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From Campuses to Communities: Community-Based Cultism and Local Responses in the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria

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Abstract

Campus cultism which began in Nigeria in the 50s has dispersed into residential communities. This paper examined the infiltration of cultism from campuses to residential communities in the Niger Delta region (NDR) of Nigeria. It traced the origin of cultism in the NDR, investigated the diffusion of cultism to residential communities, examined community response to it and implications of community response for peace and security of the region. Using both primary and secondary sources of data collection, the paper traced campus cultism in the NDR to the establishment of universities in the region in the 70s and 80s. Cultism dispersed into residential communities through establishment of affiliate groups in communities by major cult groups and expulsion of students from campuses for belonging to cult groups during the federal government anti-cultism campaigns in 1999. Due to the criminal activities of the cult groups in the NDR and ineptitude of the police, communities have responded by creating vigilante

groups but this has only promoted cycle of violence. The paper recommended that government should tackle community-based cultism and also strengthen the Nigeria Police Force to be responsive to insecurity.

Introduction

Secret cultism in Nigeria's tertiary institutions was a subject of intense academic discourse in the 1990s and early 2000s because of the problem posed by this menace to Nigerian institutions of higher learning during this period (Albert, 1995; Ogunbameru, 1997; Awe, 2001, Owoseni et al, 2006; Adewale, 2008; Onyeka, 2006). While cultism in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria has not abated and continues to draw the attention of scholars, it has also continued to expand beyond the campuses of higher institutions of learning into communities. This, which is yet to be given serious academic engagement, is the focus of this study. However, this study will be limited to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This study is guided by such question as: what is the origin of cultism among the youths in the Niger Delta region? How did cultism diffuse from campuses to residential communities in the region? What are the implications of community-based cult violence in the Niger Delta region communities for peace and security of region? How are the community people responding to cultism and its attendant violence in their environment? What implication does the people's response to community cultism and cult violence in their environment have for peace-building of the Niger Delta region?

Methodology

Data for this study were derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data collection for this paper was derived from the field work carried out on a larger study titled "An Assessment of Government Engagement with Armed Groups in the Niger Delta Region" and the baseline study on cult violence in Ughelli North Local Government of Delta State coordinated by the author for an NGO working in the Niger Delta Region. Several categories of people such as community members, ex-members of militant groups, NGO workers, scholars, journalists, cult members (rank and file as well as key leaders of different cult groups in the town), youth-at-risk, members of vigilante groups, security personnel, artisans, market men and women members of Joint Task Force (JTF) were interviewed. These persons were sampled using both purposive and snowballing sampling methods. Data got from the fieldwork and baseline study were veritable source of information and data for this study. Furthermore, secondary data got from books, articles, reports among others were also used for this study. Data and information got from both sources were content analysed.

What is Cultism?

The word "cult" from which "cultism" is derived was first used in 17th Century. It was borrowed from the French word "culte" which itself originated from

Latin word “cultus” which means “to worship or give reference to a deity. This means that the original meaning of the word is related to religion; an act of worship or religious ceremony. For instance, among the English, the word “cult” is used to designate activities of religious or social groups with socially deviant or novel belief and practices. However, contemporary understanding of the word has gone beyond this; it could involve or not involve it. Aguda (2007) and Ogunbameru (2007) defined cultism in a similar manner. They saw it as activities of a small group of people that are essentially shrouded in secrecy and may or may not be religious in nature.

In the Beginning: The Origin of Cultism in Nigeria

Secret cult activities are not new in the world. Virtually every society has one form of cult group or another. For instance, in America around the 19th Century, there were cult groups associated with faith healings and other forms of alternative medicine (Taylor, 1930; Fishbein, 1932). Africa is one continent with a significant number of secret cult groups in the world. It is an activity that is very common especially among the aged people in the continent. In Nigeria, almost all the ethnic groups have one secret cult group or the other. For instance, among the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria, *Ogboni* secret cult group can be found. Among the Efik in Southeastern Nigeria, the *Ekpe* secret cult has existed for a long period of time. In the South-South where there is a conglomerate of many ethnic groups, *Ekine* cult, *Amanikpo* society, *Owegbe* cult and *Egbesu* cult are some of the cult groups that exist in the region. Attachment to these cult groups served as sources of improved status and socio-economic and political security for its members (Adelola, 1997; Adewale, 2005)). In some cases, too, some of these cult groups played significant role in the local arbitration process, administration of justice and social control as in the case of *Amanikpo* society among the Ogoni people. They sometimes serve as effective means of checks and balances on the traditional institution of government. For instance, in pre-colonial Yoruba political system, the *Ogboni* cult served as check on the power of the Oba (King). Where an Oba ruled autocratically, he could be forced by the cult to go into exile or to open calabash which would lead to his death. However, these cult groups were highly traditional, culturally regulated and less harmful and violent.

