where I come from does not have any affiliation with their neighbour, Taaba community where the king resides. The only relationship between both is that they share boundaries, but are completely different in culture and traditions (Duumaa, April 2014).

However, other communities' leaders are less convinced that there is any difference between their communities and neighbouring NDCs, apart from minor cultural distinctions. For Variside,

> the difference between my community and other communities is our culture. Though we are one Ogoni people and speak the same language, we practise slightly different cultures. It was someone from Sogho that founded Kaani 1 & 2, so we and the Kaanis are brothers (Variside, April 2014).

Similarly, Peter Oyolo, the Deputy Leader of Okunno Community, states that, 'the difference between Okunno and surrounding communities is that we have ways of greeting in this village which is different from other villages… other than that we all are farmers' (Oyolo, March 2014). Thus, what is significant to these respondents is that their NDCs and neighbours have cultural differences that perceive NDCs as different entities. These differences are bluntly

emphasised by Laka the youth president of Kaani 1 Community, Okpeya: 'these are different communities that are heterogeneous in nature, leadership at different levels, not subjected to any other, they are on their own and perform whatever they feel without answering to any other' (Laka, April 2014), and 'the communities in the ND have their own founders, origin, management, and rulings different from one another that makes each a distinct entity' (Okpeya, March 2014).

This distinction is also linguistically delineated. Thus, the Okere-Urhobo community speaks the Urhobo language, while the Okere-Itsekiri community speaks the Itsekiri language (Ojuwu, March 2014), thereby indicating that they are distinct entities. Similarly, the Ugbangbue community are an Itsekiri speaking group, while the neighbouring Ekurede-Urhobo NDC speaks the Urhobo language (Ighedu, April 2014), thereby emphasising the distinction between NDCs through language differences. Synonymous to language differences, a distinction in dialects is perceived as a means of differentiating NDCs. Thus, the difference between the Effurun-Otor community and other neighbouring communities in Ughelli South LGA is that the Effurun-Otor has its own dialect, which is known as Uvwie, whilst other neighbouring community like Owhor-Olomu have a different dialect (Ighoriemuse, March 2014); they speak different dialects of the same Urhobo language. Accordingly, Nyowii community which belongs to the Gokana LGA perceives no difference between Nyowii and the surrounding NDCs except for slight differences in the dialects amongst surrounding communities (Barile, April 2014). Thus, languages and dialects alongside administrative independence, geographical & resource boundaries, and cultural differences appear to constitute factors that differentiate one NDC from another. However, the respondents suggest that there are different NDCs that consist of the same characteristics except that they are administratively independent.

Among such NDCs are those of the Okere-Itsekiri, Ekuruede-Itsekiri and Ugbuangbue NDCs, who speak the same Itsekiri language, are in the same geographical area of the Warri South

LGA, share the same culture, and belong to the same ethnic group and kingdom but have different community administrations (Okumagba, April 2014). Similarly, the NDCs in the Gokana LGA, such as K-Dere and B-Dere, share the same characteristics except that they have independent administrations (Uzoribarima April 2014; Tombare, April 2014). Thus, this situation where NDCs have the same characteristics, except for administrative purposes, indicates that the different administrations have arisen because of the need to respond to the geographical and political constituencies within the LGAs. What is argued here is that these NDCs share the same characteristics, yet function as distinct communities due to the mandate of LGAs to constitutionally administer their constituencies. This expands on Peterside and Ikelegbe's position that communities are kinship and sub-ethnic groups.

NDCs have been defined in the scholarly literature as kinship units (Peterside, 2007), villages (Ite, 2004), towns (Omeje, 2004), clans (Bisina, 2003), kingdoms (Ibaba, 2009), sub-ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2006), or a people with common interests (Frynas, 2000). Other scholars argue that current NDCs are the same as ancient autonomous communities, clans or kingdoms (Alagoa, 1971) that predate the arrival of Europeans. The argument advanced in this chapter based on analysis of the respondents' evidence bearing on the definition of NDCs, determines that either kinship units, villages, towns, clans, kingdoms, sub-ethnic groups, or a people with common interests can be defined as communities in the ND. However, this is only when they possess the characteristics of the geographical and political parts that make up LGAs and in some circumstances, make up the traditional and geographical parts of clans or kingdoms. It also determines that current NDCs are not the same as ancient autonomous communities, clans or kingdoms in the ND as claimed by Alagoa, but that they all sustain similar characteristics of autonomy, which predates the introduction of LGAs, and whose present constitutional authority relegates such autonomy to the status of 'inherent'. In this light, inherent is taken to

mean that though NDCs are not constitutionally autonomous, they demonstrate elements of autonomy within them.

5.5 A Working Definition of Niger Delta Communities

The thesis' definition of NDCs is a functional one for the study and does not explicitly seek to undermine other scholarly definitions of communities in the ND. The definition aims to effectively respond to answer the aim of the thesis to determine the cause of inter-community conflict. It seeks to expand on existing definitions. Following an analysis of different scholarly definitions of what constitutes an NDC, the chapter constructs a workable definition aimed at achieving the aim and objectives of the study by through connecting the realities of ancient and modern communities. The chapter argues that NDCs are inherent autonomous units that represent the geographical and political parts of an LGA and in some cases clans/kingdoms. This draws on ancient communities as previously explored by Alagoa (1971), Jones (1963) and Horton (2013) who define NDCs as political autonomous villages with their own unique types of independent administration prior to colonialism. Whilst, these scholars define precolonial ancient NDCs as politically autonomous, the thesis analyses current NDCs to be inherently autonomous from the view that both share common traits of unique traditional administrative structures.

One difference between both is that ancient communities were functional in precolonial times when there was no superior administrative entity known as Nigeria. It is the modern construct of Nigeria that has eliminated current NDCs' independence. Another difference is that ancient communities are described as autonomous villages, clans and kingdoms, whereas such descriptions can be viewed as modern communities only when they constitute the geographical and political parts of an LGA. This is due to the notion that certain ancient villages, clans or kingdoms, such as the Itsekiri kingdom, have grown beyond the modern NDC category by

having constituent communities that make up its geographical and traditional parts. For example, Itsekiri has expanded over time and now straddles more than 3 LGAs' borders. On the other hand, an ancient kingdom like Effurun-Otor remained a modern NDC because it makes up a geographical and political part of the Ughelli South LGA and does contain any geographical and traditional constituents. Thus, it is communities like Effurun-Otor that exemplify the inherent autonomous nature of modern NDCs from the view that it exercises political autonomy prior to colonisation and the establishment of Nigeria. Hence all NDCs would have had political autonomy, which is inherent in them, if not for the current constitutional federal, state and local governments.

The thesis' definition of an NDC as inherently autonomous is based on a self-sufficient nature that exists within current communities, which in turn drives them to perceive one another as entities struggling and fighting for survival at the expense of one another. This connotes a vital part of the study's definition of NDCs, because it does not only constitute a knowledge that contributes towards achieving the first objective of the study to define and delineate Niger Delta Communities, it also helps the study to analyse the third objective to evaluate social, economic, and political forces shaping inter-community conflict by demonstrating the inherent nature that drives communities to fight one another over social, economic and political factors. Thus, the study's definition of NDCs as inherent autonomous units not only differs from Alagoa, Jones and Horton who define NDCs as autonomous entities, it also connects ancient and modern communities by dissecting different definitions of modern NDCs in ways that help achieve the aim and objectives of the thesis.

Deducing from the thesis' definition of NDCs as inherent autonomous units that represents the geographical and political parts of an LGA and in some cases clans/kingdoms, the aspect of current communities representing the geographical and political parts of an LGA reflects what constitutes a modern NDC. Though this differs from other definitions of modern NDCs as

kinship units (Peterside, 2007), villages (Ite, 2004), towns (Omeje, 2004), clans (Bisina, 2003), kingdoms (Ibaba, 2009), sub-ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2006), or a people with common interests (Frynas, 2000), it demonstrates how communities' functions and their inevitable social, economic and political interact with one another, as well as with their respective local government authorities. This element of the definition helps in achieving the second objective of the study to delineate the characteristics of inter-community conflict through exploring inter-community relations and how such relationships are affected by the leadership of their respective LGAs in ways that inform causality of inter-community conflict.

The different definitions of modern NDCs in the existing literature are credible in their own ways. However, the study seeks to refine these definitions. NDCs can indeed be kinship units, villages, towns, clans, kingdoms, sub-ethnic groups, or a people with common interests if they constitute the geographical and political parts of an LGA. It is this relationship with the LGA structure, combined with the corrupt maladministration within LGAs, that lead to rivalry and conflict between NDCs. Since the aim of the thesis is to understand causality of inter-community conflict, the definition of NDCs as inherent autonomous units that constitute the geographical and political parts of LGAs, and in some cases clans and kingdoms, becomes a functional definition for achieving the aim of the study. The study's definition does not seek to controvert existing definitions, but rather to introduce new elements that address the aim of the thesis by incorporating the ideas of *inherent autonomous nature* from precolonial independent ancient communities and the *geographical and political parts of LGAs* from the way modern NDCs are set up in which they act as subdivisions of LGAs, the existing literature on ancient and modern communities are credible in different ways.

Conclusion

NDCs are conceptualised as any identified place sustaining inherent autonomous traits that constitute the geographical and political parts of LGAs and, in some circumstances, the traditional and political parts of clans and kingdoms. This differs from the two existing schools of thought regarding the definition of NDCs. Peterside, amongst others, defines NDCs as kinship units, villages, towns, clans, kingdoms, sub-ethnic groups, or a people with common interests. Alagoa, Jones, and Horton argue that communities in the ND are independent ancient clans or kingdoms settled in a village structure. These two positions are distinct. The first suggests NDCs are dependent, whilst the second suggests that NDCs are independent. Though the two positions are credible in their own ways, evidence from the respondents indicates that it was the introduction of a non-indigenous, European system of administration that removed the communities' constitutional independence, but that an independence continues to resurface in the form of traditional governance. Moreover, in the context of Peterside's argument, although an NDC can be a family kinship, villages, towns, clans, kingdoms, sub-ethnic groups, or a people with common interests, the study defines it in a way functional for achieving its aim and objectives as constituents of LGAs, and in some circumstances of clans or kingdoms. The chapter further argues that clans, kingdoms or sub-ethnic groups can extend beyond the community level when they have NDCs as traditional constituents and expand to two or more LGAs, but become NDCs themselves when such traditional constituencies are absent, which makes them a part of the constituencies that make up a LGA. In the context of Alagoa, Jones and Horton's arguments, NDCs are not necessarily independent ancient villages (clans or kingdoms), as some of these now have communities as traditional constituents. Whilst some of these clans or kingdoms, such as Effurun-Otor, remain classified as NDCs as well as communities, others such as the Itsekiri kingdom have expanded over two LGAs, and have 'children' communities such as Okere-Itsekiri and Ugbuangbwe, which have become

constituent communities of the Warri South LGA. Thus, whilst this takes the Itsekiri kingdom to a level above the NDC category, the chapter's analysis determines that the newly emerged communities operate a traditionally autonomous way and are constitutionally independent from the Itsekiri kingdom. Though newly emerged communities are not constitutionally dependent on their parent NDCs, they are politically dependent on LGAs, but maintain an inherently autonomous nature.

The chapter concludes that the defining characteristics of an NDC must remain a fluid and evolutionary process. First, NDCs are formed by overpopulation. Second, they are composed of family units alongside strangers, whose structural environment is made of streets, roads, quarters and divisions that form the constituent parts of the place called a 'community' in the ND. Third, these NDCs have their own peculiar laws which are administered by each community's unique and independent administration and are demarcated by boundaries that make them a distinct entity. Fourth, these distinct NDCs are constituents of LGAs, and in most cases also clans/kingdoms. Fifth, NDCs were politically autonomous prior to the arrival of Europeans in the ND, who introduced the mechanisms of governance and administration leading to the introduction of the LGA system that constitutionally removed the autonomy of the NDCs. The chapter argues that NDCs' autonomy is inherent and continues to resurface in emerging communities in the present political dispensation. NDCs are constituents of LGAs as well as clans/kingdoms simultaneously. They also maintain and possess the autonomous nature of ancient communities in the ND thereby making current communities in the ND *inherently* autonomous units.

Chapter 6: The Characteristics of Inter-Community Conflict in the Niger Delta

Introduction

The previous chapter analyses the definition and delineation of communities in the ND concluding that NDCs are inherently autonomous, and independent entities. Building on this, the current chapter examines the characteristics and circumstances that breed and harbour inter-community conflict in the ND. The chapter explores the nature and scope of inter-community conflict as being characterised by incompatibility between modernity and the traditional. Whilst modernity represents the modern style of governance where NDCs interact under the constitutional authority of LGAs, the traditional depicts the autonomy that communities possessed prior to the introduction of the modern administrative system. Scholars and others have severely critiqued the effectiveness of governance in the ND, highlighting failures based on poor government practice and corruption. However, by failing to access those involved at the grassroots level in conflict between communities in the ND, the literature avoids focussing on the fundamental causes of conflict. This chapter fills this gap by exploring the reasons why and how inter-community conflict plays out in ND states and LGAs drawing on evidence and data from the study's respondents. This will lay the foundations for a deeper analysis of the social, economic and political factors instigating violent conflict between NDCs in subsequent chapters.

There is a strong body of opinion across academia, the media and the NGO community that lays the blame for conflict in the ND, and Nigeria as a country, on corruption, poor governance and poverty (Watts, 2007). This chapter, however, argues that there are other features that lead to violent inter-community conflict in the ND. These are firstly, the inefficacy of LGAs' role in maintaining peaceful inter-community relations due to their untrustworthiness as a result of

being artificial 'modern' constructs leading to NDCs' resorting to traditional violent ways of settling disputes. Secondly, corruption within LGAs' allows the marginalisation of one community by another due to the modern administrative system whereby NDCs now are forced by the Constitution to interact within the same LGA. The research contends that the combination of both these realities are relative factors that facilitate other factors i.e. social, economic and political factors that create inter-community conflict, and as such produce a dilemma of modernity against the traditional. The dilemma of modernity against the traditional is the strained relationship between LGAs and NDCs, which appears to be more pronounced in the core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers than the other six ND states.

The current chapter analyses how communities' act as parts of LGAs, ND-states, the FGN, and how NDCs have lost trust in these modern means of governance. The loss of trust in the LGAs is largely the result of the prevalence of corruption as an accepted culture that allows some NDCs to marginalise others over shared resources. The issue of the forced interaction of NDCs within the same LGAs necessitates an assessment of whether communities inevitably interact because of geographical proximity and the constitutional role of LGAs.

6.2 An Ungoverned Space?

The scope of inter-community conflict in the ND is between and within ND states and LGAs. There are, however, permutations. The inter-community conflict between 'Kilama vs Zarama/Akumoni' which erupted on 1st December 2001 lasting until February 2003 was a case of conflict between two NDCs located within the Yenagoa LGA axis in the ND state of Bayelsa over an alleged killing of a Kilama youth by some members of the Zarama/Akumoni communities (News Agency of Nigeria, 2003). Similarly, the violent conflict between the NDCs of B-Dere and K-Dere in Gokana LGA, ND state of Rivers on the 21st March 2013, where two persons were allegedly killed following an inter-community clash, was also a case

of two different communities from the same LGA as well as the same ND state (Ogoninews, 2013). These differ from the case of the inter-community conflict between Kere-bangha and Nyowii-bangha in late 2007, where the former is in Gokana LGA whilst the latter is situated in Khana LGA, with both belonging to the same ND state of Rivers (Opukri & Ibaba, 2008). The inter-community conflict between Soku and Oluasiri which dates to 1992, and re-ignited in 2013, was a conflict between a NDC from Brass LGA in the ND state of Bayelsa and a constituent community of Akuku-Toru LGA in the ND state of Rivers, hence crossing a state border (The Sun, 2015).

ND states being the level of administration above LGAs have a remote, but important role in inter-community relations that subsequently affect conflicts between NDCs. Though ND states' interference in inter-community matters is rare it is significant when conflict between NDCs goes beyond LGA level, especially in cases where communities involved are in two separate LGAs which automatically puts conflict resolution above the power of a single local government authority. Such is the case of the recent inter-community conflict between Okrika and Alesa-eleme Okrika, where the former belongs to the Okrika LGA whilst the latter is in Eleme LGA, both belonging to and depending for resolution on the ND state of Rivers' (Daily Independent, 2015). ND states involvement is of a different order when the conflicting NDCs are in different LGAs and different ND states. These conflicts require the intervention of the FGN.

According to Igiran, 'the responsibility of inter-community matters rests on the chairman of the LGA authority' (Igiran, April 2014). Similarly, Nengi states that 'LGA officials have a responsibility to be fair in terms of the distribution of amenities, appointments and allocation of resources to every community that is under its jurisdiction' (Nengi, April 2014). This evidence indicates that LGAs are responsible for supplying welfare goods to their respective constituencies. However, contrary to these assumptions of fair treatment, Ojuwu argues that,

'yes from the guidelines and the responsibilities of the LGA, every community should be treated equally and fairly, but we are currently witnessing otherwise, and not being recognized by our LGA, that is why we have been asking for our own separate LGA for decades, …until we have our own LGA we will continue to be marginalized' (Ojuwu, March 2014). Ojuwu articulates the frustration experienced by NDCs not valued at the LGA level.

Watts contends that the Niger Delta region is corrupt at all levels including at the level of the electoral commission (2007). Aghalino, goes further describing a form of 'institutionalized corruption', arguing that nepotism has become commonplace (2009). Further, Ibaba argues that corruption impedes property rights and disrupts development procedures which in turn bring about further grievances and frustrations (2011). These human rights abuses often underpin the resort to conflict. However, whilst Watts, Aghalino, and Ibaba emphasise the egregious poor government practice in the region, they do not explicitly explain how this translates into conflict between communities. There is a fundamental distrust of LGAs and their officials demonstrated from the grassroots evidence collected from the respondents. In the core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers, NDC leaders and residents object to the way in which the needs of their members are handled at local government level, notably the levels of prejudice and corruption demonstrated by local government officials and politicians. However, this prejudicial response to different NDCs can impact not just the members of that NDC, but also the relationship between individual NDCs. Discussing one corrupt official, Laka complains,

> he is so selfish, and hails from a community called Banu. He openly tells people
> that he will be returning to Banu by the end of his tenure. Everybody in Khana
> LGA knows that he is bias, corrupt and marginalizes other communities in favour
> of Banu. The bulk of supervisors and working staff in the local government council
> are people from his community. There are ghost workers on his payroll of which

the salary goes to his private account. His level of partiality and corruption is as high as a very tall tree (Laka, April 2014).

Laka argues that Banu community members benefit from the prejudiced decisions made by one of their residents to the detriment of other NDCs. Okumagba supplies a further example, 'government have predominantly been occupied by the Okere-Itsekiris of the Warri South LGA which motivates them to make almost all decisions and actions in favour of the Itsekiris' (Okumagba, March 2014). In these cases, there is a clear perception that LGAs are a means used by some NDCs to dominate others.

However, other respondents put this in historical perspective. Omavonwan argues that,

in the 1950s, communities were distinct from each other, but they were not conscious of ruling or dominating one another. They were just satisfied with having their head of clans or kings and that is all, then they go about their normal day to day business. It is just recently that politics started gaining grounds that made them to have the interest and their awareness of wanting to be supreme to others, this struggle for leadership started coming up, it was never there, it was what came with domination and eventual withdrawal of English rule. (Omavonwan, November 2016).

