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HISTORY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Beyond amnesty: Rethinking government's stabilisation efforts in Nigeria's *Niger delta* region

Olusegun Paul Adesanya^{1*}, Victor Jatula² and Rotimi Olajide Opeyeoluwa¹

Abstract: In 2009, President Umaru Yar'Adua granted amnesty to militant groups in the Niger Delta. This came after a decade of insurgency within Nigeria's oil-rich region. Amnesty was strategically designed to deescalate further confrontation with militants, curb the proliferation of small arms, stop kidnapping and limit the destruction of oil and gas installations. Amnesty was also aimed at disarming, demobilising and re-integration militants into civil society. To what extent has amnesty shaped the region and of what consequence? This study examined the multi-layered drivers of crisis within the Niger-Delta. It then investigated the appropriateness of amnesty in the region using semi-structured interviews. As its main finding, deplorable conditions that sparked unrest in the region still persist, evoking growing discontent in several communities. The paper recommends sustainable policies and programs through which communities, oil companies and the region at large can benefit immensely.

Subjects: Sociology; International Political Economy; International Relations; Military & Strategic Studies; Government; Politics & Development; Development Policy; Environment & the Developing World; History; African History

Keywords: Niger delta; amnesty; militancy; Nigerian politics; crude oil

1. Introduction

Although crude oil in commercial quantities was first discovered in 1956 in Nigeria's Niger Delta, it was not until the 1990s that inhabitants of the region, especially Ken Saro Wiwa (1941–1995) and many more began calling the attention of the world to the environmental, economic, human, health and social catastrophe of unregulated and unsustainable oil exploration in the region. According to Wiwa (Okonta & Douglas, 2003)

Appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly endowed land, distressed by their political marginalization and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, their ultimate heritage, anxious to preserve their right to life and to a decent living ... I have devoted my intellectual and material resources, my very life, to a cause in which I have total belief ... ”

Throughout the 1990s and the decade after, Nigeria's oil rich Niger-Delta region was in turmoil, notorious for kidnapping, small arms proliferation, illegal oil bunkering and the destruction of oil and gas installations. Aggression towards foreign companies operating in the Delta and later at the Nigerian state was provoked by neglect and destructions that are direct consequences of oil spills and disregard. Oil leaking out of pipelines, spill into nearby rivers, swampland, contaminating drinking water, affecting people's livelihood, killing aquatic habitats and destroying the environment. According to Amnesty International (2018), in 2008 and 2009 alone, two massive oil spills into the fishing town of Bodo had catastrophic impact on the people and the environment as thick

black oil leaked into rivers and creeks for weeks. In this case and many more across the region, Amnesty reported that oil, the size of six football fields, spilled into a single community leaving on its trail destruction of lives and property and ecological devastation of immense proportion. The situation thus reinforced the prophetic remark of OPEC's founder, Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonso that oil will bring us ruin.

Consequent upon the above, several militant groups emerged, mutated, merged, split and re-organised. According to Watts:

the reality on the ground is a dizzying and bewildering array of militant groups, militias and so-called 'cults' –the Niger Delta Militant Force Squad (NDMFS), Niger Delta Coastal Guerrillas (NDCG), South-South Liberation Movement (SSLM), Movement for the Sovereign State of the Niger Delta (MSSND), the Meinbutus, the November 1895 Movement, ELIMOTU, the Arogbo Freedom Fighter, Iduwini Volunteer Force (IVF), the Niger Delta People's Salvation Front (NDPSF), the Coalition for Militant Action (COMA), the Greenlanders, Deebam, Bush Boys, KKK, Black Braziers, Icelanders and a raft of other so-called cults (Watts, 2007).

The above excludes the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), a constellation of several insurgent groups. Also excluded are: Niger Delta Vigilante led by Ateke Tom and the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari (Tattersall, 2019). Alongside these were some other freedom fighters that had amorphous connections with MEND.

