

Impact of Presidential Amnesty on Militancy in Nigeria: An Appraisal of the Presidential Amnesty Programme in Delta State (2009-2015)

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ABSTRACT: *The Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the policy of amnesty to the militants in south south Nigeria as a solution to insecurity and wanton destruction of lives and properties especially on critical infrastructures of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. This article, however, assessed the impact of Presidential Amnesty on security challenges in Niger Delta. Utilizing Frustration Aggression theory, the paper argued that the long accumulated frustrations of the people of Delta rising from the long-time neglect and under development of the State by various regimes and administrations have led to the continuous agitations and violence in the State. The Amnesty programme was basically oriented towards enhancing the security situation in the State for the purpose of increasing crude oil production. Employing qualitative method and relying mainly on primary and secondary sources, relevant data were generated and analyzed using thematic content analyses. The study therefore contended that there was nexus between the Amnesty Programme, national security and increase in crude oil production in Nigeria. Based on these finding therefore, it is our recommendation that the federal government should urgently and comprehensively tackle the underlying economic and social problems of Delta State in particular and Niger Delta region so as to prevent a relapse into crisis.*

KEY WORDS: amnesty, challenges, experience, presidential, security

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the advent of commercial oil production in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria in 1958, the region was essentially a pristine environment which supported substantial subsistence resources for the mostly active population. The region accounted for a large percentage of Nigeria's commercial fisheries industry (Afinotan, 2009). For centuries, the people of the Niger Delta were content to engage in farming, fishing and such other endeavors like pottery, mat-making and hunting, unaware that underneath their soil was one of nature's most prized mineral resources.

Crude oil was discovered in the Niger Delta over fifty years ago, with the discovery of oil in Otuakeme, Otokopiri clan near Oloibiri in 1956 by Shell Petroleum Development Company (Aaron, 2010). Oil has since become the main stay of the Nigerian economy, contributing over 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings of the government. It is surprising that the trajectory of constitutional development, socio-economic development and class formation have been massively influenced and dictated by the politics of oil (Owugah, 1999). While the Nigerian State may see the availability of the crude resources as a 'blessing' and a source of pre-eminence in the global market place, the communities where this crude resource is endowed with, see it as a 'curse'. This is because the massive exploitation of crude oil creates serious developmental, social and environmental problems which the Nigerian state and the collaborative oil giants have neglected for a long time (Omotola, 2006). Lamenting about this state of affairs, Owugah (1999) observes that "the oil which brought so much wealth to the nation and those in power, brought much poverty, disease, death, loss of livelihood, to the people of the oil bearing areas".

After decades of environmental abuse and human degradation coupled with unfulfilled promises of redress on the part of the State and Transnational oil companies; the agitations of the Niger Deltans have taken a violent and militant dimension. These militant activities have impacted gravely on national economy and security thus prompting the state to launch military attacks on the region. Intermittently, such military responses have done little to curtail the militant agitation in the Niger Delta and the Federal government itself is far from winning the war (Ikejiani, 2007). With the emergence of a pan-Niger Delta militia group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in 2006, the struggle for local control of Nigeria's oil assumed a more violent dimension. Apart from MEND that appears to have clearly articulated grievances namely Environmental Insecurity and Socio-Economic Marginalization of the Niger Delta people, sundry groups emerged in the Niger Delta as well. Some of these groups, it would appear, were driven not by liberation ideology but crime and criminality. Independently the activities of these groups created a difficult security challenge in Nigeria's oil belt (Aaron, 2010).

One of the first armed activities that emerged from the oil-rich region of Nigeria, ranging from the Boro-led Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) in 1966, the Ken-Saro-Wiwa-led Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1992, the Aleibiri Demonstration (AD) in 1997, the Kaiama Declaration (KD) in 1998, the Odi Massacre (OM) in 1999, the Asari-Dokubo-led Niger

Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) in 2004, Tom Ateke-led Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) and several other militant groups emerged as affront to the giants MNCs and the Nigerian State (Eseduwo, 2008).

The state of crisis in the Gbaramatu territory to the South-west of Warri, Ogunlaga Kingdom in Burutu Local Government area is dire and escalating. Since 1997, these oil-rich communities of Delta State have been embroiled in political violence. The decade old crisis has claimed many lives and rendered more than 30,000 homeless (including internally displaced persons). The subsequent loss of revenue to the Federal Government and the derivation to the oil producing states of Nigeria has totaled billions of dollars. Since early 2006, attacks on oil facilities and the abduction of foreign oil workers by militants, cut down drastically the nation's daily oil production. This crisis is the direct consequence of endemic poverty in these oil-bearing communities of the delta, lack of socio-economic development, militarization of the oil-bearing communities, lack of stake/participation in the oil industry by oil-bearing communities, high unemployment, corruption and lack of democratic governance in the Niger Delta and Nigeria at large. At the root of these agitations in these communities is the quest for a measure of political autonomy and self-governance – and by extension the rectification of historical wrongs including the loss of substantial oil revenues (Alagoa, 2005)

In what appears an admission of the futility of violent response, late President Umaru Yar'Adua, on 25th June, 2009, announced an amnesty for militants who were willing to surrender their arms. One strategy believed to be effective in this direction and increasingly being employed in conflict and post-conflict situations is disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) Humphreys and Weinstein (2007). Formal programmes aimed at disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating combatants into civil society started with the operations of the UN Observer Group in Central Sudan in 1989 and have since become a prominent intervention strategy of the UN (Muggah, 2009; Humphreys and Weinstein, 2007).

