



EXPLORING THE CONFLICT OVER THE CRUDE OIL IN THE NIGER DELTA-A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SOME ACTORS INVOLVED.

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decades, the Niger Delta a very rich area of one of the best crude oils in the world has been experiencing conflicts and there have been many discourses that have been developed over the years concerning this case by different actors.

This thesis is aimed at understanding the conflict over the crude oil issue in the Niger Delta

with a focus on the discourses of some selected actors such as Shell B.P, M.E.N.D (Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta and the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The methodology that would be applied to investigate this case further is known as discourse analysis (DA) and some concepts in DA would also be applied.

In addition to this, theories of power would also be applied focusing mostly on the works by Foucault and Michel Mann with a view of understanding the power relations at play in this case.

Key words: Discourse, Discourse analysis, conflict, power

EXPLORING THE CONFLICT OVER THE CRUDE OIL IN THE NIGER DELTA-A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SOME ACTORS INVOLVED.

1. BACKGROUND

Nigeria was created as a country officially by the British after several years of colonialization through the joining of the northern and southern “protectorates (Adigun, 2004). Nigeria gained her independence on the 1st of October in year 1960 and since then has been through a series of governance systems which has been marked by long eras of military regimes and little democratic rule (Adigun, 2004). Since May 1999, Nigeria has been practicing democracy which appears to be stable now over the past one decade (Adigun, 2004). Nigeria is a very populated country and she is home to about 140 million people belonging to a vast range of ethnic groups (Adigun, 2004). A total of 36 states comprise Nigeria. In this thesis, focus would be on the geographical area of Nigeria known as the “Niger Delta” which is made up of 6 states namely Akwa Ibom, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Edo and Cross River States (Adigun, 2004). In early times, Nigeria’s economy thrived mainly on Agriculture, generating most of her revenue from cash crop exportation but this reliance on yields from Agriculture changed since the discovery of oil and its accompanying prosperity often referred to as “oil boom”. Today, Nigeria’s economy (approximately every sector) depends hugely on revenue generated from crude oil exportation and this has in turn favoured the growth of the oil sector at the detriment of others (Courson, 2009). It seems as though as the rise of the oil industry led to the fall of the other industries. To buttress the success of the oil industry with figures, it has been reported that Nigeria has earned close to 300 billion U.S.D (United States Dollar) from crude oil exportation (Omotola, 2006).

It would be interesting at this point to state how the yields accrued from crude oil exportation have been managed and how it has benefited or enhanced the development of the Niger Delta (a question of whether or not). Initially, sharing of revenue from any natural resource in Nigeria was based on the “principle of derivation” which implies that any revenue from any natural resource exportation would be deposited back to the state where it was extracted but on the contrary, this rule changed when it was to be applied to crude oil (Adigun, 2004). The federal government gave a reason for this change in rule expressing her desire to develop not just some states (Niger Delta states) but the entire states of the federation (Adigun, 2004). Today, at least all states of the federation benefit from oil revenue and not only the origin states while the origin states bears all the brunt of the environmental and societal consequences that are outcomes of oil exploitation and production activities and also living in a high state of impoverishment despite its natural endowments, specifically its crude oil which is the natural resource we are interested in for this case (Omoweh, 2006).

The richness of the Niger Delta in terms of crude oil which is ranked amongst one of the best qualities in the world has been a site of attraction for exploration, exploitation and production for several multinationals (Omoweh, 2006) but the whole tale started with Shell B.P. Shell B.P, a partner company between the Dutch and British were the first to strike oil in Nigeria and this event happened in Oloibiri, Niger Delta in 1956. Since then, it has been exploiting and producing crude oil in large quantities in this region with other companies like Texaco (an American company) and Agip (an Italian company) joining the oil business following the abolishment of the “mineral act” drafted in 1914 after Nigeria’s independence in 1960 which hindered non-British companies from accessing British “territory” which in this case was Nigeria (Adigun, 2004).

It is also important to mention that the Nigerian Federal government under the trade name “NNPC” (Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation) runs a “joint venture” with Shell B.P.(Omoweh,2006).This is highlighted with a view of understanding in the later part of this text how the relationship is/has been influencing the case.

These activities of one of the multinationals Shell B.P, who controls over “70 percent” of oil exploitation and production activities in the Niger Delta (Omoweh,2006) has had both positive effects on the economy of Nigeria and adverse effects on the Niger Delta region(Adigun,2004). The latter effect is why the case is a problem because of its intense effects on the local inhabitant of the Niger Delta’s livelihoods and environment which has fuelled great degree of violence by the inhabitants of the Niger Delta and a long existing conflict between the local people against the Federal government and Shell B.P. An example of such consequences is pollution of water and land often referred to as “oil spillage” (Omoweh, 2006). Other examples include “gas flaring” which accounts for many health hazards and in addition, mortality of animals and humans through contact with toxic waste products used in the drilling stage of exploitation such as “EP 20” (Omoweh, 2006).

