# UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

# POWER: PREDATORS AND PREYS

## An Inaugural Lecture

## By

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## ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

2.45 pm. Guests are seated

3.00pm. Academic Procession begins

The Procession shall enter the CBN Centre of Excellence auditorium, University Park, and the Congregation shall stand as the Procession enters the hall in the following order:

Academic Officer
Professors
Deans of Faculties/School
Dean, School of Graduate Studies
Provost, College of Health Sciences
Lecturer
University Librarian
Registrar
Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Development
Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic
Deputy Vice Chancellor Administration
Vice Chancellor

After the Vice Chancellor has ascended the dais, the Congregation shall remain standing for the University of Port Harcourt Anthem.

The Congregation shall thereafter resume their seats.

THE VICE CHANCELLOR'S OPENING REMARKS.

The Registrar shall rise, cap, invite the Vice Chancellor to make his opening remarks and introduce the Lecturer.
The Lecturer shall remain standing during the Introduction.

## THE INAUGURAL LECTURE

The Lecturer shall step on the rostrum, cap and deliver his Inaugural Lecture. After the lecture, he shall step towards the Vice Chancellor, cap and deliver a copy of the Inaugural Lecture to the Vice Chancellor and resume his seat. The Vice Chancellor shall present the document to the Registrar.

## CLOSING

The Registrar shall rise, cap and invite the Vice Chancellor to make his Closing Remarks.

The Vice Chancellor's Closing Remarks.

The Vice Chancellor shall then rise, cap and make his Closing Remarks. The Congregation shall rise for the University of Port Harcourt Anthem and remain standing as the Academic [Honour] Procession retreats in the following order:

Vice Chancellor
Deputy Vice Chancellor Administration
Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic
Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Development
Registrar
University Librarian
Lecturer
Provost, College of Health Sciences
Dean, School of Graduate Studies
Deans of Faculties/School
Professors
Academic Officer

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- The Vice Chancellor
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- Deputy Vice Chancellors [Admin., Acad. and Research]
- Previous Deputy Vice Chancellors
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- Cherished Friends and Guests
- Unique Students of UNIPORT
- Members of the Press
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

**DEDICATION**

To God

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The faithfulness of God towards me is beyond what I can explain.

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## 1.0. PREAMBLE

Vice Chancellor, Sir, may I begin my lecture by expressing my profound gratitude for the rare privilege of joining the highly esteemed team of inaugural lecturers at our great university today. I am the sixth from the Department of Political and Administrative Studies to receive this honour. I have had the privilege of reading some of the lectures delivered by my predecessors, some of whom were my teachers. I am immensely grateful for their positive roles in my academic journey.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, two concepts in the title of this lecture, "Predators" and "Preys," evoke images of life in the animal kingdom. In that realm, survival often depends on the ability of a potential prey to successfully evade predators. It is a world where predators engage in constant hunting, and success is described differently for each side. For the potential prey, the skill to escape victimhood is part of an overall success. Conversely, for predators, securing a kill is essential for survival. In either of the cases (predators and preys), power is the critical element, mirroring the presence of skill and might. This relationship reflects a struggle for survival and the pursuit of interests when related to the human world, in social, economic, political, policy, and environmental spheres. Predators and preys all have power. The difference between them lies in the way power is used and the ends to which it is deployed. Whereas predators mostly use their power of agency in pursuit of narrow personal interests, preys apply their power mainly for seeking development of community or collective good.

Predators in environmental politics are easy to see in the Niger Delta. They include regulatory agencies, corporations, groups, political parties and individuals whose activities, actions, and behaviours contribute to environmental problems or fail to protect the environment. Predators often abuse power. They use power with little regard for public interest. Predatory oil corporations have committed environmental crimes by polluting water, creeks, soil, air, and mangroves. They have failed to use their wealth to procure modern technology to prevent these harms. Thus, they can be seen to be abusing power. This corporate power has far-reaching impact, extending to the impunity enjoyed in the face of failure of the regulatory power of the state to effectively extract compliance with relevant laws and rules aimed at protecting the environment. By failing to effectively protect the environment and sometimes giving the impression of unhealthy alliance with corporate power in the oil and gas business in Nigeria, statutory power holders easily fall into the class of predators in the eyes of many people. By hanging nine Ogoni environmental activists in 1995, the military government of Nigeria under General Sani Abacha validated the state's predatory character. The hanging of these activists was widely seen as unnecessary and cruel as it was intended only to crush community power over predatory oil exploration. Predators include everyone involved in the oil extraction sector whose deeds, whether official or informal, add to environmental degradation. The intersection of perpetrators and victimhood is defined by the extent of power at work. Predators do not necessarily show they care about the pathologies of society. Instead, they tend to make sure public offices are used first to attend to personal issues before societal problems.

Predators in environmental politics refer to actors that show minimal regard for the well-being of people and their environment. Predatory oil corporations fail in their duty to prevent and clean up oil pollution in forests, creeks, mangroves, and air. These corporations often take advantage of weak political institutions and weak policy enforcement to see the environment as secondary in their operations. The identity of a predator in environmental politics is best seen in the direction in which power is deployed in oil and sustainable development issues. Oil corporations, regulatory agencies, political elites, armed illegal oil refiners, corrupt oil marketers, irresponsible and autocratic leaders in government, and political parties without issues of environmental protection in their manifestoes are some examples of predators. Local political elites currently serving in boards under the Petroleum Industry Act, oppressing their communities through cheating and corrupt distribution of funds meant for community development are also part of the predators.

Preys refer to human and non-human victims of predatory activities. They—preys — include polluted water, creeks, rivers, mangroves, air, and soil. Local peasant economy and social systems affected by the action and inaction of corporations, individuals and regulatory agencies are preys, as well. Preys are also known by their sense of powerlessness and victimhood in the face of betrayal, violence and power of a few. In reality, these segments (mass of citizens) of human preys wield positive power of agency to influence change. They include community people across the Niger Delta where oil companies explore and produce oil, climate justice groups, ethnic social movement organisations struggling for environmental justice, conventional non-governmental organisations interested in the protection of the environment,

among others (Allen Okon & Allen 2022; Allen 2020; Allen & Ogbe 2022).

"Power" is the other concept in the title, and I feel obligated to define it in relation to the Niger Delta's environmental politics. Bertrand Russell famously described power as "the ability to produce intended effects" (cited in Heimans and Timms, 2018, p.18). In their book New Power, Heimans and Timms argued that power is accessible to everyone. In this sense, power can be useful when used to promote prosperity, raise living standards, and protect environmental resources. Conversely, power can be abused when it is deployed against the interest of the environment and the public while serving the interest of a few or self.

## 3.0. INTRODUCTION

Vice Chancellor, Sir, let me quickly say that predatory power in environmental politics creates conditions that dis-allow the prey from “breathing”. Preys in environmental politics refer to human and non-human victims of activities of predators. Predators are individuals, governments, corporations, institutions, civil society, the public security sector, and groups whose activities or behaviours, policies, programmes, and laws, instead of advancing society towards a *wellbeing and* nonkilling political economy, create conditions for retrogression both now and in the future. The concept of non-killing is linked to Glenn D. Paige, who wrote the Global Nonkilling Political Science. Based on his conviction that all life, human and otherwise, is sacred. He indentifies the principles for a society that does not kill. In the context of environmental politics, it refers to a society where there are no human activities, policies, decisions and behaviours that lead to the destruction of human and non-human elements of the environment. Hence, a non-killing economy would suggest a

system in which both governmental and non-governmental bodies prioritise the preservation of all forms of life. The concept of nonkilling is sometimes likened to the concept of nonviolence but it is a much broader concept. For instance, the inaction of state actors in preventing the contamination of water, creeks, mangroves, soil, and air due to oil company and illegal oil refining operations proves a lack of a nonkilling environmental perspective (Paige, 2002; Allen, 2010). ). The Nigerian constitution is against taking human life. The environmental and social conditions caused by oil pollution in many parts of the Niger Delta which lead ultimately to the loss of human and non-human life have been given only little attention (Allen, 2008).

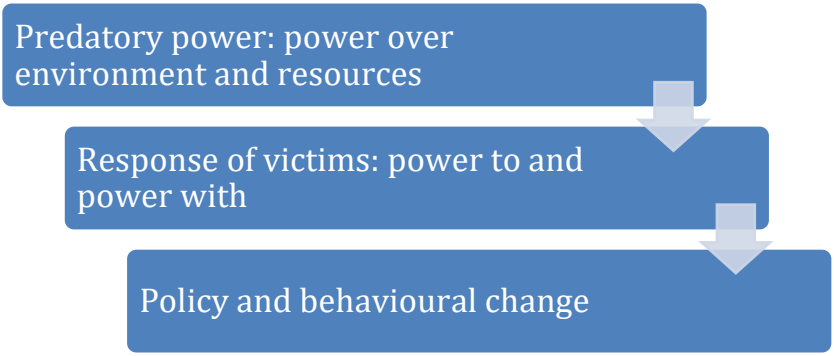


Figure 1: Conceptualisation of Predatory Power in Environmental Politics

Oil corporations, government agencies, government security, and local contractors, and politicians exercise particular forms of power. Communities, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, armed militant groups, donor agencies, and oil-importing countries also exert another form

of power in environmental decision-making. This is largely due to the fact that the Nigerian state is rent-seeking.

