

Horror in Paradise

*Frameworks for Understanding the Crises
of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria*

Edited by

Christopher LaMonica

and

J. Shola Omotola



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Acronyms

AAPW	Academic Associates Peace Work
ACE	Alliance of Credible Elections
ACN	Action Congress Nigeria
AFRICOM	Africa Command (US)
ANPP	All National Peoples Party
AP	Amnesty Programme
APGA	All Progressive Grand Alliance
AU	Africa Union
CASS	Centre for Advanced Social Science
CNA	Clean Nigeria Association
CPED	Center for Population and Environmental Development
CRISE	Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security, and Ethnicity
CSCSR	Centre for Social and Corporate Responsibility
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWG	Community Women Group
CWO	Community Women Organizations
DDC	Direct Data Capture
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (Process)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DPR	Department of Petroleum Resources
ECCR	Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crime Commission
EiE	Enough is Enough
EMIROAF	Ethnic Minority Rights Organization of Africa
ERC	Electoral Reform Committee
FAAC	Federal Accounts Allocation Committee
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FNDIC	Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities
FOWA	Federation of Ogoni Women's Associations
GDA	Gender and Development Action
GECHS	Global Environmental Change and Human Security (Science)
GRA	Government Residential Area
HCT	Human Capital Theory
HDI	Human Development Index
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICHR	Ijaw Council on Human Rights
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices Commission
IEA	International Energy Agency
IYC	Ijaw Youth Council
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
JTF	Joint Task Force
LFN	Laws of the Federation of Nigeria
LGA	Local Government Authority
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta

MND	Ministry of the Niger Delta
MOBS	Modified Open Ballot System
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
NCS	National Council of State
NDBA	Niger Delta Basin Authority (see also NDBDA)
NDBDA	Niger Delta Basin Development Authority
NDCSC	Niger Delta Civil Society Coalition
NDDB	Niger Delta Development Board
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Corporation
NDDP	Niger Delta Development Plan
NDES	Niger Delta Environmental Survey
NDPVF	Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force
NDR	Niger Delta Region
NDTC	Niger Delta Technical Committee
NDV	Niger Delta Vigilante
NDVF	Niger Delta Volunteer Force (see also NDPVF)
NDWFP	Niger Delta Women Forum for Peace
NDWJ	Niger Delta Women for Justice
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNPC	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
NPRC	National Political Reform Conference
NYCOP	National Youth Council of Ogoni People
OAU	Organization for African Unity
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OMPADEC	Oil Mineral Producing Area and Development Commission
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PCA	Presidential Committee on Amnesty (and Rehabilitation)
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PNI	Pro Natura (Nigeria)
PPMC	Pipeline and Product Marketing Company
PTDF	Petroleum Technology Development Fund
PTF	Presidential Task Force
RBDA	River Basin Development Authority
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SDAP	Sustainable Development Action Plan
SDN	Stakeholder Democratic Network
SIQ	Sequential Interactive Forum
SNC	Sovereign National Conference
SPDC	Shell Petroleum Development Company
SSG	Secretary of State Government
TMII	Trans-border Missionaries Interface Initiative
TROMPCON	Traditional Rulers of Oil Mineral Producing Communities of Nigeria
TTI	Think Tank Initiative
UAC	United Africa Company
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO	United Nations Environment Science and Culture Organization
VNDW	Voice of Niger Delta Women
WAC	Women's Aid Collective
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Series Editor's Foreword

The *Carolina Academic Press African World Series*, inaugurated in 2010, offers significant new works in the field of African and Black World studies. The series provides scholarly and educational texts that can serve both as reference works and as readers in college classes.

Studies in the series are anchored in the existing humanistic and the social scientific traditions. Their goal, however, is the identification and elaboration of the strategic place of Africa and its Diaspora in a shifting global world. More specifically, the studies will address gaps and larger needs in the developing scholarship on Africa and the Black World.

The series intends to fill gaps in areas such as African politics, history, law, religion, culture, sociology, literature, philosophy, visual arts, art history, geography, language, health, and social welfare. Given the complex nature of Africa and its Diaspora, and the constantly shifting perspectives prompted by globalization, the series also meets a vital need for scholarship connecting knowledge with events and practices. Reflecting the fact that life in Africa continues to change, especially in the political arena, the series explores issues emanating from racial and ethnic identities, particularly those connected with the ongoing mobilization of ethnic minorities for inclusion and representation.

Toyin Falola
University of Texas at Austin

Foreword

Horror in Paradise is grounded in the ideas and perspectives of Nigerian academics. This gives it an unusually sharp focus in its aims and also in the details of life that it depicts. The stated intent of the book is that “by helping others to understand the crisis, the prospects for more balanced, more humane and life-sensitive policies toward the region will be improved.” As the chapters unfold, the reader is given a strikingly clear picture of life in the region, as it was—a paradise—before oil exploitation and to the present day, anchored in the specificities of flow stations and the social geography of Port Harcourt. In evoking the former paradise it allows the possibility of returning to such a state.

From the outset, the book accepts that the impact of oil exploitation has had the most intense effect on the region and that the scale of ethnic conflict and corruption are but symptoms of the wider global pursuit of the region’s oil resources and the dynamics of the market. By locating itself inside the crisis, by its own admission, it avoids “otherising”¹ the people of the Niger Delta and some of the other traps of academic study in this area. LaMonica quotes Nigerian scholar Claude Ake who argues that “what passes as scientific knowledge in the social sciences is in fact a form of imperialism.”