The case is also of relevance because of the land rights issues and natural resource ownership aspects involved because due to Nigeria’s federal nature, all her powers are “vested” in the central arm of government and all the control, ownership of land and access to crude oil in the Niger Delta are “centralized” that is owned and controlled by the government of Nigeria (Adigun, 2004). This leaves the local people with little or no land for farming and other purposes. Another interesting question that comes to mind is who truly owns the land in the Niger Delta? Here, one may say that this question of ownership is hard to determine because the land in question is situated in the Niger Delta and on the other hand, the Niger Delta is under the Federal government of Nigeria. One may say that the struggle for ownership might be contributing to the conflict in the Niger Delta.

The reason why this case has been selected is because of its relevance as a field of study and the high societal importance attached to it. The case has also received wide coverage in both local and international media which makes it even more interesting to explore.

This thesis is important because it involves conflict over natural resource governance which in this case is “crude oil” with a goal of understanding the problem better and why the conflict has remained for years and why the possibility(ies) for a change seems improbable bearing in mind that the goal of this research is not to solve the problem or create change. Although this thesis work is focused on understanding the dynamics of the conflict situation with the emerging discourses among some selected actors such as the Federal Government Of Nigeria, Shell B.P and M.E.N.D (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta). Note that M.E.N.D has been chosen as one of the main actors because they represent the local people in the Niger Delta, Shell B.P because they carry out over 70 percent of oil exploration and production activities and the Federal Government because they possess all the power and also run a joint venture with Shell B.P.

The thesis is also important in understanding the application of discourses in Environmental issues or natural resources management related issues, relationship between discourses and conflicts and the influence of the former on the latter.

Justification for selection of topic and what is expected to be gained.

The reason we find this case interesting is that it is a conflict that involves natural resources management, it is also a major conflict and exploring the case to gain a better understanding could help managed the problem.

1.1.Problem formulation

The problem is to find out the consequences of the use of discourses by the three selected actors on the crude oil conflict in Niger Delta.

The choice of these actors is based on the criteria on role in the conflict that is, the actors which has the greatest degree of impact on the conflict bearing in mind that there might be other actors involved in this case. The justification for the choice of actors is based on our literature review from which we discovered the three principal actors with direct influence(s) and role(s) on the case.

Research questions

The research questions to explore the case are:

- How are the selected actors in the Niger Delta case using discourses?
- What is/are the influence(s) of the various discourses on the conflict?

2.THEORIES

We want to point out here that these theories would be applied later on in gaining more understanding of the case in view. The criteria for the selection of the theories was based on how we perceived them to be of use in exploring and understanding the case better.

The theory that would be applied is the concept of power by Michel Foucault and Michael Mann. The theories would be used to analyze the power relations at play in this case and their subsequent effects on the conflict. We think that power is also linked to discourses and that is why we are interested in exploring it. Although there are diverse concepts and theories of power,

Foucault and Mann's theories and concepts of power have been selected because of their degree of relevance in analyzing the Niger Delta case. Both authors concepts have been chosen to complement the other and both concepts would be applied to explore the case. Our thought is that we find the selected theories and concepts in the Niger Delta case according to the works of Foucault and Michel Mann useful tools in understanding how the power relations among the three selected actors is working (if any or among which actors does power relations exist).

Among some of the concepts that would be applied are "space, power and knowledge", "power and social network" (Foucault, 1954-1984:ch1), "power and truth" (Foucault, 1954-1984:133), "power and communication" (Mann, 1995:ch2).

The concept of "Space, power and knowledge" (Foucault, 1954-1984) has been selected because we think that the arena for expressing and exchanging discourse(s) is/are very importance for such discourse(s) to be dominant and widespread among the public on both local and international scales. Our interest with this concept is to explore the role "space" performs in shaping our understanding of the world from the user(s) perspective with a motive of also understanding the power that is inherent within knowledge. In addition, our own reflection is that knowledge is generated within a group or individually as the case may be and such knowledge is filled with a lot of power and the knowledge spreads through space. The second concept of power known as "power and the social network" has been selected due to its relevance to the Niger Delta case. Our own thinking is that there seems to be a high degree of power embedded in "social groups" or societies. This implies that the larger a group

or social class becomes the stronger is the likelihood of such discourse(s) to gain dominance over the other discourses. For example, two out of the three selected actors run a joint venture (Shell B.P and the government of Nigeria) with M.E.N.D in an independent state. In our own reflections, we think that the existence of such joint ventures between Shell B.P and the government is a form of “social network”. Thirdly, the concept of “power and truth” has been selected in order to understand the role of power in the generation of truth. We intend to explore how the powerful actor(s) in the Niger Delta case are applying the power they possess in creating the “truth” and basing a discourse(s) on such. The meaning of this is that power could be criteria for an actor’s discourse to be considered as legitimate. In other words, the more powerful an actor is, the greater the possibility of his/her discourse being considered truthful.