DDR has achieved some level of success in mitigating armed conflict and in sustaining peace in many conflict-ridden or war-ravaged societies including Rwanda, DR Congo, El Salvador, Cambodia, Cote d'Ivoire, Uganda, Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia, Russia, Angola, Sierra Leone, Guatemala, India, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Colombia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Burundi, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. As a result of its increasingly widespread usage and the successes it has recorded in the areas where it has been applied, the UN Secretary General concluded that a "process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration has repeatedly proven to be vital to stability in a post-conflict situation" (United Nations, 2006). This strategy is currently being used in hopes of preventing the Niger Delta conflict from escalating. If the crisis is allowed to escalate into full-blown war, it may become too costly and dangerous to intervene in any form and intervention after war, in any case, has been shown to be the least likely to succeed (Annan, 1996).

Statement of the Research Problem

The deployment of the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) to restore order and create a conducive atmosphere to do business could not tame the Niger Delta militants. First, the government's framework for disarmament and demobilization is inadequately specified. It is articulated as the return of arms and the dissolution of armed groups. One problem with this simplistic conceptualization is that it does not properly anticipate or articulate potential risks with disarming and demobilizing ex-militants without engaging them positively. For example, it is common for ex-combatants to rearm themselves in order to take advantage of expanding political opportunities. Re-armed ex-combatants may be recruited by combatants existing outside of the peace process. Also Multinational Oil Corporations who have been accused by environmental activists of fuelling human rights violations and resource depletion in the region with the issues of compensation and victim's protection and livelihoods that need to be addressed are still not attended to.

However, with the introduction of the amnesty programme in 2009, militancy activities should have become a thing of the past in Delta State, but on the contrary, the state and particularly the selected local government areas of study are still faced with a lot of security and developmental challenges over these years and this has led to so many uncompleted or abandoned projects which has brought the Presidential Amnesty Programme into question.

Objectives of the Study

The central objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of the Presidential Amnesty Programme granted to the Niger Delta militants. This research explored the nexus between the amnesty programme via Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration granted to the Niger Delta militants. However, this study investigates the impact of the Presidential Amnesty Programme in Nigeria within the context of exploring the following:

1. To establish the nexus between Presidential Amnesty and Militancy in the Niger Delta.
2. To determine whether the disarmament of Niger Delta Militants increases crude oil production in Nigeria.
3. To determine whether the demobilization of Niger Delta Militants reduce Criminalities in Delta state
4. To ascertain the impact of the Presidential Amnesty Programme on the lives of the youth of Burutu and Warri Southwest Local Government Areas of Delta State.

Research Questions

1. What is the nexus between presidential amnesty and militancy in the Niger Delta?
2. Did the disarmament of Niger Delta militants increased crude oil production in Nigeria?
3. Did the demobilization and reintegration of Niger Delta militants reduce criminalities in Delta State?

4. How has the presidential amnesty program (2009-2015) impacted the lives of the youth of Burutu and Warri Southwest Local Government Areas of Delta State?

Significance of the Study

The research has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this study contributes to the scholarly debate on the amnesty programme granted to the Niger Delta militants and effects on national security in Nigeria. This study explores the amnesty programme whose dynamics either impacts or transforms the lives of the people of the Niger delta region in Nigeria. It also investigates the amnesty programme as panaceas for peace in the Niger delta region. This study explores the Presidential Amnesty Programme whose dynamics either impacts or transforms the lives of the people of Niger Delta region particularly Burutu and Warri Southwest Local Government Areas of Delta State.

Practically, the outcome of this study is instrumental to socio-economic and political development of Delta State in particular and the Nigerian State in general, it will help the policy makers to reposition, complement or change the strategies and methods of intervention in the Niger Delta so as to achieve maximum results. Finally, the success of this study will clarify issues and facilitate understanding, it will enrich the pool of literature on the Niger Delta to the benefit of future researchers and students whom may wish to take up topics that are related to this very topic.

Scope of the Study

This study covers Delta State in Niger Delta region of Nigeria, focusing specifically on Burutu and Warri Southwest Local Government Areas. The time frame of this study falls between the periods of 2009 to 2015 in regards to the Presidential Amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region. The study takes a holistic look at the impact of the Presidential Amnesty on militancy in Delta State of Nigeria.

Operationalization of Concept

The Concept of Amnesty

According to Gardner et.al (2009:99, in Fagge and Alabi, 2016:295), Amnesty is a pardon extended by the government to a group or class of persons usually for political offence, the act of a sovereign power officially forgiving certain class of persons who are subject to trial but have not yet being convicted. It is the action of a government by which all persons or certain groups of persons who have committed a criminal offence usually of a political nature that threatens the sovereignty of the government are granted immunity from persecution. Examples of such offences are treason and sedition. Amnesty allows the government of a nation or state to “forget” criminal acts, usually before prosecution occurred. An act of amnesty is generally granted to a group of people who have committed crimes against the state, such as treason, rebellion, or desertion from military (Epiphany, 2013).

O'Shea (2002) sees amnesty in the general sense, as a political tool of compromise and reunion granted by a sovereign to individuals that have committed acts against the State; usually treasonable offences and/or rebellion. O'Shea who defines amnesty as immunity in law from either criminal or civil legal consequences, or from both, for wrongs committed in the past in a political context.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition (2000) defines "Amnesty" as a general pardon, especially for offences against a government (or for political offenses). It is a period during which a law is suspended to allow offenders to admit their crime without fear of prosecution. It could also refer to a situation or initiative where individual are encouraged to turn over illicit arms to the Authority (in this case the government).

