

Peace/Conflict Management: An Empirical Analysis of the Impact of Development on Conflict in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of development on conflict for in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and further investigated causality. The famous Two Stage Least Square estimation technique and OLS were adopted to analyse the panel data for conflict and development between 2005-2013. After the application of Hausman test, the results from random effects were found suitable. The results show a positive impact of about 0.04 on conflict, significant at 10% which indicates that, if underdevelopment rises by 1%, conflict will rise by about 0.04%. However, this impact reduced to around 0.03% when causality running from development to conflict was established using 2SLS, and p-value became insignificant. This means that although development has an impact on conflict, it may not be the sole cause of the conflict in the Niger Delta. This finding aligns with few studies from previous research. The implication of the findings from this present research is that resolving the persistent armed conflict in the Niger Delta and fostering peace is a two-way. While the government is usually interested in using armed forces in resolving conflicts, this is a short-term solution. A more sustainable strategy for combating armed conflict and fostering peace building in communities according to this research would imply the use of adequate development plans which would include factors such as, the provision of basic amenities, enabling environment for investments (e.g. reliable power supply), good healthcare, education, good road networks as well as good institutions. By this, the research has contributed immensely to existing body of knowledge on the relationship between conflict and development, and further shading light on the need to integrate development plans into peace building measures in communities.

Keywords: Niger Delta, Conflict, Peace, Development, 2SLS

INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria which is made of up nine states has seen so many cases of armed conflict in the past between the government and the communities for control of crude oil in the area. According to ACLEDDATA, (2016) there have been at least, 240 cases of armed conflict mostly from Rivers state and Bayelsa between 2003 and 2013. These cases include, destruction of crude oil pipelines, bombing of government buildings, killing of oil workers and other violent acts. These acts usually lead to major loss in economic activities in the areas thus affecting level of development, which accords with the theory that conflict has negative impact on development.

The struggle of the Niger Delta people in Nigeria has been a concern since the discovery of oil in Oloibiri-Bayelsa state by Shell-BP in 1956 and Ogoni, Rivers state in 1957 (The Global Foundation, 2016). Despite the fact that the Niger Delta holds the secret to Nigeria's abundant crude oil export, accounting to about 90% of Nigeria's revenue, (Akpan & Akpabio, 2009), local communities in the Niger Delta remain poor. Osuoka, (2003) found that resorting to conflicts

by the Niger Delta people becomes the only viable way of expressing grievances by the oil rich communities. Since majority of the youth in the Niger Delta are unemployed, opportunity cost of fighting becomes extremely low, which further exacerbates already deteriorating conditions. Data from Open data for Africa (2016) show that low education attainment, Unemployment and poverty persists in Niger Delta communities. Although the Niger Delta locals claim that the government has not done enough in bringing this situation under control (Omotola, 2007), Nigerian government has not been completely unresponsive to their demands. Worldbank (2009) reports that several measures have been taken by the government to reduce the conflict such as bodies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 1999, Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992, Ministry of Niger Delta affairs (MNDA) in 2008 and the amnesty program by President Yar'Adua in 2009, which were all created as a move to encourage economic and social development and reduce the conflict in the regions (John, 2011). However, proper attention has not been

given to this aspect of trying to combat conflict using development measures, which may be as a result of ignorance of the theoretical stance on the effect of underdevelopment on conflict, which this paper tries to shed more light on using empirical evidence.

With several reports arguing that conflicts in the Niger Delta is resulted from grievances from slow development in the areas (worldbank, 2009), no empirical evidence has been found for this claim, which is a serious gap in literature that needs to be addressed. Therefore, this study finds this topic worthwhile pursuing, focusing on the time periods 2000-2013, when conflict was highest in the Niger delta region of Nigeria according to (Premium Times, 2015). With these, the questions for this research become, (1) what is the impact of development on conflict in the Niger Delta? and (2), is the level of development in the Niger Delta the cause of the persistent conflict in the area?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory of Conflict and Development evolved from early authors in the academic discipline of Development Economics. However, according to Ginty & Williams (2009) the focus of the early authors was one-sided, viewing conflict only from the perspective of war, arising from political struggles and interests between states. They were Ignorant about the possibility for underdevelopment to also result to violent conflict. Recent authors have shed more light on this line of thought, arguing that, there is without doubt, a linkage between conflict and level of development (Collier, et al., 2014). While it has been established that conflict harms economic growth according to authors such as Thomas (2006, pp 186), Ikelegbe (2005), and Ray & Esteban (2017), it has not been widely researched empirically on how development level can result to violent conflict. This thus, forms the objective of this paper, using the Niger Delta as case study.