Lastly, the concept of “power and communication” has been selected with a focus on understanding how each of the three selected actors is using his/her power to “communicate” discourse(s) among the three actors and the public. We also target to understand how power is linked to communication with an aim of exploring if the powerful actor can influence the hegemony of its discourse through means of communication.

3.METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

3.1.Discourse analysis

The method that would be used to explore the case is known as “discourse analysis”. The discourse analysis would be based on some texts about each of the selected actors in the case from sources mainly the internet and some publications.

Discourse analysis has been selected as a methodology because it is one of the important research tools in the field of social science research (Antaki et al.,N.D) and because of its application in cases where there are difficulties in conducting live interviews like the case in question.

Discourse analysis has been based on several approaches for example analyzing discourses from “MP3 transcripts” and other text documents. For this case, discourse analysis would be based on analysis of the latter. This is with a view of pointing out that Social Science research can be conducted using recorded or documented materials in cases where there seems to be difficulty in conducting oral interviews like this case by applying discourse analysis of such materials.

It would be ideal to start with the definition of “discourses”. Individual’s conversations take peculiar sequence when they engage in different spheres of life and this orderliness and uniqueness in language use within any particular group is termed “discourse”. Discourse is also the “interpretations” or “meanings” that different group of people ascribe to the “world”. In other words, people with the same goal or in the same group are bound to share the same “discourse(s)”. This definition is with an aim of providing the reader with a guide on what discourses mean and how it would subsequently be applied to explore this case.

It is also important to present a definition of knowledge and highlight how knowledge is evolved using some concepts of knowledge. This is with a goal of pointing out that knowledge can be generated and shared between specific groups of individuals and that this knowledge can evolve into discourse(s). We will start with the task of defining what is meant by generation of knowledge.

Generation of knowledge according to Phillips and Jorgense (N. D) is an outcome of processes of “social” nature while also pointing out that such knowledge cannot stand as an

ultimate representation of the “truth”. The interpretation of this is that though knowledge is shared within a social group it does not signify being “true knowledge as such”. From this point, we would move to application of some concepts in discourse analysis with an aim of understanding the different views on discourses which we would apply at a later stage of this thesis.

In this case, Fairclough, Laclau and Mofe’s concepts of discourses would be applied to analyze and explore the case because of the significance of their work to this case.

We would begin by expressing Laclau and Mofe’s (in Phillips and Jorgense, N.D:ch1) concept of discourse. Laclau and Mofe’s concept of discourse is that they compete for dominance which is termed “hegemony of discourses” and according to them, discourses determines the outcome of the world “socially” which is synonymous with the earlier concept proposed by Phillips and Jorgense. Laclau and Mofe also identified discourses as variables that change when in contact with another discourse.

For Fairclough, discourse analysis is based on what he termed “intertextuality” (in Phillips and Jorgense, N.D:Ch1) which implies that an “individual’s text” has the possibility of creating another individual’s text. This sounds as a way of defining how discourses are formed. This means that some discourses are rooted in others. Fairclough also stated in one of his works (in Phillips and Jorgense, N.D:ch1) that discourse analysis is just a “part of social life” and that “social life” does not depend fully on discourses due to the multiple aspects constituting social life. This is different from the earlier concepts on discourses by Laclau and Mofe and Phillips and Jorgense. All these are just some attributes and definitions of discourses according to the authors concepts we think would be applicable to this case.

Here, it is important to mention some of the draw backs of discourse analysis. The popularity and application of discourses has met with a number of critics. For example, according to Antaki et al., N.D some social science research based on discourse analysis (DA) has not been adequately exhaustive. This means that DA has not been satisfactorily conducted in some research works. Also some have ended up in achieving results that are rather vague. The implication of this is that some DA has only produced results that have not fulfilled the criteria for a proper DA. Others have been based on using extracts from texts, recordings or speeches and this has also affected the quality of the analysis and subsequent results obtained. This can be interpreted as some DA based on direct use of text without an understanding of the inherent discourse(s) behind the production and use of such text(s).