The origin of secret cults in Nigerian universities can be traced to the establishment of the Pyrates Confraternity also known as National Association of Sea Dogs by Professor Wole Soyinka and six others at the University College Ibadan in the year 1952. This was formed to kick against the imitation of colonial culture and elitist behaviour among the students. As a result of its activities, the fraternity became popular among the students. However, bright and politically conscious students were often recruited as members. These students were often recruited in their second year when their first year result would have been out. Many of those who applied for membership of the confraternity were denied. For almost 20 years, Pyrates Confraternity was the only known confraternity on campus. However, in late 1960s, schism started among

members basically over the doctrine of Pyrates Confraternity and the elitist nature of its membership. Some members of the group who were expelled for failing to meet the standard came together and found the Buccaneer. From the Buccaneer, the Supreme Eiyeye Confraternity also broke out. As tertiary institutions began to expand, so also were fraternity groups expanding. Furthermore, government clampdown on legitimate students' unionism in Nigerian institutions of higher learning made student organize themselves into various forms of cult groups (Albert, 1995) and as new groups were formed, rivalry and inter-group tension began to set in. This often led to clashes and violence between these groups but they were basically limited to fistfights.

From the 1990s onward, Nigeria started experiencing explosion in the number of secret cult groups and members in Nigerian higher institutions of learning in the country. Increase in the number of cult groups and membership led to competition for space and supremacy began to lead to intense violence among the groups, leading to abrupt closure of campuses. The havoc wrecked by cultism during the period was intensified by the fact that the then military governments and their security and intelligence outfits had co-opted members of secret cult groups and used them as checks to foil anti-military government campaigns of students and staff unions in Nigerian universities. These cult groups were handsomely paid and well equipped with sophisticated weapons to be used against anti-government forces in their institutions. These weapons ended being used in inter-cult group rivalries. Thus, inter-cult rivalries which started with mere fistfights graduated to the use of sophisticated weapons. Similarly, some university Vice-Chancellors also employed the service of some members of the cult groups to attack and deal with student activists opposing them (IRIN, 2002; The Economist, 2008).

Secret cult was a campus-based activity and was usually composed of students. The various communities of cult members were usually places of refuge for them to run to whenever violence broke out in campuses. As a member of Supreme Vikings Confraternity interviewed puts it "...in those days when cult violence broke out in our school, we usually run to our communities to seek refuge..." (Interviewed on January 11, 2016 at Iwrekpoko, Ughelli North Local Government, Delta State). Thus while the campuses were boiling of cult clashes, communities were free from cult related activities to a large extent. Although, on yearly basis, members of cult groups graduated from higher institutions and go back to the society at large, the need to hide it from their parents made them conceal their cult identity back home. However, two significant events led to the dispersion of cultism from campuses to residential neighbourhoods. First was the nationwide renouncement programme organized by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1999 after a fierce face-off between cultists and students' union officials in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The then Minister of Education- Professor Tunde Adeniran- ordered that cultism be eradicated from all campuses by ending of 1999. Thus, a national renunciation programme was organized

in all campuses in the country. With this programme, many cultists renounced but for those who could not, campuses became unsafe for them. They therefore moved to residential neighbourhood to continue.

Secondly, as a result of anti-cultism campaigns in campuses, more stringent policies were made not only to curb cultism but also to give a face lift to the education sector in the country by reducing examination malpractices to the barest minimum possible and promote quality education. Thus, those caught cheating in examinations or involving in cult activities were summarily ejected from campuses but many of them went back to their neighbourhood to continue. Furthermore, this was compounded by the fact that many cult members had graduated from campuses and gone back to the larger society. And since membership is for life; even when one leaves school, it was easy for those who had passed out of campuses to also associate with them.