The other advantage of being inside is that the contributors can name the elephant in the room. The fact that whilst external actors (e.g. oil majors and development practitioners) tend to see only internal shortcomings within Nigeria, all observers must acknowledge the obvious collusion between Nigeria’s corrupt elites and actors outside of Nigeria. The fact that Western companies and Governments shout about problems such as conflict and corruption in Nigeria whilst fuelling these same problems to pursue their own interests is one that Platform has been exploring through its projects focused on campaigning, the arts and education. For example, recent work on oil companies, tax avoidance and subsidies² concludes that while poverty rises in the countries where oil is extracted such as Nigeria, oil companies are holding back billions of pounds in potential tax revenue by separating and reconstituting their companies around the globe, locating particularly high-value operations in tax havens. It also notes that, in Nigeria, oil company lobbying has stalled progress of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) for years. This law has the potential to regulate the sector and increase revenue going to frontline communities. The international oil companies have been particularly vocal on losing tax exemptions as a result of this law.³

The breadth of subjects is arresting. Dr. S.O. Aghalino reflects on the *cultural* crisis facing the Niger Delta:

The many different ways that the cultural crisis is reflected, to include the violation of land rights, the degradation of cultural artifacts such as shrines, groves and even burial sites. The region’s cultural crisis also affects women and their access

1. In the Preface to *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994: xxvii), Edward Said states that the pattern of thinking of the Other is the ‘root of all problems’ and the path to dehumanization and, in turn, conflict.

2. <http://platformlondon.org/p-publications/making-a-killing-oil-companies-tax-avoidance-subsidies/>.

3. <http://sweetcrudereports.com/2012/11/19/nigerias-pib-not-competitive-shell/>.

to land, water and pharmaceutical products derived from the land. The region's cultures are also adversely impacted by ongoing waves of migration as people seek paid work, a resurgence of crime, a notable rise of youth militancy and their disdain for traditionally constituted authority. The poor condition of local cultures is also epitomized, most tragically, by high waves of prostitution in the region and resulting HIV/AIDS infections.

The naming of the crisis as one of culture, rather than one of oil supply, throws a new light on the extent to which the problem is most often framed by those that profit from the oil extraction.

J. Shola Omotola's essay on women particularly stands out. The crisis affects women disproportionately and women have often been at the forefront of protest and social change.

Subsequent chapters meticulously detail the history of oil revenue sharing, demonstrating how oil companies, elites, dictators and majority ethnic groups have dominated resource allocation. The words of a chief from Oloibiri—where oil was first found over half a century ago—are particularly resonant: "If we had never seen oil, we would have been better off."

The sections of the book focusing on the militarisation of the region strike a particular chord for Platform. An important focus of our work has been documenting human rights abuses and the role of Western corporations and Governments in such abuses in the name of so-called energy security or securing access to fossil fuels and profits at any cost.⁴ The final sections on militancy and the amnesty are clear in their articulation that the violence is "a direct response to the impunity, human rights violations, and perceived neglect of the region by the Nigerian state, on the one hand, and through sustained environmental hazards imposed on local Niger Delta communities as a result of the oil production activities of multinational oil companies, on the other." Dr. Atare Otite and Nathaniel Umukoro argue powerfully that the relative peace brought by the amnesty should be used to tackle the root causes of the violence, if there is to be lasting peace.

The book finishes by intimating that the voices and recommendations from civil society must be heeded if the Niger Delta is to flourish into the paradise it should be. This incisive contribution to the debate will hopefully ensure that these voices cannot be ignored and ignite the global environmental justice movement.

Sarah Shoraka
Platform London
April 2013

4. Counting the Cost, (2011): <http://platformlondon.org/2011/10/03/counting-the-cost-corporations-and-human-rights-abuses-in-the-niger-delta/>.

Preface

The Problem

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is in an acute crisis. The primary objective of this book is to help inform the world of this basic fact. The book has been structured in a way that we hope will facilitate research, policy dialogue, and classroom discussion alike. Our overarching hope is that by helping others to understand the crisis, the prospects for more balanced, more humane and life-sensitive policies toward the region will be improved.

The exact reasons for the region's plight range from prebendalism (predatory rule), and other forms of failing or poor governance, to the shortcomings of Nigeria-wide ethnic rivalries, to weak institutional capacity and to, let it be said, the thoughtless practices of a wealth-driven international oil industry.¹ For decades, dedicated writers, scholars, and local and international activists have documented the true horrors of what has become of today's Niger Delta. Yet the region's problems continue to worsen, seemingly unabated. In a rapidly globalizing world, where most leaders are seemingly mesmerized by the "miracle" of the market, the overarching organizing principle of self-interest of individuals, states, and corporations has now firmly taken hold in virtually every corner of this Earth. With each passing day, more of us see with greater and greater clarity that there are victims of this global transformation, and that deprivation and destitution are not simply a matter of personal responsibility, as many in power continue to maintain. Faced with inevitable change, that more often than not includes a loss of local culture, community, pre-existing "civil society," and all that has formed the basis of meaning and identity in life, the actions of most Nigerians are laudable, even heroic. The notion that the Nigerian people, often forced to migrate to urbanized misery in an effort to simply survive, are somehow irresponsible, is ill informed, at best.