Oil corporations initially dominated the oil business through advantageous contract negotiations with the colonial state. They secured deals that favoured themselves over the Nigerian state. This posture has persisted into the post-colonial era. Communities entered the relationship with these corporations and the Nigerian government informally through demands for protection of their environment and development years later. Exclusion of communities from formal oil extraction business has been a matter of power. Communities' informal involvement through agitations for environmental protection and opposition to oil contamination is part of their environmental politics of oil production, where interest significantly defines the government's response.

Government agencies are endowed with regulatory power to address environmental problems. The recent emphasis on defining development in relation to environmental sustainability makes the subject of environmental politics a critical factor in balancing ecological interests and economic growth. Unfortunately, the post-colonial state in many African extractive economies has prioritised economic growth over environmental protection. This trend continued until ecological groups began to challenge the corporate world and collaborating governments.

In the Niger Delta, environmental issues like oil pollution require appropriate regulatory power to prevent pollution or compel clean-up efforts. The effectiveness of these measures depend on the nature of power at work. Ensuring corporate behaviour aligns with environmental expectations for the greater good is a goal that only regulatory power can achieve.

However, this has not always been the case, leading to growing frustration among pollution victims.

Through various participatory research activities over the years, my relationship with communities in the Niger Delta reveals the frustration among community people who believe oil corporations wield excessive negative power over their environment. These corporations' failure to prevent oil contamination despite having enormous resources is an abuse of power. The impunity often observed, where environmental crimes go unpunished or receive minimal consequences, reflects the power dynamics favouring these corporations (Allen, 2012/13). For instance, Bodo community took SPDC to a London court over two major oil spills at the company's facilities in 2008, which killed aquatic life and destroyed mangroves (Allen and Barry, 2016).

Vice Chancellor, Sir, communities and environmental social movements continue to insist that oil corporations should be held to account for their environmental crimes in the Niger Delta. This stance represents an alternative power challenging these corporations and regulatory power holders. In the age of global climate crisis, these groups have increasingly condemned hydrocarbon as a significant contributor to the crisis. For example, they are currently debating the propriety of international oil companies divesting onshore oil assets without cleaning up the pollution they caused over decades (Allen, 2024).

The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) represents the rise of ethnic-based social and environmental movements in the Niger Delta. The group rose, challenging the power of the Nigerian state and SPDC over environmental problems generated by the company and development of the

community. This agitation led to the ongoing clean-up activities following environmental assessments by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The outcome of this cleaning of the area, despite the issues associated with it, demonstrates a category of power in action.

SPDC's failure to prevent environmental damage in Ogoni, despite its considerable power, constitutes an abuse of power. The corporation's control over the environment for profit resulted in pollution, deprivation, and social conflict in Ogoni.

Environmental movement organisations also exhibit abusive power when they fail to engage the government and corporations effectively to push for environmental justice and development. Also entangled in this web of abuse is the judiciary, which the "common man" views as his "last hope," because of its inability to punish environmental violators sufficiently. The misuse of police and military power, seen in extrajudicial killings, militarization of oil facilities, and human rights violations, further exemplifies the abuse of power. Additionally, the vulnerability of oil pipelines to vandalization, non-state violence in the illegal oil business, and the growing threat of cult violence against people's security are forms of oppression and domination. The failure of political parties to address environmental protection and food security during elections reflects the reluctance or refusal of power structures to create constructive change in society.

Taken together, these facts demonstrate how pervasive power is, permeating every aspect of human interaction and the web of life beyond us (Allen & Ekine, 2004). The concept of power in social relations has a long history, with philosophers and political scientists using it to analyse politics, policy, conflict,

and society in general (Allen, 2004); Alapiki, 2010; Agbedi & Allen, 2020).

Power has multiple directions and manifestations. According to Jerry Tew (2002, 2006), it has productive and limiting genres. Power has to be seen in both positive and negative logics in contrast to the views of some scholars. Tew's schema is particularly useful here (See Table 1). A productive genre of "power over" is deployed to address the interests of vulnerable people and the development of society. "Power together," on the other hand, refers to collective action and citizen movements aimed at achieving the public good, addressing shared concerns, and promoting overall societal development.

Power is a chaotic concept due to its lack of a precise, universally accepted meaning. Political scientists are deeply divided on its definition. Violence is also a form of power available to state and non-state actors. Power can mean domination, suppression, coercion, imposition, and the realisation of the will of its holder over another.

**Table 1: Matrix of Power Relations**

| | Power over | Power together. |
|---|---|---|
| Productive genres of power | Protective power is deployed to defend vulnerable communities and seek their interest and the development of society. | Cooperative power: collective action and mutually supportive behaviour. Using cooperative power to achieve the collective good. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Limiting genres of power | Oppressive power is deployed, taking advantage of societal differences for personal gain and resource accumulation. | Collusive power<br>This refers to the coming together of people to suppress or exclude others within or outside. |

Source: Tew, 2002

Two empirical aspects codified in my work as an academic are power as domination and power as empowerment, suggesting a negative and positive connotation of the concept. Domination and empowerment are twin broad categories of the human capacity to influence behaviour and context, credited to Boonstra. These categories have many theoretical dimensions, including power over, power to, and power with (Lukes, 1974; Vene Klasen, & Miller, 2002; Gaventa, 2006). All of this points to how these forms of power seek to change behaviour or context in a negative or positive direction (Haugaard, 2012; 2021).

Vice Chancellor, Sir, the failure of power to make positive changes, a reality in many societies, is largely a function of abuse. Abuse of power is the failure to use power for the good of society. Those who abuse power focus on personal interests in contrast to the public interest.

In a 'risk society', defined by industrial-scale economic activities such as those associated with oil and gas corporations, power is embedded in these activities in alliance with those who wield state power. The concentration of power in this class of persons to the detriment of the masses of citizens and the collective good of society portends harmful use of power, which can best be described as abuse of power.

Although power can be abstract in many ways, it remains a reality for those who wield it or feel powerless. Those who have lost it can tell their story practically from the results of their relationship with power figures and institutions (Naim, 2017). They can explain when power has taken flight. Diffusion, a key feature of power that points to its shifting nature, includes the state and non-state capacity to determine the outcome of human relationships, suggesting that power has to be situated contextually and has implications for impacting people's lives and their environment. Power also changes people's behaviour and how they respond to societal problems.

## 3.0. POWER, PREDATORS AND PREY IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

Power is central in my analyses of environmental politics, involving social movements, communities, corporations, the youth, armed groups, and government (see, for example, Allen and Alapiki, 2007, Allen, 2009; Allen 2009; Allen, 2010; Allen, 2011; Allen, 2015; Allen, 2017). Themes in environmental politics of Nigeria primarily concern oil-related pollution, environmental policy, environmental conflict, insecurity, and development. All of these began with my contributions to the conceptualization of social movements, published in the maiden edition of The Encyclopaedia of Political Science (Allen, 2010).

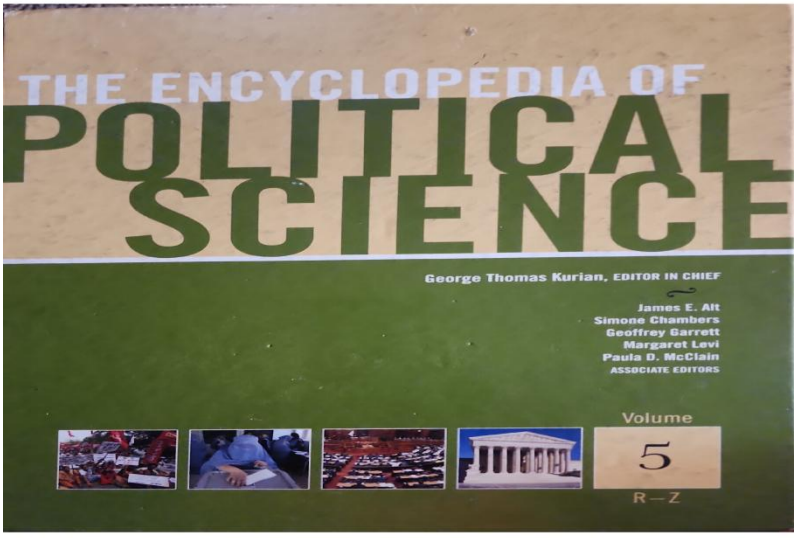


*Plate 2. Social Movements and Social Change*
*Source:* (Allen, 2010).