The Spread of Secret Cult to the Niger Delta Region

By 1970s, campus cultism had started spreading to the Niger Delta region. The first secret cult known as the Neo-Black Movement of Africa also called Black Axe was founded in University of Benin, Edo State with the aim of reviving the aspects of African culture which had been eroded by colonialism. It also aimed to fight against the oppression of black men in 1970s. By 1983, students at the University of Calabar in Cross River State founded the Eternal Fraternal Order of the Legion Consortium also known as the Klan Konfraternity. In 1984, the Supreme Vikings Confraternity (SVC) was formed in the University of Port Harcourt by former members who belonged to Buccaneer. From the late 1980s to early 1990s therefore, the contest for the control of the Niger Delta region was between these three cult groups- The Neo-Black Movement of Africa (Black Axe), Supreme Vikings Confraternity (SVC) and Klansmen Konfraternity (KKK).

The spread of cultism to residential communities can be explained in two different ways. First is the establishment of affiliate street cults in communities by mainstream cult groups. The development of cultism in the oil-rich city of Port Harcourt can be traced to this. In the University of Port Harcourt, SVC and KKK were engaged in violent clashes which spilled from the University campus into the town. Members of the rival groups found themselves being targeted by their enemies away from campus. Thus, to ensure their safety in the town and to extend their influence, the two cult groups- SVC and KKK- established affiliate street cults and recruited younger boys between ages of 14 and 18 years to join. KKK established affiliate street cult called *Deebam* (meaning be strong in pidgin English). In response, SVC established *Deewell* (meaning be well in pidgin English). However, when *Deewell* was not so active to carry out organized violence, banditry and criminality in the streets and neighbourhood of Port Harcourt city like *Deebam*, the Icelander (also known as the Germans) was formed by SVC. Thus, what had started out as a collection of harmless

university associations in University College, Ibadan had spread to the Niger Delta universities, assumed dangerous dimension, spread outside the campuses into the slum areas in the city of Port Harcourt and metamorphosed into series of violent street cults consisting of younger teenagers, many of them armed with assorted small arms and light weapons. It was not long before they moved from violent disorder to organized crime. As at 2004, the number of secret cults and gangs had risen to a hundred. The Port Harcourt Telegraph, Vol. III, No. 46, June 15-21, 2004. Pg. 2 presents the list 100 cult groups in Port Harcourt city.

Alphabetical List of Secret Cult Groups and gangs operating in Port Harcourt as at 2004

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Agbaye | 53. Mafia Lords |
| 2. Airwords | 54. Mafioso fraternity |
| 3. Amazon | 55. Malcolm X |
| 4. Baracuda | 56. Maphites/Mafite Confraternity |
| 5. Bas | 57. Mgba Mgba Brothers |
| 6. Bee International | 58. Mob Stab |
| 7. Big 20 | 59. Musketeers Fraternity |
| 8. Black Axe | 60. National Association of Adventurers |
| 9. Black Beret Fraternity | 61. National Association of Sea Dogs |
| 10. Black Brasserie | 62. Neo-Black Movement |
| 11. Black Brothers | 63. Night Mates |
| 12. Black Cat | 64. Nite Hawks |
| 13. Black Cross | 65. Nite Rovers |
| 14. Black Ladies | 66. Odu Fraternity |
| 15. Black Ofals | 67. Osiri |
| 16. Black Scorpions | 68. Ostrich Fraternity |
| 17. Black Sword | 69. Panama Pyrate |
| 18. Blanchers | 70. Phoenix |
| 19. Blood Hunters | 71. Predators |
| 20. Blood Suckers | 72. Red Devils |
| 21. Brotherhood of Blood | 73. Red Fishes |
| 22. Burkina Faso Revolution fraternity | 74. Red Sea Horse |
| 23. Canary | 75. Royal House of Peace |
| 24. Cappa Vandetto | 76. Royal Queen |
| 25. Daughter of Jezebel | 77. Sailors |
| 26. Dey Gbam | 78. Scavengers |
| 27. Dey Well | 79. Scorpion fraternity |
| 28. Dolphins | 80. Sea Viper |

