

Razed, repressed and bought off: The demobilization of the Ogoni protest campaign in the Niger Delta

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Abstract: This study examines the demobilization of the Ogoni protest campaign in the oil producing Niger Delta region of Nigeria in the mid-1990s. The contentious politics literature suggest that protest campaigns demobilize as a consequence of the polarization between radical and moderate protesters. In this study, we offer a different causal mechanism and argue that protest campaigns can demobilize before such indiscriminate repression. Moreover, states can prevent the subsequent radicalization of a protest campaign followed by harsh repression by coopting the radicals and the remaining moderate elites while continuing to use repression to prevent collective action. Our conclusion assesses how relations between extractive industry firms and their local host communities have or have not changed in the twenty years since the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1995.

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Introduction

On January 4, 1993, around 300,000 Ogoni people in Rivers State, Nigeria peacefully protested against the environmental devastation of their land caused by the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC), the Nigerian subsidiary of Royal Dutch/Shell (hereafter, Shell). These protests, under the leadership of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) also expressed the Ogoni peoples' right to self-determination, including greater control over the exploitation of the natural resources (oil) found on their lands. The protest campaign succeeded in securing both mass and international support, and it lasted more than two years under a highly repressive military dictatorship. The campaign demobilized rapidly when the Nigerian military dictatorship executed the leader of the protest campaign, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders on November 10, 1995.

This study examines the dynamics of the demobilization of the Ogoni protest campaign. We argue that government's brutal and indiscriminate repression of moderate, nonviolent activists and its subsequent cooptation of the remaining opposition prevented the protest campaign from diffusing widely to different oil-producing communities and going through an upscale shift. Typically, social movement scholars argue that protest campaigns demobilize as a consequence of the polarization between radical and moderate protesters. In this study, we offer a different causal mechanism and argue that protest campaigns can demobilize before such polarization occurs if states respond to the expansion of a protest campaign with brutal and indiscriminate repression. Moreover, social movement scholars also contend that the brutal repression of nonviolent tactics usually leads to the radicalization of protest campaigns. Here, we demonstrate that states can prevent this radicalization from becoming a major challenge by

coopting the radicals and leading moderate elites while continuing to repress the bulk of the moderates.

To examine the demobilization of the Ogoni protest campaign, we employ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's (2001) *Dynamics of Contention* framework. As discussed below, this framework is designed to identify crucial relational mechanisms and processes that shape the trajectory of campaigns by breaking the processes of specific campaigns down into their constituent mechanisms. A major advantage of using this framework is that it takes the contingent and endogenous aspects of protest campaigns into account while simultaneously allowing for the identification of common mechanisms that shape various processes of protest campaigns.

We therefore investigate the mechanisms that were at play in the mid-1990s Ogoni campaign and examine how certain mechanisms were critical in explaining the demobilization process. Even though our focus is on the demobilization of the campaign, we also look at the mechanisms throughout the mobilization phase in order to understand better the point at which demobilization began (Tarrow 1998). If we can understand the dynamics of the expansion of the Ogoni campaign and pinpoint the turning point in which the campaign changed course and began to demobilize, we can identify the mechanisms (or their lack of) that triggered this change more effectively.

The examination of the Ogoni protest campaign, therefore, contributes to the literature in three major ways. First, this study contributes to the literature on extractive industries and the "resource curse" by focusing on the emergence and subsequent demobilization of one of the most effective non-violent indigenous protest movements seeking to change the political economy and environmental impacts of oil production the world has yet seen. The January 4,

1993 mass protests across Ogoniland remain the largest peaceful demonstrations ever held against an oil company and the Ogoni claim to be “the first indigenous people in the history of our planet to force a transnational oil company to leave our land by peaceful means” (Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People 1998). There is a vast, growing and valuable literature on the Ogoni more specifically and the Niger Delta more generally which touches on many themes closely related to the focus of this study. Numerous studies have assessed the Ogoni or Niger Delta self-determination claims (Ejobowah 2000, Osaghae 1995, Senewo 2015) while Frynas (2001) convincingly highlights some of the corporate and state responses to the protests we emphasize in this study. A number of studies have highlighted the corporate role in violence and human rights violations against the oil-producing communities (Manby 1999, Pegg 1999) and others have analyzed the turn toward violence or the growth of militant insurgency in the Niger Delta (Human Rights Watch 2005, Ikelegbe 2001, International Crisis Group 2006). Obi (2014:150) emphasizes the increasingly fluid boundaries in the Niger Delta between resistance, militancy and criminality while Ukiwo’s (2007) work on how the turn toward militancy is specifically connected to a consistent failure to meet peaceful demands is particularly relevant for some of the arguments advanced in this study. None of these studies, however, have employed a contentious politics framework to study the demobilization of a resource-focused non-violent protest movement or examine how resource abundance shapes the response of states and other external actors to protests by oil-producing communities. In doing this with the Ogoni campaign, we seek to address Obi’s (2014:148) critique that “explanations of conflict in oil-rich contexts should be more nuanced, historically-rooted and context-specific.”

Second, this study examines the dynamics of demobilization which have traditionally been understudied in the contentious politics literature. Most studies on protests focus on factors

that contribute to the emergence or the expansion of the scale and scope of protest activities (Koopmans 1997, McAdam 1983, McAdam, et al. 2001, Tarrow 1998, Tilly 1978). Third, it offers a different understanding of the effects of repression and accommodation on the demobilization of a protest campaign. Scholars have shown that states usually repress radicals and accommodate moderates to increase the cost of violent collective action. However, the demobilization of the Ogoni campaign shows that states can also brutally repress the moderates and, subsequently, coopt the radicals and some moderate elites, leading to the campaign's demobilization.

The remainder of this study comprises five main sections. First, we lay out the conceptual foundations of demobilization by explaining the main components of the *Dynamics of Contention* (McAdam, et al. 2001) framework and highlighting the specific causal mechanisms advanced in this study. Second, we explain McAdam et al.'s (2001) mechanisms and processes framework and highlight the specific mechanisms and processes we believe are particularly relevant in the Ogoni case. Third, before proceeding to the analysis, we provide a brief case study background on Ken Saro-Wiwa, MOSOP and the Ogoni campaign. Fourth, our analysis section (presented in four parts) examines the Ogoni protest campaign by dissecting it into the relevant mechanisms and processes and identifying why the campaign demobilized. Finally, in our concluding section, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings.