Theory of conflict and development has been under investigation since the emergence of Development Economics as an academic discipline during the post-second World War, defined by violent conflict (Ginty & Williams, 2009, pp 7). Ginty & Williams (2009) is a good starting point for the development of this literature as the authors documents rich information about the origin and the development of the study of conflict and development. The author opines that earlier researchers were confined to studying developing states which were prone to conflicts arising from decolonisation, post-independence power struggles and proxy competition among cold Warriors, which the paper criticised heavily. The authors state that, earlier researchers have by and large overlooked the potential for development to contribute to both war and peace, in the aspect of what the paper enumerates as de-

development, underdevelopment and uneven development. A historical evidence of this relationship is seen today in societies such as the Niger Delta. Ginty & Williams (2009) further sustains that earlier studies on the subject of conflict and development used war and interplay between military and political leaders in different states as basis for their study, not considering the fact that economic conditions within states are also potentials for violent conflict thus, regarding those studies as being myopic and limited in knowledge. Many news reports and papers have it that the underdevelopment in Niger Delta region of Nigeria is reason behind the persistent outbreak of the armed conflict, especially that of 2004 and 2009. This therefore go to support the argument of Ginty & Williams

Nevertheless, recent researchers have now embraced the orthodox that development is an integral part of peace building, which therefore goes back to support the decision in 1992 by the UN secretary general Boutros-Ghali to add development to the 1992 agenda for peace. Other studies such as Collier & Rohner (2008) further supports the claim in Ginty & Williams (2009) by establishing a link between the outbreak of violent conflict and underdevelopment thus, many academics, policymakers and political leaders has come to see development as key to conflict prevention (Ginty & Williams, 2009). By these, it can be understood that where ever underdevelopment, de-development or uneven development persists within a state, there is bound to be potential for conflict.

According to RULAC (2016), there are different kinds of conflict such as war, civil war and armed conflict, with different criteria set for each type. It is necessary to point out that investigation carried out by USIP (2009) identifies the Niger Delta case to fall under the category of armed conflict. The question might arise, 'why do development economists care about conflict?' This is very simple; Conflict modifies production decisions, allocation of resources, trading patterns, political systems, capital/labour ratios, trust and lastly innovation in a given region or locality which harm both human and capital development (Ginty & Williams, 2009). According to data presented on Opendataforafrica (2016), One may link the cause of the conflict in the Niger Delta to high unemployment rate, poor educational standards and poverty. The data shows that there was a massive increase in the percentage of population who lived below \$1 per day between 2004 and 2010. Still in that same period, education in Niger Delta states deteriorated greatly and unemployment rose.

Arguments for Causality Running from Conflict to Development has been widely supported in the papers. Kim & Conceicao (2010) which is in support of

this finding state that development cannot thrive in the face of violent conflict. The paper found evidence of causal effect of conflict on development for Rwanda, following the civil war and genocide in the 1990-2000 which occurred in the country. Rodrik (1999) also report similar findings, arguing that conflict has adverse effect on economic growth. A research carried out by Collier, Elliott, Hegre, Hoeffler, Reynal-Querol, & Sambanis (2014) for developing countries, highlights violent conflicts to be the primary cause of underdevelopment in the developing countries.