Social movements are power centres in policy, governance, political, and development processes. They articulate public

interest issues and advocate for the use of state power in handling these problems. They are "a wide range of social forces and organisations that seek to influence society and public policies. They provide some sort of counterweight to the state on serious matters of public interest" (Allen, 2011, p.1563; Allen & Luke, 2022; Allen & Mai-Bornu, 2023). This theoretical position contradicts reality and has consistently faulted the assumption that movements possess the capacity to determine policy outcomes in the face of the power of corporations and state institutions (Allen, 2020; Allen, Okon & Grace, 2022). Many non-state groups responding to environmental change in Nigeria's Niger Delta, including ethnic and community-based groups, hardly separate environmental issues from development concerns. Sustainable development, by definition, puts environmental, economic, social, and political concerns as key elements (Allen 2012, Allen & Eze, 2019; Ekong & Allen, 2019). Power is at the centre of the possibility that social movements can influence state, corporate, and individual activities to save the environment while addressing the demands of both the current and future generations. The evidence of this statement is seen in many aspects of the life and activities of movements. First, their late arrival in the post-colonial state of Nigeria in response to oil-related environmental problems speaks volumes about the power at work prior to their arrival. The upsurge of groups like MOSOP and the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) in response to environmental challenges has caused increased pro-poor and environmental activities, irrespective of their ethnic colour.

Legacies of colonial political and economic structures of power through obsolete petroleum laws and activities of multinational oil companies in collaboration with local and national elites regarding the oil and gas business in Nigeria

represent an overwhelming controlling force in the face of the country's hunger for oil money as key source of revenues (Ojakorotu & Allen, 2009; Uzodikie-Okeke, Allen & Whetto, 2010).

Although the national and local social movements in many countries worldwide have continued to grow, recording significant achievements in the area of rights awareness, the environmental social movement component in the case of Nigeria has remained fundamentally weak concerning state and corporate power.

My book, *Implementation of Oil-Related Environmental Policies in Nigeria: Government Inertia and Violent Conflict in the Niger Delta*, situates violent conflict in the oil-producing states of Nigeria in the context of the government's failure to fully implement its oil-related policies intended to promote sustainable development (Allen, 2012).

Nigeria's profile as an oil-producing country dates back to 1957, when it recorded its first oil shipment overseas after several years of exploration. The colonial origin of the oil establishment in Nigeria has much to say about the power of corporations and the colonial state. The colonised territories showed weaknesses in the economic decisions of the state. Oil was first discovered in Oloibiri/Otuabagi, contemporary Bayelsa State, without the communities' inputs. They also did not know what would befall them and their environment in the future from the oil business.

After six decades of Nigeria being an oil-exporting country, my book notes the environmental consequences of the industry and addresses the question of sustainable development, implementation of oil-related environmental policies, and

conflict in the Niger Delta. Oil has influenced the country's politics, policies, ethno-religious relations, and conflict. Disasters such as the one on January 16, 2012, which the book also captures as an example of the environmental consequences with policy implications, could have been handled with adequate policy response. A fire incident at a Chevron oil facility in Southern Ijaw, Bayelsa State, flamed nonstop for 46 days. Experts assessed the impact on 40 communities in that state to be enormous. The entire Kuluama Kingdom faced a severe problem of survival because of the impact on fishing. These communities rely on fishing as their primary occupation and means of livelihood. The destruction of fish in the rivers was not the only aspect of the calamity, two staff members of the company (Chevron) died instantly. The Atlantic coast, where the oil facility is located, is ecologically sensitive. Water pollution spreads quickly with strong currents across communities.

Nigeria's status as predominantly oil-dependent has meant that the bulk of its foreign exchange and revenues would be tied to the exploration and export of the product. Protecting the environment from pollution is a striking issue of power that the Nigerian state and international oil companies have been implicated in. The colonial state did not consider environmental policy from when it first issued licences, to Shell and, later to other companies. At best, existing public health laws were there only to protect officials of the colonial government before political independence. Tackling environmental change caused by oil pollution was not a priority for the colonial state and international oil companies until the post-colonial era. Even then, no immediate attention was given to environmental policy, as no national policy addressed the problem until the late 1980s. There were, however, piecemeal policies with limited provisions for the

protection of the environment, which were not meaningfully applied or enforced to prevent or deal with the problem of oil pollution, such as listed below:

1) Mineral Oils (Safety) Regulations, 1963
2) Oil in Navigable Waters Regulations Act No. 34, 1968
3) Petroleum Decree (Act) 1969
4) Petroleum (Drilling & Production) Regulations, 1969
5) Petroleum (Drilling & Production Amendment) Regulations, 1973
6) Petroleum Refining Regulations, 1974

These laws are important but were inadequate to ensure complete environmental protection from oil pollution. Apart from being piecemeal policies, implementation was a significant issue. This situation continued until the 1990s, when new regulations began to emerge. Before then, a 1978 Land Use Decree gave the Federal Government of Nigeria oil ownership rights. In 1992, the Environmental Impact Assessment Act (Decree No. 86) was enacted.

Similarly, the National Policy on Environment was formulated in 1989, with a revised edition in 1999. The power of the State and corporations over and above the environment and its resources in the Niger Delta comes directly against the local peasant economy and those who have seen the environment as their life and source of livelihood—large-scale development of the oil industry. The pre-oil era has given way to a new era with forests, soil, rivers, and mangroves as victims.

Nigeria's economic growth strategy through the development of its oil and gas has been promoted as the investment language of every regime in the country. The significance of the oil and gas industry to Nigeria's growth has informed a national security framing of the industry. As will be

demonstrated, the militarised nature of the oil economy which ensued, representing another level of the dynamics of power relations in the Niger Delta, was in reaction to and the threat felt by the Federal Government from the activities of local groups challenging the legitimacy of the State and corporations in the oil sector. Forceful containment of resistance of communities and protests, as seen with the emergence and activities of community-based organisations, speak to the national security framing of the industry.

In the 1990s, tensions between local environmental groups like MOSOP and the international oil industry escalated into violence. Prior to this, the groups had engaged with the companies peacefully over development and the destruction of water, creeks, soil, air, and forests. However, State institutions and companies proved overbearing, failing in many instances to use their power to protect the environment and resolve issues with communities peacefully. Not being able to adequately deploy the full weight of the laws establishing relevant ministries and agencies to deal with the problem of pollution in host communities of the region showed weakness on the part of the government.

I have highlighted in the research that informed the writing of my book the victimhood of communities and their transformation into violent campaign groups. The aforementioned ethnic-based community groups in the Niger Delta have, to date, been known as non-violent power groups with the potential to compel State and corporate actors in the oil industry in Nigeria to comply with environmental ethics, regulations and laws. The pre-1988 era, characterised by a lack of a national environmental policy, saw community people asking the Federal Government and oil companies to protect the environment and deliver development. Their power

to get the attention of the government was limited to the extent that the government had to wait until some patriotic persons called the Federal Government's attention to the dumping of dangerous waste (chemicals) by a foreign corporation in Koko village in the present-day Delta State, Nigeria. That call alarmed the country, leading to the Federal Government hosting a meeting of stakeholders in Nigeria.

My book rightly categorised as violent the response of the Federal Government to MOSOP agitations for protection of its environment and development of Ogoniland, as clearly stated in the Bill of Rights. The use of violence itself was a show of raw power in the attempt to resolve the lingering agitations. The hanging of Kenule Saro-Wiwa and eight others from Ogoni after the verdict of a compromised tribunal set up by the Government to achieve that purpose speaks to how State power was used to address the root causes of the conflict between the Ogoni people on the one hand and Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and the Federal Government on the other.

"The Enemy Within: Oil in the Delta" is the title of my research article published in *World Policy Journal* in 2012. The article describes the impact of oil on the environment and the people of the Niger Delta. It specifically highlights the power of Shell in Ogoni through the activities of its subsidiary, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC). The metaphorical description of oil as an enemy of the Niger Delta, and perhaps Nigeria as a whole, is relative and based on the research that led to the publication. General Sani Abacha's Federal Military Government put nine prominent Ogoni men on trial and eventually found them culpable. One of them was Kenule Saro-Wiwa, who was the movement's founding president. These men were accused of murdering four

prominent Ogoni men, who died at the hands of angry youth wing of MOSOP. The youth had alleged the four of sabotaging their collective goal in the struggle for justice in Ogoni.

The execution of these men by the government, which many saw as an attempt to silence the voice of resistance against environmental injustice in Ogoni and serve as a lesson for other groups in the Niger Delta, was condemned globally. The critical voices from within and outside the country described the execution as an abuse of power. In the same vein, the mob of youth who took the law into their hands by killing the Ogoni four abused power. The silence of Shell over the killing of the nine Ogoni was a demonstration of power, as silence could easily be interpreted as an endorsement. The company was quiet throughout the processes leading up to their execution. This was a victory for the company and government over the environment. The execution of these men in complete defiance of an international plea for which the country would even be declared a pariah state was a manifestation of power against the Ogoni and their environment. The victimhood of the environment and people who lost their leaders represents the extent of power at work in environmental justice matters.

The article points to the role of the Nigerian police and army in protecting the prison that held the Ogoni leaders while they were awaiting trial. It also signalled the role of SPDC and national security framing of the Federal Government as uninterrupted oil production. The conflict between MOSOP, on the one hand, and the company in question and the Federal Government, on the other, was framed as a national security issue that must be resisted and contained.