Demobilization from a Dynamic Perspective

In this study, we refer to demobilization as a decrease in the scale and scope of protest activity (Tarrow 1998:147). Demobilization does not necessarily mean that protest activity

comes to a complete halt; but it does mean that campaign activity slows down, its resources decline and its potential to challenge the state diminishes significantly.

Demobilization is a process as it involves sequences of interactions among actors, including campaign leaders, activists, the mass public and the state. Among the few scholars that have studied demobilization, Tarrow (1989) and della Porta and Tarrow (1986) argue that it is the inevitable outcome of the expansion of a protest campaign and is largely driven by the polarization between the moderates and radicals within the campaign. When protest campaigns first emerge, disruptive protests diffuse to different locations and segments of the society. Competition for mass support intensifies as both established groups, such as trade unions or political parties, and new groups join the campaign. In the meantime, the early enthusiasm for protesting wanes over time and the personal costs of participation begin to wear people down. The decline in participation further encourages group competition for mass support. While moderates lead the shift toward more conventional forms of collective action such as strikes and demonstrations, smaller and newer groups turn radical as they employ violent tactics in an attempt to distinguish themselves from the moderates. The state begins to repress the radicals selectively while accommodating the moderates, reinforcing the polarization between these groups. Faced with repression, the radicals resort to more violent tactics, resulting in a further withdrawal of public support. The split between institutionalization and radicalization eventually leads to the end of the protest campaign (Tarrow 1989).

We, however, offer an alternative causal path to demobilization. We argue that if the state brutally represses the moderates even before a significant polarization between the radicals and the moderates emerges, the state deters the moderates and demobilizes the campaign. After repressing the moderates, the state can also circumvent any attempts by the radicals to start a

violent campaign by coopting them. Moreover, while the state continues to repress the moderates, it also coopts some remaining nonviolent elites to prevent any future mobilization. In other words, in this study, we demonstrate that the brutal repression of moderates can be an effective strategy for the state to employ in order to demobilize a campaign, particularly if it is coupled with the cooptation of some moderate leaders and the violent radicals that emerge in its aftermath.

The causal mechanism we offer contrasts with other mechanisms advanced in the literature on protest campaigns. Several studies have shown that the repression of nonviolent protesters has a potential to “backfire” as repression delegitimizes the state and motivates more people to join the nonviolent campaign (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, Francisco 1995, Rasler 1996). Alternatively, protesters substitute nonviolent tactics with violent ones when repression increases the cost of nonviolent collective action (Lichbach 1987). Furthermore, repression can also have a long term escalatory effect even if it initially deters protests by imposing costs on collective action. The deterrent effect of the repression of nonviolent protests can be neutralized, or even reversed, if protesters are directly exposed to repression, are members of informal associations such as unions or churches and perceive repression to be illegitimate. As a result of their interactions with other activists who believe that violence is the only option left to oppose the state, protesters might join more radical groups and continue to challenge the state through more violent means, a process referred to as “micromobilization” (White 1989). Finally, accommodation of the opposition is likely to increase mass action as it signals that the opposition has a chance to succeed (Rasler 1996). In contrast to these studies that emphasize the escalatory effects of repression and accommodation, we maintain that repression can also lead to the demobilization of a nonviolent protest campaign under three specific conditions: 1) if repression

is applied before nonviolent protests diffuse widely to other localities and go through an upscale shift; 2) if repression is extremely brutal; and 3) if the potential escalatory effects of brutal repression are bypassed by the cooptation of the radicals and some moderate leaders. Therefore, we demonstrate that states can effectively avoid the backfire effect of repression even if the campaign remains overwhelmingly nonviolent, and further circumvent the escalation of the campaign by pulling radicals into mainstream politics or simply paying them off. Without a backfire effect from repression and without the escalation of violence, the campaign then demobilizes.

So, why are the backfire, substitution, micromobilization or accommodation mechanisms not triggered in this particular case? We believe that the answer to this question lies in the dynamic, endogenous, and complex nature of protest campaigns which we examine by employing McAdam, et al.'s (2001) *Dynamics of Contention* framework. This framework is based on dissecting contention into relational mechanisms and processes and identifying which mechanisms, singlehandedly or in combination with others, shape contentious processes. Accordingly, relational mechanisms are causal mechanisms that alter relations among people, groups, and interpersonal networks, while processes refer to politically contentious actions that are transformative and have large scale consequences (McAdam, et al. 2001, Rasler forthcoming). In examining the dynamics of the Ogoni protest campaign, we specifically treat relational mechanisms as the links between large scale transformations or processes such as mobilization and demobilization.

Processes: Mobilization, Coalition Formation, Upscale Shift, and Demobilization

Demobilization is contingent on earlier processes of contention: a protest campaign demobilizes only after it mobilizes. Therefore, we need to look at how mobilization evolves and the mechanisms that shape the upswing phase of a protest campaign in order to understand better when and how demobilization begins.

Contentious politics scholars have often identified the sequence of processes throughout the upswing phase of protest campaigns as mobilization, coalition formation, and upscale shift (della Porta and Tarrow 1986, Koopmans 1993, McAdam, et al. 2001, Rasler forthcoming, Tarrow 1989). Mobilization is an increase in the resources available to groups for collective action (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:217). Typically, an existing organization initiates protest activity and seeks to attract more participants. As participation increases, protests diffuse to other groups incorporating previously distinct actors such as students, peasants, workers, elites, or women's groups, which is the coalition formation process. Coalition formation is the creation of coordinated action between two or more previously distinct actors (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:216). As groups continue to mobilize and build coalitions, protests then diffuse to new geographical sites and new actors, elevating the scale of protests, which is the upscale shift process (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:217).

Theoretically, campaigns can demobilize either right after the initial mobilization, after the process of coalition formation, or after the process of upscale shift. Most scholars who have studied demobilization have examined cases where mobilization and coalition formation led to a major upscale shift, expanding protests to a large number of people at various locations (Piven and Cloward 1977, Tarrow 1989). For Piven and Cloward (1977), the disruptive and unpredictable nature of mass protests forces governments to make concessions to the protesters

in an attempt to coopt them. Once protests become more institutionalized, the early enthusiasm decreases and the campaign demobilizes. For Tarrow (1989), the competition for mass support among the newly incorporated groups leads to the emergence of radical groups during the upscale shift process. The polarization between the radicals and the moderates during the upscale shift is followed by demobilization.

