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Vexation and Militancy in the Niger Delta: The Way Forward

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ABSTRACT The Niger Delta is richly endowed with abundant hydrocarbon resources that place Nigeria as the seventh largest producer of oil in the world. Paradoxically, however, despite its immense contribution to the up-keep of the Nigerian state, the region has suffered monumental neglect and deprivation over the years-this has resulted in widespread poverty, excruciating hardship, complete lack of basic socio-economic infrastructure, plundered environment and high rate of unemployment. This vexed situation has in recent times engendered youth restiveness, pipeline vandalisations, hostage taking, violent uprising and intensified militia activities in the region. Against the official position which tends to treat the Nigerian crisis in the Niger Delta as a security issue, the paper argued that the violent insurgency of the region is an inevitable product of the crisis of development and failure of the federal government to treat the peaceful demands of the people of the region with seriousness and sincerity. Hence, the paper is of the view that if there is going to be any hope for a reversal of the cycle of violence in the Niger Delta, there is need for a paradigm shift in the manner the Nigerian state engages the people of the region.