The Niger Delta was home to 93 gas fields and 48 oil fields as of this writing. Estimates put the region's permanent gas and oil reserves at 94 trillion cubic feet and 34.5 billion barrels, respectively (Allen, 2012/2013). With oil prices at $90 per barrel, oil revenues were more than $3.1 trillion.

Oil being the government's primary source of revenue and foreign exchange, ensuring its uninterrupted production over the years is understandable. This also implies oil's power over policy and the development of alternative sources of revenue. My research captured the perspectives of the government, oil companies, and communities affected by oil pollution and the oil economy. The idea of oil being an enemy derived from the perspectives of host communities grieving over the industry's devastating impact on their environment and sources of livelihood. In contrast, the political elite and local contractors working as stakeholders in the political economy of the oil industry with companies and the Federal Government have defined interests regarded as more important than the environmental consequences of the industry. This brazen disposition is an abuse of power for its narrow interest.

The Ogoni Bill of Rights, a document containing the demands of the Ogoni people in the context of the oil economy of the government, was presented to the Federal Government of Nigeria in October 1990. The document was perceived as a threat to national interest and security. The government's reliance on oil and gas for revenues and foreign exchange means political elite, based on a rational choice, and neo-liberal political economy perspectives do not see these resources as enemies. The free flow of oil in Nigeria is about economic growth strategy to prosperity, which environmental justice perspectives contained in the Bill of Rights and the rest of environmental justice movements in the region espouse. The

demand for the protection of the environment, livelihoods and people from oil pollution, which some groups in the area are concerned about, runs contrary to the overall interest of the political elite and the oil industry. The Ogoni people, among other demands, sought for equal access to resources and to fix the damage oil production has caused to the environment. They also seek sustainable solutions to oil pollution. Such solutions must take into consideration the wellbeing of the community (Allen and Eze, 2019).

In "State of climate justice movement in South Africa' published in *Capitalism Nature Socialism* in 2015, I explored issues and the nature of the climate justice movement. This article was the output of a study from a generous post-doctoral fellowship award, initially offered by South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF) in 2011 for six months and later by the University of KwaZulu-Natal for a slightly extended period (Allen, 2015). The fellowship addressed issues and activities of environmental justice groups in South Africa's South Durban and Nigeria's Niger Delta. Both regions compare well across borders as areas with a significant number of behaviours of environmental justice groups demanding protection of the environment from oil pollution. However, the South African case has been limited to the influence of oil refineries and coal-powered plants on the environment and well-being of communities. Groups have engaged the government over these issues in these settings.

I argued in the article that the international climate change politics of the United States of America is inimical to Africa's aspirations for sustainable development. The South African climate justice movement has been vocal about the impact of climate change on "economic, social, political and environmental conditions of life in local communities" (Allen,

2015, p.46). In shedding light on the state of the climate justice movement in that country through a narration of its activities, issues and perceptions of climate change, mostly between 2011 and 2012 in South Durban, as the aim of the article was, the United States and the South African government represented a power bloc in an alliance within the fossil fuels industry. The climate justice movement, on the other hand, representing voices from communities and groups in multilateral and national climate policy-making settings possess marginal influence. This is why, despite these movements' massive presence and increasing calls on governments and corporations to reduce emissions significantly, only little has been achieved. While studying the behaviour of these groups, I participated in a protest at the embassy of the United States in Durban. I attended several workshops organised by movement organisations to assess the issues they were concerned about.

These groups expected the United States to play a more meaningful or active role in handling the problem of climate change. There is no question that climate change is a reality for people in South Africa, Nigeria and the rest of the world. My research benefited from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference of parties that was held in Durban in 2011 (COP17). The governments in South Africa, Nigeria, and the United States hold contrary views on fossil fuel corporations that have long relied on industry sources of revenues and profits.

The environmental justice movement in the Niger Delta is weak. Only a tiny section of justice-seeking groups such as Health of Mother Earth Foundation, has embraced climate justice framing of climate change. It was even worse for groups that applied physical power in environmental and

socio-economic struggles, like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). In the case of MOSOP, the organisation did not even include climate change in framing its struggle. The struggle instead has been neo-liberal and ethnic in character with the capacity to preserve the existing petro-capitalist order. The neo-liberal character of climate policy, which relates to state and corporate power, resonates with the logic of collective action in handling the impact on global citizens. As I argued in that article, "in the pyramid of power and accountability for the devastating impact of climate change, the individual is at the very bottom" (Allen, 2015, p.52). That is to say that collective action through cooperation is a manifestation of power. The climate justice movement in South Africa, which the article focused on, represents the cooperative behaviour of citizens' power in matters of climate injustice. At the time of writing, the country produced more than 500 million tonnes of $CO_2$ from neo-liberal economic activities. Cutting emissions, therefore, is as much a crucial concern. The movement in South Africa is divided between those who endorse neo-liberal or market solutions to the climate crisis and those who favour climate justice principles.

The chapter of my contribution in a report of a study of neo-liberal market solutions through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Clean Development Mechanism and carbon markets is "Niger Delta Oil Flares, illegal pollution and oppression." The title of the report is "The Clean Development Mechanism cannot deliver the money to Africa, why the carbon trading gamble won't save the planet from climate change, and how Africa's civil society is resisting" (Bond et al, 2011).

Shell and other international oil companies have flared gas freely in the Niger Delta for decades to the disadvantage of the environment. These companies contribute massive greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, which experts have argued are responsible for global warming in the age of industrialisation. Ironically, "instead of putting an end to gas flaring, these oil companies were at the forefront of asking for CDM projects for the utilisation of oil-associated gas." A total of five CDM projects were already registered with the UNFCCC at the time of the study, out of which two were aimed at "recovering associated gas, that would otherwise have been flared in Kwale, Delta State, and recovery of marketing gas that would otherwise have been flared in Asuokpu/Umutu Marginal Field, Nigeria" (Bond et al., 2011).

The study found a spurious claim that these projects recorded an annual emissions reduction. The involvement of these companies in CDM was a reward for environmental crime they ought to have, in the first place, stopped or avoided. It was a reward of illegality as the granting of CDM credits to these companies for halting gas flaring in two locations in Nigeria was argued to be inappropriate, especially in the circumstances of massive pollution and deprivation resulting from the activities of these companies in the Niger Delta. Scholars and civil society groups accused the CDM Methodology Board at UNFCCC of promoting corporate abuse of power by agreeing to pay oil companies for illegal activity—gas flaring—which they should have ended by law long ago.

The lack of evidence of a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from CDM projects undertaken by international oil companies and the NNPC in Nigeria amidst the fall in the price of carbon on the global market contributed to delegitimization of the market approach in handling the climate crisis.

Plate 2: The CDM Cannot Deliver the Money in Africa

The ability of the climate justice movement in South Africa and Nigeria to influence climate policies that look away from the market approach to those with practical relevance for reducing emissions at the national and sub-national fronts is a function of power.

"Climate-justice-driven social movements: alternative development forces or agents of change" (Allen, 2013) is the title of my article, published as a book chapter in *Rethinking Development*, edited by Ndongo Samba Sylla. The study focused on the prospect of climate justice groups in Africa

becoming forces of change on the continent due to the group's growing loss of faith in the power of the neo-liberal order to deliver development. Environmental issues linked to neoliberalism, such as the socio-economic effects of climate change, oil pollution, and destruction of livelihoods, are easily connected to development models that do little to the wellbeing of citizens. Relying on data derived from participant observation, documentary sources, and the use of interpretive approaches, the study argues that ecological concerns in the extractive industry in Africa have the potential to breed a civil society with the capacity to push for social change in Africa.

The study, which was undertaken in 2011 and 2012, involved working directly as a participant observer in workshops, protest events, and conferences with climate justice activists in South Durban and Nigeria's Niger Delta. It also relied on interviews to explore prospects of climate-justice-driven radical social movements pursuing broader political, economic and environmental objectives in Africa" on the assumption that ecological issues matter in the evaluation of local social movements and their response and intolerance of market solutions to climate change, poverty, unemployment, inequality, elite manipulation of political and economic processes, and destruction of livelihoods. The study found mounting cynicism about the power and motivation of the political class in Africa to carry through the task of development. The doubtful role of the elite in pursuing development objectives that bring visible change in the living standards of ordinary people is likely to create an atmosphere of intense discontentment among citizens, who may, in turn, act as agents of liberation for themselves and society.

The study sees the ecological crisis in Africa as an economic, political, and social crisis that connects with every aspect of life for ordinary citizens. The crisis itself is caused by the abuse of the environment by corporations working in alliance with the political elite. The issue in South Durban, a leading centre of activities for community-based justice groups, is industrial pollution. The South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) is a leading organisation tackling the issue. On the other hand, the Niger Delta is known for oil pollution, gas flaring, deforestation and destruction of livelihoods, for which groups, like MOSOP, Health of Mother Earth Foundation, Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth and others have tackled. The study concluded that these groups are potential forces of change in both countries. However, the power of these groups in environmental policy processes concerning neo-liberal approaches to development has been at the least marginal. Elite preference for extractive-industry-driven development has focused on economic growth with minimal impact on achieving the goals of these groups (Allen, 2013). Also, the movement faces a risk of cracks or contradictory messages from within, making it a challenge for a united force for social change.