Similarly, Omoseye maintains that, 'communities as they seem to dominate one another today, but this was not so from the beginning, these communities came up because of politics and leadership in local governments, so they can be recognized at that level' (Omoseye, November 2016). These two perspectives seem to argue that NDC's drive to dominate does not have along historical provenance, but rather appears to date from the establishment of the LGA system of local administration.

Favouritism leads to, 'territorial tension' whereby non-favoured NDCs feel marginalised. Reflecting the frustration-aggression trap analysed in the literature review, Kew and Phillips link the frustration-aggression analysis to the impoverished condition of most NDCs, describing them as a people living in failed conditions who strike out neighbouring NDCs and the government alike (2013). As mentioned earlier, Oluduro and Oluduro (2003) combine the frustration–aggression hypothesis with Rasheed Draman's (2003) relative deprivation analysis that proposes that not only does conflict lead to poverty but that poverty leads to conflict. Ibaba describes the frustration-aggression trap where NDCs trapped by environmental degradation and ethnicity-based political domination, have no option but to go into violent conflict with the NDC responsible for driving them into the trap (2011).

The argument that there is a suspicion of authority being exercised by administrators from systems that are perceived as alien, imported and not traditional and 'home-grown' was made by several respondents. From a scholarly perspective Alagoa argues,

> the Local Government administration has not been married to the traditional
> system, it is still an alien thing. All the communities still have traditional offices
> like the Amanayenabo, compound chiefs, titled chiefs and so on. These institutions
> are very effective and still in practice (Alagoa, March 2014).

Similarly, Nengi states that 'the communities do not have to wait for the government before acting, because they were in existence before the creation of the current Nigerian administration' (Nengi, April 2014). Alagoa and Nengi contend that NDCs resort to inter-community conflict as a traditional way of settling disputes with which they are more comfortable. There is a sense here that not only do NDC leaders and their members perceive the LGAs as corrupt, prejudiced and inefficient, but that they do not necessarily recognise this modern system as a legitimate form of governance, that their NDC and the other NDCs with

which they are forced to interact exist in an ungoverned space. Other respondents stress the untrustworthiness of LGAs and that this drives a propensity to self-help. For Nalaguo,

> Well at the base of the situation, the problem is trust. It is when trust go haywire, basic conflict erupts. For example, the present Nigerian government lacks vote of confidence. Because the way these governments are installed, becomes the main cause of conflict and divisions considering the malpractices involved. Because of this, the people cannot take their problems to them. In the local parlance, it is like you are expecting the rat to take its problems to the cat for solution. So, in most cases that is the situation… (Nalaguo, April 2014).

A further corollary of Nalaguo's analysis is that neither LGAs nor ND-states' have the capacity to resolve conflicts between communities in the region. Odje emphasises,

> It is a case of trust. There is lack of trust by the people on the government authorities. Like I said, where there is a community bias ruler or administrator in government's office, other community groups do not look upon him as a saviour. They perceive him as punishment inflicting more harm on them, therefore they resort to self-help rather than consulting his/her office (Odje, April 2014).

The thesis argues that LGAs play an active role in allowing for conflict in the ND. However, LGAs are not the only factor leading to inter-community conflict. The analysis indicates that LGAs are corrupt, alienated and lack the trust of indigenes from their constituent NDCs. This accounts for NDCs resorting to self-help, which serves as a motivating factor for engaging in inter-community violence. Also, this explains the high level of inter-community conflict in the three ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. These three states are the most conflict-prone states in the ND (Ibaba, 2011; UNDP Report, 2006) amounting to 56 community conflicts

between 1997 to 2006 which is double the number of conflicts in their sister states in the ND put together (Ibaba, 2011; Conflict Bulletin, 2014).

This is not to argue that these states are without violent activity. Amongst the other six ND states, the ND state of Abia has a low level of inter-community conflict, but high rates of abduction, armed robbery and violent cult rivalry activities (Ogbonnaya, 2011). In the latter part of 2014, there were reports concerning connections between criminal gangs involved in abductions and political parties (Guardian Newspaper, June 2015). The significance of such activities is the dominance within the relevant LGAs of political leaders with criminal backgrounds. Arguably, corruption within these LGAs, rather than leading to inter-community violence, manifests itself in alternative forms of violence. Aba North and Aba South LGAs are notorious for corruption that often attracts violent street protests (Ogbonnaya, 2011). In Umuahia North and Umuahia South LGAs, political abductions, political thuggery and cases of cult violence are rampant (Niger Delta Watch, 2015).

The disconnection between LGA leadership and inter-community conflict in Abia reflects Adeyemo's view that the 'nature and structure of transactions or interactions between the three tiers of government determines the degree of autonomy of a local government' (Adeyemo, 2017 p.2). Local government in Nigeria are rooted in historical reform whereby the state and federal governments constantly restrain their financial and political ability to coordinate their communities. Such scenarios are typical in the eastern ND states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Imo where the chieftaincies that constituted local governments at that time, lost their constitutionally active role under the current Nigerian constitution (Afigbo, 1972). In these eastern states, local governments are more detached regarding inter-community affairs since the communities were, and remain, more self-sustaining detaching them from relying on the state and federal government (Afigbo, 1968).

Similarly, whilst Akwa Ibom is reported to have the second lowest inter-community conflict rate after Ondo according to the Niger Delta Conflict Tracker (2016), it scores highly in terms of the prevalence of rival cult gangs and abductions of political figures (Conflict Bulletin, 2014). Between 2012 to 2014 the level of violent activity was high in 8 of its 31 LGAs, Mbo, Uyo, Ibesikpo Asutan, Ikot Ekpene, Oron, Ini, Abak, Ibeno (Conflict Bulletin, 2014). According to Afigbo's view, Akwa Ibom is also notable for absence of connectivity between its LGAs and their constituent NDCs due to loss of its chieftaincies' powers (Afigbo, 1972). Thus, the low numbers of inter-community conflict in these LGAs indicate that NDCs in Akwa Ibom do not have a close relationship with their local governments, the absence of a relationship stifling inter-community conflict unlike the core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers.

Cross River, another eastern ND state has the highest level of inter-community conflict after the core ND states. Between 2012 to 2015, its LGAs, in particular, Abi, Bakassi, Calabar South, Odukpani, Ogoja and, Yakurr suffered border disputes, political violence, cult clashes and criminality (Conflict Bulletin, 2015). Inter-community conflict is reported to cause the death of 32 persons and the destruction of over 15 houses (Guardian, October 2015). Nonetheless, these figures are less than a quarter of the ND state of Bayelsa, the core ND state with the lowest rate of inter-community violence between 2012 to 2015. The level of inter-community violence between the core ND states and other ND states clearly diverges. However, there is significant and deadly inter-community violence in non-core states. Moreover, there are indications that the type of corruption and administrative malpractice found across the Niger Delta manifests in other forms of serious violence outside the core states. However, supporting the contention of this thesis, an underlying reason for the divergent rates of violence between core and non-core states lies in the relationship between LGAs and their constituent

communities with non-core states historically less reliant on the government and government resources.

6.3 Corruption as a Culture

As previously mentioned, Watts stresses the corruption that permeates the ND region evidenced by the lack of transparency and accountability within the LGA administrative system (2007). Aghalino has called this 'institutionalized corruption' (2009b). These accusations complement Ukiwo's argument that the local governments have transformed patronage into a system where resources in their gift are reserved for favoured groups, such as those who are in the same political party. This alienates the unfavoured who do not have access to these goods (2006). The thesis argues that corruption has become a culture in the modern LGAs thereby allowing the marginalisation of one NDC by another, forcing communities to traditional violent means of settling disputes. The issue of corruption enabling marginalisation is a socio-cultural, economic and political reality, a fact of life, in the ND (Ibaba, March 2014). The LGA is often perceived by those at the grassroots as a metaphor for power and powerlessness.

Odje argues, 'LGA treatment of its constituent communities has never been on equal basis, especially the local government that harbours more than one ethnic group…there is always favouritism of the ethnic group that produces the local government chairman and executives (Odje, April 2014). This is supported by Onobrekpeya in his example from Warri, 'the Warri South LGA's executives is always predominantly from Itsekiri ethnic group, making majority of their decisions and actions in favour of the Okere-Itsekiris over the Okere-Urhobos (Onobrekpeya, April 2014). According to Duumaa, the cause of the 2011 inter-community conflict between Iluekun and Nyokuru of Khana LGA in the ND-state of Rivers was the domination of local government posts by Iluekun over twenty years which led to retaliation by Nyokuru (Duumaa, April 2014). As Ikelegbe argues 'participation and representation at the

LGA level were forcefully taken from weaker communities by stronger ones back in the days, nowadays some of these formerly weak communities with the acquisition of arms are now contending with the stronger communities that forcefully kept them away from being relevant at these levels' (Ikelegbe, April 2014). This form of contentious collective action is an attempt to find redress following the wrongful denial or violation of social or human rights (Tarrow, 1989). According to Nalaguo, 'the court cannot dispense justice properly, at times, especially in the litigation system you see a judge passing judgement on a very sensitive issue, by manipulation, hence an average man now thinks the justice system is a failure' (Nalaguo, April 2014).

A key type of corruption practised in the ND is nepotism. A major grievance of the Okere-Urhobo community which instigated the 2003 inter-community conflict with Okere-Itsekiri was that nepotism in the Warri South LGA had become the default method of filling government posts (Ojuwu, March 2014). This dismissal of the culture of corruption within LGAs can lead to an effective schism between NDCs and their local administrators. Alagoa states that 'there are large sections of the rural communities from which the LGA authority is completely absent because these rural communities perceive the LGA as irrelevant, hence when disagreement occur, the local warlords are free to engage in violent inter-community conflict' (Alagoa, March 2014). The implication is that familiarity with the LGAs' corrupt practices has bred a deep contempt that has impelled a withdrawal to a form of self-determination where traditional violent dispute settlement methods are prioritised.

Some respondents argue that the LGAs are not institutionally corrupt, but rather that it is influential individuals within LGAs that pervert administrative processes. One respondent linked this to a wider failure of governance in Nigeria. For Ibaba 'it is a Nigerian thing, that is the issue, from the local government to the federal level, the man in power shows some preferences for his people, in terms of contract appointments and projects allocation' (Ibaba,

March 2014). Some LGAs have recognised their limitations and the reality of their fraught relationship with their constituent NDCs. Otavie raises an initiative by one LGA, 'the Sagbama LGA in the ND state of Bayelsa established the institution comprising the communities' traditional chiefs which is known as the conflict management committee, made up of various chiefs because of the crisis that evolved at Agbiri town over chieftaincy title in 2007 (Otavie, April 2014). This well-meaning effort to incorporate familiar community personalities into the conflict resolution process has, however, described by other respondents as ineffective as a result of insufficient engagement by the chieftaincies (Nalaguo, April 2014; Okumagba, April 2014). This is rejected by the chiefs who point to the inefficiency and corruption of the LGAs. For Iniku, 'the inter-community conflict between Okere-Itsekiri and Okere-Urhobo in 2003 caused chaos and anarchy where attention was distracted, people were looking at the war while government officials were stealing money, claiming they were spending it on security, whereas the funds were going into their pockets (Iniku, April 2014). Corruption at local government level is also held by respondents to be a brake on development (Omotola, 2009). Ibaba argues that corruption impacts traditional property rights and disrupts development processes which in turn bring about grievances and frustrations (Ibaba, 2011). According to Uzodike and Isike, NDCs cite a litany of impacts to the livelihoods of their residents resulting the effects of corruption including unemployment, poverty, environmental degradation, disease, and illiteracy (Uzodike & Isike, 2009). The pervasive corrupt environment fostered by the LGAs can have unforeseen consequences. The 2011 inter-community conflict between Luusue-Sogho and Kaani 1 in Khana LGA, ND-state of Rivers resulted from an attempt by local administrators to sequester large tracts of farmland from both NDCs for a banana project being run with a private Mexican partner (Ogoninews, 2013). According to Watts, the NDR constitute an environment that is ungovernable both at the ND state and LGA levels where the residents of the NDCs in the region have little or no trust in the way in which their needs are

supplied. This leads to a situation of quasi-insurgency. For Watts, this lack of trust largely stems from the pervasive culture of corruption (Watts, 2004; Watts, 2007). The Vanguard newspaper reports that grassroots' government institutions consistently fail to handle the developmental and environmental crisis in the region due collaboration between FGN, ND state and the LGAs (Vanguard Newspaper, 2009). This is manifest in the inability to provide roads, health facilities, development projects, and power, termed by one NGO as 'social irresponsibility' (Stakeholder Democracy Network, 2014)

The core states of the ND are also prone to the phenomenon of 'godfatherism'. Odje describes LGAs as incapable of managing inter-community conflict (Odje, April 2014). Respondents gave numerous examples of poor practice in conflict management whereby LGAs more often foster conflict than seek to address it. The conflict between Luusue-Sogho and Kaani in 2011 is one example (Winniman, April 2014). Godfatherism is a relationship between individuals in which an individual provides protection to another individual or group of individuals (Amana & Ogwu, 2014; Edigin 2010). Human Rights Watch describes a godfather as someone whose authority comes not just from wealth, but also the capacity to instigate violence in order to manipulate national, state or local political systems on behalf of the politicians they sponsor (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

It is to this phenomenon of godfatherism that Duumaa refers: 'over the years, the LGA has never effectively managed community crisis, because of their sympathy or affiliation with some of the communities [and personalities within these communities] at war' (Duumaa, April 2014). Iniku reinforces this connection between prominent individuals and the LGA, 'when two communities are at loggerheads, and one of them happens to provide the ruling chairman of the presiding LGA, then the one without such chairmanship will be punished' (Iniku, April 2014). Iniku argues that for a NDC to be preferred by its LGA, there needs to be an explicit connection or affiliation between personalities/politicians from that NDC and its LGA. Iniku

also claims that in his experience it is the NDCs that lack this explicit affiliation that usually initiate conflict.

This is the disconnection between constitutional responsibility and corruption (Igiran, April 2014; Ibaba, March 2014). For Prince Uzobarima, a youth president of B-Dere Community in Rivers, 'what we operate here cannot be classified as proper democracy, because there is diversity of interest…the chairman of a LGA might support a community, and may not support another based on what he/she is going to gain from them' (Uzobarima, April 2014). For Eyoroko, the President General of Owhor Community, Ughelli South LGA, ND state of Delta, 'the Owhor community do not have to wait for the LGA authorities before they launch an attack on an offensive community, because sometimes the chairperson might be wayward in nature, irresponsible and not interested in community affairs' (Eyoroko, April 2014). Others argue that the decision-making of individual chairpersons depends on where he/she receives political and electoral support. As Laka contends 'during the 4 years of inter-community fight between Luusue-Sogho and Kaani 1 in 2007 to 2011, the LGA chairman did not step into my community any day, because he feels that you never voted or supported him to get to his position, hence he does not owe you anything' (Laka, April 2014).

Thus, NDC environment is described as one of grave neglect. According to Alagoa, government at the state level persistently fails to use the LGA to reach out to the grass-roots. He further states that 'at the village level we have already seen that the people are still going with their traditional system, the government is not there, there are large sections of the local and rural communities that the state government is completely absent' (Alagoa, March 2014). Monday gives an example, 'for instance there is an abandoned project in Effurun-Otor community by the government such as bridge and road, if my community are a violent people they will be mounting road blocks against government to press on their demands and marginalization' (Monday, March 2014). An incapacity to fulfil their constitutional role can

lead to communities taking matters into their own hands, 'the government was unable to provide the killer of a boy belonging to my community, and they were not willing to make any arrest because they do not take our matters seriously, therefore we confronted Zarama and they started fighting us' (Bekesu, April 2014). This dereliction of constitutional responsibilities leads Ojuwu to complain with exasperation, 'I do not see any reason why we pay taxes and water is not provided in our community, we cannot have the opportunity to go to school close enough, except we trek 2000 miles before someone can get to classes' (Ojuwu, March 2014). Aghara maintains that Kaani 1 community in Rivers has, virtually no amenities, 'there are none of life's basic amenities in our communities, and that is why we hear of violence sometimes, to get the attention of the government' (Aghara, April 2014).

A further factor, however, is the reluctance, in some instances, of elected politicians to support home communities. According to Alagoa 'the Opobiri community is a highly neglected area in the ND-state of Bayelsa, which constantly protested the government in the late 2000s, but had no idea that these government officials hardly develop their homeland as a result of self-greed' (Alagoa, March 2014). And Nalaguo claims that 'it is like when most LGA chairperson are elected they send them for induction in a school that teaches them nothing but selfishness' (Nalaguo, April 2014). This reflects a speech made by former president Obasanjo in 2003,

> What we have witnessed is the abysmal failure of the Local Government system. It is on record that at no time in the history of the country has there been the current level of funding accruing to the Local Governments from the Federation Account, yet the hope for rapid and sustained development has been a mirage as successive Councils have grossly under-performed in almost all the areas of their mandate (Obasanjo, 2003).

Whilst respondents' comments concentrate on the inadequacies of LGA officials in the three core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers that results in the unpopularity of the LGA system within constituent NDCs, Obasanjo's speech relates to the failure of LGAs in Nigeria. However, despite such a poor record of administration across the ND and Nigeria, there is no evidence of inter-community conflict comparable to the levels extant in the core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. For example, as analysed earlier in this section, the three ND states of Abia, Akwa Ibom and Cross River, whilst also prone to violent activity, see more political abductions and gang rivalry than inter-community conflict.

Violence in the state of Edo tends more towards political tension and abductions, intra-community disputes, cult clashes and violent protests against government institutions. Amongst its constituent LGAs, in Akoko Edo there were intra-community conflicts within the Igara NDC over whether a banned festival should be held in secret (Conflict Bulletin, 2015). In February 2015, Esan North LGA witnessed violent political tension between the People's Democratic Party and All Progressive Alliance party members over election fraud (Vanguard, March 2015). During the same period, there were violent protests in Oredo and Etsako Central LGAs over access to post-natal care for women in Benin City, and over governance issues within the Niger Delta Development Commission. Two people were killed (Conflict Bulletin, 2015). Among the violent conflicts recorded in the ND state of Edo's LGAs between 2012 to 2015, there were no significant fatal inter-community conflicts.

In the ND state of Imo, there are frequent violent clashes between traders and herdsmen, inter-personal disputes involving assassination, as well as political unrest. Inter-community conflicts, however, have a low fatality rate (Niger Delta Watch, 2015). Between 2012 to 2015 its LGAs, Ngor-Okpala, Obowo, Oguta, Mbaitoli, Ohaji/Egbema, Aboh Mbaise and, Ehime-Mbano witnessed violent disputes between traders/villagers and Fulani herdsmen resulting in

the deaths of 12 individuals (Conflict Bulletin, 2015). During this period, only two incidences of inter-community conflict are recorded. The first at Oguta LGA between two NDCs over an oil well location with no recorded casualties, although a second conflict at Ohaji/Egbema between two communities over a disputed market barricade led to the death of seven people (Conflict Bulletin, 2014).