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 29. Dragons | 81. Soiree Fraternity |
| 30. Dreaded Friends of Friends | 82. Soko |
| 31. Eagle Club | 83. Sunmen |
| 32. Egbe Dudu | 84. Temple of Eden Fraternity |
| 33. Eiye of Air Lord Fraternity | 85. Thomas Sankara Boys |
| 34. Elegemface | 86. Tikan Giants |
| 35. Executioners | 87. Trojan Horse Fraternity |
| 36. Fangs | 88. Truth Seekers |
| 37. FF | 89. Twin Mate |
| 38. Fliers | 90. Vikings |
| 39. Frigates | 91. Vipers |
| 40. Gentlemen's Club | 92. Vultures |
| 41. Green Beret Fraternity | 93. Walrus |
| 42. Hard Candies | 94. White Bishop |
| 43. Hell's Angels | 95. Buccaneers |
| 44. Hepos | 96. KKK Boys |
| 45. Himalayas | 97. The Third Eye Confraternity |
| 46. Icelanders | 98. White Angels |
| 47. Jaggare Confederation | 99. BA |
| 48. KGB | 100. scorpion |
| 49. King Cobra | |
| 50. Klan Klansmen Konfraternity (KKK) | |
| 51. Klu Klu Klan | |
| 52. Knite Cade | |

The second explanation to the spread of cultism to communities in the Niger Delta is the effect of the nationwide renouncement programme organized by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1999. The then Minister of Education- Professor Tunde Adeniran- ordered that cultism be eradicated from all campuses by ending of 1999. As a result, national renunciation programme was organized in all campuses in the country but many did not renounce. Thus, campuses became unsafe for them to operate as many confirmed to be members of cult groups were summarily ejected from campus. They therefore moved to residential neighbourhoods to continue. The development of cultism in Ughelli town took this dimension.

All the respondents interacted with in Ughelli town agreed that the town used to be a peaceful community before it was engulfed by cult violence. Members of different cult groups have existed in Ughelli town for a very long time. These were youths who joined the various cult groups at their campuses. However, their communities were usually places of refuge for them whenever cult-related violence broke out in their campuses. Many of them also kept the membership of their cult groups away from their parents. As a result, violence usually did not ensue among them

within their communities. As time went on, those who belonged to the same cult groups from different campuses expelled from higher institutions for belonging to cult groups during the federal government anti-corruption campaign which commenced in 2000 or graduated from higher institutions started returning to the community. They began to identify with themselves and meet. At first, the gathering of these cult members in the community often pitched these groups and the police against each other. For instance, as far back as 1983, there was a face-off between the police and members of Pyrates Confraternity group at Oharisi Primary School in Ughelli leading to the death of 21 cult members. Information had gone to the police that a cult group was meeting in the night at the primary school. Thus, Police went there to disrupt their meeting. This led to a face-off between the group and police (Key informant interview conducted on 13th January 2016 at Afiesere). Later, these cult groups especially Supreme Vikings Confraternity, Black Axe and Mafite started contest for the control of Ughelli town. To increase their membership in the community, all the cult groups especially the three basic ones established junior wings usually comprise of primary and secondary school students from which potential members are recruited into the main cult groups. Supreme Vikings Confraternity got Junior Vikings Confraternity, Black Axe got The Darkest Confraternity while Mafite got Royale Confraternity. Special jungles exist in the town where new recruits are initiated into cultism. Their initiation often commences with swearing of oath of allegiance and secrecy made with concoction mixed with blood. Other forms of initiation involve spiritual fortification, training in the tactics of physical combat, use of firearms among others. The arms used by cult members are got from several sources such as politicians seeking electoral victories, market purchase of Awka-made cut-to-size guns, rent or purchase from black markets or security personnel through monthly dues and levies or contributions by cult members, disarmament of security personnel or rival cult members during face-off among others.

During an interview session with a key member of Black Axe Confraternity in Ughelli town, he said that:

My brother, don't let anybody deceive you. Let me tell you the truth today. In this town, everybody is involved in the street game (referring to cultism) in one way or the other. Even if they are not fully active, they know about it and they follow it up (Key informant interview held on January 12th, 2016).

What the respondent was saying in essence is that virtually everybody in Ughelli town is involved in cultism in one way or the other and at different levels. While some, especially the matured ones, are passively involved probably due to maturity and willingness to protect their public image, the young boys are active and very destructive. Virtually all the communities in the Niger Delta region especially the core Niger Delta states are now bases for grooming cultists.