"Politics of State/Oil Multinational Alliance and Security Response" is the title of my research, published by Elsevier Academic Press in *The Political Ecology of Oil and Gas Activities in the Nigerian Aquatic Ecosystem*, edited by Prince E. Ndimele in 2018. I argued in that chapter that "oil has political, social, economic and environmental character" (Allen, 2018, p.295). This suggests a reality of interest-driven alliances among or between actors in political systems. The pervasive nature of policy and politics means that these alliances are crucial elements in pursuing interests. The

coalition reflects power and capabilities in the quest for protection of interests. State alliances with international oil companies are suggested in my book chapter. I identified the key actors and their relative power positions. As I argued, "Local actors, such as host communities, in many instances occupy marginal and informal positions of influence in matters of policy, environmental despoliation and inadequate compliance to national regulations and laws" (Allen, 2018, p.295).

International oil companies and the government are the main formal actors in the oil business in Nigeria, but consuming nations are equally powerful through their position as buyers of products for which both the oil companies and the government depend for the profit and foreign exchange, respectively. The political, environmental and economic character of oil in the Niger Delta is based on the results of mapping of interests, actors, nature of alliances, implications for security and response of the state.

It is also based on power associated with international oil companies, local and national political elites, local communities, non-governmental organisations, etc. Oil importing countries such as the United States, for a very long time, have responded to a perceived threat to the security of supplies with exporting countries in the Middle East. The relationship between the United States and the Middle East has been shaped by oil.

John Coleman's book, *We Fight for Oil: A History of U.S. Petroleum Wars*, speaks glowingly about the power of the U.S. in the pursuit of uninterrupted oil supplies. The United States and members of the Organisation of Oil Producing Countries (OPEC) are centres of power, whose role in response to the

Middle East after Iraq invaded Kuwait proved the position of power in checking threats posed by exporting countries. Oil-importing countries' quest for energy security has shaped their foreign policies, and by extension, the nature of power disposition towards the Middle East. Abuse of power by the allied forces, such as the attack of Iraq on a flimsy excuse that turned out to be lacking in evidence, shows how the politics of oil manifest itself at the international level. In the same vein, the killing of former Libyan leader Muammar Gadaffi, which many scholars continue to see as a conspiracy of Western oil-importing nations, leaves little doubt about the display and abuse of power in the oil and gas business.

At the local and national level of the politics of oil, my arguments in the book chapter point to the power of oil itself as a decisive factor. As far back as 1996, Jean Damu and David Bacon had written a book with the title *Oil Rules Nigeria.* This also implies a notion of oil's power in the country's politics (Allen, 2018, p.300). Oil companies and the government think similarly of security regarding uninterrupted production activities. The cost of preventing oil pollution and gas flaring was considered high and has had to be delayed till date without penalty. The fact that neither the oil companies responsible for these environmental crimes nor relevant government agencies that ought to enforce appropriate regulations suffer stiff penalties suggests the nature of power at work (Ekong & Allen, 2019).

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, I argued in my book chapter that "the hanging of Saro Wiwa was intended to put an end to agitations by host communities in the Niger Delta, which will guarantee uninterrupted pumping of product" (Allen, 2018, p.301). The international community saw the killing by the Nigerian State as an abuse of power. The rights violation arguments that

followed the killing were based on the perception of protecting the narrow interest of an oil extraction regime from resistance by environmental justice groups. This was and has been about control of oil resources; having by law appropriated ownership rights of all natural resources in Nigeria, the Federal Government has had a strong sense and display of entitlement to the resource.

On 17 November 2017, I organised a meeting of experts in Port Harcourt in collaboration with the Nigerian Chapter of Natural Resource Charter (an international non-profit organisation) to address the socioeconomic and environmental cost of oil extraction from the perspective of the Charter. Based on information gathered in this meeting, I wrote and published the article entitled "Implementation of Nigeria Natural Resource Charter: a framework for addressing oil mining in the Niger Delta" where I recommended that the framework has valuable qualities for governance of the oil sector and environmental peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. The framework has the potential to promote participatory governance of the sector. Through its precepts, civil society organisations can develop valuable indicators for assessing the performance of regulators and oil companies (Allen, 2018).

The responses of communities to environmental change in the Niger Delta are two-fold: environmental peacebuilding and confrontation. The former, is new as a concept, though in reality, it has been part of the experience of communities who had initially deployed nonviolent methods of engaging oil corporations on issues of pollution and development. In a co-authored contribution to a White Paper and Compendium at the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, titled "Green Futures for Environmental Peacebuilding in Nigeria: Challenges and opportunities for oil-producing communities in the Niger

Delta" (Mai-Bornu, Allen, Maconachie and Taka, 2022) my co-authors and I suggested behaviours transcending ethnic and political boundaries with women and youth as active participants in addressing resource-based conflict and insecurity. We provide insights into future research agenda on environmental peacebuilding in the Niger Delta, with women and youth as co-producers of policy-oriented knowledge. The analysis also inferred the value of environmental, social movements as subjects in environmental peacebuilding, previously not fully captured in the power equation between state and non-state actors in the governance of the oil resource.

On the other hand, the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight members of MOSOP by the Federal Government in 1995 set the stage for a violent response by the youth in the dynamics of oil-related conflict in the Niger Delta. State violence, as demonstrated through the killing of these men, was intended to send a powerful message to communities threatening the daily production of oil. In a manner akin to the action-reaction explanation of conflict, the reaction of young people from the rest of the Niger Delta to the hanging was almost swift. They challenged Nigeria's state and international oil companies (Allen, 2012). The Ijaw Youth Council, for example, requested all international oil companies to leave the region within a given period. The emergence of armed groups like the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) further added a new dimension of response by the people of the region. These groups attacked oil installations and government security and kidnapped oil workers, leading to a drastic drop in daily oil production.

I explored the subject of political killings and violent conflicts in Nigeria, in a paper entitled 'political killings and violent

conflicts in Nigeria' (Allen, 2013). The Niger Delta situation and violence in other parts of the country have gradually brought to the fore an unresolved question of why the security sector, industry, political class and citizen groups have not been able to tackle threats posed to the security of people. The daunting task of containing these threats includes tackling their physical, structural and psychological forms. At one level, electoral violence, criminal violence, structural violence, ethnic and religious clashes, herder-farmer conflicts, and struggle for political power among the elite are present in my analysis of insecurity and conflict in Nigeria. The ramifications of poverty, inequality, corruption, energy insecurity, and lack of citizens' access to basic social amenities amidst rising inflation are far-reaching. My study interrogated the contradiction of democracy by highlighting killing manifesting itself as political assassination in the power struggle. The phenomenon of killing in Nigeria, especially in the extractive sector and during elections, which ought to be periodic democratic exercises with the potential for peaceful resolution of disputes has remained a key concern in my analysis of development issues in Nigeria. Killings linked to Nigeria's civil war (1967-70) and lingering separatist agitations, captured in a co-authored briefing paper published in ROAPE (Amadi, Allen, and Mai-Bornu, 2023) led us to recommend to the government that there is a need to address the lingering issues of insecurity and killings in the Southeast of the country with justice, equity and democratic peace where all sides in the polity are given their due and recognized as equal partners in the *Nigerian project.*

Since 1999, the trend in political killing has continued as part of an enduring struggle for power and response of people with different goals. I took a fresh look at the problem and suggested, in my research, reasons for the growing culture of

violence. "At the root of preference for violence by the political elite in Nigeria" (Allen, 2013, p.176) is the lack of a nonkilling vision.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, the theory of nonkilling is traced to the University of Hawaii retired professor of political science, Gleen D. Paige (of blessed memory), who wrote *Global Nonkilling Political Science.* His ideas have influenced me. I first read his book at the University of Ottawa, Canada, in 2004, where I travelled to deliver a paper at a Colloquium organised by Research Committee 14 of the International Political Science Association (IPSA). I was an elected member of the IPSA Research Committee for several years. Paige, through his nonkilling political analysis, makes important theoretical arguments for the possibility of a nonkilling society at all levels of human interaction. His argument was informed by his experience as a war veteran who participated in the Korean and Vietnam wars in the 1950s. My contact with the book and the nonkilling ideas spurred my interest in applying the concept in environmental peacebuilding analysis on the Niger Delta. Not only did my physical meeting with the author by invitation to the First Nonkilling Leadership Forum in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 2007 allow me to interact with him, it also offered me a chance to meet several peace activists and laureates with considerable profiles in peacebuilding research.

I met Johan Galtung at the Global Nonkilling Leadership Forum held from November 1-4, 2007, in Honolulu, Hawaii. He inspired me with his "TRANSCEND Approach to simple conflicts." This approach to handling conflict, as articulated in his paper, bridged Paige's nonkilling analysis. Both would have a massive influence on my environmental peacebuilding work.

Pate 3: Johan Galtung (colloquially referred to as father of peace and conflict studies) and Fidelis Allen in Hawaii, Honolulu, USA in 2007 at the Global Nonkilling Leadership Forum.