In the end, Antaki et al., N.D proposed that when carrying out discourse analysis (DA) it should be “discourse analysis” which appears to be a confusing proposition. This is because of the difficulty attached to trying to carry out DA without falling into all these critical positions listed earlier on.

Therefore, in this thesis project, the challenge would be to conduct DA based only on “the discourses” of the selected actors (if any) and this or these would be analyzed.

Our own view on DA as an approach is that it seems very useful and has a broad area of application but it appears to be technical and it is difficult to avoid conducting DA without not conducting DA as presented in the critics of the DA’s shortcomings proposed by Antaki et al., ND. This is the case for most new methods and they are developed over time. Our goal is to avoid vague analysis, less-exhaustive analysis and low quality analysis.

At this point highlighting some concepts in DA as a theory would be relevant.

Concepts in DA

- “Nodal points”; these can be defined according to Methmann, 2010 as links between single or multiple discourses.
- “Intertextuality”; these according to Foucault are discourses that have their origin in other text (Linnros and Hallin, 2001:p391-403).

- “Order of discourse”;this according to (Linnros and Hallin,2001:p391-403) implies how discourses arise and how they continue to develop to the point of hegemony.
 - “Counter discourse”; this refers to discourses that are “anti” other discourses.(Linnros and Hallin,2001.p391-403)
 - “Discourse arena” This implies the “space” where two or more discourses are expressed or the medium of expression of the discourses.(Linnros and Hallin,2001:p391-403)
- The above-listed concepts of DA has been selected based on the grounds of perception of some degree of relevance in analyzing the discourses of the selected actors in this case. The next step would be to give a list of the materials that were used in obtaining the empirical data for this thesis work.

Motivation for not applying all concepts in theories.

The reason why we have not used all the concepts in theories is because we find some more important than the others and we our goal was to use all the concepts as a guide in exploring the case which we later discovered that not all could be applied in this circumstance.

Method.

The method was based on reading the text produced by the selected actors and trying to understand and identify the discourses(s) implicitly or explicitly.

The concept of “narratives” (which means thoughts of actors in words) would also be used in the analytical part of this thesis work due to the importance of language in expressions and subsequent actions if any.

3.1.1.Justification for selecting empirical materials.

The justification for selecting the empirical materials we worked with in this thesis is based on relatedness to the case and the criteria for selection was based on the degree of recentness of the documents to be explored to the case.

LIST OF EMPIRICAL MATERIALS

Federal government of Nigeria

- Nigeria First State House of Abuja. Official website of the office of public communication.Nov 7,2009
- Nigeria First State House of Abuja. Official website of the office of public communication. Mar 4,2010
- Nigeria First State House Abuja. Official website of the Office of Public communication. Sept 29,2010
- Nigeria First State House Abuja. Official website of the Office of Public communication. Mar 15,2011

Shell B.P

- Royal Dutch Shell Plc Annual Report and Form 20-F for the year ended December 31, 2006.
- Royal Dutch Shell Plc Annual Report and Form 20-F for the year ended December 31, 2007.
- Royal Dutch Shell Plc 2005 Annual Review and Summary Financial Statements published Apr 12 2008.
- Shell sustainability report 2010 pp1-10

M.E.N.D

- Daily Independence newspaper, Nov 16,2010
- Nigerian Daily News, 18 Jan,2011
- Nigerian Daily news, 15 Mar, 2011
- Courson .E, 2009. Movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND): political marginalization, repression and petro-insurgency in the Niger Delta.Discussion Paper.

4. DA AND RESULTS

The results were arrived at following a close examination and comparison of the discourses of the three selected actors with the goal of gaining a better understanding of the case as stated earlier on. Here, we also applied the concepts we thought relevant to in DA as a guide in interpreting the discourses into results.

After an examination of the discourses of the three selected actors, the following findings were obtained.

Firstly, from the comparison of all the discourses of the three selected actors, they all possess diverging discourses.

Secondly,M.E.N.D has a “counter discourse” with the other two actors. M.E.N.D’s claim for ownership is contrary to the willingness of the Government to release their land and crude oil to them and Shell’s willingness to quit oil exploration,exploitation and production activities.

Also, M.E.N.D’s demand for control is contrary to the intention of the government to use crude oil earnings for both the Niger Delta development and national development as well.

In addition, M.E.N.D’s claim for justice does not seem does not strike the government as important. Here again we have the idea of discourses being met with a different or no interpretation at all.