Among the nine ND states, Ondo has the lowest rate of violent conflict with most disputes centred around protests against government institutions, political tensions, cult violence (Niger Delta Conflict Tracker, 2016). Between 2003 to 2016, its LGAs, Akure North, Akure South, Idanre, Odigbo, Okitipupa, have recorded the least fatalities of any ND state (Conflict Bulletin, 2015; Niger Delta Conflict Tracker, 2016). Among the conflicts occurring in Ondo are protests against government institutions on employment fraud and local government electoral malpractices. This suggests a tense relationship between the LGAs and their constituent NDCs which, nonetheless, does not convert to the levels of inter-community violence seen in the core ND states, but rather manifests as other forms of violence.

The disparity between the incidence of inter-community violence between the three core states and the six non-core states, despite similar levels of corruption and malpractice within their respective LGAs, might be explained by two key factors. Firstly, the core ND states are the locations for more oil exploitation than the non-core states. As analysed earlier in the thesis, rivalry and competition over the location of oil wells and MNOC facilities has historically been a source of inter-community conflict in, especially in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers where LGAs play a key role in recommending NDCs as the location for oil production.

Secondly, the higher prevalence of inter-community conflict in the core states might result from the geographical proximity between the three core ND states, where conflict between two core ND states/LGAs i.e. NDCs located in LGAs from Bayelsa and Rivers indicate that these LGAs

are more active in NDC's affairs to protect their state's interests. Examples are the 2013 inter-community conflict between Soku and Oluasiri, the former Brass LGA in the ND-state of Bayelsa and the latter belonging to Akuku-Toru LGA in the ND-state of Rivers. Thus, though LGAs in the core ND states are more involved in influencing the outbreak of inter-community conflict than in the non-core states, LGAs are a possible factor influencing the immediate social, economic and political factors that causes inter-community conflict in the ND that will be explored in subsequent chapters.

6.4 Geographical Proximity and Political Fusion

Rodney argues that the current Nigerian political system is a continuation of the administrative policies originally imposed on the region by the Europeans colonists to separate people of same ethnic groups, clans, and kingdoms, and subjugate them under different political units, which in turn forced the coexistence of disunited groups (2012). In the post-colonial context, this led to the geographically proximate communities being politically fused becoming constituents of a particular LGA. This study argues that NDCs proximity and political fusion under LGAs has resulted in the dichotomy of traditional and modernity that underpins inter-community conflict in the ND.

According to Laka, 'if two communities do not coexist and share common geographical boundaries, then they cannot fight…it is when two communities come together that they have differences, because they are close to themselves' (Laka, April 2014). Another respondent state that 'as my community remain, people from other communities came to live with us, not in our own community but living close to us, therefore we had to create a boundary for ourselves' (Iniku, April 2014). In a similar view, Ojuwu states that 'it is just that we found ourselves close to each other, if not, there is no direct link between my community and our neighbors except that we do inter-marry occasionally' (Ojuwu, March 2014). This evidence emphasises

boundaries and difference. Given that NDCs are constitutionally administered by LGAs, and LGAs fail to provide fair and equitable welfare for their citizens, the interaction of communities within this geographical and political space makes inter-community conflict, at some level, inevitable.

Geographically NDCs are close and demarcated by boundaries (Tombare, April 2014), politically NDCs' proximity brings them under the jurisdiction of LGAs as stated in the Nigerian constitution (Odje, April 2014). According to respondents, the political implication for NDCs' proximity is that they must succumb to the constitutional mandate of LGA's authority, thereby inevitably making NDCs to politically coexist. The sharing of resources becomes a source of inter-community conflict from a political standpoint, considering the sensitivity of the LGA authority's distribution of benefits and amenities to NDCs. According to Eyakade,

> if you look around Effurun-Otor, we do not have anything to show that we are part of the Ughelli South LGA, because no developmental project or amenities is there. The LGA has never done anything for Effurun-Otor community, yet they keep on bringing their officials to come and collect revenue… The LGA authorities favour some communities over others, by collecting revenue from one community to develop another' (Eyakade, March 2015).

Agreeing with Eyakade, another respondent state that unprincipled politicians at local government level, use demographics to acquire political positions which they then abuse by denying minorities access to benefits (Monday, April 2014).

Some respondents are less critical of the LGAs and their officials, pointing to insufficient allocation of funds to the region from central government (Aghara, April 2014). Nengi, the former speech writer to President Jonathan, perhaps unsurprisingly claims that the oath

government officials swear prevents favouritism (Nengi, April 2014). Oyolo takes this a step further claiming that even the president of Nigeria is not able to favour one part of the country over others irrespective of his origin, and that lower ranked LGA officials are even less able to do so (Oyolo, March 2014).

NDCs' proximity and interaction as a factor instigating inter-community conflict makes sense only when communities are recognized as separate entities. According to Okumagba, 'it is the benefit that we have as Nigerians that we identify and differentiate ourselves' (Okumagba, April 2014). The idea of the inherent autonomy of NDCs was analysed Chapter 4. It is this inherent autonomy that differentiates NDCs from their neighbours (Ehoroko, April 2014; Laka, April 2014).

Otavie describes differing 'cultures' in different NDCs, 'communities have different norms, practices, and traditions which are distinct for them' (Otavie, April 2014). An example is the distinctive cultural land tenure systems practiced in Delta and Edo (Ikelegbe, April 2014). The cultural land tenure system between Okere-Itsekiri and Okere-Urhobo NDCs belonging to the Warri South LGA was a major factor in the 2003 inter-community conflict. For Onobrekpeya, 'the Okere-Itsekiri wanted to show act of ownership of the land occupied by Hussey College, which originally belong to us and that was a problem between us' (Onobrekpeya, April 2014). On the other hand, Itemeoki from the Okere-Itsekiri side insisted that they settled and owned the area long before neighbouring communities arrived, 'we remain there, people were coming to live with us…we did not create a boundary for ourselves' (Itemeoki, March 2014). The underlying factor is that as time elapses the differing cultural land tenure systems between both NDCs begins to take on more traditional salience so conflict over land ownership becomes inevitable.

The notion of differing autonomous cultural systems between NDCs raises the question, do communities perceive inter-community conflict a necessity considering their interaction in the same geographical and political unit? In response, members of the Akumoni community in the ND-state of Bayelsa perceive violent conflict to be a means of making other communities, as well as third parties succumb to their needs (Tyger, April 2014). Zarama of Yenagoa LGA in Bayelsa and Kaani 1 of Khana LGA in Rivers claim that violence is an effective way of achieving community goals (Igiran, April 2014; Laka, April 2014). Zalik raises the issue of youth militarisation, where those between 16 and 45 rallies to militias primarily according to Zalik to enrich themselves, but also to fulfil community goals through violence (Zalik, 2004).

6.5 Governed Groups and Sovereign States?

According to William Wohlforth, 'governed groups' subject to no higher authority find themselves trusting solely on self-help for survival, and as such the distribution of power among these groups becomes the most important factor dictating the outcome of their attitudes and interactions (1993). This is commensurate to what Robert Gilpin describes as patriotism and loyalty to a group by its members, arguing that the goal of a group is to serve the interests of its members, which in turn inspires their loyalty and patriotism in achieving the goals of that group (1986). Synonymously, NDCs have administrative structures render them 'governed groups' and yet are subject to the administrative authority of untrustworthy LGAs. What differentiates Wohlforth's view of governed groups from NDCs, is that communities in the ND are subject to the higher *constitutional* authority of the LGAs. However, this study argues that corruption and mismanagement have rendered the authority of the LGAs redundant and that NDCs have resorted to the inherent autonomy that reflects their pre-colonial independence as proto-sovereign states. This allows NDCs to prefer to settle disputes using rational violent means rather than the conciliatory means intended by the constitution, but in practice not effectively administered by local government.

NDCs are defined and delineated as constituents of traditional kingdoms/clans, as well as of modern LGAs which gives them a dual status. Identity is important as NDCs collectively campaign for goods disbursed by the tiers of Nigeria's government. This need to belong to a group to campaign for potential benefits place the onus on individuals to prove their right to belong. Individuals associating and identifying with a NDC are usually born into that community (Laka, April 2014). Identity can translate into singular form of 'patriotism'. Duumaa describes the attachment of one chairperson to his community,

> The local government chairman domiciled all projects of the local government in his community called Banu. Meanwhile, there are about 105 communities in the LGA. All the infrastructures are built in just that community called Banu. You witness where a local government chairman donates houses and cars to his community members, and calls it local government project, while the other 104 communities are left out (Duumaa, April 2014).

Likewise, Ojuwu remarks on the absence of health provision in his NDC, 'I must confess to you that until now we do not have a good health centre in our area because we do not have people representing our community at the LGA and that is one of the thing we are trying to work on and overcome' (Ojuwu, March 2014). It was the unequal distribution of goods and benefits that lead to the conflict that split Okere in 2003.

The Okere case also informs the line of argument that NDCs, autonomous before colonisation, and arguably quasi-autonomous today more closely resemble in their inter-relationships sovereign states than neighbouring villages and towns. As quoted above, Ojuwu argues that 'it is obvious, the Okere-Urhobo and Okere do not speak the same language, do not have the same background, administration and cultural lifestyle… it is just that we found ourselves close to

each other, if not, there is no direct link except that we do inter-marry occasionally' (Ojuwu, March 2014).

The idea of comparing NDCs to sovereign states reflects the capacity of NDCs to govern themselves and to preserve a collective identity and the incapacity of LGAs although bolstered by a legal constitutional authority to effectively exercise authority within their territory. This reflects the discourse in IR theory concerning the position of sovereignty in the international system.

For Goldsmith and Posner, 'international law has no life of its own, has no special normative authority; it is just the working out of relations among states, as they deal with relatively discrete problems of international cooperation' (2005). In a similar vein, Hurd insists that the international system does not possess an overarching centre of political power to enforce rules (Hurd, 1999). Hurd's view appears to complement Franck's notion which upholds that states only voluntarily comply with international law when they perceive competition from other states that might be restrained by sanctions imposed by international law (Franck, 1990).

LGAs are the third-tier of Nigerian governance with authority to enforce local laws within its constituent communities. Scholars of sovereignty such as Stephen Krasner and Francis Fukuyama have argued that the inability of many developing world governments to impose their writ on their territory and population, renders their claims to exercise de facto sovereignty fictitious. Respondents to this study nuance this comparison between states in an anarchic system and NDCs interacting within the LGA legal space. Ojuwu contends that 'from the guidelines and the responsibilities of the LGA, every community should be treated equally and fairly, but we are currently witnessing otherwise, it's like we are not being recognized by our LGA' (Ojuwu, March 2014). Others state that their communities, for example Ayimebele and Kaani 1, are completely left out of their LGA's development agenda as a result of corruption

(Tamunor, April 2014; Laka, April 2014). The distinction is that whilst sovereign states might have reservations about signing treaties and conventions they make this decision voluntarily based on an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages. However, NDCs, as many respondents argue, have not got access to a responsible, honest system of laws to opt into. Effectively, they have been left behind by the authority, the LGA, meant to administer their territories and people and enforce the rule of law.

Having lost faith in the LGA, NDCs resort to self-help which can mean settling disputes traditionally by entering into conflict (Variside, April 2014; Igiran April 2014). On the ground, the decision as to whether to accept all or a measure of their LGA's authority is dependent on many of the factors explored in this thesis including their capacity to influence the LGA

Certain respondents describe NDC's synonym to sovereign-states as very minute, because communities are smaller, closer and without borders, whilst nation-states are much larger, further apart with consolidated territorial borders (Omavonwan, November 2016). He exemplified this by stating that, 'you cannot compare a country to a community, for example if you are crossing America into France you must have done it internationally there is no mistake about that, that is very much unlike crossing from Okere-Urhobo to Okere-Itsekiri in Warri South LGA which can be done by mistake because of their closeness, therefore their similarities are very limited due to idea that they have common traits of group identity' (Omavonwan, November 2016). Similarly, another respondent state that, 'inter-community conflict cannot be compared to international conflict because the communities are very small, matters can be settled very quickly between them, but for international conflicts, it takes longer time, so it cannot be the same' (Omoseye, November 2016). Thus, these views contrast those earlier in this section that perceives NDCs to be synonymous to nation-states such as Nigeria and Ghana. Although, Omavonwan and Omoseye disagree that NDCs are synonymous to nation-states and the international system, they succumb that both share similarities on group

identity. In this light, it can be deduced that NDCs sustain group identity like that of nation-states with similar environmental characteristics. Referring to both governmental environments, whilst international law has no enforcer which makes sovereign-states to act voluntarily, modern LGAs lack legitimate implementation of their primary responsibility of catering for its constituents' communities, which invariably resurfaces NDC's traditional ways of dealing with affairs. The indication of this is that both the international system and LGAs lacks legitimate enforcer, that results in making sovereign states and NDCs to voluntarily respond to the laws, and where otherwise, becomes conflictual. In this light, modern LGAs governance is deemed untrustworthy and alienated from NDCs' traditional inherent autonomous nature (traditional versus modernity), of which when assessed constitutes a major force that drives inter-community conflict over social factors.

Literature in the chapter contends that the Nigerian government oversees community affairs in the ND, and have not been able to curtail inter-community conflict due to ineffective governance resulting from corrupt practices (Watts, 2007). The literature further demonstrates the Nigerian government as being introduced by the Europeans, which saw the separation of people belonging to same ethnic groups, clans, and kingdoms, and subjugated them under different political units that forces the coexistence of disunited groups (Rodney, 2012). Accordingly, governed groups subjected to no higher authority find themselves trusting for survival solely from self-help, and as such the distribution of power among these groups becomes the most important factor dictating the outcome of their attitudes and interactions (Wohlforth, 1993). Alternatively, this describes what dictates loyalty and patriotism to a group by its member, through arguing that the goal of a group is to serve the interests of such members (Gilpin, 1986).

Drawing from the chapter's analysis, the argument presents the conclusion that the incompatibility between modernity and traditional are a fundamental building blocks that

characterises inter-community conflict in the ND. It determines this by presenting, demonstrating that the Nigerian government does not only oversee community affairs, but that such responsibility rest directly from LGAs to NDCs. It analyses the Nigerian government inability to prevent and curtail inter-community conflict as not only emanating from corruption, but that it is a situation where the LGA's mandate is not being respected by NDCs due to the notion that it is not home-grown and trustworthy, thereby brandishing it alienated and untrustworthy, that makes the corrupt LGA administration a relative factor that influences the immediate social, economic and political factors triggering inter-community conflict in the ND. This connotes the difference between modernity (LGAs introduced by foreigners) and traditional (NDCs are home grown). Furthermore, it presents the case that the coexistence of disunited groups under same government does not only reflect NDCs' situation under the auspices of LGAs, but that corruption creates a culture and environment where one community marginalises the other, thereby activating communities' inherent autonomous nature to act as a catalyst that puts them at loggerheads with one another in the local government they co-habit. It went further, extending Wohlfort and Gilpin's view of governed groups with loyalist members, existing with no superior government in which they become self-determined through intergroup power tussle to protect their members' needs, to portray NDCs that engages in inter-community conflict to satisfy its members' interests, since LGAs' ineffective governance is liken to no governance. It presents these as the characteristics of inter-community conflict in the ND, which sets the stage for investigating factors that precipitates violent conflict between NDCs.

Conclusion

The chapter explores the nature and scope of inter-community conflict as being characterised by incompatibility between modernity and traditional. The modern LGA system of administration fails to provide trust for communities, but rather fosters the traditional violent means of settling disputes between NDCs. The chapter argues that it is this tension between the traditional and modern which has strained the relationship between LGAs and NDCs. The chapter further notes that the relationship between LGAs and their constituent NDCs is more controlling and manipulating in the core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers than the other six ND states, potentially explaining the higher prevalence of inter-community violence in the core states. Thus, whilst LGAs are a relative causal factor, NDCs' inherent autonomous nature over social, economic and political factors are the major cause of inter-community conflict.

The role of LGAs, notably their corruption and malpractice, as the core driver of conflict in the core ND states aha s been under-stated in the existing literature. Among such reasons are that: (i) NDCs are inherent autonomous entities with traditional ways of settling irreconcilable disputes among themselves; (ii) they perceive the direct responsibilities of modern LGA's authority over NDCs as not being home-grown; and (iii) geographical proximity that necessitated political fusion of inherent autonomous groups with different beliefs under one corrupt and untrustworthy leadership, which causes political domination and resource benefits marginalisation. Thus, whilst these extend the understanding of the Nigerian government's careless attitude that breeds community conflict in the ND, it also helps to further particularise the term 'inter-community conflict'. It does this by showing the limited scope of inter-community conflict, which is violence between NDCs irrespective of their locations. For example, conflicted communities located in same or different LGAs and ND-states, are classed as inter-community rather than inter-LGA nor inter-ND-states. The significance of this is that

NDCs are literally understood to be organized governed groups that identifies with a certain course, as well as located in same or different LGAs or ND states.

The chapter further analyses the characteristics of violent conflict between NDCs by exhibiting the intense tension highlighted by a corrupt community member (i.e. corrupt government official with political authority) that usurps authority over the shared territory or LGA that has constitutional control over its constituent communities. The implication of this is that, other NDCs who lack control over the shared territory or LGA happen to suffer grave marginalisation from corrupt communities that have the advantage of making decisions which subsequently affects all NDCs belonging to that territory or LGA. Thus, in a bid to forestall community marginalisation in the LGA, NDCs increasingly become self-determined by losing trust on the local government system. This presents LGAs as a relative factor that facilitates the social, economic and political factors instigating inter-community conflict in the ND. Thus, community's members organize themselves into governed groups that turns out to be the NDC that they pay loyalty to and as such characterize where they can receive the service of a trusted government. The enduring result is that NDCs lay more trust on its traditional ways rather than the modern administration of LGAs. NDCs' traditional ways depict its inherent autonomous nature that portray the need to gain control over social, economic and political factors, which becomes the immediate causes of inter-community conflict since such factors are constitutionally meant for sharing with other communities in same LGA. The social factors informing inter-community conflict are analysed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Sociological Shift: The Environment of Inter-Community Conflict

Introduction

The previous chapter concludes that inter-community conflict in the ND is characterised by the incompatibility between modernity and the traditional. These characteristics are contingent on NDCs being inherently autonomous and distinct units that strive to survive independently of one another within their alienated and untrustworthy LGAs. The result of such a situation is the emergence of violent competition between communities over resources managed by these untrustworthy LGAs, which leads to suspicion of one NDC's intentions towards the other, connoting independent entities that struggle for benefits in a fragile environment. Such struggles emerge over access to social, economic and political benefits or goods. The chapter concentrates on the social aspects of these struggles and reflects the community issues, such as prestige and status differences that acts as a major factor causing inter-community conflict in the ND.

Scholars such as Ukiwo (2007) and Aghalino (2009a) argue that different interests in social factors from diverse ethnic groups in the ND make inter-community conflict more likely. ND groups with opposing interests in these sociological factors can agree or disagree, depending on how many benefits they can obtain, but there exists little consensus among scholars exploring inter-community conflict on when, how and in what circumstances inter-community conflict is triggered. Researchers tend to conform to the notion of ethnic and cultural groups attempting to exploit a failed government as the major criteria for inter-community conflict, without considering the view that NDCs are inherently autonomous groups, irrespective of ethnicity and cultural affinity, which makes social differences between them an important factor when it comes to intergroup relations. This chapter assesses such social matters by

analysing and exploring them as community status distinctions triggered by the environment, and investigates this in relation to the causes of inter-community conflict. This is achieved by analysing NDCs as being categorised into higher and lower status, with the former having better accesses to, and the privileges of, social amenities through the influence of corrupt LGA authorities, which is likely to aggravate the lower status communities into triggering inter-community conflict. It assesses these status distinctions as constituting the culture created by the environment in the area, and as such motivates NDCs to strive for domination of their respective LGAs or territories seeking an edge over other NDCs.