Olatoke and Olotokunba (2012:26) posit that the objective of amnesty is not to punish but to choose a path that will yield the best possible scenario for the triumph of peace. Thus, amnesty emphasizes the supremacy and expediency of a conducive atmosphere promotive of public welfare than prosecution. They further stated that in the course of Nigeria's post-colonial experience, it has deployed the tool of amnesty on two occasions. The first was in connection with the Nigerian civil war. At the end of the war in 1970, the federal government declared the outcome of the war as "no victor, no vanquished". This was a general amnesty that serves the purpose of closing the unfortunate chapter which the war opened. Ukaogo, (2010) stated that amnesty and pardon consist of penalty cancelation for the perpetrator of the criminal act granted by the appropriate records brought into decision by the highest governmental bodies.

Fagge and Alabi (2016:295) further states that an amnesty may be given to an individual or a group of individuals when the authority believes that bringing such citizen into compliance with a law is more crucial than punishing them for past crimes. Amnesty after the cessation of hostilities helps to put an end to a conflict. A government may embark on amnesty for a number of reasons. This includes avoiding expensive persecutions (especially when there are so many violators); urging offenders to come forward who might otherwise have eluded justice; and promoting reconciliation between offenders and society. The declaration of the Federal Government amnesty was welcomed by a large section of the society and groups, including several international bodies pledge their supports for the programme. Thus securing lasting peace in the crisis prone region has not been easy as several peace-building efforts aimed at resolving violent agitations in the Niger Delta have failed. But as part of his efforts, Late President Musa Yar' Adua offered State pardon to the militants in a nationwide broadcast that:

The offer of amnesty is predicated in the willingness and readiness's of the militants to give up all illegal arms in their possession completely renounce militancy in all its ramifications unconditionally, and depose to an undertaking to this effect. It is my fervent hope that all militants in the

Niger Delta will take advantage of this amnesty and come out to join in the quest for the transformation of our dear nation (Sahara reporters, 2009).

Also, Kuku (2012) stated that the Federal Government proclamation of unconditional amnesty for Niger Delta ex-agitators included the willingness and readiness for them to surrender their arms and ammunitions on or before the expiring date October 4th 2009. So far, 30,000 ex-agitators have accepted the FG amnesty programme. In pursuant to the letter, the FG also instituted a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). DDR refers to “the process of demilitarizing official and unofficial armed groups by controlling and reducing the possession of arms, by disbanding non-state armed groups and rightsizing state security services and by assisting former combatants to reintegrate into civilian life” (Ball & van de Goor, 2006).

Package for those who embraced amnesty before the deadline was a #65,000 monthly stipend being paid to ex-militants who accepted the offer of amnesty, with the amnesty programme there is relative peace as sustainable peace in the crisis bearing region is sine qua non to stable growth and development. Thus a major expectation of the program is to ensure the promotion of peace in order to facilitate socio-economic development in the region. It is a known fact that with the proclamation of the amnesty there seems that relative peace and security have since returned to the region, the FG has therefore met with the aim of restoring peace and safety as the nation’s economy has return to normal. Consequently, NNPC, (2009), Kuku, (2012), & Amaize, (2016) observed that at the height of the conflict in 2009, Nigeria crude production dropped from 2.2 million to 700,000 barrel per day and as a result of the post amnesty period, crude oil production increased from 1.9 to 2.4 million bpd in 2013. In 2014 it also increased to 2.6 million and in 2015 it further rose to 2.7 million bpd. Additionally, with the declaration and implementation of the amnesty package, ex-agitators who embraced the amnesty offer had since been disarmed, demobilized and are either undergoing training or have been trained in their respective training centers. Presently, it is evident that the Federal Government has so far enlisted 30,000 ex-fighters in the amnesty programme (Onukwugha, Eke-Ogiugo & Okhomina, 2014).

According to Akinwale (2010); Osah and Amakihe (2014); and Atumah (2015), Amnesty is supposed to improve the human capital development of the country which is at present low. In a way the programme has presented an opportunity to build capacity of youths as well as reintegrate agitating youths of the Niger Delta into the mainstream in Nigeria as a confidence-building strategy while gradually addressing the root causes that necessitated the conflict in the first place, If well implemented, Amnesty could serve to negate the “resource curse theory” in Nigeria that resource-rich economies such as Nigeria, Congo, Angola, etc. are more prone to mismanagement, underdevelopment and violence. Ikelegbe, (2010:6-7), observed that the Niger Delta crisis has been a major threat to both socio-economic activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. At present, the amnesty programme is eight years since it implementation in the Niger Delta as the Federal Government of Nigeria through the amnesty package had good intentions for granting militants amnesty with the hope that the gesture would effectively put an end to youths restiveness

in the region. Amnesty therefore is a guarantee of exemption from prosecution and pardon from punishment for certain criminal, rebel and insurgent actions hitherto committed usually against the state. It indemnifies affected persons in terms of safety and protection from punitive actions, retributions and associated losses. An amnesty most often time is usually within a specific time within which offenders admit crime and take advantage of the general pardon. (Idonor, 2009, Ikelegbe & Umokoro, 2014), said is on this note that in 2008, following the submission of Ledum Mitee reports with other recommendations the Federal Government after consultation with the council of States and in pursuant with section 175 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria granted unconditional pardon to all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in the commission of offences associated with militants activities in the region. The amnesty was proclaimed on 25th June, 2009 included forgiveness and automatic freedom from any form of prosecution whatsoever which was expected to run for a 60 day period from August 6th to October 4th, 2009,