The rise (and subsequent dissolution through amnesty) of these arrays of insurgent groups marked a watershed, both in the history of the region and that of Nigeria. Amnesty was not only unprecedented but also a strategic shift from previous administrations' policies. President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua immediate predecessor- Olusegun Obasanjo adopted a militant approach to dealing with insurgent groups in the Niger Delta. An instance of this display was the sacking of Odi village, where several locals lost their lives through military aggression (Onishi, 2001, October 30). In so-doing, Obasanjo violated Resolution 217 A (III) of the United Nations that incorporates UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. His administration also infringed upon Nigeria's declaration upon accession to the UN's General Assembly (Talmon, 2016; Focarelli, 2019). Government's aggression, however, fuelled more reprisal attacks and further destabilised the region.

Amnesty by President Umaru Yar'Adua in 2009 was a credible approach to disarming, demobilising and re-integrating militants (Ukiwo, 2011). Additionally, oil production and export (Nigeria's major foreign revenue generator) had fallen to a third of its total production capacity due to rebellion and insurgency. Amnesty, therefore, was aimed at restoring uninterrupted oil production (Rice, 2009). Although the government succeeded in [re] modelling the identities and/or orientation of the militants, secured some level of stability and gave a new lease of life to the region; nonetheless, an "ours/others", "us/them" grid system, which is value-laden and one-sided, was subsequently constructed and/or deepened within the zone and elsewhere within the polity. This represented the turning, as Stetter (2005) remarked, of a blind eye to the multi-facetedness of relations with the "other", which might mean other residents of the Niger Delta, other regions of the country and their inhabitants. The amnesty approach, tangible as it was ab-initio, may have however laid the stones of several gamut of insecurity across the country. The decision by the Nigerian government to use and sustain amnesty as a one-size-fits-all panacea for militancy, is the focus of this study. This is particularly important as former militants still constitute a serious threat to the region. They might revert to the use of violence whenever the government fails to satisfy their demands. Making a mockery of the amnesty offer in 2009, a prominent leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) said:

We call on political thugs, armed robbers, kidnappers, pirates etc., from other states in Nigeria to take advantage of the government's offer by travelling to one of the centres in Niger Delta and trade their weapons for amnesty. Come with the whole gang and get

rehabilitated with gains of free education, money to start legitimate businesses etc. This is a unique opportunity in a country where so many graduates cannot find jobs. (Bøås, 2011).

This present study analysed the variegated drivers of crisis within the Niger Delta, investigated the appropriateness and implications of the various amnesty programs in place to combat crisis and recommended ways of reframing efforts towards the stability of the zone.

2. Theoretical framework—resource curse

In the early 90s, Auty (1993) coined the term Resource Curse to explain why resource-rich nations, especially in Africa and South America have poor economic outcomes. Today, three strands of the theory have become prominent- (1) Dutch Disease, (2) Rent seeking and (3) Institutional models. The Dutch Disease model first developed by Sachs and Warner (2001) who found a negative correlation between surplus natural resources and deficit development trajectory. Dutch Disease is an economic concept that describes the potentially negative effects of natural resources revenue and corresponding benefits on an economy. Oil booms for example, in developing nations often leads to increased oil revenue on one hand while on the other hand, it leads to a decrease in revenue generated through non-oil tradable sectors such as manufacturing, leading to de-industrialisation. Frank (2010) argued that the phenomena arises when a strong, but perhaps temporary, upward swing in the demand for a natural resource causes a large appreciation in the currency, an increase in spending, an increase in the price of non-tradable goods relative to tradable goods, a resultant shift of labour and land out of non-export commodity traded goods and a current account deficit leading to international debt that may be difficult to service when commodity boom ends.

The problem with the Dutch Disease theory is that it suggests consistent negative correlation between natural resources abundance and poor economic performance. It fails to account for the positive relationship between resources and sustained economic growth in Australia, Norway, South Africa and Botswana, all of which have managed to a large extent to escape the curse. What this indicates is the presence of certain preconditions that are omitted in the Dutch Disease theory.

Rent-seeking model according to Tornell and Lane (1999) emphasises the role of powerful players in explaining resource curse. They argue that poor economic performance is the outcome of distortionary redistributive activities evidenced by poor policies, personal gains, sectional interests or authoritarian monopoly. Especially in developing countries with an abundance of natural resources, power contestation over control and economic privileges leads to unhealthy competition, policies and misappropriation of resources. Although the panacea to powerful groups could be strong institutions but in fragile democracies, institutions are deliberately made weak or politicised and weaponised for use by power groups. According to Akyzbekova (2018), in rent-seeking, the economy is split in two- the first is the formal, efficient sector (natural resource generator) while the second is the informal sector. Revenue from the formal sector is diverted to powerful groups who use instruments such as taxation in the informal sector to protect their interest. Tornell and Lane (1999) argue that groups in control of the state misappropriate revenue that accrue from natural resources in such a way that resources are wasted, stolen or diverted with little economic benefit to the state.