This chapter analyses status distinction between NDCs and how the consequences of this status distinction lead NDCs to resort to violent means of settling disputes rather than following the rule of law. The attempt to change status leads to inter-community conflict. Status is attained based on the level of internal cooperation achieved by an individual NDC. Whilst some NDCs have strong internal ties, and others weak, both inform inter-community conflict. The significance of different NDCs' internal ties appears to represent their desire to be identified as a separate entity that can only be established through community identity based on inherent traits that enable social demarcation. Thus, since NDCs are identified with specific names that demarcate them from one another, social identity becomes a yardstick for differentiation, which has economic and political implications for NDCs' attitudes towards inter-community conflict.

7.2 NDCs as Status-based Societies

Ukiwo and Aghalino argue that sociological issues such as status and cultural differences, when brought into the decision-making process of resource allocation, instigates geographical inequity. This is contingent on ethnic groups belonging to the same geographical territory tending to be disadvantaged in resource allocation decisions and policies in the ND (Ukiwo, 2007). This is consolidated by violent conflict between ethnic groups in the ND being based

more on social injustice and the inequity in the allocation of scarce resources by the government and the oil industry (Aghalino, 2009a). Ukiwo and Aghalino's understanding of ethnic groups implies that NDCs' conflict over social factors is because they belong to different ethnicities. However, NDCs can with both identical and different ethnicities fall into conflict. In some cases, inter-ethnic strife has degenerated into inter-community conflict. In other cases, NDCs of the same ethnicity can fall into conflict such as the communities of K-Dere and B-Dere, both belonging to the Ogoni ethnicity (Tombare, April 2014), and Ayimebele and Akumoni both belonging to the Ijaw ethnicity (Tamunor, April 2014). As previously examined, NDCs can belong to the same or different ethnicity in that the definition of an NDC is based not on ethnicity but on a NDC constituting the geographical and political structure of a LGA. Thus, whilst agreeing with Ukiwo and Aghalino's sociological approach, this thesis further emphasises the role of social factors as drivers of violence in the ND.

LGAs are responsible for the fair allocation of resources to their constituent NDCs. This is not the case in practice. Rather the allocation of resources to NDCs is dependent on their status, and takes place through processes which are not transparent. A prominent resident of Ayimebele community in Yenagoa LGA in Bayelsa argues that in 2011 his LGA allowed Yambri, a neighbouring NDC to control the construction of roads within the LGA, a process that should have been centralised, as a result of its higher status based on the presence of socially prominent individuals, resident in Yambri. The LGA council apparently constructed a road between Agbobiri and Akumoni communities bypassing the neighbouring NDC of Ayimebele (Tamunor, April 2014). This corrupt and socially discriminatory behaviour on the part of this LGA emphasises both the prevalence of status distinction between NDCs and the potential for social distinction to metastasise into violent conflict.

Higher status NDCs often have wealthy and influential residents with the military and political elites, and connections with local, state and national government officials (Bekesu, April 2014).

These influential persons work together within an NDC to ensure their community's continued prosperity (Barile, April 2014). Onobrekpeya states that,

> We were peacefully living together, until the Okere-Itsekiri community brought up their domineering influence of wanting to enforce the Ogishi family leadership on us. They tried to use their communal land trust policy as an instrument to take our land. They oppressed us, and used their communal land trust policy to acquire our land on the Hussey College side, which we leased to them. They got into power in the Warri South LGA and exercised the council's authority of taking over our land. They were the only members of the land committee of the local government, therefore took advantage by showing an act of ownership on Hussey College. Because my community believe in the rule of law, we sued them in court' (Onobrekpeya, April 2014).

A brief overview of why NDCs resolve inter-community conflict through violent conflict and not by trusting in the 'rule of law' and taking rival communities and members of rival communities to court results from and inherent distrust of the concept of the 'rule of law' based on its evolution and practice in the Nigeerian context.

Firstly, as analysed in Chapter 6, local residents believe the justice system is a failure since it is an arm of the three organs of government, the executive, legislative and judiciary, whose officials are considered biased and corrupt. Secondly, the rule of law is generally considered to be intrinsically connected with the organs of government, it is also perceived as alienated from NDC's precolonial and traditional ways of settling disputes. This is due to the notion that the organs of government in Nigeria are an untrustworthy borrowed concept or practice from the colonial power(s) rather than homegrown (Alegbeleye, 1998). Such untrustworthiness stems from NDCs' belief and trust in their traditional and customary ways of settling disputes

(Alegbeleye, 1998). The traditional and customary ways of settling disputes are often based on diplomacy when involved parties have a long cordial relationship and settled by war when they have no ties in common (Dike, 2008). The difference between NDC's traditional ways of settling disputes and the current rule of law are contributory to why NDCs resort to violent conflict among themselves.

Thus, whilst NDC's traditional ways of settling disputes are based on customary laws based on the day to day life of community members (Otite, 1972), the rule of law reflects what a civilised society should look like (Rodney, 2012). Hence, judgments based on customary laws are more seen as more legitimate by the members of an NDC, whilst a ruling based on the rule of law is seen as less legitimate. Dike assesses precolonial ancient ND communities involved in long distance trade from the coastal lowlands to the hinterlands, to be a people engulfed in unique traditional and customary laws from one community to another according to their festival practices (Dike, 2008). Moreover, these customary laws did not need the services of professional lawyers like the rule of law, a resentment given that the inability to pay for legal counsel can deny the members of an NDC access to justice. Thus, apart from the notion that the rule of law is not home grown, wealthy and influential members are better placed to hire the best lawyers, perceived as the lawyers best placed to twist the law in their favour. Hence, poorer communities and members of communities prefer to resort to traditional ways or violent means of settling disputes.

Furthermore, wealthy and influential individuals often subvert the law to serve their interests, and in cases where they consider the rule of law to be unfavourable they use money to bribe corrupt officials to render the case null and void. Also, wealthy residents belonging to certain NDCs perceive violence as a quicker and surer way to achieve their communities' aims. There is evidence that these wealthy and influential residents are directly responsible for facilitating violence through the purchase of ammunition, subverting government authority to protect their

interests, and covering up cases that should ordinarily go to court. A typical example is the inter-community conflict between Ewoama and Okpoama in 2006, where the latter had very prominent residents including judges and army officers who used their influence to promote the interests of Okpoama over those of Ewoama (Ibaba, March 2014). A similar case is that of the inter-community conflict between Kilama and Ayimebele in 2003, where the LGA chairman was from the latter (Igiran, April 2014). These put together sums up the agitation of NDCs' members in boycotting the rule of law to taking up violent means in settling disputes between communities.

The capacity of prominent individuals to influence resource allocation is maximised when these individuals act as LGA chairmen. According to Duumaa 'in the Niger Delta, a LGA chairman is influenced by his community when making a decision, because he must come from a community amongst the various constituent communities making up the LGA' (Duumaa, April 2014). This tallies with another respondent's statement about Opokoma LGA in Bayelsa, where a prominent person named Timi Alaibe, a former adviser to the late President Yaradua, is alleged to influence decisions made by the LGA on community affairs (Otavie, April 2014). Influence relates to status. Some NDCs' 'identities' are more prominent than others. Omoviri community, which includes residents closely connected with MNCs operating in the area, declared itself to be superior to the other seven communities located in the Rumuekpe kingdom leading to a protracted inter-community conflict between 2005 to 2009 that claimed over a hundred lives (Social Action Group, 2013). This concept of community 'superiority' is linked the favouritism of certain NDCs within their own LGA and can instigate a self-fulfilling cycle whereby these privileged NDCs become wealthier, more favoured within their LGA, and their superior status more entrenched.

This position is supported by Tajfel who argues that social identity theory in social psychology focuses on how members of groups are biased in favour of their own group, their so-called in-

group, and that how perceived threats from out-groups to the interests of the in-groups can lead to strong negative reactions from group members (Tajfel, 2010). Similarly, Kew argues that for groups to maintain their positions in a corrupt environment lacking legitimate business opportunities, the ones with influential politicians have every incentive to steal public funds and oppress political opponents. Moreover, under this arrangement these groups also have a strong incentive to keep competing counterparts impoverished and to fan ethnic resentments to keep them passive and afraid of neighbouring groups. This in turn maintains the status quo that benefits the political monopoly of an elite social group (Kew, 2010).

Thus, communities understood as groups are complex cultural units, which serve such a rich variety of fundamental social identity, security, and members' interests, particularly in the context of failed state conditions, where perceived threats from one ethnic group against another can elicit strong aggressive responses from aggrieved members. This type of provocation appears to be instilled by the upper status on the lower status NDCs. It is in this regard that Ojuwu states that, 'most of the civil servants at the Warri South LGA's offices are from Okere-Itsekiri, and they use the privilege to deny us from Okere-Urhobo our fundamental human rights, as well as refuse any opportunity for our candidates to be interviewed for job offers within the council' (Ojuwu, March 2014). The 2003 inter-community conflict ignited over a dispute within the local branch of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PPD) (Okumagba, April 2014). According to these respondents', such governmental influence by powerful communities can result in an aggressive response from weaker, yet aggrieved, NDCs. However, other respondents disagree, arguing that such grievances are rather stirred by the imbalance within the ND administrative structure that allows one NDC to dominate the other.

Accordingly, Odje portrays the LGAs in the ND as ill-equipped to manage inter-community relations (Odje, April 2014). Another respondent state that the administrative structure of the LGA authorities is designed in such a way as to allow prejudice and marginalisation of one

community over another (Winniman, April 2014). These alternative perspectives suggest that community 'status distinction' is not to be blamed; rather it is the fault of the ineffective ND governmental system. However, what can be deduced from respondents' views on powerful communities or the imbalance of LGAs' administrative structure, is that NDCs classed in the higher social status aggravate those of lower status through biased decisions made at the governmental level, which are often perceived as unfair by lower status communities. As such, relationships between the higher and lower status NDCs have often been a case of the denied/oppressed revolting or attempting to attain social status. According to Eyakade: 'people like to say how can this small village here threaten us, let us go and show them that we are more than them,' (Eyakade, March 2014). The role of 'pride' as an instigator of conflict is raised often by the respondents. For example, according to a youth leader from B-Dere, a dispute between two individual landowners from K-Dere and B-Dere in 2013 escalated into a wider dispute in which the landowners' respective communities became involved (Tombare, April 2014). Tombare, considers the idea of defending community pride as crucial to the nature of inter-community relations, extending the notion beyond NDCs to incorporate sovereign states: 'it is the same pride that Nigerians have in agitating and protecting the Bakassi Peninsula from Cameroon, that our communities have in protecting its borders against neighbouring NDCs' (Tombare, April 2014).

The issue of a community's pride in its social status reflects the status distinction between NDCs, itself a measure of inferred poverty or wealth. Nengi, a journalist based in Goodluck Jonathan's State house in Bayelsa argues,

> Odioma and Obiokwu are two sister communities within the same ND state of Bayelsa, but there is an oil well located in Obiokwu, and Obiokwu in times past used to be a geographical part of Odioma. Odioma community is saying it is superior to Obiokwu, and Obiokwu is saying 'no' you cannot tell us that we are

inferior because the oil well that has just been discovered happens to be located on our land, therefore we have as much right to the proceeds from the oil, which makes us financially stable as you' (Nengi, April 2014).

Access to wealth, notably oil wealth, underpin claims to social superiority. This represents a sociological extension of Von Kemedi's argument that, 'the location of oil production has become a factor engineering envy and disagreement among different groups over that land which makes an oil community' (Kemedi, 2003). Conversely, Osaghae argues that it is the environmental degradation that the exploitation of oil brings that depletes fertile lands, leading to the reduction of fishing and farming space which instigates inter-community conflict (Osaghae et al., 2007). Such scarcity of productive territory leads to poverty in communities and subsequently dictates the social status of rich or poor NDCs. An example of a conflict enflamed by such scarcity is clash in 2005 between Alesa-eleme and Ogbunabali communities in Port Harcourt LGA (Vanguard Newspaper, 2005). Thus, whilst the existing literature prioritises the presence of oil in a particular territory as a driver of conflict, this research rather emphasises internal and external ties within and between communities as instigating, or otherwise, the outbreak of conflict.

7.3 The Effect of Internal Ties within NDCs on Inter-Community Conflict

An argument exists that the inter-community conflict is linked with the relative strength of internal ties within a NDC. According to Biebelade, cooperation and unity within his community, Kere-banga, seen in terms of persuading members of the community to buy weapons, encouraged conflict with the Nyowii-Bangha community in 2009 over a disputed area of land (Biebelade, April 2014). Others insist that cooperation within a community is a necessary factor needed to boost their readiness for an anticipated violent inter-community conflict that would bring freedom and prosperity. Ojuwu argues that, 'if there was no

cooperation within my community, it would have been more difficult for us to engage the Okere-Itsekiri in the 2003 inter-community conflict that established our freedom; in fact, most of us that were far away had to come back home to support [our fellow community members] because that is our identity, we do not have any other place to call home' (Ojuwu, March 2014). To buttress this, Tyger states that, 'we were cooperating, that was why we could wage the war against the Kilama community in 2003. When there is no cooperation between us we cannot defend our land' (Tyger, April 2014). This suggests that the level of cooperation within a community is a strong motivator of conflict, whereas disunity discourages conflict. However, not all respondents subscribe to such view, with some perceiving disunity within a NDC to be a major factor instigating conflict. For Laka,

In Kaani 1 community, there is no cooperation among us. If records could be followed, one of the reasons for the war between us and the Luusue-Sogho community is factional leadership within us. This has made us unable to agree on a peaceful pact with our neighbouring community on how to settle the conflict. In my community, some people assume themselves to be among the ruling elites of political parties, whilst others seem to belong to a class of non-partisan, radical and modern leaders. It is common in my place to hear the phrase, 'Ameni, Amanameni'. Ameni means new class of chiefs, Amanameni means old class of chiefs. So, it is a struggle between Ameni and Amanameni. There is no cooperation at all, even today. But sometimes people come out to say that there is cooperation in our community; if you are not in a class of leadership, you will not know. As I am talking to you now, I am a chief, I am just looking for somebody to hand over the youth leadership to. I am Meninzuguru, one of Kaani 1. Meninzuguru means chief of the youth. So, there is no cooperation among the ruling class. Most leaders

mobilise and instigate people against other ruling classes in order to have their ways in the community (Laka, April 2014).

Reciprocally, the opposing community, Luusue-Sogho, is also engaging in the same conflict because of discord between its members. Winniman claims that 'my community cannot cooperate, because they believe that the land in contention belongs to one particular family, hence no support is supplied by the ruling class. But when the opposite community, Kaani 1, attack, they injure anybody from Luusue-Sogho' (Winniman, April 2014). There is agreement on both sides of this conflict that it is internal discord that has instigated inter-community conflict.

The inter-community conflict between Ewoama and Okpoama in 2006, where the latter was destroyed by the former over a chieftaincy disagreement, also suggests discord within the Ewoama community. According to an interview with Ibaba,

> By history the Ewoama were a little bit subordinated to the Okpoama chieftaincies. At one-point Ewoama thought that they should be autonomous and have their own chiefs, but there were factions amongst them. One group disagreed with the plan, and insisted that the tradition had to be kept. Thus, violent conflict erupted. There were people from Ewoama conniving with persons in the Okpoama group in a bid to ensure the failure of the former. Ewoama was destroyed totally; even today the place is still deserted. This happened close to a decade ago. The lack of unity among the Ewoama people, in that some of them supported Okpoama, made the conflict inevitable because of betrayal and lack of consensus within their members' (Ibaba, April 2014).

Thus, perhaps counter-intuitively, whilst some NDCs' leaders and members perceive unity as a motivational factor to engage in inter-community conflict, others view disunity as preventing

consensus. Conflict can result both from internal unity and internal disunity. The key factor is social identity as a means of social demarcation, signifying the shift in sociological boundaries that drives inter-community conflict.

7.4 Social Identity & Identity Distinction: Instigating a Socially-Driven Inter-Community Conflict

Asuni argues that communities in Ogoniland have a history of being torn apart by socially-driven power struggles. She contends that the people in these communities are united by a sense of grievance about the exploitation of their region, which they perceive as infringement on their social status, hence they go into conflict with MNCs and Nigerian state officials, who they consider as appropriators of what rightfully belongs to them, in order to protect their social rights (Asuni, 2010). This type of community conflict is linked to what has been described as the marginalisation of Nigerian minorities, which invariably connotes inequality. Thus, inequality from a community's perspective undermines its social identity. It is in this regard, that scholars like Ukiwo analyse the 1976 inter-community conflict between the NDCs of Gbaramatu and Ugborodo over ownership of oil-bearing locations, arguing that intergroup inequalities and ethnic marginalisation accounted for the Gbaramatu community fighting for its survival in a hostile environment. His analysis of the causality of the conflict is based on the view that the Nigerian authorities favoured the Ugborodo community over Gbaramatu NDC due to ethnic differences, by placing the headquarters of the MNCs in the former's territory, whereas the drilling and hazardous activities took place in the latter's territory, leading to Gbaramatu instigating conflict with Ugborodo (Ukiwo, 2007). This rationale for conflict provides a further layer of motivation beyond the self-determination rationale, explored earlier in the chapter. The Gbaramatu community belong to the Ijaw ethnic group whereas the Ugborodo NDCs belong to the Itsekiri ethnic group. Ukiwo (2007) claims that it is different

ethnicity that impels the conflict, although he fails to explain why NDCs from the same ethnic group are also prone to conflict. The quest for social identity, breaking away from a former community to gain community autonomy, can trigger inter-community conflict. According to Alagoa, 'within a community, very soon, when the population expands, the different dialect spoken by different groups increases; people then move out to settle in a new community, identifying as a unique social group and so on, but the next settlement will have to demarcate boundaries, so these [new boundaries] lead to inter-community wars' (Alagoa, March 2014). This suggests that the origin of communities is marked by a small number of persons that dominate certain areas and multiply thereafter. However, Alagoa's view is not widely accepted amongst community leaders. For Ibaba, a researcher on inter-community conflict in the ND, 'communities are formed by ancestors, and so that is one reason for demarcation; from history someone settles in a place, he lays claim to the land and then a community begins to evolve, so the boundary he claims demarcates his land from the others, and becomes the boundary between his and another community' (Ibaba, March 2014). Thus, whilst Alagoa talks about population expansion and how a boundary between two NDCs can cause conflict, Ibaba is concerned with how certain ancestral persons start up a community with pre-existing boundaries acting as a peaceful demarcation of territory. Boundaries imply differences and demarcations between NDCs whether they bring about conflict or peaceful existence. Both positions identify a new community acquiring the social identity of a group.

Such a scenario and the process of gaining social identity is also associated with the protection of this identity. Nalaguo emphasises,

> Well, the essence of a distinct identity is because there are different interests to protect and these different interests are many; sometimes in terms of small communities, they want to protect their ancestral dialect and culture, hence they fend for a distinct area within which they practise all these, and sometimes their

boundaries are encroached on by other communities, which results in inter-community conflict (Nalaguo, April 2014).