Onukwugha, Eke-Ogiugo and Okhomina (2014), states that; amnesty package has helped in the reduction of violent crime as most youths who were involved in anti-social activities have been integrated into the programme thereby making violence unattractive such crimes include; attacking oil installations, engaging in illegal oil bunkering and kidnapping of oil workers. It is however a fact that violence has now declined but not disappeared. To this end, there is no gain saying that amnesty has made significant impact on the socio-economic activities and lives of the people in bringing stability in the Niger Delta. As a result, the remarkable achievements and stability generated considerable goodwill for Nigeria among international partners and friends. Besides, amnesty package rebranded and gave Nigeria a positive image among the comity of Nations (CPED, 2015).Omadjohwoefe (2011), Ibaba (2011), and Egwemi (2010) argued that, the amnesty initiative, though a unique approach, does not have what it takes to answer the Niger Delta question. Davis (2009) opines that managers of the Nigerian system should develop strategies to deal with the post amnesty challenges and that all stakeholders need to be involved in actualizing the implementation of the post amnesty programme. Aluede (2012) argues that the way the programmes have been implemented to cost several billion nairas to benefit a few people who have committed crimes against the state is wrong.

Swartz (2009) wrote that a high-profile government amnesty program aimed at stopping militants in Nigeria's oil-rich delta region from bombing pipelines are coming under fire for not seeking permanent solutions to the area's underlying problems. The amnesty program, scheduled to begin and run for two months, is the biggest public effort yet by President Umaru Yar'Adua to ease the unrest in the Niger Delta that has cost the country billions of dollars in lost oil revenue. But Nigerian state governors, analysts, and the militants themselves have criticized the plan because it does little to address the core causes of the militancy and criminality that have plagued the Niger Delta for decades, such as the lack of education, jobs and basic services. State governors from the Niger Delta region, a powerful group but rarely in agreement, at a time threatened to withdraw

from the amnesty program because it lacked a definite post amnesty plan arrangement for the region.

Alaibe (2012) argues that the Amnesty programme has been a resounding success. “I make bold to assert that the programme will go down in history as the sincerest effort by the Federal Government to address the Niger Delta question”. Considering the number of ex-militants that willingly disarmed and turns in huge cache of arms and ammunition to security agencies and got enrolled in the programme. According to him, the Amnesty programme has been a resounding success. The present state would be better appreciated when viewed from the pedestal of the previous situation prior to the amnesty proclamation. He further stated that while it is true that the late Yar’Adua initiated the Amnesty programme, it is important to place on record that when it seemed that the programme was floundering, it was President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan that revved it up, gave it fresh impetus and provided all that was needed to attain the success that we are talking about today.

In the opinion of Hon. Kingsley Kemebradigha Kuku, the presidential aide in charge of the Amnesty program under the Jonathan administration: The Federal Government has met the target of restoring peace, safety and security in the Niger Delta using the instrumentalities of the Amnesty Programme; and as a result, the nation’s economy has rebounded. The relative peace that now prevails in the Niger Delta has aided the remarkable growth of Nigeria’s oil production. (Kuku, 2012). Understandably, many people will reject Kuku’s assessment of the program as narrow and self-serving. Others may question the constitutionality of the Amnesty program or even the moral and ethical basis of granting presidential pardon to kidnappers, terrorists and murderers disguised as freedom fighters or the neglect of justice for the victims of their criminal activities. Many may criticize the lack of transparency and stakeholder’s involvement in the implementation of the program or dismiss its achievements as peripheral or targeted at the symptoms rather than the root causes of the conflict.

This study admits that the Amnesty program in the Niger Delta, like many other DDR programs, all over the world has its shortcomings and will always be mired in pessimism and controversies. However, the interest of this study is not in the morality or propriety of the program as an instrument of justice and equity but in its impact and efficacy as a negotiation apparatus and a conflict management strategy.

From this perspective, therefore, this study observes that the Amnesty program allowed the parties in the conflict to separate the people from the problem. Both the government and the militants were able to step away from their egocentric positions to look at the main issues that they needed to address. The violence was destroying the communities and the national economy at the same speed, which was not in the interest of both parties. The real interests of the parties became clearer at the second stage of consultations and negotiations. The militants, just like the government, had fundamental economic, political, social and security needs that they were unable to meet through

the altercations hence creative options for mutual gain became imperative and preferable. For example, while the commanders of the militant groups were making lots of money from the oil bunkering and the kidnappings, they were also living like rats in holes with a death sentence hanging on their necks.

Besides, the money was also being spent on the purchase of more arms and the maintenance of their formations. Rich people need security to enjoy their wealth so it was probably frustrating for them to realize that more money in the conflict situation did not necessarily translate to a better life. On the side of the government, it would have become obvious that the use of force was ineffective in resolving the crisis and that the fighting was destroying both existing capacity and the capability of the administration to meet its financial obligations. Thus, the option of Amnesty was ingenious at that point because it provided not just a face-saving window for the parties but a realistic platform upon which subsequent negotiations could be built. In a way, the Amnesty policy is synonymous with the traditional conflict resolution methods in Africa which places great emphasis on reconciliation and rehabilitation of relationships rather than on retribution and punishment.

Dakolo (2011) argues that Late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua went all out to confront the problem with all sincerity through the Amnesty initiative in June 2009. When the Federal Government announced the Amnesty programme for the militants not a few persons took it with a pinch of salt. With the Amnesty programme now in full swing and ex militants receiving rehabilitation, reintegration, training and certification since June 28th, 2009, it is important that the issues which led them to take up arms, in the first place are frontally addressed. The success of the Amnesty programme is underscored by the large turnout of militants at the various arms collation centers across the Niger Delta and the staggering trench of arms recovered so far. Fusato (2003) added that the three phases of the amnesty programme (DDR) are interconnected, and the successful completion of each phase is essential to the success of the others.