Paige advocates for a shift in political science paradigm to "a four-part logic of nonkilling political analysis" (Paige, 2002, 2007, p.72) and advances a need for understanding the cause of killing and nonkilling. Is a nonkilling Nigeria possible? Paige defines nonkilling as follows:

> a human community, smallest to largest, local to global, characterised by no killing of humans and no threats to kill; no weapons designed to kill humans and no justifications for using them; and no conditions of society dependent upon threat or use of killing force for maintenance or change (2002, p.1).

This is an ideal society with potential though for its realisation if leaders articulate it as a vision that requires active work in that direction. One interesting aspect of the nonkilling theory

is that it also relates to the non-human world. The killing free society relates also to non-human elements of the environment.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, my intellectual curiosity and zeal for transformational scholarship led me to apply Glenn's formulations to practical work of peacebuilding research and engagements in the Niger Delta. First, I translated Glenn's book into Ogoni and Ijaw languages for members of these groups to read. Second, I produced an economical English version to make the book more accessible to readers, which we gave out free to students in secondary schools during visits for special talks on non-violent conflict management. Third, I applied the nonkilling theory to a study of violent conflict in the Niger Delta, with the title, "Oil, Politics and Conflict in the Niger Delta: A Nonkilling Analysis," published in *University for Peace Africa Programme African Peace and Conflict Journal* (Allen & Okeke-Uzodike, 2010). We found that 'oil-related killing in the Niger Delta results in part from a lack of vision of nonkilling leadership and politics among state and non-state actors' (Allen & Okeke-Uzodike, p.32). Thus, the problem of killing in the region will wait for a nonkilling governance of oil, politics, and distribution of the resource benefits. By using this theory as a framework in our analysis and community service, we demonstrated the role of the concept in the understanding of policies, institutions, practices, politics, cultures and behaviours that instigate the killing of non-human and human members of society. The bottom line is that killing is an abuse of power. On the other hand, nonkilling governance, leadership, and politics are positive uses of power in the interest of society.

My deployment of nonkilling theoretical formulations in analysis of violent conflict in the Niger Delta resonates with nonviolent conflict management. As Director of the

University of Port Harcourt Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies from 2015 to 2019, I was at the forefront of the peace and conflict studies curriculum development of the Centre's Master of Science programme. Of particular note was my role as head of the Rivers State Conflict Management Alliance (RSCMA). This was a group of representatives of civil society and relevant government agencies involved in managing conflict in Rivers State, including the Nigerian Police and the Army, and the office of Special Adviser to the Governor of Rivers State on Conflict Resolution. In collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser to the Governor of Rivers State on Conflict Resolution, the group organised reconciliation workshops for communities in Abua and contributed to tackling inter-community disputes in parts of Ogoni.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, these activities point to the value of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in managing conflict expressed in negative power dispositions of people and groups. My interest in Alternative Dispute Resolution has blossomed in the light of the conflict situation in the Niger Delta. I reviewed Segun Ogunyannwo's book, *The Effective Mediator: A Complete Guide for Practising Mediators*. It was published in *Adjudication and Other Strategies of Conflict Resolution in Nigeria, essays in honour of Honourable Justice Chukuwunenye Ichegbo Uriri.* Uriri is a retired judge of the High Court of Rivers State (Allen, 2015). On September 12, 2024, I spoke on the subject of infrastructure for peace, focusing on the Rivers the State Multi-Door Courthouse, at Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructure for Peace 8$^{th}$ international conference held in Abuja Nigeria. I argued for a national shift in the justice system in Nigeria in civil disputes to alternative dispute resolution to reduce the risk of violent methods of waging conflict (Allen, 2024).

Police brutality is a troubling aspect of the profile of Nigeria as a country with an increasing incidence of killing. I discussed this in a book chapter with the title "Police Brutality in Nigeria: Political Context and Forms," in *Political Economy of Policing in Nigeria,* Volume 1(Allen, 2014). I examined, in that chapter of the book, police brutality in different contexts and political and historical sense and forms to understand likely vested interests and socioeconomic drivers, concluding that more often than not, the police are involved in abuse of power through violation of human rights. Thus, a citizen-based police reform where policing is about respect for citizens' rights and crime-fighting will not be hindered by personal interests.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, Nigeria needs a workable vision for transiting to a society characterised by a stronger sense of safety in residents. This transition covers many aspects of security, including food security. In "Violence, politics, and food insecurity in Nigeria" in *Global Food Politics and Approaches, Emerging Research Opportunities,* I explored how violence and politics affect security in Nigeria in the light of oil, cult, herders - farmers conflict and Boko Haram activities (Allen, 2020). The analysis provided insights into what needs to be done to address food insecurity in the country. I suggested more timely interventions with kinetic and non-kinetic tackling of bandits and terrorists.

The key theme in environmental activism across the world today is climate change. In a solicited review article entitled "Trends in environmental activism" (Allen, 2023), published in *International Political Science Abstract* by Sage, I explored trends in environmental activism regarding conceptualization, themes, and directions and predicted the agenda for future research. Based on a review of 45 scholarly articles, the

article notes climate change as the direction of future research. The article also notes the increasing frustration of environmental movement organisations in the global climate crisis. At the same time, their policy advocacy activities have continued to grow on the multilateral front. Climate justice is a significant concern. However, scholarship covers themes such as the emergence of green parties, ecological citizenship, radical environmentalism, social conflict, violence, and non-violence. These groups aim to influence policymakers and their views on environmental problems. They contribute to the transformation of society. Similarly, they significantly contribute to public interest discourses that serve the purpose of deliberative democracy. The issue of climate change as a central concern, which the review highlights, is linked to centuries of abuse of industrial power over the environment and the failure of the regulatory power of governments and multilateral policy to check the trend.

As earlier mentioned, there are four main themes. The first is linking environmental social movements with parties. The environmental activism-democracy hypothesis from this linkage suggests the contribution of environmental activism to democracy, particularly at the grassroots level. Unfortunately, scholars in this school of thought have their roots in advanced countries. Green parties are yet to emerge or take root in Africa. Not only that, climate change has remained at the periphery of electoral politics. Campaigns and electoral processes have been blind to climate change. Environmental social movements in Africa campaign simultaneously for environmental protection and development. They have, however, failed to transition to political parties with a clear political vision. Nigeria's experience with democracy, especially in the post-military era since 1999, recognizes the role of environmental activism. In the Niger Delta, not even

ethnic-based MOSOP and similar groups in the region have considered green parties as vehicles for pursuing environmental goals. Worse, it has not been fully integrated into the struggles of these groups for environmental protection and development.

The theme of radical environmentalism is hardly expressed in the African context, as what passes for environmentalism at the same time, is a demand for development. There are, therefore, no radical policy reforms in response to radical ecological concerns. Basically, neo-colonial attention is given to environmental problems seen as unavoidable effects of extractivism. However, the environmental justice movement is emerging in many areas of the continent in alliance with global environmental justice to push for better solutions to the climate crisis. They advocate against what they refer to as false solutions. They see market approaches to tackling the climate crisis as false solutions. For example, they have continued to critique carbon markets as failing to discourage pollution by corporations interested in continuing to pollute the planet with opportunities provided by carbon trading. Significant policy results from both African and global radical environmentalism will, however, take a long time to realise. This is because the language of global capitalism has normatively changed without fundamental transformation of the world's energy system. The evolution of renewable energy technology and the promise of electric automobiles are encouraging developments, though the transition is disproportionately slow in developing countries. The future is becoming bleak for the fossil fuels industry, but for exporting and importing countries, it might take several more years to figure out exactly when the industry will slow sufficiently for a take-over by renewable energy. The reason behind this is that exporting countries will always have a structural reliance on fossil fuels as a source of national

revenue and foreign currency. For importing countries, the spate of threats against energy security globally and nuanced capitalist exploits in the global economy are matters with implications for speed in cutting global emissions.

The third theme, ecological citizenship, defined as how citizens contribute to sustainable communities, is prominent in the literature. Ecological citizens' participatory activities regarding environmental protection, especially at the grassroots and in cities in more advanced countries, support environmental democracy. This speaks to the empowerment of citizens, primarily if their voices are heard, factored into decisions, and counted for sustainable development. In the Niger Delta, where community voices have been less heard in matters of massive pollution, their contribution to sustainable development through non-violent campaigns was not successful in changing the behaviour of oil corporations early enough. It took decades for these corporations and relevant government agencies to listen to the communities.

Finally, the theme of social conflict is critical in many studies. Environmental activism conceptually speaks to the reality of social conflict. The extractive industry worldwide is amenable to conflict, though the possibility of rebel conflict is rare in countries outside Africa. Riots and protests are common across the world, but armed conflict is seen in Africa, especially in the case of the Niger Delta. The emergence of armed groups after the killing of nine MOSOP leaders in the mid-1990s and intense violent attacks on oil facilities, government security and kidnapping of oil workers mark the genesis of this trend.

While the research on subjects mentioned above differs among regions of the world, the direction of future research on environmental activism across the globe will tilt towards

climate change. It will also be shaped by multiple factors, including continuing destructive extractivism, unequal power relations between environmental groups and governmental and corporate leaders, policy success of these groups or disappointments with those responsible for addressing socio-economic issues associated with environmental injustice.