The government and Shell so far do not seem to have any “counter discourse(s)”(Linnros and Hallin,2001:p391-403) this could be because of the joint venture between Shell and the government. They are both focused on a form of caution about the state of the Niger Delta and they expressed a readiness to improve upon the state of the situation in the Niger Delta but we can say here that M.E.N.D seems to perceive this action as deceitful and there is no form of trust for the government and Shell by M.E.N.D

Finally each of the three selected actors has a specific discourse and we can apply the concept of DA proposed by Laclau and Mofe (in Phillips and Jorgense,N.D:ch1) to explain why.Here, we will agree with Laclau and Mofe’s concept on discourses(that people in the same social group share the same discourse) because each of the actors discourse is based on the social group they belong. For example, Shell’s discourses would be the same among its entire staff and this would be the same for M.E.N.D and the Government.

There is a form of “intertextuality”(Linnros and Hallin,2001:p391-403) (that is discourses that are inter-linked) between the actors discourses especially between M.E.N.D and Shell and M.E.N.D and the government. M.E.N.D’s discourses are based on the text of both the government and Shell. For example M.E.N.D’s discourse on ownership and control is based on the text of the government concerning development of the Niger Delta. M.E.N.D’s discourse is linked to the discourse of the Government. We can say here that the discourse of M.E.N.D emerged due to the interpretation of the discourse(s) of the Government and Shell by M.E.N.D.For example, in our own reflection, we think if M.E.N.D had a good interpretation of the discourse(s) of the government and Shell, they might not have developed their own discourse(s).

Also, there is an “order of discourse”(Linnros and Hallin,2001:p392)(that is discourse(s) that develop in a particular sequence). For example the government’s discourse of development would have originated from a particular stage before developing further to gain hegemony, same for all the other actors discourses. This would have been interesting to find out but since the goal of this thesis is not to understand the history and historical development of the Niger Delta case, we will not conduct that as part of our analysis and we only suggest that the discourses would have developed from a specific discourse to another bearing in mind the changing tendencies of discourses according to Fairclough’s work on discourse analysis(in Phillips and Jorgense,n.d:ch1). Here one can say that discourses truly develop in a sequence from one stage to another.

Consequently, there seems to be a nodal point (connection between two or more discourses) which in this case is the conflict over the crude oil. All the actors discourses are somehow connected and linked with the conflict. We can say here that the centre of all the discourses of the three selected actors in this case is the conflict. One can also say that there might still be discourses(which could possibly be similar)

if there happened to be no conflict but the discourses would have been independent and without a particular nodal point as suggested in this case. Here one might ask if nodal points are present only when the actors have different views on a subject or different definitions of a situation. We can say that this is usually the case but not taking for granted that actors with similar views might also have a peculiar point of discourse which is referred to as nodal point.

Further more the discourse arena (the medium through which the discourses are expressed) is the internet and some reports from published books on how each actors perceives and interpretes the problem. We can say here in our own reflection that the discourse arena is very important for the development and popularity of the discourse. Discourses only gains public attention when expressed through platforms such as the internet, newspapers, books and media. The actors rely on the discourse arena to convey their messages and make the public have a clear understanding and perception of their actions with an aim of giving the public a picture of reality from the actors own perspective which the audience are persuaded to accept as the truth. For example, the Government makes use of the internet to state its discourse of development in the Niger Delta(trying to point out their awareness of the poor state of development in the Niger Delta). This kind of publicity through the internet as a discourse arena portrays a picture to the audience that indeed the government understands the situation and would probably act according to their discourse.

Here, our goal is to further explore the case with some theories with a view to gaining more understanding of the problem.

From the results obtained from the individual discourses of the three actors, it appears as if they each function as a "social network" which according to Foucault's concept on discourses is made up of people with the same "goal(s)"belonging to the same "society"(Foucault,1954-1984). This in turn creates a particular/particular set of discourses among the group(s) which in this case are the three actors. Although we think that though discourses cannot express "hidden agenda", it can still be used to gain an understanding of how people belonging to a specific "social group" perceive the world. The implication of this is that each actor has a particular discourse influenced by the "social group" the actors belong to.

Foucault also expressed in his concept of discourses that "social networks" are built in order to "gain more power"(Foucault,1954-1984:ch1). In this case, each actor tries to put its discourse(s) forward strongly and strive to make those who share it more in order for the discourse to gain more "hegemony". For example, Shell B.P uses a lot of "public space" such as the media, internet, news prints to perpetuate its discourse and to make people have an understanding of the world especially as regarding their actions in the Niger Delta region as "legitimate" as possible and to make people see the picture of the Niger Delta in their own "reality" and to accept this reality has the truth.

M.E.N.D also does the same by seeking the support of the masses and global organizations through publications, speeches, interviews to tell their own narrative of the Niger Delta the way they perceive it while also pointing out that the actions of other actors such as Shell and the Government are negatively impacting their environment and denying them of access to what rightfully belongs to them.