As local residents attest in these pages, environmental devastation and maldistribution of oil wealth have remained the key aggravating factors of numerous environmental movements and inter-ethnic conflicts in the region, including recent guerilla activity by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and others. For some, the 2008 Niger Delta Amnesty Programme has been a recent source of hope but its implementation has been already proven to be a source of much controversy, as we will see in several contributions to this book.²

Moreover, Nigeria's crises cannot be "explained" by ethnic conflict or corruption alone, as so many are apt to do.³ To be clear: the crises that are the subject of this book *followed*

1. See emphases on these issues in, e.g., Egshosa E. Osaghae, *Nigeria Since Independence: Crippled Giant*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998): 311 et seq.; Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999): 195-212; and Duncan Clarke, *Crude Continent: The Struggle for Africa's Oil Prize*, (London: Profile Books, 2008): 83-114.

2. See also: <http://www.nigerDeltaamnesty.org/>.

3. Re *ethnicity* see: Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) and Daniel Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); re *corruption*, see: Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder*

the advent of the 1956 discovery of oil in Oloibiri and it is essential for observers to keep the historical order of events at the forefront of their thinking. It is, without doubt, the impact of oil exploitation that has had the most impact on the region; the scale of ethnic conflict and corruption are but symptoms of this wider global pursuit for the region's oil resources. And, as occurs in other areas on this Earth where natural resources are being heavily exploited—often “justified” under the title of economic freedom⁴—policy decision-makers have generally prioritized the extraction of those resources over all else, ignoring adverse implications for local communities.

Dialogues amongst the contributors to this book have confirmed that textbooks on Africa rarely address the issues of the Niger Delta, despite its enormous significance to the welfare of the whole of the Gulf of Guinea and even, one could say, the global quest for energy resources. When I first started making contact with scholars in the region, I was quite surprised to see the level of desperation in their writing. Well-informed in ways only locals can be—motivated, often “raw” or not polished in terms of scholarship, and therefore marginalized—it was soon clear to me that their voices needed to be heard. It seems that is hard for many establishment scholars to look beyond perfect expression in the language of the colonizer. Consistently this form of intellectual snobbism has served as a barrier to inclusion in the global dialogue of debates. Instead of focusing on the substance of an argument all too many superficially react to English grammar, typos and the like, systematically rejecting basic facts and arguments that come from within Africa, and elsewhere. This could well be an important reason for the consistently brief surveys, or complete rejection of, Niger Delta issues in most African studies texts. Certainly, the fact that the region has been going through what Eghosa Osaghae calls *accelerated decline* is not reaching the ears of the world in time.⁵ And from what I have seen of the works of Nigerian artists and scholars, it is not for lack of trying.

Some Africanists, like Robert H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O’Barr, presumably await the ‘merit’ of African arguments to filter through the system of academic debates but one wonders if this is reasonable as, frankly, that method systematically ignores basic material facts on the ground.⁶ Yes, today’s Africa-based scholars do increasingly have access to the internet but there is a long history of their working in highly constrained, often political, circumstances with consistently limited resources. Throughout Africa, university libraries are generally lacking and lagging in terms of acquisitions. And, if history is any guide, the powerful care more about their own immediate needs than the problems of netherworlds. For a variety of reasons, then, the prevailing perspectives on African problems remain those of the powerful—and the powerful systematically ignore basic material facts on the ground, in places like the Niger Delta, simply because they

as *Political Instrument*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); and Giorgio Blundo and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, eds., *Everyday Corruption and the State: Citizens and Public Officials in Africa*, (London: Zed Books, 2006).

4. As argued by Amy Chua in her best-selling book, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*, (New York: Doubleday, 2002).

5. A term used, for example, by Osaghae (1999): 312.

6. Robert H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O’Barr, eds., *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and the Humanities*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993). In a published interview Bates describes his own enjoyment of academic debates while at the University of Manchester: “*If an idea worked, people talked about it; if it didn’t, then out it went. It was wonderful.*” Yet, ironically, he acknowledges that, even among US universities, those debates are difficult to get going. See: Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder, *Passion, Craft, and Method in Comparative Politics*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007): 516 (emphasis mine). In short, while I admire Bates’ ideal and his ongoing efforts to help make that happen, we do have to be frank and realistic about the current state of affairs.

can; they have the luxury of doing so. It is a lesson of political realism within the core of the social sciences, as most clearly told by Thucydides: *the powerful will do what they have the power to do; the weak suffer what they must.*⁷

Denying the Foucauldian dilemma with which Africa-based scholars must operate, the aforementioned contend, for example:

Arguments are not privileged by origins, geographic or cultural; arguments become knowledge when they have been refined by logic and method . . .⁸

Of course, Foucault would argue the exact opposite. In his view, the many factors that lead to the production of social science “knowledge” are not natural or neutral; *ergo* arguments *are* privileged by origins, both geographic and cultural! Consider the very basic fact that the majority of indigenes in the Niger Delta do not have a voice in African social science studies, let alone within their own country. Can we say that their marginalization is only due to their not having meritorious ideas? Even if we are to conclude that only educated outsiders are the ones with the ‘best’ ideas, doesn’t engagement with the people adversely impacted by previous “best” ideas matter? To date, as the now forgotten World Bank Participation Action Plan of 1996 demonstrates, those engagements have been viewed as an unnecessary burden or cost to moving forward.