Finally, Okafor (2017) using panel estimation techniques also provide evidence for causality running from conflict to underdevelopment for ECOWAS countries. Nevertheless, interest of his present research is on the reverse side to this. That is, while it may be an obvious case that conflict impacts negatively on development, interest of the researcher is on whether conflict will decrease with increase in development. Papers found which carry traces of this reverse side of the story are Kim & Conceicao (2010), UNDP (2010), and, Dickson, MacKenzie, & Sekeris (2018). While there are many factors that could cause conflict, these studies find that poor economic performance is associated with higher incidence of conflict. For instance, report by UNDP (2010) shows that being poor is correlated with most forms of conflict. In consistent with this, Dickson, MacKenzie, & Sekeris (2018) also find that scarcity of resources may trigger conflict in communities. Our paper tries to add to this reverse side of the argument which has received little attention.

IDENTIFIED GAPS IN LITERATURE

From the literature search, one can notice that only one empirical paper was found for Nigeria on this topic, which is Okafor (2017) conducted at national level (with high level of data aggregation), which may not have captured the unique case of the Niger Delta. This presents a serious gap in literature which needs to be addressed. With these existing arguments as guide, this present paper tries to add to knowledge and bridge this gap by adopting a panel data approach for the Niger Delta using micro-level data to investigate the possibility for development level to correlate with rising conflicts

DATA/ESTIMATION TECHNIQUE

$$Development_{it} = \beta_0 + \sum_{it=1} \beta_{1i} HIV_{Population}^{-} it + \varepsilon t \dots \dots \dots 2$$

$$\widehat{Development}_{it} = \beta_0 + \sum_{it=1} \widehat{\beta_{1i} HIV_{Population}^{-} it} + U t \dots \dots \dots 3$$

This paper uses balanced panel dataset from 2005-2013 for nine states in Nigeria which make up the oil rich Niger Delta region. The data for conflict is obtained from ACLEDDATA (2016) and data for development indicators are obtained from Open data for Africa (2016). To satisfactorily achieve the objectives of this essay, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and Two Stage Least Square (2SLS) econometric regression analysis are employed, using log of conflict (Number of reported fatalities) as dependent variable and unemployment rate (Proxy for level of development) as independent variable. The use of unemployment rate to proxy for development level was as a result of the inability to obtain comprehensive data for poverty and education for all the nine Niger Delta states. The author applies OLS and 2 Stage Least Squares (2SLS) Estimation Techniques to the balanced panel data obtained. The estimate equation is given as,

$$Conflict_{it} = \beta_0 + \sum_{it=1} \beta_{1i} Development_{it} + \varepsilon t \dots \dots \dots 1$$

Where,

B1 = Estimates

it = state i at time t,

ε_i = the error term.

Recall that the objective of this research is to assess whether poor development level can cause conflict. However, from equation (1), there can be observed a problem of endogeneity in the regression. That is, the possibility for conflict to also cause development, which will defeat the objective of this study if estimated as it is. Nevertheless, the researcher addresses this problem by adding instrumental variable for development and running a Two Stage Least Squares estimation as explained in (Gujarati & Porter (2010, pp.362). To do this, the researcher uses a variable which can cause a change in unemployment rate but which does not affect conflict. This led to the use of log of population living with Human Immune Virus (HIV) as the instrument. That is, if more people are sick, then there will not be many people accepted in employment, but this does not necessarily affect conflict. This regression as the name implies involves two stages of estimation.

Stage One: Prediction of development proxy variable using the instrumental variable (Percentage of People Living with HIV).

$$\overline{Development}_{it} = \beta_0 + \sum_{it=1} \beta_{1i} \overline{HIV_{Population}}_{it} \dots \dots \dots .4$$

Stage Two: The predicted variable 'Development' is then reintroduced at the right-hand side of the equation for estimation, given as equation 5 below.

$$Conflcit_{it} = \beta_0 + \sum_{it=1} \beta_{1i} \overline{Development}_{it} + Vt \dots \dots \dots .5$$

By using equation (5), the ability of conflict to cause development is successfully eliminated, while the reverse may hold true. Thus, the researcher has moved from equation 1 to equation 5 to reflect the objective of

the research which is, to assess the impact of development on conflict and not the reverse.