A loophole of this theory is that failure or success of rent-seeking depends on institutions within the state. In Western nations with strong and robust institutions: Norway, Sweden and Denmark, the activities of groups, oil companies, local governments or political parties, are constantly under surveillance principally to expose and limit rent-seeking. In less-developed countries, the presence of institutions does not constitute a stumbling block for rent-seeking agencies.

The institutional model, developed by Mehlum et al. (2006), combines the roles of rent-seeking and institutions but the latter plays a larger role in determining the former. They argue that

resource abundance is not a problem in itself but existing institutions in place to strategically and efficiently manage windfall revenue from resource export, play a significant role. In countries with weak institutions, worse economic outcomes become the pattern. It is, therefore, the case that a combination of weak institutions and an abundance of natural resources leads to Resource Curse. This model, therefore, rejects the Dutch Disease theory unconditional negative economic outcome due to natural resource surplus.

In modern literature, the international context also plays a significant role in determining the wealth and poverty of nations. Resources, institutions and the political class in each nation operation within the international system that is conditioned and controlled by regional bodies and major players in the global context.

3. Public order collapse in the niger-delta: an overview of main drivers

11 years ago, Niger Delta was weaned off the smouldering inferno of militancy when the government of Nigeria offered unconditional amnesty to militants and freedom fighters who fought against economic, ecological and environmental challenges daily witnessed within the zone. Indeed, amnesty and the post-amnesty programmes have performed quite well by serving to markedly reduced crisis within the Niger Delta. Unlike the early years of Nigeria's Fourth Republic when the region witnessed a severe surge in violence and vandalism, relative stability has returned. The relativity is in reference to the previous years, not in comparison with the other southern regions of Nigeria.

However, several criminal activities are still ongoing. According to a respondent, the de-escalation of violence in the last couple of years has created a somewhat less-volatile environment for oil production, (Field notes, 2019b) but reports of high levels of criminality and sporadic episodes of violence persist. An instance was the pirates' and kidnappers' attack on a passenger boat which led to the abduction of a councilor and one other person, while several other passengers were robbed of belongings (Akasike, 2019). Another example is the ten-week kidnap of the mother of former national football (Super Eagles Coach) Samson Siasia from her home between July and September 2019 (Igoni, 2019). Similarly, two passengers were abducted on board a passenger boat that was hijacked between Port Harcourt and Bonny, in Rivers state (Itode, 2020). In Edo state, a pregnant woman was abducted in broad day light in Edo state.

Although criminal activities are not unique to the Niger Delta, remarks by Seriake Dickson, a former Governor of Bayelsa state in the Niger Delta indicated that oil multinationals are responsible for the prevalent terrorism within his state. He noted:

... multinational oil firms are responsible for sponsoring terrorism through the award of pipeline security and surveillance contracts to a candidate of a major political party. The oil firms were operating like mafias and have maintained a firm grip on the oil producing communities in the state to neutralise any form of resistance to their nefarious activities in the communities; even as the contractors primarily engage dubious individuals who in turn inflict terror against the oil-bearing communities. The surveillance contractors are equally said to be operating militia groups working under them to inflict terror on the society. What has happened is that the oil companies are giving surveillance contracts to these young boys, most of whom are outlaws ... they are working towards having a mafia-like hold in our communities. These boys are like parallel government. Somebody has close to a billion naira every month and the only thing he does is to look for criminally-minded people to engage and just pay them money and use them to maim and kill anybody he disagrees with. (Ebiri, 2019, p. 10)

As escalating crime continues to threaten the stability of the region, the strategic importance of Nigeria's Niger Delta to Nigeria, Africa and the global economy is a concern. The international strategic nature of crude oil and its potency to move the wheel of global capital makes instability within the region unsettling. For more than a century, oil has served as a major lubricant of the wheel

of global wealth. Oil-producing countries are of global interest. Crude oil is one of the major attractions to Africa, the Gulf of Guinea in particular, has become the epicentre of investments. In this vein, the vast resources on which the Niger Delta sits have rendered the region a transnational zone, where global players invest. This influences the framework for decision-making within Nigeria.