In the Ogoni case, demobilization took place after the coalition building process. In other words, the campaign demobilized before sustained protests spread widely to other locations in the Niger Delta (isolated or sporadic protests occurred in other areas of the Niger Delta both before and during the Ogoni mobilization) and before a radical wing emerged among the protesters (in some senses, the National Youth Council of the Ogoni People (NYCOP) was the radical wing of MOSOP but it remained largely nonviolent and did not split from MOSOP). Some conservative leaders left MOSOP in 1993 but their departures did not significantly affect the trajectory of the protest movement. So, what relational mechanisms affected the triggering of the demobilization process after the coalition building process?

In the context of the Ogoni protest campaign, we examine four relational mechanisms and their effects on demobilization: certification, brokerage, repression, and cooptation. We demonstrate that certification and brokerage intensified the mobilization and coalition building processes, but the combination of repression and cooptation triggered the process of demobilization before an upscale shift could occur. Certification is an external authority's signal of its readiness to recognize and support the existence and claims of a political actor (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:215). Certification can come from a variety of different sources. It could potentially come from an intergovernmental organization which adopts or highlights the issue(s) the campaign is raising. It could come from the domestic government or elements within it

granting legitimacy to some of the protesters' demands. It might also come from the diplomatic support of a foreign government or it could result from the campaigning or advocacy work of a domestic or international non-governmental organization (NGO).

Brokerage refers to the production of a new connection between previously unconnected or weakly connected sites (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:215). In contrast to certification which merely bestows some degree of legitimacy on the protesters' demands, brokerage involves previously disparate groups beginning to work together on the same campaign. As with certification, though, brokerage can happen in a variety of different ways. Hypothetically, an environmental movement could enlist the support of a labor union in promoting its cause or vice versa. A protest movement initiated by students could secure more active support from middle class professionals. Brokerage can also operate transnationally as a campaign in one country picks up active support from NGOs in other countries.

Repression is any action by authorities that increases the actual or potential cost of an actor's claim making (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:15). Repression can range from the imposition of curfews or restrictions on gatherings to selective arrests of leaders or mass arrests of protesters to the use of varying levels of violence against the protesters or their leaders.

Cooptation is the incorporation of a previously excluded political actor into some center of power (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:215). Cooptation is a mechanism which states typically use to tame or moderate potential rivals by enabling them to benefit directly from the existing political system.

Figure 1 illustrates the trajectory of the Ogoni campaign based on the relational mechanisms and processes identified. The analytical narrative that follows focuses on explaining how each mechanism is related to the demobilization process.

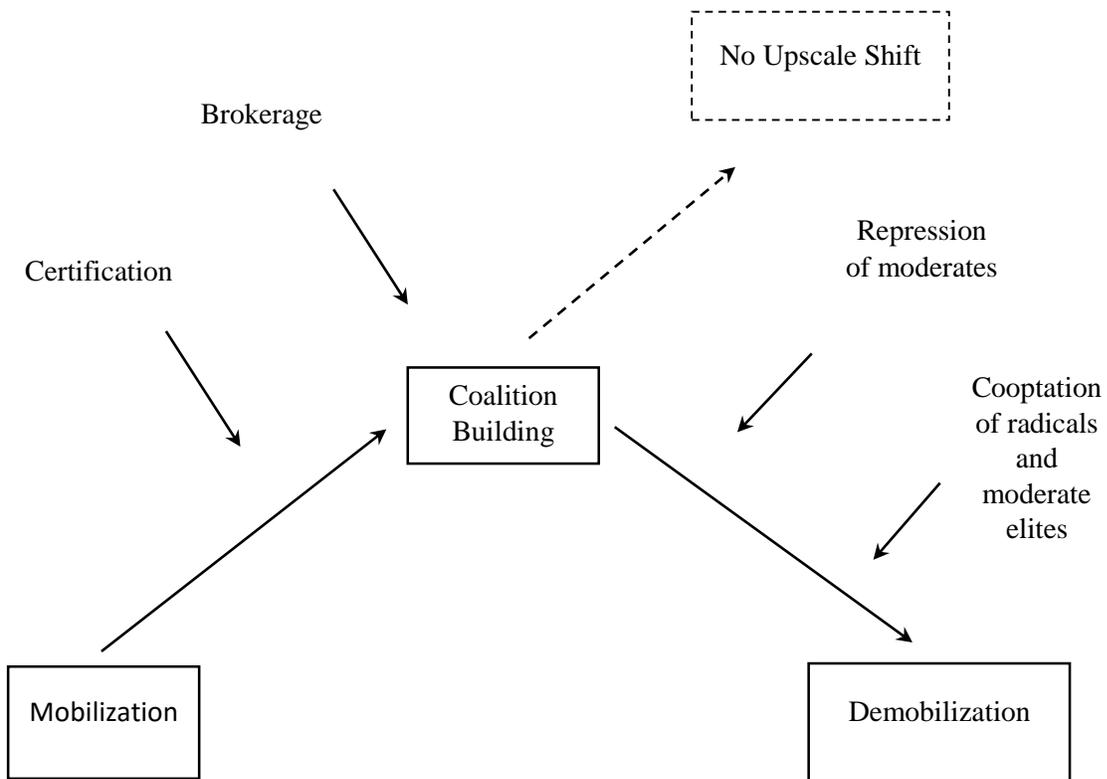


Figure 1: Mechanisms and Processes in the Ogoni Protest Campaign

Background on the Ogoni, Ken Saro-Wiwa and the MOSOP Campaign

The Ogoni people live on approximately 400 square miles or 1,000 square kilometers of land located east of Port Harcourt in Rivers State, Nigeria. Traditionally, they are divided into six different kingdoms (Babbe, Eleme, Gokana, Ken-Khana, Nyo-Khana and Tai). In Nigeria's current political system, they are divided into four local government authorities (Eleme, Gokana, Khana and Tai). According to Nigeria's 2006 census, there were about 832,000 people living in Ogoni (United Nations Environmental Program 2011:22-24).

Oil was first discovered in Ogoni at Bomu in 1958. According to Shell Oil's own figures, 634 million barrels of oil worth US\$ 5.2 billion were taken from Ogoniland from 1958 – 1993 (Detheridge and Pepple 1998:481) when production was halted in response to the highly successful MOSOP-led protest campaign. At the time SPDC halted production in Ogoni in 1993, the company had 12 oil fields, five flow stations and a flow station capacity of 185,000 barrels per day (b/d) in Ogoni (United Nations Environmental Program 2011:24). Although Ogoni has not been actively producing oil since 1993, the area is still crisscrossed by oil pipelines, including the 120,000 – 150,000 b/d Trans-Niger pipeline (United Nations Environmental Program 2011:116), two major spills from which devastated Bodo Creek in Ogoni in 2008-2009 (Pegg and Zabbey 2013).

Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa was born in Bori, Ogoni on October 10, 1941. His family's ancestral home is in the Ogoni village of Bane. During the Biafran civil war, Saro-Wiwa escaped from Ogoni (in Biafra) and crossed over to the federal side where he became an outspoken opponent of secession and was appointed by the federal government as Civilian Administrator for the oil port of Bonny. Prior to the MOSOP protest campaign in the 1990s, he was perhaps

best known to Nigerians as the writer and producer of the hit 1980s TV show *Basi and Company*. *Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English* is typically seen as his finest literary work.

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) was founded in 1990 with Dr. Garrick Leton as its first president and Ken Saro-Wiwa as its spokesperson. MOSOP essentially operated as a coordinating umbrella organization whose membership drew from various sub-organizations such as the National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP), the Federation of Ogoni Women's Association (FOWA), the Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers (COTRA) and the Ogoni Council of Churches (OCC). MOSOP conceived itself as a mass non-violent social movement and stridently refrained from engaging in partisan politics (Bob 2005:63).

Even before MOSOP was officially launched, “the seminal document in the Ogoni struggle” (Bob 2005:64), the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) was adopted on August 26, 1990 (see Senewo, this volume for more on the OBR). Largely written by Saro-Wiwa, the OBR asserted the long-standing historical grievances of the Ogoni people, highlighted their distinct lack of benefits from oil production, and noted some of the adverse environmental and social consequences of oil production on their land. The OBR's main posited remedy for these ailments was that the Ogoni people “be granted POLITICAL AUTONOMY to participate in the affairs of the Republic as a distinct and separate unit by whatever name called” with political autonomy defined as including “the right to the control and use of a fair proportion of OGONI economic resources for Ogoni development,” better representation in Nigerian national institutions, environmental protection and linguistic, cultural and religious rights (all caps in original) (Ogoni Bill of Rights 1990/1991).

Dissatisfied with the lack of response to their demands in the OBR, in December 1991, the Ogoni adopted an addendum to the OBR that authorized MOSOP “to make representation, for as long as these injustices continue, to... all international bodies which have a role to play in the preservation of our nationality” (Ogoni Bill of Rights 1990/1991). Convinced that the Nigerian government lacked the ability or will to solve the problem, Saro-Wiwa began to seek international support (Saro-Wiwa 1995:131-32). Ultimately, the OBR served as a template that was adopted in somewhat modified form by various other groups in the Niger Delta as seen in such documents as the Ikwerre Rescue Charter, the Kaiama Declaration of the Ijaw People and the Oron Bill of Rights.

A number of features of the MOSOP-led Ogoni protest campaign in the early-mid 1990s contributed to its popularity among the Ogonis as well as various international actors and, in some cases, made it seem more threatening to the oil companies and the Nigerian state. First, the Ogoni campaign was theoretically conceived and overwhelmingly practiced as a peaceful, non-violent campaign. Saro-Wiwa studied Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. and sincerely believed that non-violent protest was the most effective option available to the Ogoni. MOSOP protests were often led by women marching in front to signal non-violence and featured protesters carrying twigs or leaves to show that they were unarmed. This is not to suggest that Ogonis never used violence. Rather, it is to suggest, in Bob’s (2005:106) phrasing that “although some Ogonis used violence, these unusual events contravened MOSOP policy and were quickly condemned by the leadership.” The nonviolent nature of the campaign increased its popularity as people are more likely to participate and commit to nonviolent campaigns as opposed to violent ones, which require a higher level of commitment (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011).

Second, the Ogoni demand for political autonomy was a demand for non-secessionist self-determination. As noted, Saro-Wiwa escaped from Biafra and worked for the federal government during the Biafran civil war. Writing in 1968, Saro-Wiwa addressed the question “What does the future hold for the Ogoni nation?” and answered “First and foremost, the Federal Republic of Nigeria.... We have bound ourselves irrevocably to this cause. It is only within the context of a Federal Nigeria that our aspirations will be legitimized and our interests fully protected” (Saro-Wiwa 1968:19). The OBR’s demand for political autonomy includes “adequate and direct representation as of right in all Nigerian national institutions” and its addendum refers to the Ogoni people’s “just struggle for their rights within the Federal Republic of Nigeria.” Referencing this language, Saro-Wiwa subsequently argued that “Only an idiot or a man fishing for trouble could ever construct those words as secessionist” (Saro-Wiwa 1995:154). The goal of self-determination as opposed to secession was another factor that contributed to the campaign’s popularity as it did not suggest the enormous suffering that Nigerians associated with the secessionist Biafran civil war.

Third, over time, the relatively heavy emphasis on political autonomy within Nigeria in the OBR was increasingly augmented by an emphasis on environmental rights and Ogoni suffering due to environmental degradation. The environmental impacts of oil exploration and production are significant and varied. They include clearing land for seismic operations, disposing of drilling waste, oil spills and the production of greenhouse gases from gas flaring. Environmental impacts can also occur both long before production starts and long after it ends (Frynas 2000, Manby 1999, United Nations Environmental Program 2011). Throughout the course of the campaign, the environmental aspects of the campaign received increased attention and support, particularly from international NGOs (Bob 2005:80-90) with Saro-Wiwa ultimately

arguing that for the Ogoni people, “the environment is their first right and the struggle for it takes precedence over all else” (Saro-Wiwa 1995:169).

Fourth, an innovative aspect of the Ogoni campaign was the way in which its self-determination claims were directed simultaneously at the Nigerian state and at the transnational oil companies operating in Nigeria (Saro-Wiwa 1995:80). Ultimately, this belief earned widespread acceptance throughout the Niger Delta, contributing to the popularity of the protest movement but also adding to the oil companies’ fear of it. As Omeje explains, “In the minds and reckoning of a large section of the local people, there is hardly any distinction between the oil industry and the state. The two are perceived as one and the same entity” (Omeje 2005:328). Most self-determination movements direct their claims solely at sovereign governments. In the Ogoni case, such claims were always directed both at the state and at the oil companies.