Even when one or a few indigenes break through to the position of university scholar, so that they have the pedigree to be a participant in the world of ideas, it is not the home culture or language that that new scholar is expected to engage in—factors which, generally, are not a matter of choice! This might be a matter of having the aforementioned Africanists better appreciate the systematic challenges that most aspiring scholars of the world now face. But it should not take too much reflection to realize that the language and culture of scholarly dialogue are those of the powerful. In the case of the Niger Delta, indigenes are expected to engage in the ‘dominant’ language and culture of those who are benefiting from the consumption of oil—a language and culture that has, heretofore, scarcely considered the adverse impacts on the indigene’s overall welfare.

Observing these circumstances, Michel Foucault would likely argue that what passes as social science knowledge regarding Africa may actually be a reflection of the desire, on the part of leading social scientists, to impose a particular view of social normality.⁹ For Foucault, it must be recalled, what passes as truth or knowledge is merely an expression of socio-cultural configurations of power; merit is not the only guiding principle. And, if one bothers to listen, one consistently hears this Foucauldian concern in the voices of African scholars. For example, in his seminal book, *Social Science As Imperialism*, Nigerian scholar Claude Ake states unequivocally that what passes as scientific knowledge in the social sciences is in fact a form of imperialism. Upon reflection it should come as no wonder why an African scholar, even as well-known and successful as Ake, would feel this way. But it does require a certain amount of contemplation for the majority of otherwise successful social scientists who feel great pride in what they have accomplished in their social science careers: social status, respect, etc. Whether the reader agrees with Ake’s critique of prevailing (now termed Washington Consensus or neoliberal) theories

7. From Thucydides, *A History of the Peloponnesian War*, ca. 431-404 B.C. Yes, international dialogue of scholars is an important form of ‘international relations’—one that should enjoy the benefit of being more democratic and engaging than other forms of interest-linked dialogue.

8. Bates, et al., (1993): xii.

9. Much of Foucault’s work, for example, focuses on what society considers—at one point in time—to be abnormal and, therefore, not human or worthy of much serious consideration by the social sciences: the marginalization of psychopaths, criminals, homosexuals, and others.

of development or not, it is hard not to be moved by his sense of powerlessness in a very one-sided, allegedly global, dialogue of social science ideas.

It could be said that the error that all too many social scientists from the industrially developed states seem to be making, as they look outward (to places like Nigeria), is similar to the idealistic error of Georg Hegel. Yes, in an ideal world, a globally significant Hegelian Dialectic would take place and the ‘best’ ideas would eventually filter through, ultimately having a positive impact on the direction of policy in the world. However, even where that might occur in, say, well-functioning pluralistic societies, formal states, or social science networks (e.g. ISA or APSA) the same cannot be said of most Africa-based scholarship. Yes, again, the digital divide is less than what it used to be even ten years ago and that is facilitating the dialogue—this book is testament to that fact. But it still takes will. In 1993, when *Africa and the Disciplines* was published, the Internet was still in its infancy in most of Africa; what wonders, then, what kind of dialogue the editors had in mind. The Ancient Greek ideal of open and free debate so that we can get to better ideas—and perhaps a better place—is a wonderful ideal but the truth of the matter is that industrial state social scientists are in a privileged place, whether they acknowledge that fact or not. The Hegelian and other idea-based dialogues on this Earth will not simply occur on their own; it takes a willingness to listen, to reach out, and to engage, in all directions (as writers like Edward Said have noted).¹⁰ I, for one, will not simply sit back and wait to be contacted as I contemplate ideas from my own academic abode. And I cannot fault others for not reading what I have written in some obscure journal, or chapter, or presented at any given social science gathering; there are very clear reasons why that is not a reasonable assumption for any scholar to make. Moreover, scholars are not entirely independent from powerful interests in the world. In a free world one can scarcely appreciate, for example, the hardships of scholars residing in illiberal circumstances. Without doubt, then, it is far too soon to declare that we have an even playing field. When it comes to the social sciences, at least, the world is not “flat” just yet. In fact, I submit that from our privileged positions our role should be, in part, to help facilitate a truly global social science dialogue. That is at least what we should aspire to do. The alternative—which, it must be said, most scholars have knowingly or otherwise chosen—is to wait to see if more inclusive dialogues will take place, if ever.

When one considers the myopic (via specialization) and non-inclusive methods of most social scientists, it is hard not to conclude that many working within the humanities as Africanists have seemingly forgotten the subject. How much human suffering is required in places like the Niger Delta for established Africanists to take an interest? Or are we to believe that human suffering is not a priority within the social science disciplines’ range of inquiries? It must be said that many influential scholars hope for liberal (democratic) theory to take hold—in their view it will take time. But as British philosopher Isaiah Berlin noted, that was the same conclusion of the fascists and communists of the twentieth-century who, in essence, declared: damn the human cost, we’ve got a theory to pursue! And theories quickly become destructive ideologies when the ‘human factor’ is systematically neglected. For certain, the worth and celebration of human life was at the forefront of German writer Johann von Goethe’s notion of *weltliteratur* and most Enlightenment

10. In the aftermath of his seminal publication, *Orientalism* (1979), Said was often taken to task for “blaming” the West for not understanding the Orient; “reverse orientalism,” critics argued, was also prevalent. In the 25th anniversary edition of *Orientalism*, Said stated again: “That is one side of the global debate. In the Arab and Muslim countries the situation is scarcely better.” Edward Said, Preface to *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994): xxvii. In other words, the pattern of thinking of the *Other* as the ‘root of all problems’ is the recurring challenge, for all of humanity. It is, in Said’s words the path to *dehumanization* and, in turn, conflict.