Activities of Members of Secret Cults in Niger Delta Communities

Cultism has served some beneficial functions to the Niger Delta communities especially where there is no police presence. For instance, in suburb riverine communities where there is no presence of government security agents, members of cult groups were empowered by the community to provide security for the people and properties of the community. A good example of this was in Okrika community of Rivers State where infiltration of cult groups was recorded in late 80s and early 90s. Members of street cults created by mainstream campus cult groups like SVC and KKK (i.e Deebam, Deewel and Iceland) were used by the community as security guides to protect the community people against incessant crime and violence. Ateke Tom, the leader of Iceland cult group, was empowered by the Okrika community to lead the Okrika Community Vigilante. Under his leadership of the community vigilante, Ateke Tom was able to neutralize the local mafia that had taken over Okrika and restored security to the community. His ability to ensure security in the face of the failure of the police to maintain law and order made him to be recognized by the local people and that gave him popularity in Okrika. His success in providing security for the Okrika people sold him to oil companies who began to hire him for protection of vessels and oil facilities. It was not long before Ateke Tom turned the Okrika Community Vigilante into Niger Delta Vigilante Service (NDVS) by annexing several other street cult groups to his main cult group (Key Informant Interview conducted on 25th, April, 2014 at Port Harcourt, Rivers State; see also Joab-Peterside, 2007).

Apart from this, cult groups in communities in the Niger Delta region are involved in series of activities that are threats to peace and security of the region. Their role in armed insurgency in the Niger Delta region cannot be over-emphasized. Many of the militant groups in the region such as Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta region (MEND), Niger Delta Vigilante Service (NDVS), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) among others recruited members of the street cult groups as combatants (Wellington, 2007; Asuni, 2009). For instance, the leader of The Outlaws, one of the street cult groups in Port Harcourt City- Soboma George was co-opted as a commander for Eastern MEND based in Rivers State. He accepted the federal government amnesty in 2009 before he was ambushed and killed by his subjects in August 2010. Similarly, Ateke's NDVS was form by the amalgamation of various street and university cult groups such as Icелander (the Germans), Greenlander and KKK. So also was Asari's NDPVF formed by merging of various street cult groups in Port Harcourt such as Deebam, Black Axe and some members of the Greenlander who fell out with Ateke Tom. Even the leaders of these militant groups themselves were revered cult members. For instance, Ateke Tom who was the leader of NDVS was a member and later the leader of street cult group known in Port Harcourt as the Icелander. Asari Dokubo too was a member of secret cult in the University of Calabar before he was rusticated (Key Informant Interview conducted on 25th, April, 2014 at

Port Harcourt, Rivers State). Government Ekpemukpolo also known as Tom Polo who was the brain behind the formation of MEND in 2006 was a revered priest of *Egbesu* cult.

Apart from being involved in militancy and insurgency in the Niger Delta region, the various street cults are involved in inter-cult group violence usually cause by attempt to outweigh another cult group over the control of space in the city or town. In a community called *Bodo* in River State, the contest for space between Deebam and Deewell cult groups resulted in cult clashes that lead to the death of over 42 people in 2007 (Isumonah, 2012). In Ughelli town, the contest for the control of the town is between SVC, Black Axe and Mafite confraternities. In the course of this contest, over 40 people were killed within the 3rd quarter of 2015 (Interview with Project Manager of Academic Associates PeaceWorks on February 3rd, 2016). Members of these cult groups also used the orchestrated cult clashes to loot people's property especially stores, shops, and houses. They are also involved in armed robbery, theft, oil-bunkering, kidnapping and piracy to create fear in the minds of the inhabitants. As a result of this cult violence in Ughelli town, socio-economic activities end by 6p.m.

Local Responses to Community-based Cultism in the Niger Delta

The act of cultism in the Niger Delta is a security threat to lives and properties of the people which the state has the responsibility to protect. The agency of the state in charge of security of lives and properties is the Nigeria Police Force. However, on several occasions, the police have been found wanting in providing security to the people. In some cases, the people believe that the police connive with members of cult groups to unleash violence on the people and rob them of their properties by lending them guns or refusing to answer distress calls from people whenever they are under the siege of the cult members. They expressed further that when cult violence or any other crime is perpetrated, the police often use it as an excuse to arrest innocent citizens from whom they collect huge amount of money to release them on bail. The people also alleged that whenever a suspected criminal is arrested by the police, he is released immediately after he is bailed by his people or members of his cult group. Such a person returns to the community more hardened and willing to harm those who have orchestrated his arrest by the police. During an interview session with a trader at Ughelli market on the role of the police in the containment of the cult violence in Ughelli town, her opinion was that "...I am sure the police have a hand in all the crises in the town". She was further interrogated on why she thought so, she opened-up by saying that:

I think so because when a suspect is arrested, before you know, he is released. When they come out of the cell, they begin to go after those who raised alarm that led to their arrest. We also know that the guns they used are from the police. That is why they do not respond to

distress call until the crime has been committed and perpetrators absconded (Interviewed at Otor-Iwhreko on January 9th, 2016).