RESULTS/ANALYSIS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Unemployment_Rate	LNConflict	LNHIV_Population
Mean	20.85714	1.961302	11.31163
Median	18.40000	1.945910	11.26213
Maximum	67.40000	7.185387	12.34029
Minimum	4.500000	0.000000	10.05810
Std. Dev.	12.32121	1.612836	0.436127
Skewness	1.741979	0.977940	0.125885
Kurtosis	7.300995	4.573852	3.642515
Jarque-Bera	80.42089	8.140699	1.071482
Probability	0.000000	0.017071	0.585235
Sum	1314.000	60.80036	610.8282
Sum Sq. Dev.	9412.354	78.03722	10.08095
Observations	63	31	54

According to the mean scores from table 1 above, it can be observed that unemployment rate is 20%. This indicates a very high unemployment rate in the Niger Delta which in this study represents poor development. Conflict has remained at approximately 2% and population living with HIV is around 11%.

The value of skewness shows that all the variables are positively skewed, especially for unemployment rate. This indicates that there are only a few states in Niger Delta with low unemployment rate. This perhaps also explains the slight positive skewness in conflict, where the possibility of those states possessing higher unemployment rates also having higher conflict levels exists. This variation in skewness (different from zero) coupled with the value of kurtosis generally exceeding 3 implies that variables do not follow normal distribution. Nevertheless, the central limit theorem still permits the undertaking of econometric estimation and tests even though variables are not normally

distributed, stating that normality can be a question of type of sample one obtains (Gujarati & Porter, 2010).

Panel Data Estimation Issues

There are two models available for estimating a panel data. They are the fixed effects model (FEM) and the random effects model (REM). The appropriateness of a model depends on a formal test known as the Hausman Test. This test determines whether error terms are correlated or not with explanatory variables as outlined in Gujarati & Porter (2009). If correlated then fixed effects model is appropriate but if not correlated then random effects is appropriate.

Hausman's Test

H0: the error terms are uncorrelated with explanatory variables

Ha: error terms are correlated with explanatory variables

Decision Rule: If p-value following the chi-square statistic is greater than 0.05, accept H0 and reject Ha

Table 2a: Result of Hausman Test for OLS
Correlated Random Effects - Hausman Test
Equation: Untitled
Test cross-section random effects

Test Summary	Chi-Sq. Statistic	Chi-Sq. d.f.	Prob.
Cross-section random	0.370651	1	0.5426

Table 2b: Result of Hausman Test for 2SLS
Correlated Random Effects - Hausman Test
Equation: EQ01
Test cross-section random effects

Test Summary	Chi-Sq. Statistic	Chi-Sq. d.f.	Prob.
Cross-section random	0.019144	1	0.8900

Table 2a and 2b above produce p-values which are greater than 0.05 thus we accept H0 for both models which states that the REM method is more appropriate.

Thus, only estimates gotten from the random effects model is reported below on table 3a and 3b

Table 3a: REM Estimates from OLS

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.	R ² =0.128
C	1.065050	0.534012	1.994431	0.0556	
<i>Development_it</i>	0.039965	0.020106	1.987730	0.0564	

Table 3b: REM Estimates from 2SLS

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.	R ² =0.0877
C	1.262200	3.377978	0.373655	0.7114	
<i>Development_it</i>	0.028308	0.157841	0.179343	0.8589	

As seen on table 3a and 3b above, estimations were carried out using the two different approaches, OLS and 2SLS. In all the two approaches, Estimates did show a positive relationship between underdevelopment and conflict for the Niger Delta, which accords with expectations. The coefficient of unemployment rate for the OLS REM is 0.04, meaning that, an increase in unemployment rate by 1% will lead to an increase in conflict by approximately 0.04% for the Niger Delta. This result is statistically significant at 10% which establishes that the outbreak of the violent conflict in the Niger Delta between 2005 and 2010 may have been caused by the level of development in the region. Note the use of the word 'may', which means that causality had not been established. When causality was established using the 2SLS method, the impact reduced from 0.04 to 0.03 approximately and became insignificant. R² also fell from 12% to about 9%. The statistically insignificant result produced when trying to establish causality implies that the level of development may not have been the sole cause of the

conflict in the region. There is a possibility that there are other factors at play which also causes conflict. Note that the R² value of 9 implies that the specification only explains 9% of all the factors responsible for conflict in the Niger Delta