thinkers as, again, writers like Said remind us. The German philosopher Karl Jaspers has also reminded us that history's prophets, throughout the world, had similar messages for humanity. Indeed, engaging in global dialogues over the experiences of human life, regardless of culture or geographic location, should be an essential part of the subject. Doing so openly and unabashedly should always be an essential part of social science inquiry, despite the ridicule that scientific rationalists have inflicted upon humanist errors of history. To be clear: the errors of history were scientific, not humanist. And the 'wait' for a better world has always been justified by scientific rationalist theories, like the neoliberal one now being pursued all over the world. Moreover, today's social scientists must be aware of the simple fact that human circumstances in vast regions of this Earth are now systematically ignored—presumably the benefits of their scientific plans will eventually reach the currently immiserated masses. Will social scientists ever be able to collectively identify the 'merit' of an argument in a more holistic, less myopic, and less self-congratulatory fashion? For now, pride and ignorance seem to thrive in the halls of academia: chest pounding nationalistic self-interest reigns supreme (in all directions) and today the prospects for the free and open debate of ideas amongst scholars seem bleak indeed. Thus far, for example, the systematic dismissal of geographic and cultural differences has proven to be an insensitive, ill-informed, dehumanizing method of inquiry. Put simply, we—the scholars of the world—can do better.

Canadian critic John Ralston Saul has similarly argued that many social scientists have seemingly walked away from that humanistic Enlightenment era prioritizing the rational dictates of science over all else. Is it true that some of us are, as Saul suggests, Voltaire's Bastards, dismissive or largely unaware of our humanistic heritage?¹¹ For a variety of reasons, identifying oneself as a humanist in the social sciences is still seen as idealistic, naïve, impractical and even the exact opposite of the humanist's proclaimed aim, that is to say, their ideas are more often portrayed as being destructive than helpful to humanity. My point is that, in fact, the significance of humanism—compassion for others—is a message that has reverberated throughout human history, in diverse cultures and religions. Jaspers, Karen Armstrong, Joseph Campbell, Mahatma Gandhi, The Dali Lama, and others have reminded us of its significance to the functioning of human societies in history in the disciplines of mythology, religion, and philosophy, yet mainstream social scientists remain mesmerized by the miracles of science and, presumably, the good that has come to humanity from the industrial age, which they view as but a byproduct of scientific inquiry.

The problem with humanism, say some critics, is that many 'well-intentioned' endeavors have resulted in human disaster. A critic like Ayn Rand (1905-1982), for example, was made famous during the Cold War by her critique of Communism, which, at its base, was informed and justified by the allegedly ethical and humanistic ideas of Marx. But Rand should have listened to philosophers of her own age, like Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997), who argued that Communism failed in ways similar to any ideological pursuit. Communists, like all ideologues, failed because they too forgot the subject, which is human life. Hell bent on making one or another ideology work, the powerful of the time would scoff at the notion that people were suffering along the way. Stalin, for example, infamously argued that he had to "break a few eggs to make an omelet," meaning he might have to kill a few million people to assure the success of Communism. Similarly, today's policymakers and scholars alike cannot wait for some kind of formula, whether it be the free-market (neoliberalism)—the trickling-down of the benefits of economic growth to

11. John Ralston Saul, *Voltaire's Bastards*, (New York: Vintage, 1993) and *The Unconscious Civilization*, (New York: Free Press, 1999).

the masses—or the eventual trickling-up of meritorious ideas justified by some Ancient Greek ideal (via Hegelian dialectic or other scholarly debate of ideas), to take hold while thousands, nay, millions, suffer in clearly identifiable places on this Earth. Again, scholars cannot allow themselves to lose sight of the subject, which is humanity. We cannot simply watch, waiting for *the formula* to work, and treat human cost as an entry in our developmental accounting ledger—for it is in their neglect of humanity that social scientists have all too often acted as ideologues.

That said, one must admit that the productive ability of free-markets—a primary aim of many establishment social scientists and policymakers—is truly remarkable. The problem seems to be that many social scientists, materially contented and presumably mesmerized by the ‘miracle of the market,’ see no problem with waiting. For decades now, proponents of capitalist markets have trumpeted the virtue of industrial growth or modernization and scoffed at those who pointed to social, environmental, and other failings along the way. The truth is that, alas, the dynamics of the market do not resolve all social woes—if only it was that easy—and the ongoing crises of the Niger Delta are testament to this basic fact. Democratically accountable governments are also an important part of the ‘miracle’ and that important fact seems to be marginalized in favor of catering to the whims of capitalist enterprises in African contexts. In all states struggling for political and economic liberalization, the state does matter as some of the earliest responders to neoliberal policies of the 1980s argued.¹² Governing institutions are failing in Nigeria, as everyone knows, but the role of free-market ideology in the creation and support of that governance failure needs to be universally understood and acknowledged.

