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**An Essay on Violent Conflict on the Niger Delta**

**The world is a puzzle but the puzzle of all puzzles is**

**man. Nothing that shows this nature of man more than his**

**behaviour, which is full of contradictions. He loves and as well**

**hates, builds and as well destroys, gathers and as well scatters,**

**purifies and as well corrupts, refines and as well defiles, praises**

**and as well condemns, etc, in his bid to make one thing or the**

**other out of his wealthy-wretched existence. His whole existence**

**is mostly informed by these contradictory actions of his, which**

**have made him a big riddle. The focus of this work is on**

**violence, one aspect of his behaviours, which exemplifies so**

**much his enigmatic life. Man wherever he is, shows signs of**

**violence either overtly or covertly in words or actions. He is**

**either fighting or preparing to fight; either he is moody counting**

**his loses of past fight or busy celebrating the dividends of his**

**pyrrhic victory. Nigerians have often been roasted in**

**the flame of violence. What is the root cause of this violence?**

**What prices have Nigerians been paying for it? Is there anything**

**that can be done to avert it completely or reduce the rate at which**

**it occurs? These are main questions to be addressed.**

What is violence? The term violence is derived from

another term violate which is its verb form. To violate means

among other things: to hurt, injure, break, disobey, infringe,

invade, desecrate, pollute, profane, abuse, debauch, defile,

deflower, outrage, ravish, transgress, damage, etc. Each of these

synonyms of ‘to violate’ brings out the meaning of violence.

Thus simply put violence means an act of destruction-any act of

man that involves willful destruction. Man’s belonging which

could be destroyed range from his dreams, his work, his property,

his freedom, his rights, his dignity, his moral principles, his life,

his beliefs to other things he values, cherishes and works for their

enhancement, advancement and protection.Nigeria is a human society as well as a sovereign state.

Like every human society, it is a collection of people who have

agreed to live, work and share their benefits and burdens of life

together in their efforts to realize goals of their well being. They

have realized that the goals of their well being, are easier and

better attained in their joint efforts than in their separate efforts.

So, human society (Nigeria inclusive) came into being solely to

help its members to achieve their individual and collective goals.

The overruling goal is that of their well-being. Their well-being

is the purpose of their coming together to live and work for its

attainment.In Nigeria incidents of violence are legion. Just a few

will be mentioned as it is not in doubt that Nigeria has been

bedeviled by this human virus. What is most important is how it

can be stopped or reduced. The first incident of violence that

flashed past the researcher’s mind is slave trade. All of the events

that have occurred in human history the one that has degraded,

deformed and distorted human dignity in a large scale is slave

trade. This alone has questioned, dismissed and made a mockery

of man’s claim to rationality, knowledge and civilization. In that

scene man’s inhumanity to man was given full expression. For in

it, man made his fellowman a cargo, an object, a good, a toy to be

used and discarded at will. In the hands of those who introduced

this inhuman trade animal pets were treated with much love,

respect and dignity than human cargos that could be stubborn at

times. It is this man’s inhumanity to man exhibited in various

forms that made God to weep and to regret to have made man.The second incident is imperialism with its offshoot-

colonialism. Imperialism as an economic and political theory was

formulated in Europe to serve as “the rule of the powerful

monopolies, trusts, combines and cartels controlled by the

financial oligarchies of the various European countries, along

with the consequent reduction of the market competition which

characterized the earlier periods of capitalism. Abroad, for

example, Africa, imperialism combined these features with

foreign European control of the local apparatus of the state”

(Nnoli, 1980:1).