Also, the discourses of M.E.N.D seem to be against the Government and Shell B.P and both the Government and Shell never seems to antagonize each other in any obvious manner. From the results obtained, the joint venture could possibly be the reason why the Government and Shell B.P do not have any counter discourses. There appears to be a relationship between both actors.

These actors use their discourses to channel and express their action on the Niger Delta while claiming a certain form of legitimacy. One can say that it is difficult to ascertain legitimacy of discourse but what is inherent in all actors discourse is the indirect expression and claim for “legitimacy”.

The conflict has brought up different discourses and each actor holds his discourse strongly. For example M.E.N.D does not appear to want to let go of his discourse on justice, ownership and control, the government too does not want to forgo its discourse on development while Shell B.P is holding firmly their corporate, environmental and profit maximization discourses. One might say that the deadlock between the discourses is one major aspects out of probably the others that is responsible for the continued existence of this problem in the Niger Delta.

The problem itself is being avoided and other aspects are used in order to hide it. Here, one might also ask for example if all the actors have the same understanding of the problem. From the result obtained this appears to be false. The three selected actors do not have the same view on the problem. We suggest this is based on the fact that the three selected actors have different definitions of the problem from the result obtained. For M.E.N.D, the problem definition is mis-management of their crude oil, for the government, the definition of the problem seems to be the poor state of development in the Niger Delta while for Shell, the problem appears to be the resulting pollution of the Environment in the Niger Delta as a consequence of Shell’s activities. All actor seems to have a different interpretation of one another’s discourses. This is evident from the discourses of the actors. For example, the Government understands, defines and interpretes the problem as lack of development in the Niger Delta, Shell presumes it is a problem about managing their activities in the Niger Delta more effectively with a goal of achieving minimal impact on the environment.

Another important aspect in this case is the question about the Government’s readiness to carry out the requests of M.E.N.D. From the analysis o the discourses of the government, it would be difficult for the government to forfeit all the wealth that the crude oil generates and to give up possessing of the crude oil and land in the Niger Delta because of the great economic value attached to crude oil exportation. This case has a rather complex nature and stakes involved that are influencing the problem,

which is why the problem has remained a problem. One can say that it would be difficult for the Government to loosen its reign on crude oil because of the immense wealth accompanying crude oil exportation and this also affects the conflict situation negatively because of the power relations involved in ownership and the market.

For Shell, they are not ready to carry out the wishes of M.E.N.D. For example they are not willing to remediate the environment of the Niger Delta to its original state and they also have the government as a source of power to protect them and this could be a reason why Shell is reluctant to do as M.E.N.D wish. Here, we can say that the possession of power by an actor strengthens its ability to carry out its actions in the face of protest. Shell might be aware of the power they have and as such this might give them more confidence to act despite protests and threats by M.E.N.D. One might say that Shell could be able to remediate the environment although not totally to its original state but Shell might want the Government to be a part of the process in terms of finance because of the joint venture agreement.

There is a lot of power relations at play. All the actors do not have the same degree of power. The government and Shell are more powerful than M.E.N.D and this seems contribute to the conflict. The more powerful actors are not willing to lose their power. Another point here is the "hegemony of discourse" The most powerful actors seems to have the most "dominant discourse" and this brings a concept of "power and truth" proposed by Foucault(1954-1984:p133). How powerful actors influence the authenticity of their discourses.

According to Foucault (1954-1984:ch1p5) Shell B.P and the Government are using "authoritative and diffused power on M.E.N.D." "Authoritative" power refers to the type of power that is exercised directly and diffused power is the opposite of authoritative power(Foucault,1954-1984).

The discourses are contributing more to the escalation and continued existence of the case because it is closing every arena for conversation and deliberation about the needs of each actor and how this can be met (Marshall,2005.p2-13). According to Marshall, conflict is a result of un- satisfied needs. It appears as if discourses are simply defence mechanism against ones actions since. Also, according to Daniel and Walker work 2001, the conflict seems to be due to "dissatisfaction" between the three selected actors. For example, M.E.N.D seems to be "dissatisfied" with the situation of the Niger Delta environment and the (mis) management of the crude oil in the Niger Delta.

One can say from here that discourses have been a futile way of solving the problem in the Niger Delta.

Applying the concept on "communication and power" proposed by Mann (1995), it seems as if the type of communication in this case is based on "mass communication" and "mass self communication" with "interpersonal" communication completely neglected.