Beyond the local and global corruption that marginalizes the interests of the people of the Niger Delta region, and of Nigeria as a whole, there is also an unrealized potential for Nigeria’s greater engagement in global trade. The export of oil has completely dominated the priorities of policymakers to the point where other commercial trade is virtually non-existent. Today, ports like Lagos (Tin Can Island Port and Port of Apapa), Port Harcourt (to include Port of Onne complex), and others are dysfunctional. And today the large capacity (super) containerships that are gradually taking the lion’s share of world trade do not even bother to stop in West African ports.¹³ For those who bother to pay attention, the efficacy of coastal governance and port development in this region is of crucial significance to the development of commercial trade and, in turn, economic development throughout the region. The inability to properly store containers in-bond, barriers to effective trans-shipments, and other inefficiencies cost all of the Nigerian and broader African public. In fact, Nigeria’s ports ought to function as a cumulative hub for trade throughout the region; to date, this potential has not been realized. For now, several Nigerian ports (Escravos Oil Terminal and Port of Pennington)—all small ports by international standards—are desperately exporting the region’s oil and, due to the dysfunction of virtually all else necessary for the functionality of coastal trading ports, little else is accomplished in terms of commercial trade. Even the glaringly obvious abundance of oil that should benefit the region’s economic development is burdened by corruption, oil bunkering, and many forms of criminality. And yet, despite all of the aforementioned, Nigeria’s ports still manage to attract an estimated 70% of all trade to the West African

12. E.g., Peter B. Evans, et al., *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

13. There is the potential for the development of the Port of Lekki, just east of Lagos, which could handle larger (8,000 TEU) container ships. But the super-container (Panamax) ships now engaged in global trade have capacities of nearly double that (the Maersk vessel *Edith*, for example, has a capacity of 15,000 TEU).

sub-region.¹⁴ The potential for Nigeria is enormous: port development, while falling behind in terms of international standards, still remains an enormous hope for the country and the entire region. If allowed to happen, Nigeria's policymakers and international partners cannot allow the errors of the past to continue unabated; Nigeria's south must be considered as mutually beneficial players in a transition and not, as so often happens in desperate (African) circumstances, a zero-sum I-win-you-lose scenario.

As so many critics of Nigerian affairs have pointed out, there are assuredly many *internal* issues that need to be addressed. Here, in this unique book, these internal issues are discussed by local scholars who, unlike many outside observers, have their ears closer to the ground; that is, they follow and observe these issues on a daily basis. To treat the crises of the Niger Delta region superficially, as most Africanists do, or to permanently label the whole of Nigeria as some kind of "basket case" of development can only postpone the finding of solutions. As all students of history know, permanence in the form of social stagnation is not a human trait; from the dawn of time, mankind has continuously adapted to new circumstances. Given the make-shift housing and squalor that extends as far as the eye can see throughout the heavily inhabited region of Lagos and extended environs, this might not be immediately apparent. Many of us view the emergence of mega-cities or mega-slums throughout the developing world as nothing short of failure. Yet in viewing these overwhelming scenes we tend to lose sight of the millions of individual and collective efforts to survive the global upheavals of change. That squalor is, in fact, a clear manifestation of human efforts to cope with change. And many of us, upon reflection, have had similar experiences in our own family history. I am therefore of the view that humanity, not oil, remains our best resource. Viewed another way: it is humanity, not oil, that is our best investment.

To date, the direction of the Nigerian economy has been dictated by the global demand for the country's natural resources. As had been the case with British colonial administrators, the Nigerian elite have literally fallen over each other trying to provide for, and benefit from, the global demand for Nigeria's resources. Like many outside of Nigeria, most Nigerian elites point to the *internal* shortcomings of their home country, neglecting to point to the shortcomings of *external* norms and their own collusion with them. Both *internal* and *external* norms are critically assessed in this book. We ultimately leave it up to the reader to determine which emphases are best suited to which historical, political or developmental theory as it relates to individual African circumstances. As such, our hope is that *Horror in Paradise* can be used as a supplement to survey texts that consistently skirt details yet recognize the significance of the Niger Delta and of Nigeria, writ large, to the whole of sub-Saharan Africa and the world.

Despite the dominance of self-righteous and largely self-serving expert theories, the crises of the region are not only the creation of Nigeria's *internal* shortcomings. A primary concern that we have had, in the preparation of this book, is that many working in the field of development spend a disproportionate amount of time identifying Nigeria's *internal* failings, from the lack of civil society to the lack of responsible leadership. Yes, these are undoubted problems within Nigeria. But there must also be some acknowledgement of the *external* influences on the creation of crises in the Niger Delta. Contributors to this book have carefully documented the many ways in which Nigerians, themselves, should

14. Estimates vary. See the discussions on port privatization at: "Seaport Concession: Redevelopment of Nigerian Seaports in the New Millennium," <http://fivestarlogisticsltd.com/concession.html> (Accessed on September 19, 2011) that offer more favorable statistics. As stated, petroleum products account for the lion's share (95-98%) of Nigeria's exports. See: http://www.economywatch.com/economic-statistics/Nigeria/Trade_Statistics/.

take some responsibility for the crisis. But the careful reader will also note that ties with the outside world, notably over the exploitation of oil, are also identified as being of crucial significance to the current state of affairs in Nigeria. Local scholars are clearly not interested in pointing fingers and being done with it; they are sincerely concerned about the welfare of (what is most often) their homelands. Many work diligently within Nigerian universities, year after year, in dramatically under-resourced environments. Already strained—usually in both the private and professional realms—local scholars are also reminded of the sometimes spectacular successes of the world’s Nigerian diaspora. One example is of the world-acclaimed novelist Chinua Achebe, who assuredly wanted the best for his homeland, but after a lifetime of work and worry, found himself still quite skeptical of Nigeria’s circumstances.¹⁵ Those seemingly endless circumstances of despair, often based on the repeated disappointments of Nigerian leadership, lead many to simply leave Nigeria as soon as they have the chance. We have all heard about the phenomenon of *brain drain* but this ongoing sense of despair assuredly impacts the morale of even the most avid Nigerian scholar. Of course there are also potential dangers to writing and teaching in a critical fashion about Nigeria’s crises from within the country, particularly when we know there are proven ties among criminality, corruption, and riches.