Finally, the Ogoni self-determination claims were also pitched in terms of “resource control” which made such claims particularly threatening to the Nigerian state. Compared to some of the subsequent demands that have been made, the OBR puts this demand forward somewhat mildly as “The right to the control and use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development” (Ogoni Bill of Rights 1990/1991). The addendum to the OBR subsequently increases the specificity of this demand to using “at least fifty per cent of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development” (Ogoni Bill of Rights 1990/1991). Demands for resource control are often incorrectly equated with demands to increase the share of revenues allocated to the states that produced or generated them under the so-called derivation principle. At independence, the derivation principle was set at 50% of the tax revenues derived from that area. This was subsequently lowered to 45% and then to 20% before being entirely abolished and replaced with a special account for oil-producing areas which ultimately hit a low of 1.5% in

1992. Under Nigeria's current constitution, the derivation principle has been increased to 13% (Frynas 2001:32-39). While the 13% formula is seemingly an improvement, under Nigeria's legislative and constitutional framework, all sub-soil resources belong to the federal government and are controlled by it.

Yet, as Ihonvbere (2000:358) has correctly noted, "The debate in the oil-bearing communities of Nigeria has long gone beyond percentages to one of control." More specifically, the oil-producing communities are not asking that control and ownership of the natural resources on their land be given to state governments. As Manby (1999:49) observes, under the current 13% revenue allocation formula, "it is not clear that the allocation would directly benefit the communities in which the oil is produced, rather than the state governments in the oil producing areas, where the money would likely be used for patronage rather than development." Thus, the Ogoni demand for resource control is a demand for community ownership and control of the natural resources found on their lands (Osaghae 1995:340-41). It is thus not surprising that oil companies used to dealing with one Nigerian federal government or that government which depends upon oil for about 80% of its total revenues and 95% of its foreign exchange earnings (United Nations Environmental Program 2011:20) would find such a demand revolutionary and unacceptable.

The Ogoni Mobilization Process and the Certification Mechanism

A crucial mechanism in enabling the Ogoni campaign to achieve traction and grow rapidly was certification by outside actors. Certification refers to an external authority's signal of its readiness to recognize and support the existence and claims of a political actor. The earliest

form of certification the MOSOP campaign received was when Ken Saro-Wiwa travelled to Geneva in July 1992 to speak to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations. In Saro-Wiwa's own account, "perhaps the most important result of my trip to Geneva was that my address to the Working Group on Indigenous Populations got published in Nigerian newspapers. And this, I believe, is what may have convinced the Ogoni elite that there was some value in what I was doing" (Saro-Wiwa 1995:99). Another early form of certification came from the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples' Organization (UNPO), a small Hague-based NGO. Saro-Wiwa's initial attempts at securing support from NGOs were largely unsuccessful (Bob 2005:65-77). Environmental groups did not initially respond to the heavy focus on minority rights and political autonomy while human rights groups found Saro-Wiwa's entreaties about a 35-year-old unconventional ecological war where "no bones are broken, no blood is spilled and no one is maimed" (Saro-Wiwa 1995:148) unconvincing in the absence of large-scale physical violence against individuals. UNPO was "MOSOP's sole success" before the 1993 mass protests as it admitted MOSOP as a member, elected Saro-Wiwa vice-chair of its general assembly and served as an important conduit for the distribution of information from Ogoni to the outside world (Bob 2005:76-77). The acceptance of the legitimacy of the Ogoni cause in multinational forums contributed to the coalition formation process as Saro-Wiwa began to gain international visibility.

The Coalition Formation Process and the Brokerage Mechanism

MOSOP used its external certifications to build coalitions within Ogoni. MOSOP's own structure as a federation of different organizations like NYCOP, FOWA and COTRA was an attempt to reach different sections of the Ogoni community within the groups – churches,

traditional leaders, women, etc. that they were already used to participating in. Churches with their “powerful hold in Ogoni... proved most important” in reaching large numbers of ordinary Ogonis (Saro-Wiwa 1995:151-52). On January 3, one day before the first major protests, the MOSOP leadership organized an inter-denominational church service where one of the MOSOP leaders read Biblical scripture from the Lamentations of Jeremiah (5:1-22) on the destruction of Jerusalem and the suffering of its people who lost their land, a text obviously designed to resonate with the Ogonis (Saro-Wiwa 1995:120-21).

Similarly, about two months later on March 13, MOSOP held a night vigil throughout Ogoni to increase support for the campaign (Saro-Wiwa 1995:152). The youth were a critical pillar of local support and Saro-Wiwa made a conscious attempt to secure the support of young Ogoni people. In November 1992, MOSOP organized a tour of the Ogoni kingdoms meeting with the youth, outlining the Ogoni case and introducing a motion asking the oil companies to pay for the damages they had caused in Ogoni over the years or leave their land. Saro-Wiwa’s speeches accompanied with the presentation of the motion directed to the oil companies were instrumental in energizing the youth and securing their support (Saro-Wiwa 1995:102-04).

Another key strategy that Saro-Wiwa employed to reach out effectively to the Ogoni masses was to speak to them in their own local languages and dialects. One NGO mission visiting Ogoni noted “That he made the effort to learn to speak the various Ogoni languages, an apparently unusual characteristic for Ogoniland leaders, has impressed many people” (Boele 1995:11).

A final good example of the kind of coalition formation that MOSOP sought to pursue comes from the establishment of the One Naira Ogoni Survival Fund (ONOSUF). At the time it was established in 1993, one Naira was worth approximately 4.5 US cents. Thus, this campaign

was not about fundraising. Rather, it was about securing participation from as many people as possible. In Saro-Wiwa's explanation, "In establishing this fund, we want to emphasize not money but the symbols of togetherness, of comradeship, of unity of endeavor...." By contributing to ONOSUF, Ogoni men, women and children would make "a statement of their wish to survive as individuals and as one indivisible nation" (Saro-Wiwa 1995:150).