Similarly, a businesswoman interviewed at Otor-Iwhreko also responded in a similar manner to the above. When asked if she could trust and report any matter to the police, she answered in the negative. Her reason is stated below:

I know that some of the police aid these boys in some ways. Even when a suspect is arrested and handed over to the police, after collecting money from those involved, the suspect will be released. When such a person comes back, he returns to crime. Reporting to the police is a waste of time and doing so expose me to risk.

In essence, what these quotations about show is that there is a breakdown of trust between the police and the community people in the Niger Delta region. The people think that the police are inept and incompetent to provide security for them. As a result, communities have stepped up to address the insecurity by forming vigilante groups and arming them with assorted weapons to confront the street cult members and other sundry criminals. In the slums of Okrika community where the problem of secret cultism is a common phenomenon, a vigilante group known as the Peace Makers initially formed to defend the interest of the Okrika community against Eleme people during the Eleme/Okrika crisis was armed by the community to protect the people. Similarly, in Ughelli town where street cultism has stuck socio-economic activities, series of vigilante groups are formed to provide security for the inhabitants.

Implication of Local Response to Community-Based Cultism for Peace and Security in the Niger Delta region

While the formation of vigilante groups by communities affected is brought about by ineffectiveness of the state security agencies, the use of these vigilante groups by the communities is like curing evil with evil. Studies on vigilante security in Nigeria have pointed out that vigilante groups formed by communities in response to insecurity often later pose serious threat to public order and social stability in the course of their engagement with crimes and violence (Last, 2008; Nolte, 2007; Harnischfeger, 2003, Pratten, 2008).

The Niger Delta region is one of the places with several inter-communal/intra-communal conflicts due to oil exploration in the region. Weapons in the reach of the community vigilante groups are often transferred into various inter-/intra-communal conflicts thus aiding violence which has serious implications for peacebuilding. Apart from this, some of the leaders of these vigilante groups have a cordial relationship with armed robbers and therefore rent community weapons to them. This helps to further promote insecurity and crimes in local communities. In 2008, a vigilante leader in charge of Kono Boue community weaponry was arrested by the Joint Task Force for

renting community weapons to armed robbers (Nyiayaana, 2015). Youths who are members of these vigilante groups have exploited the opportunity of being members of the vigilante groups and the fact that they poses arms to challenge the authorities of the chiefs and elders and organize parallel leadership in the community. Similarly, these members of the community vigilante often carry out jungle justice on their victims without thorough investigation. For instance, in October 2012, four students of University of Port Harcourt suspected to be cult members were brutally murdered by the Aluu community vigilante group in Ikwerre on allegation of armed robbery. They are also involved in accidental discharge and are usually in constant confrontation with state security agencies especially the police as a result of clash of duty. Furthermore, the oil politics and the elites' competition for political power and wealth of the region often interfere with the activities of the vigilante groups- promotion of collective community security interest. All these promote violence and pose significant threat to sustainable peace-building and security of communities in the Niger Delta region.

Conclusion

This study has shown how cultism infiltrates Niger Delta communities from the campuses and what the responses of the communities affected are especially in the context of the ineptitude of the Nigeria Police personnel. Unfortunately, the infiltration of cultism to communities is not only limited to the Niger Delta region. In Epe, Lagos State, street cultism is also on the rise. Over 10 people were killed in the community as a result of inter-cult clashes in the community in May 2016. The only difference between community inter-cult clashes in Niger Delta and elsewhere in Nigeria is that the region is very fragile due largely to proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Government must make effort to address community-based cultism squarely the way it addressed campus cultism in early 2000s. Government should also strengthen the Nigeria Police to be responsive to insecurity. Ineptitude of the Nigerian Police will continue to encourage self-help and vigilante security by the people.

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