Again, whereas external actors (e.g. oil MNCs, development practitioners) tend to see only internal shortcomings, within Nigeria, all observers must acknowledge the very obvious collusion between Nigeria’s corrupt elites and actors outside of Nigeria. Instead of falling into the scholarly pattern of ‘blaming’ either Nigeria’s *internal* failings or the influence of *external* actors only, observers need to ramp-up the discussion in a more informed and meaningful fashion.¹⁶ And to simply label all thinking Africans as neo-marxist or worse is similarly unhelpful. The stakes are simply too high.

To clarify the aforementioned: many African and/or Africanist scholars are often labeled as being ‘dependency’ theorists who do little more than entertain their students with Marxist-Leninist inspired tales of a global capitalist conspiracy. While there are undoubtedly African and Africanist scholars who do just that, there is an overarching pragmatic concern over what can be done to correct the problems of underdevelopment and crisis. In other words, one must not presume that African/Africanist scholarship is only based on global conspiracies against Africa.¹⁷ The pages that follow attest to that fact. As I tell my students in the classroom: making grandiose statements about Africa (informed by one’s ideology) then going home to listen to one’s classical CDs is simply unacceptable in today’s world. We all need to transcend ideological dismissals of others and seek to identify more effective ways to engage.

In fact, there are very clear understandings as to what is now occurring in places like the Niger Delta and throughout Nigeria, yet little changes. Africa is not the grand exotic mystery it has often been portrayed as; the overarching issue, at least for now, is that powerful stakeholders are seemingly stuck in their various oil-driven norms. Everyone who pays any attention to Nigerian politics knows that corruption is rife and that oil

15. See Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble With Nigeria*, (Oxford: African Books Collective, Fourth Dimension Publishing, 2000).

16. See Christopher LaMonica, *African Politics: Frameworks for Analysis*, (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, forthcoming).

17. For example, Peter J. Schraeder’s thoughtful book, *African Politics and Society: A Mosaic in Transformation*, 2nd Ed., (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2004) emphasizes the significance of Marxist-Leninist views in African area studies—what he calls the ‘Critical Tradition’—and the prevalence of similarly inspired politicians in African contexts. Of course, it makes perfect sense that such views would have appeal! But there are also those who emphasize practically-oriented solutions and not only Marxist-Leninist complaints and grandiose ‘theory.’

MNCs have long played alongside this allegedly “Nigerian problem.” And, like generations prior, the new observer is quick to lose hope: it seems that oil MNCs will only continue to do the least they have to in terms of environmental safety and other forms of local sensitivity; that Nigeria’s elites will only continue to operate as they see fit to stay in power; and that the masses will only continue to function as best they know how, for they have few alternatives. But the post-cold war world represents new opportunities, as the ongoing Arab Spring most vividly demonstrates. We cannot know what the future will bring but, along the way, no matter how challenging things are, we can count on individuals striving to better their lot in life. For the masses of the Niger Delta it is our hope that the transition will be constructive, peaceful and democratic; the alternative, part of the horror of which we speak, is the complete opposite: tossing aside all sense of self-respect, family and community in favor of various forms of self-indulgence. Certainly, the majority of Nigerian politicians have not yet inspired the masses by acting as true role models for peaceful co-existence and change; instead they have tended toward pure self-aggrandizement and self-indulgence. As Chinua Achebe has artfully described in his book, *A Man of the People*, it sometimes appears that self-indulgence is the Nigerian model of politicking.¹⁸ Emulating that form of self-indulgent leadership, one now finds far too many Nigerians engaged in various forms of criminality, from joining local gangs, thugs, and militias, to engaging in drug trafficking and prostitution. Through their actions, what politicians and many of their fellow citizens are demonstrating is that they have essentially lost all hope for a better Nigeria; according to this perspective, the problems are just too big and one is best off taking advantage of the chaos. Some, in other words, have lost all sense of individual worth, self-dignity and meaning; therein lies our concern. Yet, simultaneously, we see millions of Nigerians working daily to improve their lives in honorable, often heroic, ways: eking out a bare existence by simply joining the immiserated poor that reside in the endlessly growing hodge-podge of inadequate housing arrangements found in peri-urban areas throughout the Nigerian state.

In his book *Planet of Slums*, Mike Davis provides the global statistical overview:

The global countryside has reached its maximum population and will begin to shrink after 2020. As a result, cities will account for virtually all future world population growth, which expected to peak at about 10 billion in 2050.¹⁹

Although these demographic trends are now regularly cited as a given and promise a future time of hopeful reprieve, the trends of sub-Saharan Africa, along the way, are worrying: during this period, the population of sub-Saharan Africa is expected to triple.²⁰ As such, it is the large sub-Saharan African cities — notably Lagos — and their vast environs that are of particular concern.²¹ Hope and mourning are Nigeria’s awkward companions that recur alongside rural decay and the corresponding vast reaches of Nigeria’s growing peri-urban slums. Today, there can be no denying that these dramatic trends are global in scope and far from being unique *internal* challenges; the patterns that lead to urban immiseration are global in scale. Moreover, there appear to be similarities among the motivations of those who direct and support the activities of oil MNCs and the acts of so many Nigerian locals: all appear to be desperate attempts to identify with the norms

18. See another of Chinua Achebe’s books on this subject, *A Man of the People*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1989).