No Upscale Shift: The Mechanisms of Brokerage and Repression

After the mass demonstration of strength in January 1993, the MOSOP campaign was further bolstered by the mechanism of brokerage, particularly in terms of internationalizing the struggle. Brokerage involves making new or stronger connections between previously unconnected or disparate groups (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:215). In the Ogoni case, Ken Saro-Wiwa effectively linked human rights violations to environmental issues, a now unremarkable argument but one that was a major conceptual innovation in the early 1990s. Saro-Wiwa did this by playing the "Shell card" (Bob 2005:81) and establishing the transnational oil company as the vital nexus which was both directly involved in the environmental devastation of Ogoni (United Nations Environmental Program 2011) and indirectly involved in the repression and human rights violations directed against the Ogoni through its support of the Nigerian military dictatorship and its request for specific forms of security assistance from that dictatorship (Pegg 1999). Ultimately, MOSOP's successful brokering of the links between environmental rights and human rights led to a number of highly visible international NGOs such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch and UNPO publishing reports on the Ogoni case (Amnesty International 1994, Boele 1995, Crow 1995, Rowell 1994) while a number of

other NGOs such as Friends of the Earth International, Rainforest Action Network and the Sierra Club began advising and assisting the Ogoni campaign in other ways (Bob 2005:79-80).

Ironically, MOSOP's success in expanding the campaign to include different segments of society and its securing of foreign support became a major turning point at which the campaign failed to go through the process of upscale shift. Upscale shift is the diffusion of contention to new geographical locations and actors and demonstrates a major elevation in the severity of the challenge the authorities face (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:217). The Nigerian military dictatorship clamped down on MOSOP by using extremely harsh repression before sustained protests could spread to other oil-producing communities. Many other Niger Delta communities share broadly similar grievances to those of the Ogoni. As explained by Ikelegbe (2001:463), "The unison of claims has made the [Niger Delta] issue so generalized as to constitute the feelings of the entire region." Other non-Ogoni Niger Delta communities such as Umuechem (1990) and Obagi, Brass, Nembe Creek and Rumuobiokani (all 1993-1994) did indeed protest against SPDC or other oil companies and express similar grievances to those enunciated by the Ogoni (Crow 1995). Yet, the "high handed response of the state to peaceful protest" (Obi 2014:150) and its brutal repression within Ogoni through the use of "unlawful and disproportionate force" (Crow 1995) prevented any possible diffusion of sustained protests to those or other communities.

The Process of Demobilization and the Mechanisms of Repression and Cooptation

Aware of his critical role as an effective leader in mobilizing the Ogoni, the state directly targeted Ken Saro-Wiwa starting in April 1993. Between April-July 1993, Saro-Wiwa was arrested four times. He was also prevented from travelling domestically and internationally on a

number of occasions. In the summer of 1993, the state issued the Treason and Treasonable Felony Act, which stipulated the death penalty for anyone “who ‘conspires with himself’ to ‘utter’ the words ‘ethnic autonomy’ or plans secession or seeks to alter the boundaries of any local government or state previously decreed by the military authorities” (Saro-Wiwa 1995:161). Saro-Wiwa’s final arrest came in May 1994 after the killing of four Ogoni chiefs at a rally in Giokoo, Gokana that he was prevented from attending after being stopped at a security checkpoint. Saro-Wiwa was initially charged with five other MOSOP leaders for the incitement to murder or the murder of the four Ogoni chiefs. Subsequently, ten additional defendants were charged with the same offenses and tried “by a special tribunal established for the case, whose procedures blatantly violated international standards of due process” (Manby 1999:114). Six of them were found not guilty while Saro-Wiwa and eight others were found guilty and ultimately hanged on November 10, 1995 in a process that former British Prime Minister John Major termed “judicial murder.”

Beyond just its targeting of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Nigerian state also targeted the MOSOP leadership more broadly to deter participation in collective action. Twenty other Ogonis who were arrested in 1994 or 1995 were held in prison for years awaiting trial on the same charges that led to Saro-Wiwa’s hanging until their release in 1998. Saro-Wiwa’s younger brother Dr. Owens Wiwa was arrested and ultimately fled to Lagos where he lived in hiding before leaving the country on his way to exile in Canada. The authors witnessed a case brought at a tribunal by Legor Senewo about the destruction of his family’s home in Bane and the beating of his father after the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force showed up in the hopes of arresting his brother IkpoBari (see Senewo, this volume), a leading MOSOP activist. Human Rights Watch researchers “spoke to eyewitnesses about several cases in which individuals marked as MOSOP

activists had been extrajudicially executed, beaten, or detained by members of the security forces. In raids by the security forces on houses where such activists live, police or soldiers often assaulted all members of the household indiscriminately” (Manby 1999:115). MOSOP leaders who avoided arrest or extrajudicial executions ultimately ended up in exile in Chicago, London, St. Louis, Toronto and other cities. As explained by Bob (2005:93) “by the end of 1994, most of the MOSOP leadership had been killed, jailed, or driven into exile....”

While Saro-Wiwa and the MOSOP leadership were being targeted, the student and the youth wings continued to hold peaceful demonstrations. The state responded violently to these protests, killing hundreds of Ogoni activists and torturing those who were arrested (Cooper 1999). At the same time, the state targeted Ogoni communities by razing villages, raping women and indiscriminately killing people. For much of 1993-1995, Ogoni was essentially under military occupation with the region almost entirely sealed off from outsiders. Estimates suggest that more than 2,000 Ogoni civilians were killed from 1993-1995 (Pegg 1999:474). Such Ogoni civilians were killed both in small numbers at oil-related protests at such locations as Biara (April 1993) and Korokoro (October 1993) (Pegg 1999:476-77) and in much larger numbers through military attacks staged to appear as if they were communal violence between the Ogoni and some of their neighbors including the Andoni (July 1993), the Okrika (December 1993) and the Ndoki (April 1994) (Crow 1995). Human Rights Watch noted that the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force “reportedly raided at least sixty towns and villages in Ogoniland” and that during the summer of 1994 the “raids reportedly became almost a nightly occurrence” (Crow 1995). One former MOSOP activist explained to the authors that rape had lost its stigma in Ogoni because so many women had been raped. Human Rights Watch reported that “soldiers raped young and old women alike in the course of raids on Ogoni villages” and concluded that

“the rapes were both punitive and discriminatory because they occurred in the course of organized raids on Ogoni villages alone” (Crow 1995).

The Nigerian state’s brutal response toward the Ogoni communities and the execution of Saro-Wiwa discouraged activism and mass protests in the Niger Delta after 1995 (Bob 2005:105). Even though activism expanded between 1993 and 1995 as other minorities sharing similar political, environmental and economic grievances emulated MOSOP strategies by issuing their own bills of rights, harsh repression prevented the coordination of protests across the Niger Delta which might have elevated the pressure on the government and the oil companies to change their policies.