This type of social identity distinguishes a community from the ethnic group it belongs to, as well as conforming to what is known as a social group attracting special attention and recognition from Nigerian government authorities. Accordingly, Hope argues that,

We all have our identity. Once a people is identified as a community, it tends to give some element of attention or recognition, so everybody wants to be identified by that light. That is just the truth. If you say you come from the Ijaw ethnic group or town, people will understand what you are talking about. But when you say you come from the Ijaw community of Ogbe-ijoh or Okerenkoko, for this person to have used the word 'community', means there is something there that needs special attention. That is just the way it is, that it is a social identity; community tends to give special identity to a group of persons' (Hope, April 2014).

This 'special attention' that comes from being recognised as a social group is linked to the alleged cause of the inter-community conflict in 2003 between the Okere-Urhobo and Okere-Itsekiri, when the former struggled to assert social identity (Ojuwu, March 2014; Iniku, April 2014). Thus, the drive to gain social identity affects a community in ways that urge it to respond violently to those perceived as constraining their social ambitions. Such social identity is even more conspicuous considering that NDCs are co-exist within the LGA to which they belong. In other words, one NDC can be more socially inclined than another within the same LGA.

Accordingly, some respondents believe that within the Warri South LGA, some communities are more developed than others, and that the developed NDCs are more likely to control the council's resources, which they use to treat neighbouring community members as second-class citizens (Ojudirere, November 2016). Another respondent claimed that the location of Delta's

administrative capital within the Asaba community in Oshimili South LGA was influenced by Maryam Babangida, the wife of former President Ibrahim Babangida, and former member of the Asaba community (Ofugara, November 2016). However, the flagrant social climbing of certain NDCs is disputed by other respondents such as Nengi and Oyolo who cite the effectiveness of constitutional checks and balances to prevent such misuses of power.

However, the majority perception amongst the respondents is that NDCs exist in reality and that some consider themselves socially superior to others. Also, inter-community conflict exists and is based on remote, and immediate factors that impel inter-community conflict. Socially, NDCs can be related to a remote factor that gradually impels NDCs towards inter-community conflict. Thus, Nengi and Oyolo's understand social factors that lead to conflict as remote, rather than immediate factors. In other words, the issue of social identity exists for a reason, which could be a remote or immediate factor instigating inter-community conflict in the ND. Social identity is a subtle factor, especially in circumstances where NDCs belong to the same LGA requiring co-existence within a space subject to ineffective governance.

NDCs' identity is significant when differentiating one from another in the same LGA. This is contingent on the view that groups identified with the status of a community stand in a more advantageous position to gain prestigious recognition from the LGA than reckoned groups or quarters which make up a section of recognised communities, as well as those parts of a community with ambitions to become discrete NDCs (Aghe, March 2014; Igiran, April 2014). Moreover, some NDCs have a more prominent identity than others ascribing them a higher social status (Onobrekpeya, April 2014). As stated earlier, such socially accredited status is associated with a community possessing high status individuals. According to Eyakade, a small community can be more influential in LGA affairs than a big community if it has wealthy and influential members capable of manipulating military and governmental decision-making. He cites the case of the Zaki Biam community crisis in Benue state where prominent people

belonging to the Jukun communities conspired with the Nigerian military to invade and demolish the Tiv community in Zaki Biam (Eyakade, March 2014).

Conclusion

Certain ethnic groups within the ND are disadvantaged in resource allocation decisions and policies (Ukiwo, 2007) both by the government and oil industry alike (Aghalino, 2009a). The result of mis-allocating scarce resources based on social injustice and inequity are intergroup inequalities and ethnic/tribal marginalisation (Ukiwo, 2007). By synthesising the analyses of primary data from ND community leaders, the chapter determines that social inequity between inherent autonomous communities, accounts for inter-community conflict, rather than ethnic/tribal inequality as argued in the existing scholarly literature. NDCs are more responsive to their inherent autonomous nature than to the ethnic group to which they belong. The chapter concludes that the marginalisation of one inherent autonomous community by another, based on social factors, constitutes a major driver of inter-community conflict.

This chapter scrutinises the social aspects of the environment in which NDCs exist propelling them into inter-community conflict. Failures in the Nigerian justice system and the advantages of traditional self-determination to maintain their social status between NDCs motivate them to promote, maintain or defend their prestige against one another through means of violent conflict rather than believing in the rule of law. Such motivation is augmented by the corrupt culture, whereby LGAs neglect their primary duty of effectively administering their constituent communities. As a result of this administrative vacuum, NDCs fall back on their inherent autonomy, in so doing becoming vulnerable to inter-community tensions and ultimately conflict based on perceived social distinctions. As such, the quest for social domination in a vulnerable environment becomes a catalyst for violent inter-community conflict in the region.

NDCs can be categorised into 'higher and lower status' communities within a shared territory. The mis-governance of such a shared territory precludes some NDCs claiming superiority over others. Socially dominant NDCs have wealthy and influential members, stronger internal ties

and greater cooperation between their members. Yet, NDCs without strong internal ties and where cooperation is absent, nonetheless, are also prone to falling into conflict as a result of the absence of consensus between community members. In circumstances where both strong and weak social identity can provoke conflict, the enabler of corruption as LGA level is particularly harmful. This chapter argues that NDCs are distinct and inherently independent entities which strive through violent and other means to socially dominate one another within an ineffectively governed LGAs. They seek to do this through dominating the sectors that connect them and make them co-exist. Such sectors include the social factors embedded in the LGA from which accrues social prestige. However, such domination cannot and does not happen without an NDC having strong internal ties invariably based on wealth. The economic bases for conflict are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: Economic Drivers of Community Conflict in the Niger Delta

Introduction

The previous chapter analysed how social factors can instigate inter-community conflict in the ND, scrutinising how evidence from NDC leaders brings into question arguments addressing the causes of conflict made in the scholarly literature. It concludes that social inequity between inherently autonomous communities transforms social relationships between communities in the ND into inter-community conflict. This transformation of peaceful social relations into inter-community conflict is facilitated by the notion that NDCs are inherently autonomous. This reflects the status of individual NDCs, or the social hierarchy between communities seeking social dominance. This dominance is abetted by pervasive corruption in the governance of the NGAs (and other layers of the Nigerian polity) and the actions of influential and ambitious individuals within socially dominant communities. Thus, the economic dimension to inter-community conflict in the ND is linked with the seeking of privilege and wealth of NDCs within their LGAs.

Ikelegbe argues that individuals looking to enrich themselves are responsible for recruiting people to ignite inter-community strife in the ND (Ikelegbe, 2006), whilst Osaghae et al. contend that elite manipulation is responsible for NDCs engaging in conflict (Osaghae et al., 2007). However, this chapter disagrees with Ikelegbe and Osaghae, rather proposing that it is NDCs' inherent autonomous nature as a collective force that drives inter-community conflict in the ND. It supports this argument by building on gaps in the existing scholarly literature, and adds layers of evidence, notably concerning disputes over land resources that subsequently cause conflict between NDCs. Such economic issues are a major driver that determines how disputes over land resources, for example space for building houses, for farming or for business

can lead to conflict between communities in the ND. This chapter investigates how certain NDCs adopt a violently competitive relationship with other NDCs more explicable through intrinsic autonomy than their modern status as constituents of LGAs and ND states. The chapter further explores the main resources over which conflict occurs: mineral and oil resources. The chapter concludes by examining how economic factors driving conflict are inextricably linked to political influence and the capacity to exercise political power within the Nigerian administrative and governance system.

8.2 Land as a Source of NDC Frustration-Aggression

From an economic perspective, Ikelegbe argues that unemployment gives rise to poverty thereby resulting in grievance amongst residents of affected NDCs leading to a reservoir of disaffected youth easily exploited by corrupt business and political elites (Ikelegbe, 2006). This type of ruthless behaviour dates to the era of imperialism and the slave trade. Similarly, Osaghae associates inter-community conflict in the ND with the inequity in the way in which the dividends from oil revenue has been distributed. He argues that this was made possible with the help of elite manipulation allowing MNCs to ignore their social responsibility towards NDCs. This has resulted in environmental degradation and unemployment, which impoverishes the region exacerbating resource competition (Osaghae et al., 2007). These economic factors precipitating inter-community conflict in the ND are specifically understood by these scholars from the perspective that elites or prominent individuals are principally responsible for instigating inter-community conflict. This, however, largely ignores the central contention of this study that NDCs are inherent autonomous groups that act collectively in defending the course of their community.

The respondents' evidence suggests that NDCs contend over land ownership not only as a result of potential profit for individuals, but because they are separate and inherently

autonomous communities. Having autonomous control over their own economy is crucial for communities' existence. Variside, the prince of Luusue-Sogho, states that 'each of the communities in Khana LGA have their own economic interests to protect and one of the major interests is our land, which is the reason each community has boundaries, and the encroachment of our boundaries and land by Kaani 1 in 2013 brought the conflict between us' (Variside, April 2014). This proposes that an NDC protects its resources from another NDC, highlighting the sense of independence within these communities. Duumaa maintains that his community, Babee has its own language and land space, which makes it unacceptable for them to claim lands belonging to another NDC, since it is geographically and culturally demarcated (Duumaa, April 2014). Ebimo states that 'communities normally have crises because of land disputes; when Evwrheni community crosses their boundary to work in Uweru community's space in 2006, they insisted that the land belongs to them, and that they do not want Uweru people to cross to that land, which brings to the fore conflict over land, subsequently leading to fighting between the two communities' (Ebimo, April 2014). Boundary encroachment breaches a NDC's inherent autonomous identity leading to inter-community conflict underlining the position of this research that a NDC acts collectively in ways that seeks to protect its members' interests.

Community boundaries and identity are linked with economic growth, towards which land resources contribute a significant amount. Ebimo states that 'the cause of conflict between Evwrheni and Uweru communities in 2006, was a result of farmland dispute in the dry season, a time that is normally marked for harvesting crops that yield economic benefits' (Ebimo, April 2014). Economic disputes of this type also motivate groups within a community to campaign for autonomy when they feel economically marginalised. The Okere-Urhobo maintained group status within the Okere community until 2003 when, following intra-community conflict resulting from a dispute over the poor income that they were receiving from the land they lived

on, before they became autonomous. Itemeoki states that, 'in the beginning there was a land dispute in the 1970s and again boundary adjustment and changing from the original Okere community which has been in existence to the present communities of Okere-Itsekiri and Okere-Urhobo' (Itemeoki, March 2014). Such demarcation is assessed as a lease of economic life for the Okere-Urhobos, who see community identity and autonomy as a means of achieving economic growth for the group. It is in this light that a youth leader of the Okere-Urhobo community states that 'authority over land is what makes a community strong and powerful which brings wealth and properties' (Ojuwu, March 2014).

Whilst scholars such as Ikelegbe and Osaghae are concerned about individuals' struggles over resources accrued from land, respondents such as NDC leaders and residents are concerned with how their autonomy and control over land resources can add to their economic growth as a group of people with a common identity. Though these contrasting views uphold economic factors as being responsible for causing inter-community conflict, the evidence from the interviews is not corroborated by evidence from elsewhere. For example, reports from the Vanguard newspaper detail the conflict *within* the Ogborodo community in Warri Southwest LGA that have been recurring since 2012 due to a disagreement over the distribution of financial benefits such as contracts and bursaries within the community (Vanguard, 2012). This periodic conflict indicates, contrary to the positive assessments advanced by local respondents, that community autonomy and identity do not automatically economically benefit all members of a NDC. Thus, individual interests, and factions seeking a higher share of income than other factions within the same NDC, are the elements facilitating *intra*-community conflict, conflict within a community. This arises as a result of acquisitive individuals and/or factions attempting to enrich themselves at the expense of the wider NDC under the pretext of community collectiveness.

It is with this in mind that Zalik suggests that participatory practice and partnership development are the result of a wider penetration of individualised regulation. This involves the focus on solutions rather than problems, for example, suggesting a move away from the legal procedure for claim-making to the offer of compensation to militants within a community and the engagement with influential individuals and youths within communities rather than operating through communal authority structures (Zalik, 2004). Zalik argues that powerful leaders have become wealthy under the pretext of fighting for community members' rights regarding the activities of the MNCs. The MNCs act as accomplices for these individuals, dealing directly with them rather than the NDC's agreed representatives. In these instances, MNCs deny all residents a share of the profits from the commercial activities taking place on their community's territory (Emeseh, 2011). Thus, though such individual and factional ambitions within a NDC undermine the evidence from the respondents from Okere-Itsekiri and Okere-Urhobo that community autonomy and identity automatically economically benefit all members, it should be noted that intra-community and inter-community conflicts are separate topics.

According to Igiran, 'most of the problems that arise between communities are caused by land disputes especially in situations where you have oil wells, when MNCs come they tend to create clashes between communities…imagine a situation where a company comes and sites an oil well on your land and name it with my name, you would be troubled, so most of the disputes we have in Niger Delta are caused by oil companies because they create land dispute by wrong naming' (Igiran, April 2014). This reflects how MNCs are instrumental to inter-community conflict and is also an extension of Zalik's view that they contribute to community crisis by enriching a few and neglecting most NDC members (Zalik, 2004) who then seek alternative ways of meeting their economic demands, and often end up in committing violent acts to achieve them. This is exacerbated by the scarcity of land in the region.

However, whether NDCs struggle over land resources, see themselves as a collective autonomous group with unique identity, or are dissatisfied with the distribution of wealth, what is conspicuous is that they are economically motivated to instigate inter-community conflict in a way that splits interests between groups or communities. Such economic motivations prompt the notion that autonomous groups or inherent autonomous communities, are what drives them into inter-community conflict. This contrasts with Ikelegbe and Osaghae's argument that inter-community conflicts are primarily instigated by *individual* ambitions and actions. The evidence from the interviews is that conflict between NDCs is caused by a community's *collective* interests. Aghara states that 'communities are basically formed by interests, one community may be sited near a river that may be a fishing community, the other community maybe sited in open farmland such as Kaani' (Aghara, April 2014). Thus, as NDC's interests are different, so are their environments. In Nalaguo's words, 'one community cannot just go into another community and start farming on its land or start hunting there, as a clan, the boundaries are clearly spelt out, there are certain activities you can carry out as long as you are a native of that clan or you have authority to live and do things there, but there are other things that are restricted by boundaries, for instance, going into a neighbouring community to pick up a good piece of land for development, is prohibited' (Nalaguo, April 2014). This shows the disparity of NDCs as distinct entities which Olu-Fubara exemplifies, 'the Southern Ijaw area, have some communities such as Olobia and Asiswama that have a history of being torn apart by claims to particular portion of land' (Olu-Fubara, April 2014). Thus, resources accrued from land are one factor that divides groups or communities based on economic gains which accelerates violent conflicts between them.

8.3 Mineral Resources a Source of Inter-Community Conflict

Ikelegbe argues that from an economic perspective, 'economies of war' are a major driver of conflict between NDCs in the region (Ikelegbe, 2006). From a similar perspective, as explored

in chapters 2 and 7, Ukiwo analyses the 1976 inter-community conflict between the NDCs of Gbaramatu and Ugborodo over ownership of oil-bearing locations, arguing that intergroup inequalities and ethnic marginalisation led to the marginalised Gbaramatu community fighting for its survival in an unfriendly marginalised environment (Ukiwo, 2007). His analysis of the causality of the conflict is based on the view that the FGN favoured the Ugborodo NDC over the Gbaramatu NDC by placing strategic locations and headquarters of MNCs in Ugborodo zones, whereas the drilling and hazardous activities took place in mostly Gbaramatu areas. Whilst Ikelegbe argues that the interests of oil stakeholders are a factor instigating inter-community conflict, Ukiwo argues that ethnic marginalisation resulting from unfair distribution of oil proceeds is responsible for the marginalisation of one NDC over the other. However, this does not address the issue of NDCs' inability to co-exist in a harmonious, peaceful and mutual way even when they are from the same ethnic group within the same LGA or why oil and mineral resources have exacerbated conflict in the region

Two respondents argue that proximate NDCs within the same LGS should be living as a single extended family and should not be divided in the way that they are. In Uzobarima words, 'communities in the Niger Delta are having problems because of crude oil, which makes us argue over oil pipelines, oil wells; outside that, traditionally, we are supposed to be living like brothers and sisters' (Uzobarima, April 2014). In a similar vein, Olu-Fubara states that 'the faulty community is greedy because it is obvious that the place belongs to a different community, but because there is an oil flow station there, and them wanting to be a partaker of that oil, refused to be sincere enough to come openly to say let us eat together, instead they intend to forcefully take over the place' (Olu-Fubara, April 2014). The phraseology used in these two accounts such as 'brothers and sisters' and 'eating together' imply a sense of fraternity and kinship shattered by the desire to profit from oil wealth. Thus, the scrambling for oil locations is perceived by NDC leaders as key to inter-community conflict. Nengi states that

'since the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta, communities that used to be on the best of terms have now started squabbling over oil and gas resources in their area' (Nengi, April 2014). Whilst these respondents perceive the disagreements between NDCs over oil and gas locations' ownership as incidents that shatter a supposed previously mutual and cordial relationship, others take the disagreements as events requiring the establishment of new communities. Identity becomes the way to gain access to oil wealth.

Duumaa, from an NGO researching Rivers state NDCs, states that, 'some communities were created because oil that was found in that place, they decided to move there to claim ownership of the facilities, which made them have boundary problems with their traditional neighbouring communities' (Duumaa, April 2014). This suggests NDCs' quest to differentiate themselves is embedded in their natural tendency to sustain autonomy and independence from one another. An example of this is demonstrated in Bekesu's statement about how five communities that called themselves 'the Kato' became detached from their entire clan of Biseni, which originally consisted of ten NDCs. This split was a result of the idea that the Kato possessed oil resources, which made them identical to the Bisneni, and they therefore demanded their own agreement with the MNCs drilling the crude oil. In Bekesu's words:

> for the ten communities making up the Biseni clan, we have one interest to protect, which is to work towards one goal in terms of protecting our language, culture, and land from trespassers. In Biseni itself, we have Kato which is made up of five communities, and they operate separately from the entire Biseni clan, because that is what they have been fighting for from Agip and Shell to have their own Memorandum of Understanding with these oil companies operating under the Kato communities. They do not want a global system that will cover the entire clan. The reason for this is that, if any project will come from these companies, it will be sited in their own community and they would be the ones to decide what should be

carried out. If it is for the whole clan, it is only the clan head and cabinet that will decide how crude oil project will go and it will not favour some communities that are less populated. For that reason, we decided to have our own identity by forming Kato which gives us a personal MOU with the oil companies so that each community will be fully represented and these projects will be there in the communities (Bekesu, April 2014).

This scenario regarding the formation of a new NDC illustrates the importance of having access to economic opportunities and defending these opportunities. Therefore, oil money not only encourages NDCs to establish their own identity and distinguish themselves with unique names, but it also leads to the NDCs viewing the names of oil facilities as something that proves a community's right to financial claims over oil proceeds. Thus, according to Igiran, 'most of the problems that arise between communities are caused by land naming disputes especially in situations where you have oil wells which are wrongly named, like the situation where Shell named the oil well located at Oluasiri as Soku oil well, and has been the main cause of conflict between both communities since the 1950s' (Igiran, April 2014). Uzobarima states that 'since oil exploitation came to Gokana LGA, money has started coming in, and people have started claiming oil lands which brought the 2008 inter-community conflict between K-Dere and B-Dere, which are neighbours known for peaceful co-existence over the years since they share practically same language and culture and are descendants of two brothers, Okegbara and Ibarayan, of the same father' (Uzobarima, April 2014). It can be deduced from the above that whilst some NDCs broke mutual friendships because of oil and gas, others sought a complete new community identity altogether. Thus, broken friendships and the emergence of a new community are rightly perceived as being motivated by the same goal of seeking to secure oil and mineral revenues.