19. Mike David, *Planet of Slums*, (London: Verso, 2006): 2.

20. Authorities cited in *ibid*.

21. Okwuwe Enwezor, et al, eds., *Under Siege: Four African Cities — Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Lagos*, (Ostfildern-Ruit, 2002) cited in *ibid*: 1.

of an emerging global “get rich quick” culture that prioritizes material gain over all else. And again, these emerging norms, that are challenging the previously established norms, institutions, and identities of so many, are global.

Admittedly, for Nigeria’s elites, the potential for a dramatic drop in social standing is apparent daily; faced with the prospect of losing social status, Nigerian elites have established a pragmatic if illegitimate norm of doing whatever is necessary to maintain the status quo. In fact, that process can be so corrupt, uncertain and stressful that many well-to-do Nigerians leave the country for greener pastures as soon as they are able. This only leaves the norms of corruption and cronyism to younger generations who, frankly, see few other ‘professional life’ options available. Following the norms of the former colonizer, far too many post-independence Nigerians have, perhaps understandably, looked to the Nigerian state and not entrepreneurship as the primary means for obtaining wealth. In a place where independent entrepreneurial efforts are inevitably thwarted, challenged by some already established and often corrupt activity, this should come as no surprise. More often than not, all of the aforementioned seems overwhelming and, in the end, hopeless.

To break the cycle of hopelessness that has been commented on by everyone from Nigeria’s world-renowned Chinua Achebe to Nigeria’s downtrodden citizen, we must stop making overly simplistic critiques about Nigeria’s multifaceted crises; we must engage in meaningful dialogues with all stakeholders—not only Nigerian citizens but all of those who have benefited so handsomely from the sale of Nigeria’s oil resources. For too long, transparency and democracy have been marginalized in favor of the interests of Nigerian and other elites with ties to the oil industry. This book aims to facilitate an understanding of the dynamics at play to a wider audience. As discussed in *Horror in Paradise*, we cannot continue along the well-trodden path of pointing fingers in a largely ideological fashion; the time is well overdue for all of us to clarify the obvious: the Niger Delta, and all of Nigeria, is in the throes of dramatic change with very apparent human implications. As we hear in the pages that follow, many of these changes are due to the social pressures brought on by global demand for oil, but we cannot fall into the trap of thinking in solely scientific terms about Nigeria’s future. When we know that the history of post-1956 Nigeria is a history of growing human costs to transformation, we should all understand and agree that there is a problem with the formula of natural resource exploitation that is being imposed on Nigeria in the name of “legitimate commerce” (where have we heard this before?) or development.

If we listen to local scholarship, we get a very clear picture of what the real problems are and what could be done to ameliorate them. For those who adhere to the view that managers of development have something to offer Nigeria, let me use a business management analogy: Managers of efficient workshops know too well that it is always a good idea to ‘hear’ the ideas of those who are struggling with specific issues on the shop floor; the individual workers are the ones struggling day-to-day with the resources made available and that information can be infinitely valuable. The problem for the development entrepreneur and for Nigeria’s democratic leadership is to determine which of those ideas might be most useful. That is a skill that only the best leaders acquire; but if Nigeria is to develop efficiently and with a modicum of equity, it is a skill that must be recognized as valuable and nurtured, for it is the spirit of any pluralistic democracy. The complaint here is that Africanists have thus far tended to wait and favor, for one reason or another, “grand theory” over specifics.

The hope that I have for all social scientists and practitioners interested in the plight of the Niger Delta is that they stay focused on what really matters, for *the test of a human being is not usefulness to the aims of a capitalist enterprise*, as materially impressive as that

enterprise might, at times, appear. If necessary, let us all remind each other of that simple fact.

This book would not be possible without the collaborative efforts of all involved. I would first like to thank the ever-talented J. Shola Omotola for agreeing to be co-editor of this book while he was in the last stages of his doctoral program at the University of Ibadan. Dr. Omotola is a rising star among Nigerian scholars and I sincerely thank him for his many efforts to make this book a reality. For years now I have been in touch with him and all of the contributors to this book via the academic journal *Africana*. Let us all hope that *Africana* continues to be a viable resource for some of that ‘raw,’ sometimes irritated, sometimes hopeful, but always well-informed Africa-based scholarship. As discussed above, that very scholarship has, for too long, been marginalized in the global dialogue of social sciences ideas.²² Thanks and Godspeed to you all. Thanks to the exceptionally driven and talented Dr. Mourtada Deme who, after working for years on the politics of achieving free-and-fair elections in Nigeria, graciously agreed to share some of his professional insights. And finally, a special thanks to Dr. Toyin Falola, recipient of the 2011 African Studies Association Distinguished Africanist Award, for appreciating and understanding this unique effort and for helping us to get this collective message out.

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22. For a more elaborate discussion on this issue see Christopher LaMonica, “Africa in International Relations Theory: Addressing the Quandry of Africa’s Ongoing Marginalization Within the Discipline,” in Pey Soyinka-Airewele and Rita Kiki Edozie, eds., *Reframing Contemporary Africa*, (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010): 351-374.

Map of Nigeria

NIGERIA	Country names
Abuja ★	National capital
KADUNA	State names
Enugu •	State capitals
---	International borders
---	State borders
—	Niger Delta