The timing and the brutal nature of repression, therefore, played a crucial role in triggering the demobilization of the campaign instead of leading to a “backfire effect” which is what happens when nonviolence is repressed and more nonviolent protesters join the protests (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, Francisco 1995, Rasler 1996). The Nigerian state responded forcefully to the increased mobilization in Ogoni in order to prevent the widespread diffusion of protests to other oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta. A backfire effect might have been possible if protests had already spread significantly to other communities because the military would not have been able to respond with such sustained and concentrated force over a much wider geographical area. Moreover, if other oil-producing communities had also quickly joined the protests and effectively shut down oil production, the Nigerian state would have suffered tremendous economic losses. So, the Nigerian state acted before the protests diffused widely and acted brutally to prevent any potential increase in the scale and scope of the protests.

So, one part of our argument is that the harshness, severity and comprehensiveness of the Nigerian state’s repression of non-violent protests explains why there was no backfire effect

where the repression of non-violent protests leads to their growth and diffusion as more non-violent protesters join the movement. The contentious politics literature, however, suggests another way in which the repression of non-violent campaigners might also lead to an increase in the intensity of a protest campaign. This is the mechanism of escalation which occurs when nonviolence is repressed and activists switch to violent means (Lichbach 1987). In particular, micromobilization models suggest that even though repression deters nonviolent protests initially, its deterrent effect is neutralized, or even reversed, if people are directly exposed to repression and are members of informal associations such as unions or churches that are supportive of protests (McAdam 1988, Opp and Roehl 1990, White 1989). For people to engage in political violence, they must perceive repression to be illegitimate and expect others to do so, anticipating their support for organized violence because of the belief that it is a viable option (White 1989). The shift to political violence may not happen immediately as micromobilization processes take time. However, as support for political violence grows, a repressed nonviolent campaign ultimately escalates into a violent campaign (White 1989).

To some extent, there was escalation or a preference shift from non-violent to violent tactics in the Niger Delta after Saro-Wiwa's hanging in 1995. The authors have personally witnessed a number of Ogoni activists confronted by others with some variant of the question "what did your non-violent protests get you?" with the proclaimed answer being some variant of "it got your villages razed, your leaders killed and your women raped." While the turn toward militancy in the Niger Delta over the past 15-20 years is often ascribed simplistically to greed or the desire for personal enrichment on the part of the militants, a more compelling explanation is the perceived failure of non-violent methods of collective action. In a careful study of the rise of militancy among the Ijaw in and around Warri, Delta State, Ukiwo (2007) argues that

communities turned to violence only after the repeated failure of the oil companies to respond to petitions and other peaceful or constitutional forms of demand. Ijaw communities learned that the same companies that blithely ignored peaceful protests “responded speedily, under threat of violence and ‘direct action,’ to community demands” (Ukiwo 2007:609). The end result of this is that “Ijaw youths have come to realize that the only language government and oil companies understand is violence” (Ukiwo 2007:609). Ikelegbe (2001:459) similarly notes that “violent confrontations have actually been last resorts of the civil groups, embarked upon because of the failure of peaceful methods” while the International Crisis Group observes that militants “have learned the unfortunate lesson that violence, extortion and kidnapping are a way – sometimes the only way – to be taken seriously” (International Crisis Group 2006:1).

The question then becomes how was this escalation to violence contained? In contrast to the brutal repression of moderates highlighted with the MOSOP campaign, violent militants in the eastern Niger Delta were instead often paid off or coopted by the oil companies and the Nigerian state.¹ Payments to militants can loosely be grouped under three main headings. First, oil companies often substantial direct payments to militants, “some of which are disguised either as oil servicing or community development contracts or as customary payments to communities” (International Crisis Group 2006:9-10). Another ruse employed by the oil companies is to reward militants “through ‘surveillance contracts’, a term used to describe contracts given to local residents to protect pipelines, flow stations, wells and other facilities” (International Crisis Group 2006:10). Second, Nigerian politicians also direct substantial payments to militants, often during the run-up to elections where the militants effectively serve as the politicians’ private armies. Famous militant leaders Ateke Tom and Alhaji Mujahid Asari-Dokubo are among those widely

¹ This practice was less prevalent in the western Niger Delta – see Watts (2015), this volume.

reported to have received significant payments from the Rivers State government (Human Rights Watch 2005:5). A number of Niger Delta governors have publicly referred to various militants as “our boys” and “As with the oil companies, government officials... would rather have the ‘boys’ choose another target for their violence” (International Crisis Group 2006:21-22). Finally, militants have more generally received payments for disarmament under the Niger Delta Amnesty Program which started in August 2009. Rank-and-file militants have received monthly payments of approximately US\$410 and estimates of the program’s total cost have exceeded US\$1 billion.

The strategy of paying off militants has also been accompanied by the selective cooptation of Niger Delta moderate leaders. Oronto Douglas, a recently deceased Ijaw activist and a member of Saro-Wiwa’s legal defense team worked with Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan from his days as deputy governor of Bayelsa State. At the time of his death, he was Special Adviser to the President on Research, Documentation and Strategy.² Von Kemedi, another former Ijaw activist, served as a Special Consultant to the President. Saro-Wiwa’s eldest son Ken Wiwa has served as an advisor to three Nigerian presidents, most recently as Goodluck Jonathan’s Senior Special Assistant to the President on Civil Society and International Media.

Although the scale and scope of repression of the moderates has declined since Nigeria’s return to democracy in 1999, Ogoni protesters still suffer regular attempts to prevent them from commemorating “Ogoni Day” (January 4) or the anniversary of Saro-Wiwa’s hanging (November 10). The continued willingness of the Rivers State government to repress moderate

² See Watts (2015), this volume for an argument that Douglas was not coopted.

nonviolent protesters was shown as recently as March 2015 when women protesting against perceived electoral fraud were tear-gassed in Port Harcourt.

Overall, the analysis of the Ogoni protest campaign shows that the Nigerian state's use of brutal repression before the campaign diffused widely to other oil-producing communities and expanded to a larger set of actors effectively started the demobilization of the protest campaign. If the protests had spread to other oil-producing communities, the state would have had more difficulty in quelling the protests and could have been forced to make larger concessions than it wanted to. After repressing nonviolent activists in Ogoni directly, killing Ken Saro-Wiwa and punishing local communities for supporting the campaign, the state was able to deter many people from joining the nonviolent campaign even though they probably perceived the state response as illegitimate. The state also prevented the possibility of a shift to a violent campaign by continuing to repress moderate activists, limiting their ability to mobilize and by coopting the militants through financial payments while simultaneously integrating other moderate factions into the government.