This view of NDCs as being motivated by their inherently autonomous nature and desire to gain access to oil wealth, leading to inter-community conflict, reflects and extends the research undertaken by inter-governmental, non-governmental organisations and investigative journalism. In 2006, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) concluded that the Olomoro and Oleh conflict, and the Okere-Urhobo and Okere-Itsekiri conflict, both of which occurred in 2003, had been exacerbated by disagreements over land boundaries (UNDP, 2006). Likewise, the Social Action Group, a local NGO known for its community activists' programme since the establishment of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, published a report that concluded that the inter-community conflict between Luusue-Sogho and Kaani 1 in 2011 resulted from confusion over the boundary that demarcates both NDCs as separate entities (Social Action Group, 2013). The Punch newspaper reported that the intermittent conflict between the communities of Nembe-Ogbolomabri and Nembe-Gbasamabri, which has existed since the period of colonisation, can be traced back to claims of ownership over the Nembe kingdom (Punch Newspaper, 2005). The above reports show that causes of inter-community conflict in the ND are closely associated with NDCs attempting to differentiate themselves. However, these reports do not explicitly scrutinise why and how NDCs seek to differentiate themselves with regard to oil reserves on their territory. Ikelegbe's 'economies of war' approach emphasises the role of ambitious individuals whilst Ukiwo argues that ethnic marginalisation is a prime instigating factor leading to conflict. This is at odds with the evidence presented by some respondents who argue that it is NDCs' traditional autonomous nature that drives them to seek self-determination, which leads to completion, and sometimes conflict over oil wealth in the ND. The impact of crude oil money is evident from the statistics, oil and gas resources constitute 75% of Nigeria's national income and over 85% of the ND's income (Wall Street Journal, 2015). It follows from these base figures that NDCs and their members are highly reliant on oil-related economic activities in order to obtain employment,

contracts, scholarships and other forms of financial security. The absolute primacy of oil as the source of financial well-being, or indeed survival, dictates the lengths to which NDCs will go to protect access to this source of income.

8.4 Access to Benefits

Economists such as Ostby argue that completion over economic advantage lies at the heart of conflict between groups. He contends that it is scale of the perception of potential opportunity that determines the decision to go to war or to pursue peace (Ostby, 2008). Cederman et al. maintains that rebel groups will fight if perceived benefits outweigh the costs of rebellion (Cederman et al., 2010). It is in this light that Nafziger maintain that intergroup conflict between the elite and the masses, precipitating from the absence of economic opportunities, income inequality, pervasive rent-seeking, contributes to emergencies of economic downturn. As such, economic downturn brings about relative deprivation, arising from a growing discrepancy that fuels intergroup conflict whereby the deprived group weighs between what they expect and what they receive (Nafziger, 2002). The contention made by these scholars relates to the tipping point that results in rebels choosing to start a civil conflict. However, this section will extend this thinking to the motivation of NDCs to enter into inter-community conflict.

Ojuwu states that, 'access to economic benefits such as job employment in the communities that are surrounding Warri South LGA, are denied by the dominant Itsekiris' NDCs, which do not allow participation of any other group, and in turn makes us, the Urhobos, who are the main inhabitants of these denied places, become hostile and aggressive towards them' (Ojuwu, March 2014). This is a major factor leading to the inter-community conflict between Okere-Urhobo and Okere-Itsekiri in 2003. Another respondent state that the Okere-Itsekiri community were trying to establish ownership of Warri town, an area in the Warri South LGA regarded as

the commercial headquarters of the ND-state of Delta, which intermittently results in conflict between Okere-Itsekiri and Okere-Urhobo (Okumagba, April 2014). Thus, the denial of economic opportunity by one NDC over another prompted Aghara to name economic factor as the major driver of communal conflicts in the ND (Aghara, April 2014). The evidence from respondents suggests that the denial of economic opportunities by other NDCs is crucial to precipitating inter-community conflict, apparently corroborating Cederman et al. However, despite this corroboration, the disproportionate advantage enjoyed by NDCs who benefit from oil-related revenue also needs to be taken into account.

The BBC reports that SPDC has agreed to an $84m (£55m) settlement with residents of the Bodo community in the ND for two oil spill incidences (BBC News, 2015). Such massive compensation stems directly from the oil sector, albeit as a reparation for the despoliation of Bodo's natural environment. Other NDCs that have gained economic opportunities from oil-related activities include those communities that have a well-educated population readily recruited by a MNC located in a community with fewer well-educated residents. This results in unrest from host communities against MNCs for employing members from other NDCs. For example, the riverine communities, mainly Ijaw and Itsekiri, believe that members of the Yoruba NDCs in the western ND have taken the most lucrative jobs offered by MNCs located in the Ijaw and Itsekiri's areas (Guardian Newspaper, 2006). This suggests that the claim made by some of the respondents for this study that some NDCs are denied economic opportunities is not justified since a proportion of oil benefits are tied to oil spill incidents such as compensation for environmental pollution, and other benefits tied to the human resources needed for oil production activities. Whilst benefits that accruing from oil spill incidents and human resources exist, they are not as salient as the movement of workers from well-educated communities to less well-educated communities, which challenges these communities' self-image as autonomous and independent.

In order to guard territory against encroachment by another NDC, some communities go on the offensive. Onobrekpeya makes this point in the context of the Itsekiri communities:

> generally, what brings about crises is the attempt of one community to dominate the other, the attempt by one community to lord it over the other. The Itsekiri communities are selfish, their belief and their approach to life is all about stealing from and dominating others. When other communities sharing LGAs with the Itsekiris want to develop at their own pace, the Itsekiri NDCs will say no, you cannot develop at your own pace, your development must be dictated by us. That is where conflict comes in, that is where the crises is ignited. When you are pushed to the wall, even as a lazy man you would make every effort to fight back. There is a saying in the Urhobo language, *owieleojeketebieoen*, which means that, the fact that you are weak does not preclude you from preparing for an eventuality. At least you must stand to defend yourself before you die. That is the ordinary meaning of the Urhobo phrase that I used, *owieleojeketebieoen* (Onobrakpeya, April 2014).

Onobrakpeya claims that Itsekiri communities always seek to expand their authority over neighbouring NDCs in the same LGA which they see as an effective strategy for achieving their economic ambitions. Okumagba likewise alleges that the Itsekiris have maintained and protected their wealthy lifestyle since the colonial period by continually seeking to dominate four strategic administrative positions in the Warri South LGA: the chairman, vice chairman, secretary and the speaker at the local government level (Okumagba, April 2014). This shows that domination can be a form of economic expansion and consolidation that the dominated NDCs perceive as belligerent and as such a reason for conflict.

This aggressive strategy is viewed by other respondents as an intentional move to cause inter-community conflict with the view of using existing wealth to gain further economic expansion. According to Onobrekpeya, the Itsekiri NDCs are known for using such a strategy to influence the outcome of inter-community conflict between them and communities in the same LGA. He claims that, 'the Itsekiris' influence and affluence in terms of crises is a great advantage, their affluence is wealth and their influence is the connections that they have with federal government, and when a particular community have people that are well connected, they will always have an edge in any communal conflict' (Onobrekpeya, April 2014). Okumagba states that wealth is usually a factor that leads to domination. He argues that 'there are some communities that are financially stronger than other communities, that have produced more prominent people in government, and these persons aids the community they come from, through the connection they have with the upper government, and such status determines who prevails in a crises' (Okumagba, April 2014). The term 'connection' describes means used to achieve targeted goals (Monday, March 2014). NDCs initiating inter-community conflict to expand their economic ambitions are those capable of using their 'connections', that is wealth and influence, in order to sway the outcome of the conflict.

Those NDCs that do not possess such 'connections' are unlikely to go on the offensive, but rather adopt a defensive posture. As Onobrekpeya asserts:

> so many factors made the Okere-Itsekiri community attack us in 2003. They had
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> the financial resources, they had weaponry, they are well connected, and they know
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> those who have influence in society. So, their plan was to disgrace those who know
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> nobody, those who have none of these capabilities, and if you do not have capacity
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> do you go to a war? Of course not, because that will be a war to annihilate yourself.
>
> That has been the problem in the Warri area between the Urhobos and Itsekiris.
>
> The Urhobos do not have the capacity, so they do not initiate war, they do not start

any crises. It is those who think they can overrun others that normally engage themselves in causing troubles. The Okere-Itsekiris are always advancing to cause trouble by pouncing on us the Okere-Urhobo people. We have never initiated any crises, because me as the president general and the Agwutuwi of the Okere-Urhobo community, is always in the picture about anything that is ongoing. But I can vouch and swear that there is no time we initiated the fight (Onobrekpeya, April 2014).

Similarly, a newspaper reporter who had investigated numerous cases of inter-community conflict states that communities that do not have influential residents and that are less privileged are always prone to attack by powerful ones (Olu-Fubara, April 2014). Nengi additionally argues that less privileged NDCs are those with the smallest populations. NDCs with small populations, unable to exert influence over the MNCs, are liable to fight those communities that use their larger populations numbers to marginalise them in their shared LGA by using their numbers to vote in councilors and chairpersons (Nengi, April 2014). The above seems to argue that inter-community conflicts result from assertive NDCs going on the offensive to expand economic ambitions resulting in the encroached community reacting violently to protect its interests.

According to Nengi, these economic positions equally reflect political influence and authority. For example, a LGA chairman, who is a political head presiding over a juridical NDC, is wields political powers that affect his community economically (Nengi, April 2014). This is contingent on the notion that the LGA chairman is responsible for allocating resource benefits that accrue from the FGN to NDCs (Odje, April 2014). Thus, Nengi states that the minority NDCs in the Yenegoa LGA, in the ND-state of Bayelsa, are often denied the chance of producing the local government chairman by the communities with a majority population, because the minority NDCs do not want to give up the chance of winning government positions, as this would negatively impact them in terms of economic advantages (Nengi, April

2014). Irrespective of the offensive-defensive dichotomy, the argument from both sides is that economic gains are accessible through political authority, and that NDCs sustain political interests that consequently set them at loggerheads against one another. Such scenario reflects Ostby's theory of one group dominating the other and Cederman's argument that intergroup conflict results from situations where the benefits of violence outweighs the costs of peace. In this light, the offensive NDC seeks to dominate in order to protect and expand its economic ambition, whilst the defensive community seeks to violently defend its financial lifeline as long as such defence outweighs the costs. Whilst both Ostby and Cederman's explanations reflect a community's motivations for entering into conflict, it should be emphasised that this study conceptualises NDCs as inherently autonomous groups, rather than as the autonomous and non-autonomous groups recognized in the existing literature, extending Ostby and Cederman's explanations of causes of intergroup conflict to inter-community conflict.

Existing research into conflict between NDCs argues that individual economic interests facilitate inter-community conflict (Ikelegbe, 2006), with MNCs serving to enrich these individuals (Zalik, 2004), thereby avoiding their social responsibilities to the communities in which they operate (Osaghae et al., 2007). Secondly, it asserts that oil proceeds necessitate ethnic marginalisation which subsequently leads to inter-community conflict (Ukiwo, 2007). Thirdly, the existing literature contends that rebel groups will enter into intergroup conflict when the perceived the benefits outweighing the costs of conflict (Cederman et al, 2010).

However, evidence collected from respondents leading and living in these communities supports the argument that community collectiveness resulting from these communities' inherent autonomous nature is key to driving inter-community conflict based on community economic interests rather than the ambitions of individuals. Secondly, communities populated by people from the same ethnicity will enter into conflict over mineral and oil resources due to their inherently autonomous nature and their need to protect their own interests, thereby

explaining causality of inter-community conflict within an ethnic or ethnic group which ethnic marginalisation does not explain.

Conclusion

The chapter explores the economic factors that lead to inter-community conflict in the ND by critiquing the claims of scholars in the field and research undertaken by the actors in the international community that the primary driver of land disputes and ethnic agitation over mineral resources in the ND are the ambitions and actions of individuals. Rather, this study argues that it is the inherently autonomous nature of NDCs that drives inter-community conflict over economic resources. The chapter concludes that the marginalisation of one inherent autonomous community by another, based on economic factors, constitutes a major driver of inter-community conflict. Thus, each NDC protects its own interests by striving to achieve economic gains, reflecting consolidated groups with an identity synonymous to that of rebel groups, protecting their own interests at the expense of each another.

The chapter arrives at this conclusion by exploring NDCs' inherently autonomous nature, which analyses communities as traditionally distinct entities fighting over scarce economic resources emanating from a modern and single LGA comprised of co-existent communities. It argues that assertive NDCs that exert influence within their respective LGAs adopt offensive strategies to economically dominate other communities who necessarily respond defensively resulting in inter-community conflict. The next chapter will explore the link between the economic dimension to inter-community conflict and the exercise of political influence and authority.

Chapter 9: The Politics of Inter-Community Conflict in the Niger Delta

Introduction

The previous chapter explored how economic factors can be a major factor instigating inter-community conflict in the ND by emphasising NDCs' inherently autonomous nature as a driver for conflict over economic resources. However, these economic rationales are intrinsically linked to the politics of Nigeria, and in particular the politics of the Niger Delta. This chapter analyses political manoeuvring as a major factor that ignites inter-community conflict arguing that NDCs are inherently autonomous and unified groups that compete, sometimes using violence, for positions of authority in government. This contrasts with the argument made by Akpan that political motivations for inter-community conflict is driven more by individual than community ambition (2010).

The chapter assesses the motives and economic benefits behind political ambition. The first section analyses how NDCs compete over political positions for the wealth that political authority brings given weak, corrupt and partial governance within the LGAs in the ND. It then analyses this competition alongside militants detached from political offices to understand the causes of inter-community conflict from a different political perspective. It assesses how NDCs' members using advantages, in the form of population, political power and the LGA's weak governance, to marginalise opposing communities, to understand causes of inter-community conflict. Furthermore, it scrutinizes political acrimony at the LGA level and the scrambling for traditional positions of paramount rulership, as two distinctive type of politics that precipitates violent contention amongst NDCs.

9.2 Local Government Authority

Akpan argues that NDCs resort to violent conflict amongst themselves to gain political power which gives them control over oil rents which in turn enriches prominent personalities within a community (Akpan, 2010). The significance of this argument is that individual political interest is the primary motive for wrest political power from neighbouring NDCs in order to co-opt the economic benefits that accrue from political influence. Although benefits to prominent residents could be a reason for communities engaging themselves in violent conflict to win political power, this section argues that the political benefits accruing to the community are paramount in instigating inter-community conflict.

The evidence from the interviews conducted for this research affirms that NDC members prefer politicians to come from their community rather than from other communities in the belief that there will be economic benefits across the community and not just to the individual. Accordingly, Ibaba states that 'political positions in LGAs have always been an issue because of ethnic politics, you get more when your brother is in power; at each point in time everybody wants his brother to be in office, so, it is usually a fierce struggle to see that your clans man, your community man is the local government chairman or even the councillor, as such, this has always been a source of conflict' (Ibaba, April 2014). Similarly, Biebelade states that 'politics always go with interest and you have to protect your interest before the interest of others; when someone from Kere-banga becomes the chairman, he or she will always use official power to intimidate the Yonwii people, and even the Yonwi people also use that power when they become the chairman of the local government council, to also intimidate the Kere-banga people, so it is very clear that in times like this, if you have political power, you can also gain economic power' (Biebelade, April 2014). This implies that once a community member ascends to a political position, economic benefits readily accrue to his/her NDC. The

implication of this is that NDCs without such political positions feel marginalised and this acts as a catalyst for inter-community conflict.

An example of a conflict mainly instigated by political appointments is the 2003 conflict between Okere-Urhobo and Okere-Itsekiri. Onobrekpeya describes feeling slighted, 'for a very long time, the Okere-Urhobo and the Okere-Itsekiris were living together as brothers, but for political reasons by which the Okere-Itsekiri's politicians felt they could dominate us, cracks started developing between both communities which made the crisis to be purely political' (Onobrekpeya, April 2014). Odje states that 'political contention is a catalyst for inter-community strife, political position, wealth creation, oil and gas have been among very many issues that propel ethnic and communal conflicts; it is usually the case where one community wants to out-will the other in regards to political short-changing that brings about an escalation of a crisis; such incidences are always connected with the struggle for councillorship or chairmanship or any political positions that connects the involved communities' (Odje, April 2014). The issue of political dominance of one NDC by another is also reflected by Bekesu, 'everybody wants his community to have political power in terms of future problems and trouble, at least you will have somewhere you will go to, you will know there are people you can call that will come and deliver your community, for that reason, everybody likes to protect its own interest in contesting election or in giving political positions to their own people' (Bekesu, April 2014). This evidence from grassroots leaders indicate that NDCs engage in inter-community conflict in order to achieve political benefits for the entire community rather than for certain individuals. The evidence further points to communities uniting behind community candidates for political posts such councillorships, chairmanships and senatorial constituencies. Again, these contests are perceived as raising tensions between NDCs. Variside states that 'the councillorship position in Khana LGA used to have a zoning system concerning which community should produce the counsellor for each ward, but when that agreement was

breached in the 1990s, it created a war that lasted for over 10 years between Kaani and Sogho communities in ward 1, and about five hundred persons were killed, alongside one part of the Kaani village being destroyed' (Variside, April 2014).

> Similarly, Duumaa implies that the ward 3 councillorship constituency of the Khana LGA is made up of eleven autonomous communities, ten of which are traditional NDCs belonging to the Iluekun ethnic group, whilst the remaining one belongs to the Nyonkuru ethnicity. The Iluekun communities have held the councillorship position for 20 years until 2008. The Nyonkuru community, which is in the minority, then held the same post in 2008 for four years, which made the Iluekun people to violently agitate that the Nyonkuru people had occupied the seat for too long, subsequently causing conflict amongst the communities (Duumaa, April 2014).

From this evidence, it might be argued that inter-community rivalry to win political posts is often the catalysts for conflict. Whilst, community leaders are intuitively liable to support candidates from their own NDCs, their insights do indicate that the authority of LGA governance in the ND is sufficiently weak to allow for manipulation.

As analysed previously, NDC reliance on political positions for economic security is a symptom of underdeveloped governance structures that is only too vulnerable to political manipulation. Nigeria as a country has been plagued by 'institutionalized corruption', implying that corruption has been officially incorporated into public activities (Aghalino, 2004). The ND as a region has been described by Watts as anarchic and ungovernable due to the level of community violence (2007). A modern construct that was established during a period of institutionalised corruption and community violence, the LGA mode of governance and administration is not 'home-grown' and alienates the people who live in the region.

Unable to control their own politicians, LGA's have become the crucible for political rivalry that often turns to violence as these corrupt politician recruit unemployed youths from their communities to back their candidacies and campaigns with menaces (Variside, April 2014). This can extend to the hiring of professional mercenaries (Olu-Fubara, April 2014). For example, according to Otavie, in the Ekeremo LGA elections in 2011, the Kolokoma community, home to an influential political elite, used external militia to inflict terror on the Pokoma community, culminating in the Ekermo candidates winning the available councillorship positions (Otavie, April 2014). This becomes a vicious circle as politicians increasingly rely on hired muscle to win political posts with the LGA, in so doing further hollowing out the legitimacy of the LGA.