According to him, the goals of DDR are both short term and long term. The immediate short-term goal is the restoration of security and stability, through the disarmament of warring parties. Progressive disarmament reduces the mistrust that fuels a security dilemma between the fighting factions, allows aid workers to intervene more effectively, and allows peaceful social and economic activities to resume. Oladoyinbo (2012) equally commended the fact that since the commencement of the programme sporadic outburst of violence in the region has been drastically reduced. But the Stakeholders must never rest on their oars as there is still a lot of work to be done. Government and those entrusted with the arduous task of prosecuting the Amnesty programme must be seen to be transparent and credible in discharging their mandate. There is a whole world of difference between actual militants and miscreants who cash in on the volatility to perpetrate heinous crimes. This group of people should not be included as militants. What is important now is for the ex-militants to be properly and effectively demobilized and adequate training given to

them to make them beneficial to the society. But beyond that, there should be a mechanism to ensure that new militants are not created in the future.

Oscar (2012) opined that the amnesty programme did not make provision for the role of Multinational oil corporations who have been accused by environmental activists of fuelling human rights violations and resource depletion in the region. This feeds into the issues of compensation and victim's protection and livelihoods that need to be addressed. According to him, the lavish expenditures on the amnesty programme have been described in the popular media as a 'political liability' to the Nigerian government. Furthermore, the year 2012 budget proposed a whopping \$450 million to the amnesty programme, which is more than what the government spends to deliver basic education to children.

Oyedongha & Ewepu, (2015) are of the view that the amnesty has helped the Niger Delta youths in no small measure. A continuation of the programme has helped to curb youth restiveness in the region while terminating the programme may pose a great challenge to the nation as there may be a relapse of the conflict. The programme has helped to secure jobs for the unemployed graduates. More so, it has helped to pay monthly stipends, engage ex-agitators in vocational training/skills acquisition and entrepreneurial development. Consequently, it has helped to reduce the violation and vandalization of oil facilities and, brought relative peace in the region which has boosted crude oil production in the country.

Concept of Militancy

Various definitions had been given to the term militancy, according to Quamruzzaman (2010), the word "militancy" can be understood as the acts of individuals, groups or parties displaying or engaging in violence, usually for a cause, whether religious, political, ideological, economic, or social. Nowadays, the term militant is synonymously used with the term 'terrorist. Ashimolowo and Odiachi (2012) see the motive behind militancy to be that people want their rights and if they are not going to get it by negotiation, they simply will then have it by violence against the "powers that be". More recent understanding of militants implies that they are forced or voluntary recruits in an organization/militia. Khan (2005), sees Militancy as the confrontational act of a group or organization supporting some aggressive cause based on a self-created agenda. Militancy is the portrayal of aggression and the militant is the one who is involved in a belligerent act. Bobbitt (2002) holds that Militancy is the manifestation of unfulfilled demands that are created under autocracy and dictatorship, which may otherwise be catered peacefully under a democratic regime. Quamruzzaman (2010) states that a militia movement has five dimensions, ideology, motivation, mobilization, organization and ritual. This word is sometimes used to describe anyone with strongly held views (e.g., Militant Christian, Militant Atheist). A militant person or group expresses a physically aggressive posture while in support of an ideology or a cause. A militant person is confrontational regardless of physical violence or pacifistic methods.

According to Chindah and Braide (2000), Militancy is a state or condition of being combative or disposed to fight for a cause or belief. It can also be defined as a violent response by an individual, group or sect in a region, community, state or nation due to claims of underdevelopment, political oppression, religious beliefs and segregation. The motive is that people want their rights and if they are not going to get it by negotiation, they simply will then have it by violence against the “powers that be”.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Militancy in the Niger Delta

The feelings of being politically oppressed among the ethnic minorities seem to be a key component of the Niger Delta conflict. This is highlighted in the views offered by several interviewees. For instance Kowa, locates protest/resistance by the ‘militia groups’ in response to political oppression before oil was first discovered in Nigeria. He explains that this set the context for struggles for political power in which minority groups were submerged under the regional authority of Eastern majority Igbos. According to Kowa 2016:

Militancy in the Niger Delta region is a combination of series of struggles, dating back to the Adaka Boro revolt [...] because of the injustice and minority status of the inhabitants of the region, we needed to be separated from Eastern region [...] These events existed before Oil came into prominence. (Kowa, 2016)

Militancy in the Niger Delta region is not a recent development, but it has been suppressed to the barest minimum in the past through several policy and military actions by the Government and supposed contribution from the oil majors, such as; establishment of the NDDC, Ministry of Niger Delta affairs, Amnesty Programme, JTF operations, etc.

Historically, looking at the issues of violence and crisis in the African continent in line with the popular perspective on the link between environmental degradation and conflict, Bakut (2006) notes that the link between environmental degradation and conflicts in Africa is self-evident due to the negative impact that has been experienced by African peoples. He observes that while global warming, depletion of ozone layer, pollution and deforestation are global problems in nature desertification, soil erosion and water shortage and the degradation emanating from the activities of Multi-National Companies (MNCs) by way of exploring or exploiting the environment for either oil (as in the Niger Delta of Nigeria) or precious stones (as Liberia and Sierra-Leone etc.) prominent in Africa, are linked to conflicts in the continent. In particular reference to Nigeria, he opines that there are numbers of environmental degradation related problems that have resulted in flooding. Bakut notes that the conflicts in Plateau and Delta states in Nigeria are about claims of

ownership of land (with the resources found in them). He states that these conflicts are in essence over the right to use the environment in pursuit of socio-economic interest of the peoples.