To disentangle the problems of global warming, war, and development, decoloniality is important. That was my argument in an article published in Conflict *Studies Quarterly*, Issue 4 in 2023. This article was inspired by the data from a study I had led for a consortium of NGOs working on climate change as a cause of conflict (Allen & Amadi, 2022; Allen & Amadi, 2022, p.vii).

The article was published during my time as a Letsema Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Pan-African Studies and Conversations at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2022. The response of policymakers at the sub-national and multilateral fronts currently does not accord a premium to indigenous knowledge systems. Yet evidence abounds of how people in communities in different parts of the world apply local methods in their adaptive responses to climate change effects. My analysis of Niger Delta coastal communities reinforced this assumption. The policy structure in the case of Nigeria is seen in a recent formulation of the National Policy on Climate Change, acknowledging the reality of climate change and its impact on the country. Nigeria is active at the multilateral policy level of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change annual conference of parties.

As of 2013, Nigeria was yet to develop a national climate policy. My analysis then was concerned about this issue. Based on the outcome of the colloquium I organised in

Bayelsa State in 2011, I explored the role of communities and poverty and the question of climate policy in the Niger Delta. I argued in that article and recommended urgent need for local communities to be included by the policy community in climate policy conversations. After all, these communities face severe consequences of climate change. In addition, they are in many ways struggling to cope with the effects of climate change, especially among people with low incomes.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, the Niger Delta remains a region in the world with a significant number of young people at risk of violence. Both climate change and extant socio-economic challenges linked to oil-related environmental change have implications for youth survival and well-being. Many of the youth are neither in school nor employed after schooling. The solution to this state of affairs is contained in a co-authored article (Allen, Tonwe, Alapiki and Allen, 2016). Unemployment, in particular, is an enabler of destructive conflict and criminal tendencies. We recommended a transparent youth empowerment programme to deal with the situation.

## 4.0. CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Oil corporations' power over the environment is not unconnected with failure of government's regulatory power. Our analyses of activities of these corporations and extent of control by the State point to the emergence of social and environmental conditions that, to all intents and purposes, have been conducive to conflict in the Niger Delta. Insecurity, in its different forms, has been an outcome with chains of impact on life and wellbeing. The power of oil corporations is seen in the seeming helplessness of the State to adequately punish them for polluting the environment. Preventing these problems is a

matter of power. Seeing them happen with impunity is also about power.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, my involvement in a comparative study of responsiveness of public security decision-making in Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and Uganda with scholars at the Conflict, Security and Development Group at King's College London in 2006 yielded significant results in terms of policy recommendations from findings in the Niger Delta case study which I handled. A part of the outcome of my contribution to that research was published in the *Journal of International Peace Studies* in 2009. I highlighted the role of the oil industry in the emergence of irregular forces in the Niger Delta and their implications for security in the region (Allen, 2009). While blaming the government's inaction on public security concerns, the piece acknowledged the interconnected nature of environmental insecurity and other types of instability. As I argued, "security decision-making of the State and oil companies seem to have neglected environmental contents of security/insecurity in the region" (Allen, 2009, p.40).

The oil and insecurity nexus was also captured in my study, titled "Oil and security in the Gulf of Guinea: Reflections on the external and domestic linkages" (Allen, 2013), where I recommended the development of national alternative energy systems to curb energy security appetite of importing countries. By extension, it will reduce the external influence on social conditions occasioned by the oil sector, fuelling insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea area. Curbing insecurity in the region due to external linkages with the domestic energy policies of exporting countries already suggests a power relation working against Nigeria in many ways. External pressure on policy and the behaviour of policy and political actors in exporting countries is a form of power contributing to

social conflict. In the case of Nigeria's Niger Delta, as already implied, the historical presence of oil corporations has been somewhat disruptive of traditional peace. It has caused social dislocation and upset communities known to have been previously cohesive and forward-looking.

Insecurity in Nigeria owes much to the use and abuse of power at different levels in the social, economic, and political relations of actors. Oil pollution, cultism, militancy, criminality, banditry and terrorism are prominent elements in any analysis of insecurity. Food and physical insecurity are two of many dimensions of insecurity, with many cases of victimhood.

"Violence, Politics, and Food Insecurity in Nigeria," published in *Global Food Politics and Approaches to Sustainable Consumption: Emerging Research and Opportunities* by IGI Global in 2020, addresses the impact of violence in Nigeria on food security. This book chapter was selected for republishing by IGI in *Research Anthology on Strategies for achieving Agricultural Sustainability* in 2023. I analysed how violence (violent power) and politics affect food security in the light of existing issues of oil, cult, farmers -versus -herders conflict and Boko Haram terror in Nigeria. As I argued:

> When villagers run away from the violence of cult groups, herders and farmers clashes, and the terror of Boko Haram, the impact on the availability of food requires more accountability. So is the link between oil violence and food insecurity, considering how the industry, through pollution, has considerably reduced cultivable land and fishing in the Niger Delta…a complex mesh of

> illegal political relationships and considerations in frequent cases of non-state and criminal armed violence is fast reducing men and women labour in peasant agriculture, such that availability and affordability of food have become threatened (Allen, 2020, p.78).

In 2013, in *Nonkilling Security and the State*, edited by Joam Evans Pim, my research on political killing and violent conflicts in Nigeria was published as a book chapter. Against the historical realities of political killing in the post-colonial state of Nigeria, I applied Glenn D. Paige's problem-solving nonkilling theoretical ideas in my analysis of the struggle for power in Nigeria. Political killing is said to have at least three main features identified by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (2000), quoted in my book chapter as follows: 'They often happen with the support of authorities; violate national laws and international regimes on human rights, and finally, they are not accidental, for self-preservation or based on ignorance' (Allen, 203, p.376). These are exciting properties of political killing, especially in detesting physical violence leading to death, but, as I argued in my research, they ignore killings resulting from government policies, inaction and actions of non-state actors and government actors. Some scholars refer to this as structural violence. The functional significance of structural violence as a significant cause of killing was the reason for my explaining cases. The nonkilling theory could be applied in the interest of Nigeria and the Niger Delta in particular.

A nonkilling approach to conflict management and politics would mean using the principles of nonkilling to address threats posed by political killing in society. My research detailed the chronological incidence of political killing, a problem that has defined a great deal of the history of Nigeria.

The pre-independence era matters, too, as the colonial state was fundamentally violent. The period before 1960 set the stage for a series of coups with the results of several killings.

The chapter focused on political killing in different contexts, including the broader political environment in the country's immediate post-colonial era in which military coups resulted in the killing of many members of the ruling class, militancy in the Niger Delta and security of life and property; activities of terror groups such as Boko Haram and banditry have led to the loss of thousands of lives As I argued:

> To my mind, compelling political office seekers to seek certification in nonkilling lifestyles, to be issued by a legitimate moral and ethical nonkilling institution, established by the government and managed by men and women of integrity in civil society, is needed as part of the nonkilling transformation of the political process in Nigeria (Allen, 2013.p.383).

Vice Chancellor, Sir, this recommendation is apt given the structural causes of killing in Nigeria. Policies and social transformations are essential elements in any redefinition development in Nigeria, especially in the Niger Delta, where the regulator power of relevant government agencies has been weak at ensuring the environment and communities are insulated from oil pollution.

"Governance and Violent Struggle for Power in Mali: Implications for Nigeria" is the title of my chapter in a book published by the University for Peace Africa Programme in Addis Ababa in 2009. I argued in that book, funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre, that violent struggle for power in Mali by non-state actors has

implications for the security of citizens in Nigeria. For example, armed insurgents in Northern Nigeria have benefited from Tuareg insurgents' struggle for power in Northern Mali. The activities of this group have supported criminal gangs, arms smuggling and drug trafficking. These crimes have in turn encouraged Boko Haram insurgency through inflow of small arms and light weapons and drugs.

The chapter contributes to the reconceptualization of the struggle for power by highlighting "interest-driven political behaviour and activities of individuals and groups in a political system aimed, among others, at securing and maintaining formal political control and influence" (Allen, 2009, p.116).

I re-echoed in that chapter the maxim that "power is the subject and object of politics." This assertion is indicative of a positive role of power. Power struggle, however, is used negatively to suggest actions and behaviours contrary to the public interest (Allen, 2009, p.116). This negative view of power struggle derives from Edward Lawyer's analysis of power in which he sees it as 'structure-based capability." (Lawyer, 1992, p.17). My analysis in that chapter was based on the assumption that "unequal power relationships tend to encourage or promote hostile tactics by parties in conflict. On the other hand, equal power relationships tend to promote conciliatory tactics" (Allen, 2009, p.116). The choice of approach in relationships by parties depends on the extent of equality of power. The selection of hostile or conciliatory methods is motivated by parties' aspirations and power in pursuit of interests. Power is destructive to society when it is used to suppress popular demands. In that sense, power is even worse when the struggle, for it is aimed at satisfying narrow private interests.