Oil politics in the Niger Delta is relatively new according to Ukeje (2011) who argued that the quest for self-determination by minority groups in the Niger Delta was more pronounced in the 1960s. This was exemplified by the grievances that the indigenes of the zone presented before the Henry Willink's Commission of Inquiry, which considered the fears of minorities in 1958. Since the 70s however, oil has played a more significant role in the world economy. As a consequence, oil-producing nations and regions such as the Niger Delta have become exposed, volatile and shaped by the operations of multinational oil companies. The Nigerian Civil War (1967–70) and revenue allocation were on one hand responsible for the shift from regional governance to the creation of twelve states in 1967 (Okonta, 2008). On the other hand, oil influenced the promulgation of the Decrees that repossessed the ownership of land and the mineral resources embedded within, and up to 200 nautical miles off the coast of Nigeria. From the early years of the exploration and exploitation of crude oil till date, oil has immensely featured in the complex relations of social classes. It has defined the disposition of all the regimes that have ruled since civil war, conditioned the characters of several policy-making institutions, as well as influenced the calculus for decision making in Nigeria. In sum, the Nigerian economy and polity have been “petrolised”.

Bad governance, abject poverty, inequity and infrastructural decay, as noted by a respondent, were in part, significant drivers of the crisis within the Niger Delta (Field notes, 2019a). It is, however, imperative to add that the consequence of the above has led to grave ecological destruction that resulted from the ill-regulated oil extractive sector. At the centre of it, all is political marginalisation of the Niger Delta, which was escalated by ethnic politics (Ebiede, 2015), oil politics (Owolabi & Okwechime, 2007) a sense of neglect, exclusion and marginalisation; as well as gang violence (Pratten, 2009, May) within the region.

It is believed the inheritors of state power and the military regimes that ruled after independence had a dim view of the eastern region in general and of the Niger Delta in particular. According to Harold and Margaret Sprout and Sprout (1956), the value of an environment consists in how such milieu is regarded and related with. Indeed, to the government and its agencies, Niger Deltans either constituted spectres of very low worth or were inconsequential to the government's strategic calculations. In turn, it was quite difficult for any form of entente cordiale to exist between the state and the people to the extent that either side would intend to accord any appreciable treatment on the other. The worrisome mode of their entanglements thus indicated relationships underpinned by vague ideas of the identities of the other. Through this, the residents regarded the government as the agent that would actualise the essence of citizenship, while the government, predominated by egocentric oligarchs, merely took the residents of the region as “devils” obstructing their path to wealth; and this occurred over several decades. This informed the dimensions of entanglements between the two sides.

The consequences of the ill-governance witnessed thus include the demise of several thousands of persons through the numerous episodic violence, which represented the feedback to government/oil multinational corporations' activities within the zone. Consequently, the Nigerian government lost its authority in the Niger Delta region and made efforts to reclaim it. Below is an account of some of the earlier attempts at instating Nigeria into the Niger Delta, while the subsequent section discusses the amnesty and post amnesty programmes designed to reinstate the Niger Delta into Nigeria.

4. Efforts to stabilise the niger-delta—an overview

There are robust narratives about the attempts of the federal government to rid the Niger Delta off militants. A respondent claimed that:

several efforts were made ranging from the development of water basin authorities, and the creation of states and local governments in the region to bring government closer to the people and give them a sense of belonging, and the reinstatement of a degree of the oil derivation revenue allocation formula that returns a proportion of the oil revenues to the states of the Niger Delta for the benefit of the people (Field notes, 2019d).