Also, comparing this case with previous studies on discourses (the case of the construction of the bridge between Copenhagen,Denmark and Malmo,Sweden) (Linnros and Hallin,2001:p391-403) where there were "counter discourses" generated by the proposal to construct the bridge. Some group used the discourse of development, emphasizing that the bridge otherwise known as the "Oresund link" would bring development to both countries. This discourse was met with a counter discourse by an environmental group which in this case was the discourse of "nature" telling in their own narrative that the construction of the "Oresund link" would impact nature adversely. There seems to be a relationship between the use of the concepts of discourse analysis between this case and that of the Niger Delta in terms of discourse and "counter discourse" although the situations and contexts are quite different. In the Niger Delta case, the discourse is "development" shared by the Government while the counter discourses seems to be that of M.E.N.D in terms of violation of land and human rights and degradation of the environment.

The discourses of the three actors is competing for hegemony from our analysis and we can say that this is one of the reasons why the problem is still existing because the focus is no longer on the problem itself but on the discourses of each of the selected actors and based on our own interpretation, the selected actors are trying to develop their individual discourse at the expense of the other.

There are power relations existing between the discourses. This could be analyzed from the discourses of each actor. The government who is the most powerful actor in this case appears to be applying its power to circulate its discourse and to dominate the "discourse arena" while M.E.N.D who have the least power are trying to gain more power by soliciting for support and attention locally and globally.

Linnros and Hallin. (2001:p391) highlighted that "environmental conflicts" assumes a form of discourses. Here brings the question of the influence of discourses on "environmental conflict" and one can say that discourses affects the existence of conflict by prolonging or limiting the possibilities for a change through self defence, competition and claim for legitimacy of action by actors through the use of language. This applies to the Niger Delta case. The actors discourses have as a consequence an elongation of the conflict situation.

Foucault(1954-1984;p348-360) in one of his concept of power "space, knowledge and power" argues that thoughts have a spatial form of creation which in turn results in the creation of discourses. This implies that the images in the mind of a particular group of individuals create their "discourses" this answers the question of why different groups of people often have different discourses. In the Niger Delta case, each actor according to Foucault applies the theory of spatial generation of knowledge to develop images which leads to thoughts and subsequently discourses by filling the meaning of the situation with their own reality. The government for example pictures the problem to be due to the poor state of development in the Niger Delta region, M.E.N.D has images of the problem to be the result of human, land rights abuse and ownership.

Also, applying another concept of Foucault known as “power and truth”(Foucault 1954-1984:p133) to the Niger Delta case, it appears as if there is a “battle for truth” and since Foucault theorized that “truth is in a way connected to power”, the most powerful actors seems to be the most truthful. One can argue that this is another reason why the conflict situation has been escalating for decades because M.E.N.D, which ranks has the least powerful are discontent which the denial of the truth in their own discourses by other actors and expresses this in form of “violence”.

Foucault (1954-1984:p133) also states that “truth is already in itself a form of power” and in this case, it appears that the struggle for truth which can be defined as the desire for the actors to be viewed by both local and global world as being the most legitimate is causing the power relations which is affecting the resolution of the conflict situation.

4.1. Analysis

4.1.1. Nigerian Government’s Discourse

From a review and analysis of the empirical materials for the Federal government of Nigeria, their discourse is “development” “national” and “Niger Delta development”.

- “National development”: the idea of development is the discourse of the Federal Government of Nigeria in this case applying discourse analysis. The Nigerian government intends to use the revenue generated from crude oil export to develop the entire nation. The government’s narrative is “*National resources will be effectively utilized for national development*”

from: Nigeria First State House of Abuja. Official website of the office of public communication. Mar 4,2010

The second part of the government’s discourse on development is “Niger Delta development”.

- “***Niger Delta Development***”: Here, the government is also focused on the development of the Niger Delta region. The government’s narrative is “*We are on top of the situation in the Niger Delta. The problems in the region, being human and development-related, are such that require time to be addressed. I encourage the Niger Delta people and major companies in the region to keep faith with Government, as we are determined to reinvigorate post-amnesty plans and programmes for the region.*” From: Nigeria First State House Abuja. Official website of the Office of Public communication. Mar 15,2011

4.1.2. Shell’s discourse(s)

From an analysis of the empirical materials for Shell, it highlights that they have more than one discourse. The discourses of Shell include:

- “**Environment**”; Shell’s focus seems to be on the environment. Shell expresses awareness of the environmental damage their activities are causing in the Niger Delta and expresses plan of action to work more cautiously, exploring, exploiting and producing crude oil with the least of impacts on the environment. Shell’s narrative is: “*our environmental performance saw improvements in energy efficiency and in reducing the number of operational spills*” From: Shell sustainability report 2010 pp 1

The second discourse of Shell is the “corporate” discourse.