Variside contends that during elections, politicians make promises of jobs and financial remuneration to young men from their community to co-opt them into joining militia to support them during election campaigns (Variside, April 2014). These promises are often not kept. Variside argues that 'the failure to fulfil promises earlier made by politicians to the militia youths, makes the militia fall back to their various communities and start criminal activities with possessed arms, and even when such crimes are reported to the politicians, they fail to carry out disciplinary actions because of the agreement they had while using youth members for thuggery' (Variside, April 2014). This use of favouritism to reward previous militia service in lieu of jobs or money ultimately hamstrings both the individual politician and the LGA. It is with this in mind that Otavie maintains that 'the local government has not been able to curtail crises because of their biased nature, which makes most of today's inter-community conflicts politicized and the local government chairman tends to favour community leaders that have political affiliations with his administration' (Otavie, April 2014). Thus, the weak local governance becomes self-perpetuating with corrupt politicians encouraging inter-community violence. A consequence of this enduring weak governance is that communities by necessity

emphasise their own autonomy and self-determination. Weak governance and the unfitness of LGAs also result in the politicisation of community leaders, kings and chiefs, installed by local politicians as proxies. Duumaa contends that, 'some of these communities' traditional leaders are politically appointed, it is just a nomenclature, the kings are gazette rulers appointed by the government's officials thereby making them politically motivated' (Duumaa, April 2014). One example would be the immediate replacement in 2003 of the Pokoma community leader when the Ekeremor LGA chairman took office (Otavie, April 2014).

9.3 The Politics of Militancy

In March 2003, violent tensions between the Itsekiri and Ijaw's communities in the ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers were reported to be instigated by militant leaders who had no political affiliations with the then government for the sole purpose of fighting over disputed oil location territories (Global Securities News, 2007). In a similar vein, militant members of the largest paramilitary groups in the region, the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) led by Ateke Tom, both of which are primarily made up of the Ijaw ethnic group, were reported to have clashed over bunkering routes in the ND state of Rivers. This led to conflict between communities located in Port Harcourt and outlying towns. Both the NDPVF and the NDV have smaller militias supposedly numbering more than one hundred in diverse locations (Human Rights Watch, 2005). More recently, it is reported that a group of unidentified militants shot and killed nine people on in Obrikom and Obor communities, in the state of Rivers, leading to conflict between these NDCs (Reuters, 2015). The activities of these militant groups, leading to conflict between communities, are not motivated by competition for local government political posts, and seems at odds with the emphasis in the interviews for this study that political completion lies at the heart of inter-community conflict. This parallel 'scramble for power' between militant groups is the result of a different completion for supremacy with different rewards.

The tussle for supremacy between militias recognises that people living in the ND are willing to use different strategies to achieve their economic ambitions. However, the rivalries between militant groups are more detached from the political struggles for power within the LGAs since it is the LGAs that, at least ostensibly, are constitutionally empowered to administer the communities within the ND.

Whilst corrupt politicians make money out of their abuse of office, they are also accused of not representing the interests of their communities. Variside argues that 'the people at the helm of affairs in the government council play politics of the pocket and not of the people, so when there are crises they do not come in to manage it on time' (Variside, April 2014). Similarly, Igiran contends that 'local government chairmen, councilors, and officials are politicians who have a tenure, when they are there they only struggle to get something for themselves, I regret to say that Nigerian politicians are a group of greedy people, they are not interested in the good of all, they are only interested in the good of themselves' (Igiran, April 2014). Despite Variside's 'politics of the pocket', most communities and their residents prefer an individual from their community to succeed in being appointed rather than an individual from another NDC, seemingly in the, quite probably misplaced, hope that some benefits might accrue to the community as a result of their man's success. The other dimension to rivalry between would-be politicians and the abuse of office by politicians when appointed as causes of inter-community conflict, is the disparity between those NDCs that perceive themselves as favoured and those that perceive themselves as marginalised.

Monday maintains that 'people in government use population size as a gimmick to allocate dividends to their communities' members…for example any community larger than Effurun-Otor that has no equal mineral status with us, will benefit more from the LGA if that community is having about three wards in the LGA, which automatically gives them more funds and benefits than Effurun-Otor that has only one ward' (Monday, March 2014). Similarly, Duumaa

states that 'a contributing factor to inter-community conflict is politics, because some wards such as ward four of Khana LGA contain more than three communities, and during the choosing their councillors, who allocate funds to the various communities, they continually marginalise the two communities belonging to Iluekun which subsequently causes inter-community conflict in the area' (Duumaa, April 2014). This evidence supports the argument that smaller NDCs are disfavoured in the inter-relationships that they have with other communities, having the financial benefits of their natural resources diverted, as well as less populated communities being marginalised by those more populated in the same ward. Intuitively, this further example of the 'politics of the pocket', the manipulation of funding between communities, should instigate inter-community conflict. However, the manoeuvring of funds from one community to the other does not seem capable of causing inter-community conflict, because NDCs co-exist in the same LGA. In other words, the evidence from the respondents laid out above does not provide a persuasive rationale for instigating inter-community conflict, but rather for NDCs' negative approach to weak and ineffective LGAs.

NDC frustration comes from being less favoured in a LGA structure where communities co-exist. It is also a plea, albeit a violent plea, against the ND's unfit system of governance that allows the exploitation and marginalisation of some communities at the expense of others, essentially those communities that are able to exercise influence in the ways discussed in this chapter. The ability to employ people is a key benefit exploited by these corrupt politicians. This includes finding employment in the local public sector for residents from the NDCs who supply the local political class (Laka, April 2014), employment for the political class' friends and family members regardless of whether they are community residents (Duumaa, April 2014) and employment for ghost workers whose pay is diverted to the political class (Alagoa, March 2014). It is within this sclerotic local government political structure that inter-community manipulation by corrupt ND politicians needs to be assessed.

Political bias in disbursing economic goods should also be placed in the context raising a community's social standing as previously discussed. It is also contingent on this study's position that NDCs are separate and distinct entities who consistently demonstrate inherent autonomy and independence from one another. Previous chapters have analysed and explained how NDCs co-exist due to their geographical proximity and political affiliations within the LGAs, the mechanism constitutionally established to administer local communities. Inherent autonomy is seemingly a product of self-determination that prevents communities perceiving themselves as a holistic whole. As analysed earlier in this section, this inherent autonomy leads Tombare and Okumagba, instinctively adopting a Realist conceptualisation of international relations, to compare the difference between NDCs to the difference between sovereign states such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon, emphasising the group identity of NDCs (Tombare, April 2014) and the priority to protect the communities' interests over those of other communities (Okumagba, April 2014). Following on, these NDCs can be seen to have separate political ambitions and developmental trajectories drawing on an autonomy that has it vestigial roots in pre-colonial times. And it is this group identity, autonomy and collectivity that primarily prompts offensive and defensive violence between communities rather than actions of individuals as argued by Akpan.

Part of the strategy NDCs use to maintain their group identity is defend their 'official' name. NDCs supply the electorate for LGAs and LGA chairmen must come from a constituent community. This often leads to conflict, 'where one ethnic group wants to out-manoeuvre the other in terms of winning political positions in a LGA, the escalation of conflict is normally the outcome' (Odje, April 2014). In a similar vein, Onobrekpeya states that the causes of inter-community conflict in the ND 'are mainly political, such as who is going to oversee shared political areas, who will produce the next chairman, who will produce the next house of assembly member… who will produce this and that, you know, these are the major reasons that

make community go into war and crises against each other' (Onobrekpeya, April 2014). Bekesu adds that, 'most of the problems that lead to inter-community conflicts in the Niger Delta are land and political issues, those are the things that lead to either families or communities going into conflict with each other, because they feel that the opposing community is underestimating their power, so they must fight for their right' (Bekesu, April 2014).

Although NDCs' group identity can be a strong motive for engaging in inter-community conflict, identity comes in different forms and can be attributed to personal reasons than those in favour of the community as a group. The concept of group identity plays a central role in the inception and escalation of intergroup conflict, even when political factors are also at play (Seul, 1999). However, individual identity is considered paramount and the foundation on which a group identity is built.

> This rests on the notion that individuals' psychological efforts to satisfy basic human needs are what drive people to form a group. These psychological needs contribute to cosmologies, moral frameworks, institutions, rituals, traditions, and other identity-supporting content that answer individuals' needs for psychological stability in the form of a predictable world, a sense of belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation. This peculiar desire to obtain human identity thus may partially explain why individuals fuel intergroup conflict in order to achieve the shared values of members belonging to the same group (Seul, 1999, p.553).

The concept of identity competition can be broken into three major parts: a sense of belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation. It is seen as a phenomenon that stirs individuals to form or join the groups that give them individual protection against others. Whilst group identity is instrumental in causing inter-community conflict, where individuals' identities or interests are not protected within that group, the group's identity is unlikely to be a motive for such

individuals. However, as analysed previously, many individuals trust community identity to serve their individual interests, thereby making community identity a crucial instigator in inter-community conflict over political powers.

NDCs strive to dominate the LGA as the authority that determines the location of developmental projects. Bekesu states that 'if I, a Biseni man, becomes the Yenagoa local government chairman, I will site more projects in my communities than other areas, so it becomes a political problem, that makes everybody want to be in that position in order to assist his or her own community and in terms of employment they use to employ people from their place more than outsiders' (Bekesu, April 2014). Similarly, Uzobarima contends that government officials at the LGA level are biased in terms of favourable decisions: 'of course as a politician once you are in office you must consider where you got more votes from' (Uzobarima, April 2014). An example is the Warri Southwest LGA where the Itsekiri and Ijaw communities constantly compete over the LGA's councillorship, chairmanship and headquarters.

Though this emphasises that communities contend for supremacy over one another at the LGA level, which accounts for some of the most acute inter-community conflicts in the ND, there are contrasting factors that suggest that contention for political power entails more than that. For instance, there is the problem of when and how legitimate membership of a community is determined. The requirements that spells out legitimate membership of an NDC are not clearly set out, hence it is difficult to know which NDC an individual belongswhen establishing who is eligible to politically represent a community for councillorship or chairmanship election. (Igiran, April 2014). Some individuals contesting councillorship or chairmanship elections can have a dual with parents from two different communities.

for instance, the immediate past Warri Southwest LGA chairman, Maruwi George Okpenkolo, his father was from Okeronkoko, which meant he is an indigene of Ijaw soil of the Isonrotu. His mother is from Jaala, Ikpomi and Patele, which also makes him an indigene of the Itsekiri soil. He has ruled his first tenure as the political chairman of Warri Southwest as a member of the Ijaw soil. Such formula had brought peace to the Itsekiri and the Ijaw dominated communities, which is to say, if Itsekiri rule one tenure, the Ijaw rule another tenure. However, such formula appeared to be undermined, because Maruwa George has ruled his first tenure, as the chairman from the Ijaw stock, now, his own maternal people are telling him, 'your mother is an indigene of Jaala' which makes him an indigene of Itsekiri soil. Let us assume ourselves as the Itsekiri people who are awaiting their turn, then the incumbent takes the position again from his mother's side. I do not know if you understand the point I am trying to make? It is not a bad idea, but not many people will accept that (Hope, April 2014).

Hope claims that contention over who governs a LGA is a major source of conflict among NDCs located in the same jurisdiction. There appears to be a blurred line over the membership of each community. It is also necessary to point out that although communities take pains to clearly delineated themselves from other NDCs membership does not appear to be quite so distinct. However, in the context of rivalry over LGA elections, NDC membership disputes regarding political positions are rare. Only two out of fifty respondents for this study were concerned with NDC membership.

Indeed, there is disagreement amongst NDC leaders and residents over the way in which rivalry for political power influences inter-community conflict. Whilst some respondents considered this rivalry to be an instigator for conflict, others perceive LGAs as a force for accord.

The introduction of LGAs created an overlap of political interests amongst NDCs in which they co-operate to elect councillorships and chairmanships. Nengi states that, 'in terms of political, economic and social phenomena, there is an overlap of interests across the board, and that is why they are all grouped under the Yenagoa Local Government Area, which is the political space that they share' (Nengi, April 2014). Barile states that some LGA wards consist of up to eight communities, which means that NDCs that are distinct from one another must produce one councillorship to represent them at the LGA level, which is often done peacefully. He gives an example, 'like in my ward we have eight communities, so most times we are not able to unanimously choose a candidate, so we vote and whoever wins represents us, and when this is done, it ends the contention for representation' (Barile, April 2014). In addition, the zoning system referred to by Hope, which failed to resolve inter-community conflict over councillorship and chairmanship positions in the Warri Southwest LGA, is being commended as encouraging for good relations between NDCs in other LGAs. Barile states that 'in my ward we practice the zoning formula to avoid conflict…when there is this understanding in the members of a political party it makes things easier, and conflicts are avoided' (Barile, April 2014). This type of successful zoning formula, led to respondents like Barile to perceive political parties as monolithic, i.e. a one political party system of government. Ikelegbe argues that 'elections for political positions do not cause inter-community conflict, because most communities are monolithic in terms of political party affiliation, so what occurs in most LGAs is political conflict, and not community conflict' (Ikelegbe, April 2014). Thus, the zoning system appears to have been effective in sharing political positions amongst NDCs.

Whilst Barile and Ikelegbe claim that elections for political positions among NDCs is unproblematic and does not lead to inter-community conflict, others agree with this contention, but for different reasons. Igiran argues that elections for LGA positions have not been a cause for inter-community conflict because such affairs are determined by the parties. He maintains

that, 'if you are in any party and your party wins, you have to accept it that way, communities do not interfere, if the community is with the majority party then they may reap one or two benefits, so election as an issue has not been a cause for conflict in our area…political appointments also come from the parties, and at times of election, whether people vote wrongly or rightly, it is the person that wins from a political party that gets there' (Igiran, April 2014). So, for Igiran, NDCs are neutral when it comes to politics at the LGA level. Tamunor also claims that 'we are not fighting because of politics, so anything political, we deal with it politically, and we are neutral in electing our local government chairman' (Tamunor, April 2014). This seems to suggest that traditional communities have not yet adapted to the modern LGA system of local administration. This is the position of Tombare's, 'issues of political positions happen to be a new thing in the community set up, because that is not the original structure of our communities, so most times, they conduct it with lack of zeal' (Tombare, April 2014).

This also reflects Alagoa's view, 'you know the local government thing has not been married to the traditional system, it is still an alien thing, all the communities still have traditional offices like the *Amenabo*, compound chiefs, titled chiefs and so on, these institutions are still existing till date and still very effective' (Alagoa, March 2014). Complementing this, Tombare talks about the lack of political and democratic awareness of NDCs' members, 'it is not like pride to them, it is just like part of the modern life coming from civilisation, so we just go and cast our vote, but if at the end of the day you are not able to mobilize your candidate to win, no problem, because they look at it as though the people emerging victorious are well educated and more exposed, hence they back out' (Tombare, April 2014). Others have explained such attitudes of showing little concern over political matters on the basis that elections for LGA officials are not free and fair (Igiran, April 2014), hence a sense of resignation amongst the electorate.

Some respondents who assert that politics are not a cause of inter-community conflict insist that a more important factor related to political acrimony is the issue of the paramount ruler. In Tombare's words, 'various communities under a clan normally have one clan head to govern them, and the issue of which community is going to produce that person, usually brings matters to a head, because that is where the natural pride of the Ogoni people comes in' (Tombare, April 2014). This indicates that the appointment of a clan head (clan heads being the most important leadership role in most NDCs in the eastern ND) can be a matter of contention considering that the clan head is normally also the traditional head who in turn confirms the rulers of the constituent communities. Since a clan consists of various NDCs, it is not surprising that the coronation of its head can be a cause for inter-community conflict. Agreeing, Uzobarima maintains that the administration of each NDC is entirely the business of the paramount ruler of that community, who is installed by the clan head (Uzobarima, April 2014). Hence, this appointment is a major cause of rivalry between and among communities belonging to the same clan. Ibaba explains that 'in the Eastern Niger Delta the compound chiefs are subordinate to the community chiefs, the community chiefs are subordinate to the paramount rulers, and the paramount rulers are subordinate to the clan head, that has always been the pattern and is still in existence' (Ibaba, March 2014). NDCs contend to produce candidates for the traditional position of the clan head, since he wields influence in the appointment of paramount rulers, but remain indifferent to political positions at the LGA level.

There are differing positions taken by respondents to this study regarding the influence of politics on inter-community conflcit. One position is that communities fight between themselves over the traditional role of clan head. Others argue that communites fight over local government psotions such as councilorships and chairmanships. Still others are that communities are frustrated by militants embedded in their communities who frequesntly not pursued or prosecuted by the local administration, leading to tension and conflcit between

communities. Other militants are detached from the local political system, providing security in areas where MNCs are operating liaising with local communities and creating inter-community conflict with neighbouring communities.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that political factors are major drivers that instigate inter-community conflict in the ND, and are largely based on the economic advantages that derives from political office. This triggers a political and economic imbalance that can contribute to the onset of inter-community conflict. In other words, the idea that each NDC must protect its own economic interests by winning political power is a fundamental reason why communities in the ND enter into conflict. Thus, NDCs' engagement in violent inter-community conflict emanating from political factors is traced to the notion that NDCs are inherently autonomous units and remain detached from the modern life of co-existence under the auspices of LGAs because their traditional values contrasts with modern ways of the ND government.

Following the previous two chapters exploration of social and economic causal factors, this chapter investigates how the political underpinning of communities in the ND have led to the evolution of an ineffective and corrupt system of local governance that is not fit for purpose. Builds on these factors that portray the ND environment as corrupt, in other words lacking standard government capabilities, political authority thus means control over economic gains, which determines who has a better social status. This rests on the determination that NDCs' traditional inherently autonomous nature contrasts with the modern LGAs, which subdue such autonomy and lack credibility for providing satisfactory administration for communities. Furthermore, the chapter analyses this porous environment as being favourable to powerful NDCs, as it appears that each sees itself as a completely different and distinct entity to the other, which presents the situation to be one of protecting one's community interests in a place synonymous to an ungovernable international system. Thus, the underlying factors in each NDC protecting its own interests, striving for economic and political gains, are seen to reflect consolidated groups with a reckoned identity, protecting their own interests at the expense of the other. It is against this backdrop that the following concluding chapter seeks to describe

how tradition versus modernity stirs inherent autonomous communities to fight over social, economic and political factors, which is sequentially demonstrated in Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

The penultimate three analytical chapters evaluated the evidence and data gathered from a cross-section of respondents to this study based in the Niger Delta regarding the causes of conflict between their communities. The key finding is that the relationship, or often the absence of a relationship between LGAs and NDCs acts as a facilitating factor that drives the major factors of NDC's inherent autonomous nature that manifests in the form of self-determination to acquire or protect social, economic and political goods that ultimately fuels these conflicts. At the heart of this dysfunctional relationship is a dichotomy between the 'traditional' represented by the pre-colonial practices employed by the NDCs in their internal administration and their relations with other NDCs and the 'modern' represented by the legal, constitutional and administrative practices employed by the LGAs. The quality of local administration is frequently poor, and corrupt procedures and partial decision-making often leave NDCs alienated and forced to resort to self-help, returning to pre-colonial means and methods of self-administration. At the same time, the inability of the LGAs to provide social, economic and political goods for their citizens brings communities into competition for the goods that are available which can lead to disputes. The resort by communities to inherent autonomy means that these disputes are often settled using traditional violent means.