Another interviewee insists that the efforts of the federal government include the creation of various successive panels/committees that were meant to investigate the grievances of the people and make recommendations to government (Field notes, 2019c). Indeed, several literature provide tangible background information on the effectiveness of some other attempts, which range from the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), (Omotola, 2007) to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), (Gabriel, 1999) Ministry of Niger Delta, several attempts at co-opting the indigenes of the region into government's programmes, the passing of the Petroleum Industry Governance Bill (PIGB), amnesty and post-amnesty programmes in placating the restive militants, some narratives stopped at the elucidation of the drivers of the conflict within the zone. Several others are limited by their proclivity to over-sensationalise the relevance of each of the approaches in making the militants stay off their enterprises. In this vein, attention is focused majorly on how each of these programmes, particularly OMPADEC and NDDC, has served to give the militants a new lease of life and how the government had been pressured into releasing funds for the continuity of some of the programmes to the neglect of the implications that the [in] effectiveness of such approaches, amnesty and post-amnesty programmes for instance, pose for other residents within the zone, and other regions outside the Niger Delta.

OMPADEC was established by decree No, 23 of July, 1992 for the twin purpose of rehabilitating and developing the Oil Mineral Producing Areas of Nigeria. OMPADEC was funded with three percent of the Derivation Principle Fund, and was to direct the fund for specific development of the oil producing communities. However, OMPADEC failed to actualise the development of the Niger Delta region because of structural defects, financial imprudence, faulty project ideas, poor administration, poor funding, nepotism and corruption and challenges of implementation. OMPADEC equally failed in many instances because it worked in isolation, without consulting local communities and authorities before executing a project, many of which were abandoned because of inadequate funding. Nevertheless, the existence of OMPADEC in the oil-producing region was not riddled with the "woe" stories; it contributed to the educational sector within the zone through the establishment of science centres in Port Harcourt in 1996 (Gabriel, 1999).

In 2000, OMPADEC was replaced with the NDDC, which was established at the start of civilian rule. It bore immense hope that resonated widely within the region. Its main objective was to facilitate the rapid, even and sustainable development of the zone, through a process expected to usher the Niger Delta into stability. Unlike OMPADEC, NDDC was funded with 15 percent monthly statutory allocation to the Niger Delta States, 3% total budgets of oil and gas producing companies, and 50% of ecological fund due to Niger Delta states, as well as through aids and grants. In spite of the commitment of huge funds to this area, NDDC has failed immensely in addressing the fundamental issues of exclusion, marginalisation and deprivation within the region. Critical to its failure was the inability of Commission to work with the communities in order to generate bottom-up solutions. The Commission therefore adopted a top-down approach in addressing the myriad of problems within the region, and decided how to solve it (Paki & Ebiefa, 2011). The Commission did not live up to expectation; suffering from misappropriation of funds, leadership deficit and gross corruption.

5. Amnesty and post-amnesty programs: a re-assessment

How has the region been shaped by amnesty and post-amnesty programs? Has amnesty ended agitation in the Niger Delta? How has the region turned out in spite of continued exploration and exploration of crude oil by international oil companies operating under the protective arms of the Nigerian state? How effective has demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) been?

Declared in June 2009, amnesty was meant to stabilise the Niger Delta, with an attendant plan for further development of a region that was marginalised for too long. Consequently, amnesty assisted in demobilising 30,000 militants. The programme is in parts. The first part, demobilisation, a one-off process, was directed at cessation of hostilities and the mapping of several thousands of small arms and light weapons with which the region was inundated with; a situation that represents an outright surrender by the militants to the government. The second part, disarmament was another one-off process. Its focus was the assemblage of militants at designated camps for demobilisation and biometrical registration. There was a year duration between the second and the third phase; which was meant for demobilisation and rehabilitation of the repentant militants. The third face, filled with the long-term herculean task of dispensing Post-Amnesty Programme, is concerned with the reintegration of the trained militants into society.

Although the programme was designed for five years between July 2009 and December 2015, it is still on-going, five-year post-deadline. A critical attendant of this is the financial outlay. As at July 2009 when it was initially announced for instance, the budget was N50 billion and was meant to cater for 20,192 registered militants. Given the rise in the population of the ex-militants with 9,808 persons, the budget was raised to N68 billion in 2012 (NSRP, 2014). With the payment of N65,000 to each of the participants on monthly basis, the financial and economic implications on annual basis; which are not limited to the amount and the alternative forgone in order to allot such humongous funds to the post violence programme.