Egwu (2006) considers the role of the state in the pervasiveness of conflict in Africa. In looking at the context of conflicts provided by the nature of states in Africa, Egwu notes that the state is central to the analysis of identity construction and conflicts as well. He opines that the pervasiveness and domain role of the state that explain its central role in the process of identity construction and conflicts. Egwu notes that the politicization of ethnic identity in the construction of power and the organization of the public space in Africa relates to how it is manipulated by the power elites in fragmenting and weakening opposition. He uses the Niger Delta region of Nigeria to illustrate how the tendency of resorting to the ethnic platform to resist political domination of an overbearing central state authority. However, he notes that the preponderant factor is the tendency for communal conflicts to be fuelled and instigated by the state, which is expected to mediate conflicts. This he states is the trend in the Niger Delta, where inter-ethnic and communal conflicts have tended to undermine and weaken the broad coalition of ethnic nationalities in the region in opposition to the predatory activity of the Nigeria state and transnational oil companies. Egwu notes that the strategic role of petroleum in the Nigerian economy, as the major foreign exchange earner, can explain the desperation to break the resolve of the various ethnic communities. He opines that state involvement in fuelling intra and inter communal conflicts appears to be a key. Strategy in response of the state to a pattern of domination and exploitation has led to imposition of the ethnic identity in the Niger Delta. Egwu notes that a shift from liberal to social democracy is necessary to ensure the role of the state in development and also create the ideals of popular participation. He opines that alongside the consolidation of democratic process is the question of restoration of constitutional federalism aimed at reducing the concentration of power and resources at the centre.

The first major episode of violent militancy in the Niger Delta occurred in February 1966, on the eve of the succession of the Eastern Region, or Biafra, which included the eastern oil producing delta. Isaac Boro, an Ijaw born in Oloibiri and leader of the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), declared the independence of the Niger Delta People's Republic, consisting of the present day Rivers and Bayelsa States. Boro's abortive twelve-day revolt anticipated the Biafran civil war. Both conflicts were motivated by the control of oil revenue. Boro called for oil companies to negotiate directly with his government rather than with the national authorities. Over a year later in May 1967 the Eastern Region renamed itself the Republic of Biafra, plunging the country into civil war. In the same month, the federal government broke the East into three states. (Asuni 2009, 5, Barrett 2006, 41). One of them was Rivers State, which included many of the minority groups of the delta, as well as the bulk of the oil producing areas. However, any expectations of greater resource control were disappointed, as the federal military government transferred the control of oil resources to itself through legislation both during and after the war (Obi 2004).

The 1969 Petroleum Decree gave the federal government ownership and control of all petroleum resources in the country. In 1978 the Land Use Decree nationalized all land under the administration of state and local governments, the centralization of resources reduced tensions between the dominant ethnic groups of the federation, the Hausa, the Yoruba and the Igbo. At the same time, it exacerbated tensions between these large groups and the numerous minorities, especially those in the Niger Delta, who became increasingly marginalized from the political and economic systems. This, together with the progressive degradation of the environment due to oil exploitation and impoverishment, increased the minorities' feelings of frustration against the federal government (Ebiri, 2004).

The effect has been complete failure of the federal and state governments to deliver on the political, social and economic welfare that should give these oil producing states meaningful livelihood and compensation for environmental hazards. One wonder with all these destruction how much the military could have offered with most of the decrees and edicts tailored to keep their hold on power. Also the behaviors of the oil multinationals who on their part seem not committed enough to do anything meaningful with the community representatives, the complains gradually moved from feelings of fear, dejection and voice protests to the present level of struggle that is been championed by militants youths who have devised several other combat moves to press for their demands. (Ejobowah, 2000) Oruwari, (2006:3), explains that since the early 1970s, after the end of the Nigerian civil war, violence compounded by military involvement in political governance became legitimized, and the youths' social mobility and struggle for survival now require violence. Society gradually stopped recognizing merit and force became a plausible avenue to the top of the social and economic strata with drug trafficking, smuggling and other perceived negative moneymaking ventures like armed robbery and pen-robbery, becoming attractive ways of getting rich quickly.

By 1990, another revolt led by the renowned playwright, Ken Saro-Wiwa, emerged in Ogoniland. Inspired by the non-violent protests of the American Civil Rights Movement, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) unveiled the major reasons behind their agitation through the presentation of The Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) to the Government in October of 1990. Therein, MOSOP demanded:

Political control of Ogoni affairs, the right to control and use a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development, the right to protect the Ogoni environment and ecology from further degradation and adequate and direct representation in all Nigerian national institutions (MOSOP, 1992). Predictably, the government's response to these demands was repressive and reactionary. The Federal Military Government then, led by General Sanni Abacha, swiftly introduced the following measures to clamp down on the activists: The proscription of ethnic minority associations; The confinement, detention, arbitrary conviction and/or imprisonment of outspoken oil minority elites; The violent suppression, by military force, of protests,

demonstrations and uprisings by oil minority communities; The official declaration of ethnic minority agitations for self-determination, or any disturbances of oil production activities for that matter, as a seditious or treasonable offense punishable with the death penalty (Suberu,1996. p.xii) Eventually, Saro-Wiwa was arrested by the military regime, tried, condemned to death by hanging on the 21st of May, 1994 and subsequently executed. The death of Saro-Wiwa, contrary to the expectation of the Federal Military Government, ignited an unprecedented rebellion throughout the Niger Delta that metamorphosed the struggle from sporadic non-violent agitations to full blown armed insurrection. Apart from the proliferation of splinter armed gangs that were kidnapping oil workers, conducting attacks on oil production facilities and government installations in the region, the major development in the conflict from this stage was the emergence of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) and the famous Kaiama Declaration of 11th December 1998. Again, rather than engage the IYC in a political dialogue or respond to the demands made in the Kaiama Declaration, the military government, in January 1999, sent in troops backed by warships that forcefully quelled the protests (Dokubo, 2005. p.192).