Disputes are settled using traditional violent means since NDCs trust in their inherent autonomous self-determination rather than the rule of law as exercised by the FGN. NDCs do not rely on the constitutional justice system for resolution of dispute. Though analysis in Chapter 7 indicates that the Okere-Urhobo NDC always respected the rule of law by suing the Okere-Itsekiri in court before the 2003 inter-community conflict between both NDCs, such practice is unpopular due to the alienation and distrust of governmental institutions as explored in Chapter 6. Government institutions and practices including the rule of law and LGAs are

perceived as not homegrown and detached from the real-life situation of NDCs, hence the strong reliance on a community's inherent autonomy by violently resolving disputes in a form of self-determination to protect their social, economic and political ambitions.

The overarching aim of the study is to determine the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND. To achieve this aim, three objectives were formulated: 1) To define and delineate Niger Delta Communities; 2) To determine the nature and scope of inter-community conflict; 3) To evaluate the social, economic, and political forces shaping inter-community conflict.

A further three core research questions were devised to assist with testing the analytical framework. In a bid to determine causality of inter-community conflict in the ND, the research reviewed relevant literature and proposed three sub-questions: 1) what is the definition of NDCs? 2) what are the characteristics of inter-community conflict in the ND? 3) do communities fight over social, economic and political factors?

There is agreement in the relevant literature that understanding the causality of inter-community conflict is increasingly problematic. This thesis contributes to research in the area of the causes of conflict in the ND by exploring two under-examined dimensions. Firstly, the relevance of tradition versus modernity acts as a relative or facilitating factor regarding how it affects the social, economic and political that acts as the major factors that lead to inter-community conflict. Secondly, the idea of NDCs' being inherently autonomous in nature. More specifically, the thesis focuses on how the notion of NDCs' traditional autonomy can come into tension with 'modern' administrative system exemplified by the LGA. A limitation of the study, is the researcher's failure to collect primary data on LGA-NDC relationships from all nine ND states. This limits the study on the leadership role of LGAs with regard NDCs to the three core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers. However, using secondary sources on LGA-NDC relationship in the other six ND states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and

Ondo, comparative analysis of the relationship between LGAs and NDCs in the core ND states and those in the other six ND states determines that LGAs in the core ND states lack effective administrative capabilities that should ensure peaceful inter-community relations. Though the LGA's weak and inefficient leadership is analysed as a relative or facilitating factor that influences the major causative factor i.e. inherent autonomous nature that drives NDCs' self-determination over social, economic and, political factors, study of its control over communities in the other six ND states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and Ondo needs further research.

Chapter 1 presents the background, research problem, aim and objectives, justification, scope, and limitations of the study. It summarises the main and sub- research questions, which are outlined in Chapter 2 and developed in Chapter 3. Chapter 1 also outlines the plan of the thesis, the case study and methodological approaches.

Chapter 2 reviews the academic literature on community conflict, and analyses existing scholarly thinking on the causes of inter-community conflict in the ND. The chapter provides a historical context to the current traditional and organisational structure of NDCs and violent forms of dispute resolution, showing how the political economy of oil and dissatisfaction with the role of the elders brought the youths into the structure of community governance that subsequently fuels violence between communities. It concludes that previous studies exploring inter-community conflict, whilst based on credible definitions of current and ancient communities, have not adequately defined and/or explored the NDCs' innate nature and characteristics that is functional for this study. Furthermore, previous research has failed to access the leaders and residents of the communities in the core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers that have resorted to violence to settle inter-community disputes. Chapter 3 explains how this study has gathered a corpus of evidence and data directly from those involved in the community decision-making processes that underpin the relations with the LGA and with other

communities that can lead to conflict, particularly in the core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and, Rivers. It explains the collection of primary data in the core ND states as a limitation in methodology and suggests LGAs-NDCs' relationship in the other six ND states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and Ondo as an area for further research. The chapter begins by presenting an analytical framework, or working hypothesis, demonstrating how the nature of NDCs is inherently autonomous, and how these inherently autonomous entities engage in conflict with one another due to the environment in which they find themselves. Geographically, politically and legally, this local administrative environment is governed by the mechanism constitutionally authorised to govern at a local level in Nigeria, the LGA. The study argues that traditional NDCs are inherently autonomous and their political practices stem from ancient practices developed before colonisation. It is argued that LGAs, on the other hand, are 'modern', that is colonial/post-colonial constructs that are alien to the residents of the NDCs, untrustworthy in that they are corrupt, partial and inefficient in distributing the few welfare goods available to the citizens of the ND. It is this dichotomy between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' that acts as a relative factor facilitating the major causal social, economic and political factors of the disputation between NDCs, that lies at the heart of this thesis' argument.

Chapter 3 also presents and defends the methodological approach used to achieve the aim and objectives of the thesis. A qualitative methodology is employed as the most appropriate methodology to achieve the goals of the study. Specifically, the core method used is the semi-structured interview technique, buttressed by observation and the use of key primary sources. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the three ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers, as the most conflict prone states in the ND and, since he is a resident of Delta, the states most familiar to the researcher. The field activities in the core ND states, mean that the relationship between NDCs and LGAs in the other six sister ND states require further primary

research. Fifty interviews were conducted in the three ND states. The interviews were transcribed and analysed by the researcher.

Chapter 4 investigates the position of NDCs in the wider social, economic and political context of the ND, and how this context affects inter-community relations. It explores local government in the ND and the parallel traditional 'system' and modern constitutional system of LGAs and wards. It emphasises that the term 'wards' is unfamiliar to ND indigenes, whilst 'communities' is a more familiar term, albeit understood in diverse and divergent ways. The chapter further investigates the differences between the term 'community' and other entities such as clans, kingdoms, villages, towns, cities, and ethnic or tribal groups that are found in LGAs. It sets out the constitutional role of the LGAs, including the limitations of its jurisdiction over resolution of conflicts. It also outlines the duties of LGAs to their local indigenes in relation to how NDCs interact with one another over social, economic and political affairs in their respective LGAs. The chapter connects the response of communities to social, economic and political factors to the response of 'groups' to the same factors, arguing that communities are examples of groups. Furthermore, the chapter focusses on the specificities of the three core ND states – Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers - which form the geographical locus of the thesis, mapping a timeline of conflict. It sets out that conflict starts either by inter-personal dispute i.e. conflict between opposing community members, disagreement between NDCs' ethnic groups, or a rational decision made by a community as an autonomous entity.

Chapter 5 is the first chapter to explicitly analyse the empirical evidence and data collected from the respondents. It focusses on delineating a definition of the concept of the Niger Delta Community. It analyses the NDCs' inherent autonomy arguing that NDCs sustain traditional political practices developed prior to colonisation. In this they more closely resemble independent sovereign states and/or autonomous groups than parts of a unitary state. Chapter 6 builds on this by assessing the characteristics of inter-community conflict. It evaluates the

relationship between NDCs and LGAs underlining the dichotomy between the traditional and the modern. Again, reflecting the international system rather than domestic politics, the study finds that NDC leaders perceive themselves as interacting with other NDCs in an effective anarchic local government and administrative environment where the writ of the LGA does not effectively run. NDCs, alienated by these corrupt, partial and ineffective LGAs, effectively withdraw from their orbit, falling back on their own inherent autonomy evidenced by pre-colonial administrative and government practices including relations with other NDCs.

A key distinction between this study and previous research into the causality of inter-community conflict in the ND is the mutability of previous understandings of the nature and character of the NDC, which the study explores in a way that addresses the research aim and objectives. To address this issue, the thesis focusses on two core elements of NDCs: the geographical and the political. The research finds that NDCs can be variously a kinship unit, village, town, clan, kingdom or sub-ethnic group, and that these entities represent the geographical and political parts of a LGA or clan/kingdom. The research assesses NDCs to be clans or kingdoms in cases where a clan or kingdom makes up a geographical and political part of an LGA, or geographical and traditional parts of clans/kingdoms in cases where the clan or kingdom straddles the boundary of two LGAs. For example, the Effurun-Otor kingdom is assessed as an NDC since it forms a geographical and political part of Ughelli South LGA, but the Itsekiri kingdom is found to have constituent communities that comprise its geographical and political parts, since these communities are in different LGAs. The study, therefore, argues that the characteristics of an NDC are conditional, though understood as geographical and political parts of LGAs, as well as clans/kingdoms.

The thesis seeks to differentiate between ancient NDCs and contemporary NDCs. According to Alagoa, communities in the ND date back to the pre-colonial period and are described as clans and kingdoms with complete political autonomy, which deal with one another as

independent entities. Chapter 5 gives a variety of examples of clans and kingdoms from central and eastern ND, using testimony from the respondents to demonstrate that NDCs act as independent communities. The key distinction that follows from the evidence and data gathered from the respondents is that a contemporary NDC can be a kinship unit, village, town, clan, kingdom or sub-ethnic group if it represents the geographical and political part of an LGA, or a clan/kingdom and is not the same as the type of communities described by Alagoa. Rather, this research argues a contemporary NDC is assessed as having the same traditional autonomous nature as ancient clans and kingdoms, as described by Alagoa, because these communities were already in existence before the advent of modern LGAs. For example, an NDC such as the Effurun-Otor kingdom was autonomous prior to the advent of LGAs, and a community such as Okere-Urhobo created in 2003, is classified as *inherently* autonomous, since it was an organised group existing within the autonomous Okere community that predates the ND's constitutional local government system and, therefore, would have retained its autonomy like other ancient kingdoms if not for the advent of the LGAs. On this basis, contemporary NDCs are deemed to be *inherently* autonomous considering their political and constitutional subjugation to the LGAs, therefore demonstrating how the ancient differs from the modern.

This incompatibility between tradition and modernity is a factor that facilitates the social, economic and political factors that underpins inter-community conflict in the ND. There is a constitutional responsibility for a LGA to effectively administer and govern the people and communities that exist within its borders. However, as determined from primary data collected from the core ND states of Bayelsa, Delta and, Rivers, LGAs largely fail in this responsibility through corruption, partiality and inefficiency. However, evidence from the respondents equally indicates that the LGAs as administrative entities do not engender respect from the NDCs as they are considered an alien imposition stretching back to arrival of European

colonisers and are perceived as untrustworthy whereas the NDCs see themselves as home-grown and inherently autonomous.

The coexistence of disunited groups under the same government not only reflects the situation of NDCs under LGA governance, but also demonstrates how corruption creates a culture and environment where one community marginalises the other, thereby stimulating communities' inherently autonomous nature leading to inter-community disputes that are potentially settled using violence. The final three chapters explore the social, economic and political dimensions to the conflict, investigating the major causal drivers of community contention in these areas. As inherently autonomous entities interacting within an LGA, NDCs seek to maximise their access to various resources and to win influence under these three categories. Social factors include prestige, social distinction and identity; economic factors include wealth, land and water resources; and political factors include political positions of authority and influence including LGA councillorships and chairmanships, as well as traditional positions with political influence. As a result of the failure of LGAs to efficiently govern their areas, including a failure to manage disputes, NDCs fall back on their autonomous nature settling disputes using pre-colonial practices as they violently contend over resources and influence.

In terms of social drivers, the research finds that social inequity between inherently autonomous communities accounts for inter-community conflict, rather than ethnic rivalry as argued by Ukiwo. Analysis of the respondents' evidence indicates that community leaders and residents are more loyal to the inherent autonomy of their NDC than to the ethnic group to which they belong. Communities of the same ethnic group will fight over access to their resources, especially mineral resources, reflecting the vestigial autonomy and identity politics surviving from pre-colonial times. This *community* collectiveness is key to instigating inter-community conflict over social interests, rather than it being instigated by ethnic strife. The

evidence from the NDC respondents contradicts much of the existing scholarly thinking that argues that ethnicity is key to conflict in the ND.

Likewise, from an economic perspective, existing literature prioritises the role of the individual seeking profits from oil (Ikelegbe, 2006). Whilst, politically, the literature emphasises the role of ambitious and unprincipled individuals seeking political authority and influence (Akpan, 2010). However, analysis of the evidence indicates that, once more, it is the NDC exercising self-determination as a result of its inherent autonomous nature that is the fundamental driver of conflict with other NDCs over social, economic and political resources and positions.

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Appendix I: Respondents

Akodi Amos, Chief (The Presiding Chief of Otumara-Jesse community, Ethiope West LGA, ND-state of Delta) March 2014

Alagoa Ebi, Prof (Emeritus Professor of Niger Deltas' History, University of Port Harcourt, ND-state of Rivers) March 2014

Aghara, Pious Chief Dr. (The Chief Ruler of Kaani 1 Community, Khana LGA ND-state of Rivers) April 2014

Aghe Richards (Youth President Effurun-Otor Community, Ughelli South LGA ND-state of Delta) March 2014

Atutu Richard (Youth President Okunno Community, Ethiope West LGA, ND-state of Delta) March 2014

Bekesu Stanley (Youth Secretary of Kilama community, Yenegoa LGA, Bayelsa) April 2014

Biebalade Godwin (The Community Development Chairman of Kere-banga Community, Khana LGA, ND-state of Rivers) March 2014

Duumaa Lucky, Chief (Head of Community Development, Academic Associate Peaceworks, ND-state of Bayelsa, Delta & Rivers) April 2014

Eboh Ajaro, (Leader of Civil Defence, Okere-Urohbo Community) November 2016

Eyakade Bernard, Chief (Vice President General of Effurun-Otor Community, Ughelli South LGA, ND-state of Delta) March 2014

Eyitemi David, Hon. (Public Relations Secretary of Okere Community, Warri South LGA, ND-state of Delta) March 2014

Ebimo Zaccheus (Police Corporal serving at the Ughelli South LGA ND-state of Delta, Police District Station, deployed to quell the inter-community unrest between Uweru v Evwrheni in 2006) March 2014

Hope Henry (Community Development Officer, Academic Associates Peaceworks, ND-state of Bayelsa, Delta & Rivers) April 2014

Ibaba Samuel, Dr. (Chief Editor of Niger Delta Research,Yenagoa LGA, ND-state of Bayelsa) March 2014

Igiran Rankin, Chief (the Paramount Ruler of Kilama Community of Yenegoa LGA, NDstate of Bayelsa) March 2014

Ighedu Samuel, Former Secretary of Ugbuagbue Community, Warri South LGA, ND-state of Delta) April 2014

Jeremiah Tyger, Chief (Member Council of Chiefs Akumoni Community, Yenagoa NDstates of Bayelsa) April 2014

Ighoriemuse Monday, Chief (Member of Council of Chiefs Effurun-otor kingdom, Ughelli South LGA, ND-state of Delta) March 2014

Ikelegbe Augustine, Prof. (Principal Lecturer University of Benin, ND-state of Edo) April 2014

Iniku Augustine, Chief (Compound Chief in Luusue-Sogho community, Khana LGA, NDState of Rivers) April 2014

Laka Des (Youth President of Kaani 1 Community, Khana LGA, ND-state of Rivers) April 2014

Mahone Lucky (Youth President of Akumoni Community, Yenagoa LGA ND-state of Bayelsa) April 2014

Nalaguo Chris (Community Activists & Coordinator of the Niger Delta Peace Secretariat, Yenagoa LGA, ND-state of Bayelsa) April 2014

Nengi Ilagha, Prince (A Journalist and a former Speech writer & Special adviser to the former President of Nigeria and Governor of the ND-state of Bayelsa, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan) April 2014

Odje Akpor, Dr. Barr (A Human's Right Advocate Lawyer & Niger Delta Political Activist, Warri South LGA, ND-state of Delta) April 2014

Ojudirere Prince (Secretary to the Okere-Urhobo Community) November 2016

Ojuwu Okumagba, Prince (The Youth Leader of Okere-Urhobo Community, Warri South LGA, ND-state of Delta) March 2014

Okpeya Jelicho, Elder (The Most Eldest Man and Ruler of Okunno-Jesse Community, Ethiope West LGA, ND-state of Delta) March 2014

Okumagba Bright, Chief (The Secretary of Okere-Urhobo Community, Warri South LGA, ND-state of Delta) March 2014

Popo Amos (Former Executive Member of Ogunu Community, Warri South LGA, ND-state of Delta) April 2014

Ofughara Silva Erumijiere, (Chairman, Ekpan Community Development Committee), November 2016

Olu-fubara (News Reporter, Yenagoa Broagcasting Station, Yenagoa LGA, ND-state of Bayelsa) March 2014

Omavonwan Frank, Elder (Uvwie Community) November 2016

Omonoto Anthony, (Financial Secretary of Okere-Urhobo Community) November 2016

Omoseye Isaac, Elder (Jesse Community) November 2016

Onobrakpeya Emmanuel, Chief JP (President General of Okere-Urhobo Kingdom, Warri South LGA, ND-state of Delta) April 2014

Otavie Jeremiah (Community Development Officer of Academic Associates Peaceworks, ND-state of Bayelsa, Delta & Rivers) April 2014

Oyolo Peter (Deputy Leader of Okunno Community, Ethiope West LGA, ND state of Delta) March 2014

Oyoroko Amos, Chief (President General of Owhor Community, Ughelli South LGA, NDstate of Delta) April 2014

Tamunor Napoleon (Community Trust Chairman of Ayamabele, Yenagoa LGA ND-state of Bayelsa) March 2014

Tombare Nzorka (Youth President of K-Dere Community, Gokana LGA, ND-state of Rivers) March 2014

Uku Godwin (Secretary General, Okere Community, Warri South LGA, ND-state of Delta) April 2014

Uzobarima Prince (Youth President of B-Dere Community, Gokana LGA, ND-state of Rivers) April 2014

Variside Nenebare, Hon. Prince (Youth Secretary of the Luusue-Sogho Community Council of Chiefs, Gokana LGA, ND-state of Rivers) April 2014

Appendix II: Interview Questions

(1) What is a community and what characteristics can you use to describe your community? Code: Autonomous Political Unit.

(2) Tell me the difference between your community and neighbouring communities? Code: Different Autonomous Political Units.

(3) How long has your community existed for and how can you describe its administrative structure overtime? Code: Autonomous Political Unit.

(4) Explain the reasons for two communities going into violent conflict with each other? Code: Community protecting its own interests.

(5) Describe the level of effectiveness of your local government council in overseeing or managing the relationship and violent conflict between communities in your local government area? Code: Area Ungovernable.

(6) Describe the level of equality shown by the local government authority to communities in your local government area? Code: Ineffective/Area Ungovernable.

(7) Explain why the people that engaged in the violent conflict between (specific communities and the period) did not wait for the state or local government authorities to settle the matter? Code: Anarchical Environment.

(8) Does cooperation within (a) or your community such as unity within family units and kinship affects the way that community prosper or excel (as in protecting its own interests) in relation to neighbouring communities? Code: Effect of Mobilizing Internal Resources.

(9) Do election for (local or state) government's positions forces communities to fight one another with the view that whichever community controls power and ascends sensitive

government positions, has the advantage of protecting its community interests over other communities? Code: Anarchical Niger Delta System constrains NDCs to react.

(10) Explain, in terms of violent conflict between communities, why do some communities prevail over other communities and describe how communities perceive inter-community relations, in terms of one or the other being more powerful or influential in protecting its interests? Code: Relative Material Capability, and Status quo/Hegemony in an Anarchical Environment.