The programme is presently wading through the daunting murky waters of sleaze, institutional deficit and gross maladministration, which have reduced its effectiveness and almost rendered it another failed intervention programme for the region. According to the former Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Emmanuel Kachikwu, “the current Poverty Alleviation Program (PAP) of the Federal Government is not sustainable, it cannot be a solution to the Niger Delta crisis, especially as the huge money expended on the programme cannot guarantee peace in the region.” (Onapajo & Moshood, 2016). Nonetheless, these flaws are yet to demean its relevance because it has remarkably enhanced the stability of the region, and the extraction of oil, which reverted from the low of 700, 000 barrels per day (bpd) during the heydays of flared violence to 2.2 million bpd in 2012 alone. In addition, the continuation of the programme has reduced the fear that the region might revert to militancy.

In spite of its relevance however, the programme is discriminatory against the other residents not involved in violence against the federal government and the oil multinationals. These persons equally suffered from: the hazardous activities of the oil multinationals, repressive policies of the government, and the attendant upheaval feedback from militants, but they decided against participating in the myriad violent acts against the state. Consequently, it is believed that the allure of the discriminatory benefits might get to such persons, who might be incited into participating in future violence. Or better still, the programme proves that the Nigerian government prefers those that took up arms against the state to the unsung heroes who decided against violence and for whom the destabilisation of their (home) region is anathema.

The graveness of the programme herewith consists in its empowering several erstwhile violent persons within the region with: contracts to protect the grid of oil pipelines, grants for training locally and abroad, particularly in institutions of higher learning; payment of monthly stipend, and influence with notable politicians and technocrats across the country, through whom they could get supports to access whatever their aspirations might be. The allotment of these developmental largesse to repentant violent men to the neglect of those that decided to negotiate their livelihoods peaceably in the context of disorder that the Niger Delta constitutes worst dimension of injustice and insult to the wisdom of patriotism. It is in view of this that the quest to reconfigure efforts at stability within the zone becomes necessary.

The program, as a respondent explains, has been successful to the extent that it has stemmed the tide of violence by ethnic minority militias and non-state armed groups in the Niger Delta (Field notes, 2019d). At best however, it represents a very weak approach to sustaining peace and development. In as much as the quest for equity among different sectors of domestic society, correction of hazardous environmental situation and solution to economic crises are the key issues that several residents raised queries on, coming to terms with these issues is key to tackling the Niger Delta debacle.

In years to come however, some of the factors responsible for militancy within the zone might worsen and pose immense threats to existence within the zone. This might be because there is still a large proportion of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta, as Oyefusi remarks, who have the intention to take up arms against the state (Oyefusi, 2007). In view of this, the long-term effectiveness of the programme depends on its effective implementation. This must be done with the intention to establish or deepen systematic people-centred initiatives and programs/interventions that address the roots and triggers of conflict within the zone; and must equally take emerging actors in the cycle of violence within the oil-rich region into security consideration.

6. Reframing stabilisation efforts in the niger-delta

Amnesty programmes in the Niger Delta cannot run in perpetuity, and might come to a stop at some point whether the 30,000 beneficiaries of the programme are integrated or not (Akasike, 2020). The concern however is how the integration of the beneficiaries of amnesty and post violence programmes would halt the descent of the zone into further crisis or render the Niger Delta into a relatively stable zone. This is because several non-militant residents that suffered the incidences of the destructive activities of the oil multinational corporations, harmful burdens of insurgency (physical, economical, psychological, etc.), and government's repressive acts and policies unleashed on the zone in no way partake of the largesse presented as post-amnesty programmes. And the fact that several of the acclaimed repentant militants were unable to access funds as they wanted prior to the amnesty or as the former militant commanders who did from insurgency and the negotiated peace that produced post amnesty order becomes worrisome. The challenge then revolves around how the government would construct some bits of perfection, some sort of good society, just society and conflict-free society that as Bauman remarks, might be reached tomorrow, next year or next millennium, in all or some of its many postulated aspects of steady equilibrium and satisfaction of all needs; of perfect order, in which everything is allocated to its right place (Bauman, 2012).

