

SECURITY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NIGERIA: THE NIGER DELTA PERSPECTIVE, 2003-2010

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of social movements on Nigeria's national security with particular reference to the Niger Delta region. The study attempts to give a detailed historical account of the evolution and organizational nature of some notable social movements in the Niger Delta and how their activities posed a serious security challenge to the Nigerian state before the declaration of amnesty in June 2009. Social movements refer to "collective enterprises seeking to establish a new order of life". In most cases, social movements are characterized by unrest borne out of widespread dissatisfaction with the existing social and economic conditions of life of a people and their avowed determination to achieve a better living condition. This may, however, result in destabilizing social security. Historically, the Niger Delta crisis originated from social movement spearheaded by Isaac Boro in the 1960s, when he led an agitation against the activities of oil companies operating in the region. The agitation was rekindled in 1990s by Ken Saro Wiwa and his group who agitated against what they described as unfair treatment by oil companies and worsening environmental degradation arising from oil exploration and exploitation in the region. By 2006, the movement had snowballed into militancy with its attendant acts of hostage-taking and destruction of oil facilities. Consequently, there was direct confrontation between the militant groups and Nigerian state as exemplified by military clashes between the militants and the Joint Task Force (JTF) of Nigeria Armed Forces. The situation resulted in pervasive social insecurity in the region with its attendant colossal loss of lives and properties, and massive disruption of oil production activities and consequent loss of huge revenue to the government. Sequel to this, the federal government embarked on various measures to restore normalcy which include amnesty for all militants in the region and post-amnesty programme.