The government's response instead of suppressing the revolt in the delta further exacerbated the conflict and triggered the emergence of many other resistant groups including the Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw in the Niger Delta (MOSIND), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). As the insurgency intensified, the government vehemently refused to negotiate with the militants but rather applied more force.

Isumonah, (2012), holds that the adoption of the violent confrontation by the youth was hastened by the Niger Delta region's youth's visit to Abuja during Abacha's 'two million man march' procession to demonstrate his popularity among Nigerians. The visit of the Niger Delta youths to participate in the procession in Abuja inadvertently exposed them to reality that they had been severely marginalized and deprived of development. Many of them wondered if they were in Europe. They were surprised that Abuja had attained such development in less than 10 years while Niger Delta, the region from where oil is explored to cater for the whole nation, is perpetually impoverished. In late 1998, Ijaw Youth Council convened a meeting of Ijaw youths at Kaiama to discuss the impoverishment of the Niger Delta Region by the FGN and oil companies. It was in this meeting that the armed struggle for resource control was launched. Already, series of intra- and inter-communal conflict, political mobilization of the youths during election had led to proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region. These weapons were used by the youths to pursue their war against the Nigerian state. With the exposure to oil bunkering in the region, the proceeds were also used to procure additional weapons or used in exchange for more sophisticated weapons.

Otoghagua (2007) is also of the opinion that the neglect of the Niger Delta region since the discovery of oil in the area in 1956, pitched the youths of the region against the Nigerian state. The

people of the region believed that they have been deprived of the gain from the resources that comes from their soil. Azaïke (2003) notes that “the oil revenue which ought to have accrued to the Niger Delta, is used to develop other parts of the country, while goose that lays the golden egg suffers official neglect. He also argued that the principle of derivation – which was the operative formula when groundnut, cocoa, palm oil and kernel produced by the major ethnic nationalities were Nigeria’s main sources of revenue – should not have been jettisoned.

The long years of neglect and deprivation, coupled with insensitivity of successive governments and the oil companies, had by the late 1990s created a volatile atmosphere characterized by protests, agitations and conflicts. According to Azigbo (2008:18), the restiveness which started on a mild not as pockets of peaceful demonstrations to the offices of multinational oil companies by community development committees of various host communities, soon degenerated into lock-ins and seizures of oil installations. By 1998, the Niger Delta region had become “a lawless zone, where youths disrupted oil production activities and communities frequently engaged with little provocation, in destructive inter-and intra-community strife. Prominent among the militant groups operating in the region are the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) led by Henry Okah, the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Alhaji Asari Dokubo, the Niger Delta Vigilante force (NDVF) led by Ateke Tom, the Bush Boys, the Martyrs Brigade among others. These militant groups have carried out deadly and paralyzing attacks on oil and gas facilities with their weapons.

Enders and Sandler (1999) observed that armed groups carry out kidnapping and hostage-taking of expatriates to internationalize domestic crisis. Another reason for kidnapping foreigners by MEND was to internationalize the Niger Delta crisis. Americans, Briton, Hondurans, Filipinos, Chinese, among others were kidnapped to internationalize the domestic crisis involving the Nigerian state and MEND. This was achieved to a large extent. As a result, many countries declare Nigeria, especially the Niger Delta region a no-go-area due to kidnapping of expatriates. Another strategy adopted to internationalize the Niger Delta crisis was communication with international media and research organizations like BBC, CNN, International Crisis Group, Amnesty International, etc. of planned attacks and those already carried out and their significance to the struggle. Furthermore, the kidnapping episodes were meant to send message that despite the size of military personnel and security agents Nigeria possessed and deployed to the Niger Delta region, the Nigerian state could not provide security for the people especially the expatriates. It was therefore meant to create security dilemma and to show the foreign workers that they were vulnerable in spite of their close affinity with the Nigerian security agencies.

Fagge and Alabi (2016; 296), observes that militants in the Niger Delta consist of both individuals and organizations that have various reasons for fighting against the governments and the oil multinationals. It is however important to stress that it is difficult for an individual to function as a militant. It requires a concerted effort and collaboration with other individuals with similar

beliefs and goals. In this regard, one could state that there are more than ten militant organizations in the Niger Delta.

Aaron (2010) opines that with the emergence of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in 2006, the struggle for local control of Nigeria's oil assumed a more violent dimension. Apart from MEND that appears to have clearly articulated grievances namely Environmental Insecurity and Socio-Economic Marginalization of the Niger Delta people, sundry groups emerged in the Niger Delta as well. Some of these groups, it would appear, were driven not by liberation ideology but crime and criminality. Independently the activities of these groups created a difficult security challenge in Nigeria's oil belt. The patterns of militant attacks on oil installations, hostage taking and direct confrontations with Nigerian security agencies have drawn both local and international attention to their deplorable situation through their restiveness. All these were happening virtually in every part of the region including Burutu and Warri Southwest Local Government Areas of Delta State, in spite of the heavy presence of the Joint Task Force (JTF), comprising of the Navy, Army and Air force, who were sometimes over run by the superior fire power of the militants.