- “**Corporate**”: Here, they emphasis their willingness in meeting demands of crude oil globally through more efficient exploration, exploitation and production activities. Shell re-states their goal and target using the corporate discourse. Shell’s narrative is: “*We continue to work on improving operational performance and energy efficiency to reduce GHG (green house gases) emissions*”.

“*In 2010, we met the voluntary target we set in 1998 for our direct GHG emissions from facilities we operate to be at least 5% lower than our comparable 1990 level. Shell’s GHG emissions in 2010 were around 25% lower than our comparable 1990 level*” From; Shell sustainability report 2010 pp 3

The third discourse of Shell is the “profit making discourse”

- “**Profit making**”: Profit maximization also seems to be on the agenda of Shell. They intend from an analysis of their discourse to earn increased profit from their activities. Shell’s narrative on “profit making” is: “*Our income in 2010 was \$20.5 billion and we delivered \$10.2 billion to our shareholders in dividends. We made net capital investments of \$23.7 billion to build and sustain our business for the future. We also spent \$1.0 billion on our research and development programme.*”

“*We continued to focus our efforts on those markets where we see the best potential for growth. For example, we bought businesses in countries including the USA (East Resources, Shell interest 100%) and Australia (Arrow Energy, Shell interest 50%). We also made good progress in establishing our Raízen joint venture (Shell interest 50%) with Brazilian ethanol producer Cosan*”. From: Shell sustainability report 2010 pp 3

4.1.3.M.E.ND’s Discourse

M.E.N.D’s discourses include:

“**Human right**”: M.E.N.D has its discourse demanding for a claim for justice. Justice could also have a multiple meaning. It could be for human rights abuse, land rights violation, environmental degradation or even something more. M.E.N.D’s narrative is “*According to Ken Saro-Wiwa, the environment is man’s first right: the absence of a safe environment*”

makes it impossible for man to fight for other rights: be they economic, social or political. And ...whether the peaceful ways

favoured will prevail depends on what the oppressor decides, what signals it sends out to the waiting public...I call upon the Ogoni people, the peoples of the Niger Delta, and the oppressed minorities of Nigeria to stand up now and fight fearlessly and peacefully for their rights” From: Courson .E., 2009. Movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND): political marginalization, repression and petro-insurgency in the Niger Delta. Discussion Paper.pp 9,14

- **“Ownership”**: Here, the meaning behind the use of this discourse might be a demand of their crude oil from the Government or their land as well. M.E.N.D’s narrative is: *...the overarching theme of this and similar resistance efforts, the liberation of a land occupied*

by an irresponsible foreign goliath cannot be dismissed as “terrorism”. It is this oversimplification that forces people into arms” From Courson .E., 2009. Movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND): political marginalization, repression and petro-insurgency in the Niger Delta.Discussion Paper pp 20

- **“Control”**: Control might signify an intention by M.E.N.D to have access to all the revenue generated from crude oil business and to manage it by themselves.

This much was made clear by Boro, while addressing his men (Tebekaemi, 1982:116): “Let us examine with some latitude whether the state of development is to any extent commensurate with a tint of the bulk of already tapped mineral and agricultural resources”

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Answers To Research Questions

From the empirical materials used in carrying out this thesis and subsequent identification, examination and analysis of the discourses of the selected actors, we can say that the actors are using discourses in order to:

1. To claim legitimacy of own action.
2. To give a definition and subsequent interpretation of the case from own perspective.
3. To give a direct/indirect definition and explanation of own action(s) one another’s actions.
4. To give a narrative of own understanding of the Niger Delta case.
5. To give a description of own ambition and needs.

Secondly, about the research question on how the discourse(s) is/are influencing the conflict we can say from our empirical materials that:

1. The discourse(s) is/are limiting the possibility for consideration of dialogue.
2. The discourses are preventing the space for dialogue since discourse is obvious to have replaced room for inter-personal communication.
3. The discourses are helping to increase the existence or life span of the conflict.

5.2. Own reflection

From the discourses, results, analysis and application of theories to explain the respective actions of each actor, one can conclude that each actor has a specific discourse and finds it difficult to accept that of the other actor.

Also, each actor is contesting for the superiority of its discourse using several means especially with the advent of power.

Furthermore, the discourses seem to be affecting the conflict situation negatively in the sense that it prevents interpersonal communication and dialogue.

Power also seems to be aggravating the Niger Delta case because it shuts the door on possibility of dialogue. Another consequence of power relations is that it replaces the consideration of a solution to the problem with a continued struggle for dominance through exercise of power.

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