In as much as the government is yet to properly address the challenges that snowballed into insurgency, particularly the inordinate paradox of plenty and untoward subservient treatment of several residents as third class citizens, but has only been able to keep militants, both genuine insurgents and criminals, off insurgency through amnesty and post-violence programmes; militancy might resurge at a future date, and in severe form. Since the militia phenomenon, as Ikelegbe observes, is both a form of employment and a chance to survive the dire need and deeply frustrating economic and social crises (Ikelegbe, 2011), the upcoming generation of youth within the region might give it a try. This is more so since incoming generation of youths within the zone can easily access the stories of the arm-twisting conducted against the government by the previous generation of militants across the pages of news tabloid at a time when they are likely be in dire need of employment opportunities.

Since the federal government is yet to address the drivers of the crisis that made the insurgents believe that their rebellion was for public good, and through which each participant accessed private rewards; there is the likelihood that the private incentives would lead the "new" youth population to engage in future rebellion since there would always be bills to pay. The properties of the federal government and the oil multinationals might become the target for future attacks by the insurgents, who would be interested in forcibly stopping or disrupting oil production as

a means of compelling the government to address their demands or rework their environment; and consequently, hinder potential investors' from committing their funds to any investment within the zone.

In reframing stabilisation efforts within the Niger Delta region therefore, significant attention should be paid to the identity of the residents for whom efforts are being made to activate a stable environment. Such identity is likely to be in a flux of dislocation and relocation, as well as passing through the binary positions of insider out and outsider in. This simply is engendered by the fact that some militants morphed into other personalities immediately their personal, not regional/communities' aspirations were satisfied. Such former militants include, but not limited to Mujahid Asari Dokubo, the proprietor of King Amachree African University in the Republic of Benin; and Government Ekpemupolo (aka Tompolo), the owner of Messrs Global West Vessel Specialist Nigeria Limited (GWVSL). The identity already projected must have been predicated upon the prevalent circumstances bequeathed on them, which translates to their allowing cultural narratives of ownership of spaces and resources within the zone to bound into the picture of ecosystemic destruction, misuse of public funds and unemployment, all of which gave nuance to the imagery of the Niger Delta communities in particular, and Nigeria at large. In as much as the society functions on the basis of the numerous feeder activities channelled at individualising such, data indicates that the activities of the previous insurgents contribute to the [re]shaping of the zone; particularly when the society, as Bauman submits, shapes the individuality of its members (Bauman, 2012), and individuals form society out of their life actions, while pursuing strategies plausible and feasible within the socially woven web of their dependencies.

In view of the above, it is imperative to interrogate the period when the persons of the present militants were symbolically altered and the factors responsible for this act. Indeed, this is necessary since the population of genuine militants within the zone, even before the declaration of amnesty and post-amnesty programmes, had shrunk significantly in the face of the rise in the population of criminal elements that used violence for personal ends, who infiltrated the group of insurgent militias that struggled against governmental repression and marginalisation of the indigenes of Niger Delta and for the increase of the derivative from oil sale.

Furthermore, in 2005, a Nigerian court ruled against the inordinate environmental degradation, gas flaring in particular, by Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (Lobe, 2005). The company however flouted the court ruling and continues the activity. Despite the abrogation of the act in 1984 (Yusuf, 2010), two deadlines: 2008 and 2012 set for the outright stoppage were violated; and the fact that the country would have been able to use the gas that is flared in resolving the power generation crisis it is contending with so as to further develop her economy. Though there were claims and counter-claims concerning the continued flaring of gas, particularly in regards to the laying of pipelines, how can a multinational company defy a court order within the court's jurisdiction and still continue operating without remorse over its actions within the confines of such a country? Since this challenge poses significant threat to the stability of the zone, the federal government might have to be stiffer with its penalties against further gas flare within the zone; this is more so as it commits itself to the fulfilment of its side of the finance for the laying of the gas pipelines.