DISCUSSION

The positive relationship observed on this paper between underdevelopment and conflict for the Niger Delta align with the argument of existing studies such as shown Osuoka, (2003), Kim & Conceicao (2010), Dickson, MacKenzie, & Sekeris (2018), and UNDP (2010), which also argue that development level (underdevelopment) has a potential to kick-start a violent conflict within a state. By this, this paper has been able to verify the theory that, not only does conflict result to underdevelopment as many researches such as Collier & Rohner (2008), Ginty & Williams, (2009), Kim & Conceicao (2010), Rodrik (1999), Collier, Elliott, Hegre, Hoeffler, Reynal-Querol, & Sambanis (2014) and Okafor (2017) show,

underdevelopment is also a major contributor to violent conflict. Nonetheless, a deeper look into this topic may in fact show that papers investigating impact of conflict on development and those investigating impact of development on conflict may well be investigating two related but different topics. For example, while it is a proven fact that conflict modifies production decisions, allocation of resources, trading patterns, political systems, capital/labour ratios, trust and lastly innovation in a given region or locality which harm both human and capital development (Ginty & Williams, 2009), underdevelopment on its own may cause grievances, greed, low opportunity cost of fighting, resulting from high unemployment rate, often worsened by neglects from governments also results to conflict. Thus, one may say that these two sides of the arguments are not actually opposing each other but complementing each other. That is to say, the relationship between conflict and development may well be a bidirectional one (feed-back theory). Thus the results presented by the two sides of the papers in the literature are partially correct. That is, causality runs from development to conflict and at the same time, runs from conflict back to development. The relationship is best explained on the chart in figure 3 below.

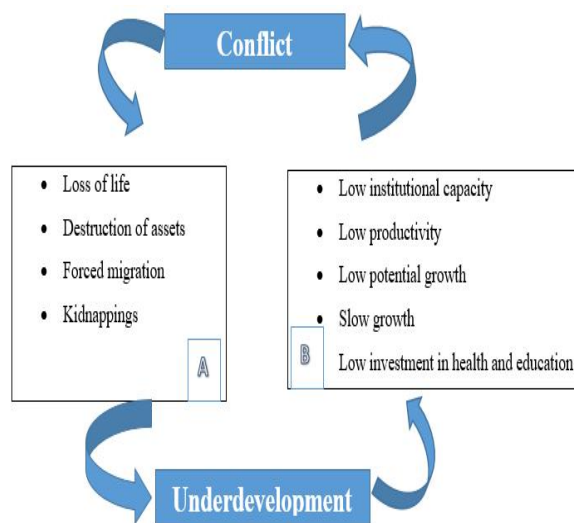


Figure 3: The Feed-Back Relationship Between Conflict and Development

The chart in figure 3 above shows the summary of this paper. From the chart, factors in box A such as loss of life, destruction of assets, forced migration and kidnappings would lead to underdevelopment. In the same vain, the existence of factors such as, low institutional capacity, low investments in education and health on box B can also result to grievances and agitations from the community which can also lead to armed conflict thus, a feed-back relationship exists.

CONCLUSION/IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS

The objectives of this research have been to assess the impact of development on conflict and to further investigate causality. It was found that underdevelopment has a positive impact of about 0.04% on conflict. Investigation of causality did however, show a weak (insignificant) result which indicates that development may not be the sole cause of conflict in the Niger Delta. The results imply that, while governments may choose to use armed forces as first choice to try to combat armed conflicts, a more sustainable strategy in the long run may be the use of development plans to improve the quality of life. Thus, it is recommended that governments should consider creating enabling environment for job creation, providing basic amenities, good road networks, reliable power, education and health care as more sustainable strategies for preventing and eliminating conflict and thus, fostering peace in communities.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

There two main limitations present in this paper. Firstly, the use of unemployment rate to proxy for development may not have captured the level development in the Niger Delta. Secondly, there may exist omitted variable bias as just one explanatory variable was used. These imply that caution should be observed by institutions or government policy makers wishing to use the results from this research to make policies as the results may not be true reflection of the situation. It is therefore recommended for future researchers to use other development indicators and include more explanatory variables for analysis when such data is made available.

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