## 5.0. SUMMARY

Vice Chancellor, Sir, I have so far highlighted the power dynamics between predators and preys in environmental politics in this lecture. The dominant themes in my research of environmental politics connect with power dynamics involving social movements, communities, corporations, youths, armed groups, and government. The lecture highlighted how oil is at the heart of environmental politics and deeply intertwined with abuse of power, conflict, and struggle for the development and protection of the environment.

In the intricate landscape of Nigeria's environmental politics, the power dynamics between oil companies, the government, and local communities play out like a high-stakes game of predator and prey. While a source of immense wealth, the vast oil reserves also serve as a battleground where control, entitlement, and resistance intersect.

The government and oil companies share a singular vision: the uninterrupted oil flow. This pursuit often comes at a significant cost, with environmental protection taking a backseat. Oil spills and gas flaring, harmful by-products of extraction, persist without substantial repercussions. The lack of penalties for these environmental crimes highlights a troubling reality: the formidable power wielded by the government and the oil corporations. They operate as predators, exerting influence to sidestep accountability and suppress opposition.

The extractive industry often sparks conflict, with corporations (predators) exploiting resources at the expense of communities (prey). In Africa, neo-colonial approaches treat environmental degradation as an unavoidable by-product of extractivism. Environmental justice movements are emerging to challenge these exploitative practices and advocate for genuine solutions

to the climate crisis. However, substantial policy changes may take time due to the dominance of global capitalism and slow energy system transformations.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, the Niger Delta and Nigeria, as a whole, provide us with an excellent example of how the environment matters in development and the role of power in protecting the environment. The intricate relationship between oil corporations, government regulatory failures, and the resulting insecurity speaks to the question of power. It begins by highlighting how the government's inability to regulate oil corporations effectively has led to social and environmental conditions that foster conflict in the region. This regulatory failure has profound implications for the local population, whose victimhood affects peace and manifests itself in various forms of insecurity that impact life and well-being.

Taken as a whole, the story reveals how oil extraction, regulatory shortcomings, and different types of insecurity in Nigeria and the Niger Delta are all interrelated. It advocates for improved governance and alternative energy solutions to address these pervasive issues.

## 6.0. RECOMMENDATIONS

Vice Chancellor, Sir, the abuse of power and the predatory character of environmental politics of some stakeholders in the oil industry in Nigeria can be tackled.

The energy insecurity issues which many face in Nigeria today can be reduced with a fast-track intervention by way of

governments at all levels putting money aside for piecemeal investments in the renewable energy sector.

The Section of the Petroleum Industry Act that seeks to punish host communities to oil companies by denying them funds (three percent of profit from oil business) when criminals vandalise oil facilities needs an urgent review. The review should aim to make criminals pay for the crime they commit and not innocent community people.

The federal government has policies and programmes aimed at tackling environmental problems caused by actors in the oil industry. In order to make them better fit the requirements of humans and the environment, many of them require immediate attention: an energy transition programme that takes gas as transition fuel; penalty for abandoning oil assets without due process or decommissioning; and a gas flare commercialisation programme. These policies should be reviewed to enhance their positive impact on people. For example, the use of gas as transition energy continues to undermine interest in cleaner renewable energy alternatives and opportunities that need equal attention. In addition, gas flare laws of the federal government have a major gap of making culprits to pay comfortable fines as penalties for gas flaring. This has provided room for oil companies to continue to flare the gas. More stringent penalties are needed to turn the tide.

Governors of states in the Niger Delta should commission elaborate studies of the impact of the oil and gas industry on their environment and people. They need to do what or former

Governor of Bayelsa State did by setting up an Oil and Environment Commission, charged with responsibility of studying the impact of the oil industry on the environment and people of the state. The report of the study, entitled "An Environmental Genocide" was launched on the 28th of October 2024 in Yenagoa. The findings of the study as contained in the report add to the existing body of knowledge which policy makers and the civil society can use for their work of sustained discourses of environmental justice in the entire Niger Delta region. It is instructive that the Federal Government, at an international conference on pollution and just energy transition organised by Social Action and Health of Mother Heath Foundation with support the Ford Foundation in Abuja on 30 October 2024, has pledged to collaborate with the Bayelsa State government to implement some of the findings of the study. The governors should work together, using their power of agency to reverse the destructive power of oil companies over the environment in the region.

In addition, governors should seek better access to Ecological Funds, statutorily provided for states to take care of ecological issues. Communities should have direct access to the funds in the face of troubling oil-induced environmental change.

Regulatory agencies of government charged with protecting the government from oil pollution should be strengthened to ensure they do not continue to depend on international oil companies to do their work. For example, some of the agencies of government appearing weak and unable to compel oil companies to comply with relevant environmental laws and policies have one way or the other relied on these companies to

provide them with logistical support in responding to cases of oil spills in communities or field.

Cleaning all oil- polluted places in the Niger Delta is a task that needs to be achieved. The federal government should hasten the clean-up of Ogoni currently being handled by Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) and prepare the organisation for the same role in the rest of the Niger Delta.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, it is difficult for local communities to be empowered through inclusive policies if they do not themselves realise that power is multidimensional and is accessible to everyone. Their continuous non-violent engagements with relevant government regulatory agencies and oil companies are sources of policy power or manifestation of power if they produce results that protect the environment. Non-violent local community groups have the potential to promote corporate accountability by holding both government agencies and corporations to account for abuse of power. Local communities and the civil society can increase their power in environmental decision-making processes through continuous non-violent involvement in environmental politics. Their activities should be directed at achieving environmental justice through regular advocacy and direct non-violent actions.

To reduce the risk of predatory behaviour of government agencies, corporations, individuals, and groups, a vision of nonkilling Nigeria among actors in environmental politics is required. This demands problem-solving strategies that focus on the wellbeing of human and non-human components of ecological systems. Mobilisation of nonkilling as a national philosophical strategy for environmental peacebuilding in the Niger Delta is urgently needed even in the face of a global climate crisis.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, elite struggle for power contributes to environmental insecurity. This has to change. Violent agitations for development, killing, kidnapping, banditry, food shortages, and poverty have connections to environmental politics. The present approach of addressing these problems with force and market solutions in the case of energy and climate change through multilateral commitments, need alternative approaches that focus peoples' practical struggles for improved living conditions in an age of global campaign for just energy transition.

Vice Chancellor, Sir, market forces have their place in decent societies where people respect principles. In Nigeria, these forces so far seem powerless to take care of the poor, especially where powerful members of the political class are also part of the ownership structures of the so-called private sector controlling environmental politics and policy. There is no part of the world where the government has totally surrendered its role of ensuring citizens are not unethically left at the mercy of the forces of demand and supply. Government at all levels in Nigeria should therefore be intentional about addressing problems such as food insecurity, increased poverty, and physical energy insecurity.

The Clean Development Mechanism and other market solutions to the global climate crisis which Nigeria, like other African countries, has subscribed to, is not based on any climate justice-driven analysis. Market solutions represent the power of global capital that needs to be decolonised. (Allen, 2016).

**Future Research**

I will be looking at the potential role of environmental movements in development in Africa. The growing trend of

how environmental issues are contributing to environmental activism in many countries in Africa is a key concern. I will explore the subject of power and predatory environmental policy and how it is impacting on the well-being of ecological systems and humans. My future research is expected to relate to this for specific countries, especially for those with fossil fuels in an age of much technology and much talk about a just transition to a renewable energy regime.

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# PROFESSOR FIDELIS ALLEN

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Professor Fidelis Allen was born on October 18, 1969, at the General Hospital in Joinkrama, Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers State. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Allen Okolo, sent him to Central State School, Isua Joinkrama, for his primary education, which he finished in 1981.

Allen holds a University of Ibadan Second Class Upper Division Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Education. He obtained his Master's degree in Political and Administrative Studies from University of Port Harcourt. He obtained his PhD in Political Science from University of

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Allen was employed at the University of Port Harcourt at the level of Lecturer I in 2005, and his record of service was transferred from the Rivers State College of Education. He was promoted to the rank of professor in 2018. He has occupied several offices within the University of Port Harcourt. He served as Deputy Director and later Acting Director of the Centre for Ethnic and Conflict Studies. He also served twice as acting director of the Centre for Conflict and Gender Studies. Allen was also Head of Department of Political and Administrative Studies, and he is currently Director of the University's Centre for Politics.

Professor Allen was South Africa's National Research Foundation's Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College in Durban, South Africa, in 2011. He was also Letsema Visiting Fellow at the University of Johannesburg's Institute of Pan-African Studies and Conversation in 2022. In the same vein, he was Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Environmental Futures, University of Leicester, United Kingdom, and is currently Honorary Visiting Fellow at the School of Criminology, Sociology and Social Policy in the same university. Allen also served as Teaching Fellow at the School of Pan-African Thought in the United Kingdom. He serves on the editorial board of many journals including *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies*. He is a member of Nigerian Political Science

Association (NPSA), International Political Science Association (IPSA) and Mid-West Political Science Association (MPSA) Chicago. Allen is happily married to Grace Isodiki Allen and they are blessed with three sons namely, Onisobuana, Bileoniso and Onisokinye.

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