International oil companies at times enhances the covert roles of their home governments' attempts at maintaining, if not increasing, their own share of world power (Mearsheimer, 2001); and in the sustenance of the existing calculus of asymmetrical relations that they have with Third World Countries in general, Nigeria in particular. This results from the fact that the oil multinationals constitute or develop into what Wolfers regards as mere instruments of national policy (Wolfers, 1962); and possess the capacity, as Hopkins and Mansbach observe, to behave in ways that have consequences in international politics without a recourse to other actor authorities (Hopkins & Mansbach, 1973). This ability is predicated upon the fact that men identify themselves with corporate bodies (Wolfers, 1962), and as such, enhance the capacity of the multinational oil

companies in affecting the course of international events. Though this position might, in some quarters, be regarded as hypothetical, however, the pathway of history is littered with instances in which multinational corporations devastated national economies. Corroborating this, Kapfer notes that:

In the past MNCs such as the London and Rhodesian Mining Company, or Lonrho, and ITT have plundered states' economies and manipulated governments. Recent accounting scandals involving Enron, Adelphia and Parmalat, and Wal-Mart's deplorable labour practices also seem to suggest that MNCs do not encourage development, but rather seek to corrupt governments and destroy domestic economies all in the name of maximizing profits (Kapfer, 2006).

Thus, notable it is that the United States, [and some other major powers within the international society] most often uses its capabilities in Nigeria's domestic political struggles to further its national interest. In reframing the stabilisation effort for the Niger Delta therefore, it is important that those playing the influence/asymmetrical cards should for once be sincere and place human value above the profit from oil and/or whatever interests their covert operations are meant to achieve.

Finally, the place of gun proliferation within the zone cannot be demeaned. If the weakest of men should have the barrel of a gun in his hand, the feel ordinarily emboldens, gives confidence and might likely incite such a person to action. Within the zone, there is a high proliferation of SALW, which has enabled ordinary citizens to be in possession of assault rifles, as Duquet remarks, such as the infamous AK-47, the Czech manufactured SA Vz. 58, the Heckler-Koch G3 assault rifle, and FAL and FNC rifles of the Belgian arms manufacturer FN Herstal (Duquet, 2011). In the same vein, Davies insisted that armed groups also use pistols, revolvers, hunting rifles, craft weapons, pump-action shotguns and machine guns such as Beretta 12S and AR-70, MAT 49, Sten MK 2, Czech Model 26 and Model 59 (Rachot), MG 36, Tokarev TT and Makarov PM Pistols (Davies, 2009).

The proliferation of arms within the zone resulted from politicians' arms distributions to sub-alterns within their society in the bid to access political power within their respective state at all cost. Mention is mostly made of how the aspiration of politicians in the Rivers State impelled the politicians into arming their "errand boys" during the 2003 elections and they failed to retrieve these arms after the electoral exercise (Duquet, 2011); and there is an extension to this dastard practice (Akasike, 2018). Such arms were used in the early set of kidnappings of foreign expatriates and staff of oil multinationals, vandalise oil pipelines and engage in oil theft or oil bunkering.

Through the above actions, the insurgents were able to access the needed funds for the purchase of the type and more of sophisticated arms with which they engaged the Nigerian military before the amnesty programme was called in 2009. It is thus necessary for the government to either co-opt these militias and cultists who already are adept in the use of the same weapons possessed by the military into the military or paramilitary or that the government finds ways of limiting the flow of arms and ammunition into the region. The possession of the coercive capacity is no longer the preserve of the military, hence, during likely future crisis in the post-violence future, this capacity will go a long way in compelling the militants to evolve under new guise and titles.

7. Conclusion

The study investigated the multiple drivers of crises within the Niger Delta prior to and after Amnesty. It also interrogated the adequacy of the stabilisation efforts put in place by the federal government of Nigeria in order to tackle the growing crises within the region. Finally, it examined amnesty and its appropriateness, and identified ways of reframing efforts towards the stability of the zone. While no modern society can be rid of crimes in all its ramifications, criminality in the Niger Delta can be reduced to the barest minimum if the various drivers of insecurity and

underdevelopment are fundamentally tackled. Amnesty and post-amnesty programmes may have assisted in curtailing the growing crises in the Niger Delta however, recent happenings have drawn attention to the drawbacks of the programmes. This study holds that portions of the efforts already made have to be sustained. These include training and academic sponsorship, cleaning of the environment, provision of employment. Several others like the award of oil pipelines security contract to the former militant chieftains, release of funds for construction of security infrastructure needs to be reframed so as to stabilise the Niger Delta region. In the light of the above, this study recommends that government must correct the notion that residents of the Niger Delta are incapable of recommending solutions to the region's multiple challenges. Government must intensify and actualise efforts directed at correcting the degradation of the Niger Delta ecosystem; and combat the influx of arms into the region.

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