Conclusion

This analysis of the Ogoni protest campaign has several theoretical implications for the contentious politics literature. It shows that a nonviolent campaign can demobilize before a significant polarization between the moderates and the radicals emerges as Tarrow suggests, or before the grassroots nature of the campaign is replaced by more established organizational structures as Piven and Cloward suggest. Thus, we show that the demobilization of a nonviolent protest campaign does not always result from internal protest dynamics such as the competition

among different groups or the eventual decrease in enthusiasm as campaigns become more institutionalized. In contrast, we demonstrate that the state can use repression to stop nonviolent campaigns from expanding and can also avoid the potential escalatory effects of its repressive tactics. The Ogoni case, therefore demonstrates that even though the campaign was overwhelmingly nonviolent and secured the support of multiple segments of Ogoni society, the Nigerian state's repressive tactics prevented its expansion without leading to a backfire effect. This analysis also shows that cooptation can be a successful mechanism to avoid the potential escalatory effects of repression. By providing financial incentives to the militants and by incorporating several moderate activists into the government, the state effectively found at least a temporary solution to its problem of militant-induced declining oil production. As militant activity escalated, Nigeria's crude oil production declined by approximately 26 percent from 2.44 million b/d in 2005 to 1.8 million b/d in 2009. Post-amnesty, production has since recovered to 2 million b/d in 2014 but it remains below its previous peak levels (United States Energy Information Administration 2015).

Second, this study shows that analyzing contention by examining the mechanisms and the larger processes that are at play facilitates a better understanding of the dynamics of the case at hand. In this case, we were able to identify where within the trajectory of the Ogoni protest movement the campaign started to demobilize and why. Moreover, we showed how mechanisms that are influential in the mobilization process, like brokerage and certification, can also be important factors in a movement's demobilization by alerting the state to the growing influence of the campaign. Therefore, this study shows that mechanisms might have different effects at different points in time over the course of a protest campaign. The occurrence of one mechanism changes what happens next and how the overall processes play out.

Twenty years after Ken Saro-Wiwa's hanging, it is remarkable both how much and how little has changed in terms of the extractive industries. A few years after his execution, in 1997, Shell became the first major energy company to declare publicly its support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The following year, Shell became one of the first extractive firms to address human rights issues explicitly in an annual report on the firm's financial, social and environmental performance. Idemudia (2014:157) finds in this regard that "the Ogoni crisis in the 1990s was central to the changes made by Royal Dutch Shell" to its corporate-community involvement strategies. Today, it is hard to find an extractive industry firm that does not support the UDHR or enthusiastically embrace and widely publicize its commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR). The larger business embrace of CSR has certainly been driven by a number of different factors but it is hard not to see the worldwide attention brought to the relationships between sovereign states, transnational oil companies and their local host communities by MOSOP's campaign and Saro-Wiwa's execution as a significant driving force behind CSR's rapid growth and widespread acceptance by extractive industry firms. Similarly, while it would be naïve to think that the Ogoni protest campaign directly created such things as the UN Global Compact (1999), the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (2000), the World Bank's Extractive Industries Review (2001 – 2003) or the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (2003), it would be equally naïve to assume that Saro-Wiwa's ideas and the worldwide attention his death and the suffering of his followers brought to those ideas did not serve as a major catalyst for such developments. The relationships between extractive industries and their host communities and the social and environmental expectations embraced by or placed upon extractive industry firms are radically different after Saro-Wiwa's hanging than they were before it.

On the other hand, the most comprehensive environmental assessment yet done in the Niger Delta recently found that “clean-up efforts by SPDC... are not leading to environmental restoration nor legislative compliance, nor even compliance with its own internal procedures” (United Nations Environmental Program 2011:135). Idemudia (2014:160) notes here that “the compartmentalization of CSR obligations by focusing almost exclusively on affirmative duties (i.e., social investments) while being silent on negative injunction duties (e.g., questions of oil pollution incidence and compensation payments)” means that core community concerns such as environmental degradation and compensation for it “are often not addressed.” SPDC’s initial offer of assistance to an Ogoni community of more than 60,000 people whose mangrove forests, fisheries and waterways were devastated by two major oil spills in 2008-2009 consisted of 50 bags each of rice, beans and garri (a cassava product), 50 tins of groundnut oil and 50 cartons each of sugar, milk powder, tea and tomatoes (Pegg and Zabbey 2013). Twenty years after Saro-Wiwa’s hanging, despite living on oil-rich land, the vast majority of Ogoni remain without access to electricity, modern sanitation or piped drinking water and many of their children attend schools with leaking roofs and teachers whose salaries have not been paid for months. The abject poverty and sense of hopelessness that pervades Ogoniland today can be found in oil-producing communities throughout the Niger Delta and in other oil producing countries as well.

In his final statement to the military tribunal that sentenced him to death, Ken Saro-Wiwa predicted “that the denouement of the riddle of the Niger Delta will soon come.... Whether the peaceful ways I have favored will prevail depends on what the oppressor decides, what signals it sends out to the waiting public.” Twenty years later, we are arguably still waiting for that denouement. Through a combination of the assassination and targeting of protest leaders and the harsh repression of non-violent protesters and entire Ogoni communities, the Nigerian state

decisively rejected the peaceful ways favored by Saro-Wiwa and MOSOP. After Saro-Wiwa's hanging, MOSOP degenerated into factional feuding with rival leaders and is now a miniscule shadow of its former self. Ako (2015) outlines a number of ways in which MOSOP might have leveraged new peaceful initiatives had Saro-Wiwa not been killed and argues convincingly that these tactics probably would have been more successful than the subsequent turn to militancy witnessed in the Niger Delta.

Ken Saro-Wiwa is gone but his ideas on self-determination, political autonomy and resource control continue to animate political demands in the Niger Delta today. Yet, these demands are now often put forward by violent militant groups or cynical and rapacious state governors. In contrast to its brutal repression of Ogoni villagers, the Nigerian state has largely chosen to coopt and buy off the militants. That strategy has produced a temporary calm in the Niger Delta but one whose costs cannot be sustained indefinitely. There is as yet no denouement in the Niger Delta because none of the larger issues raised by Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni campaign have been substantively addressed.

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