Surprisingly, according to (Amaize et al 2009:1) just when people had come to believe that the amnesty programme would succeed after all, remnants of the splinter groups began to sabotage it and to take the battle sometimes outside the creeks, upland and even to the seats of government; and this portends a larger threat to the nation's security. This trend first became manifest in the Atlas Cove bombing on the eve of the commencement of Amnesty in 2009. This destroyed the capacity of this major petroleum products supply and distribution facility that takes petroleum products feedstock from ocean-going vessels and distributes same from receiving petroleum products. This facility is the source of petroleum products' distribution to the entire south-west of Nigeria, including Lagos State, Kwara State and the South South states of Edo and Delta. The attack, conducted outside the boundaries of the Niger Delta by the Niger Delta militant group MEND, prompted the then NNPC boss, Mr. Sanusi Barkindo, to lament thus:

It is the first time this type of incident has happened in Atlas Cove...everybody concerned was taken by complete surprise because this facility had been secured on a twenty-four hour basis, seven days a week... (Amaize et al 2009:5).

The event left military officers who were safeguarding the station dead, including a Navy Commander. The militants who carried out the operation came in as many as 15 boats early in the evening (8:15 pm), placed dynamites on a critical angle of the pipelines and blew it up without the Nigerian security system being astir.

This fits into the contention of Ylonen (2005:53) that 'these crises illustrate the weakness of the Nigerian state as they demonstrate the limitations of the governance structures to overcome

challenges to the national government before they occur.’ To further underscore the magnitude of the threat which the activities of the militants posed to the nation’s security, a day after the militants bombed the Atlas Cove oil facility; late President Yar’Adua immediately changed the Defence Minister. In a minor cabinet reshuffle affecting only two ministries, the Minister of Interior, Major-General Godwin Abbe a retired infantry soldier swapped positions with Alhaji Shettima Mustapha who moved from the Defence Ministry to that of Interior. ‘Given the background of the new Defence Minister’, the call to his new portfolio aimed at ‘fast tracking the ongoing peace process in the Niger Delta region, especially critical issues that concern defence.’ One would have expected that the gravity of the security concerns the Niger Delta crisis has created would compel the federal government’s counter measures to be commensurate with them, but it all seemed rather cosmetic. By and large, government efforts ended in a debacle as a full-scale military action between the militants and the military (JTF) broke out in the Ijaw Gbaramatu creeks. According to Oyadongha:

What started as mere ill-equipped fighting band in the mangrove swamp of the Niger Delta has snowballed into a deadly war machine that would hold the nation by the jugular. From this poorly organized rag tag gang emerged a disciplined fighting machine using speedboats, machine guns and rocket propelled grenade launchers to carry out precise attack on installations in the region. The initial thinking that the military would rout the rampaging militants in a matter of days turned out to be a mirage (Oyadongha 2015).

According to (Aaron, 2010). The implications of this parlous security were grave. Oil production figures plummeted to all time low, as many TNCs announced production shut-ins. Specifically, average production figure for 2009 was around 1.6million barrels per day(bpd), down from 2.7million bpd(NNPC,2009). The country lost an estimated \$92 billion in oil export earnings to production shut-in and crude oil theft associated with the activities of militants (Davis, 2009). The cumulative effect of this was a drastic fall in the country’s oil exports. Consequently, public finance was subjected to one of the worst crises since independence.

Alaibe (2010), observe that by January 2009, militancy in the Niger Delta had virtually crippled Nigeria’s economy. Investment inflow to the upstream sub - sector of the oil industry had dwindled remarkably. Exasperated foreign investors had begun redirecting their investments to Angola and Ghana as preferred destinations over Nigeria. At that point Angola surpassed Nigeria as Africa’s highest crude oil producer. This dwindling investments in the critical oil and gas sector threatened Nigeria's capacity to grow its crude oil reserves as planned. Clearly, insecurity in the Niger Delta was identified as key reason why investors were leaving for more stable business opportunities in Africa. For example, due to militant activities in the Niger Delta, Royal Dutch Shell by early 2009 saw its production drop from one million barrels per day (bpd) to about 250,000 bpd. ... Sabotage, oil siphoning rackets and kidnappings of oil workers by suspected militants further threatened the operations of the oil companies and exerted immense pressure on the Nigerian economy.

Agitation against environmental degradation and poor infrastructural development in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria, particularly by the Ijaw youths, has been a recurring issue particularly from the 1990s. However, the emergence of the new wave of agitation started in 1998. Precisely, in December, 11th 1998, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) in the region in its Kaiama Declaration issued an ultimatum to all the oil companies in the region to suspend operations and to leave the region by 31st December, 1998. The basic complaint by the IYC, as contained in the Declaration, is that the oil exploration by oil companies in the region is causing severe land and food shortages and serious environmental pollution (Ezeudo, 2013). The oil exploration in the region is dominated by Multi-national Corporation such as Chevron, Texaco, Exxon-Mobile, Agip, Shell and Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation. Their other complaint is that there is no serious and systematic effort at meaningful human and infrastructural development in the region both by the government and the multi-national oil companies (Olatoke and Olotokunba, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2002; UNDP, 2006).

In the Niger Delta region, as observe by Fagge and Alabi (2016), four important forces become manifest- the Federal Government, the State Government, the multinational corporations and the downtrodden masses whose objective condition of existence has taken a plunge for the worse for decades. The first three (Federal Government, the State Government and the multinationals) have in varying degrees contributed to the contradictions in Niger Delta. By the virtue of fact that the Land Decree has made all the lands the Federal Government property, successive governments at the center have virtually wiped off the principle of derivation which would have made it possible, for the indigenes of the zone to control a sizeable chunk of the resources of the area. Within this context, the federal government serves as the Leviathan who dispenses favours and bounties to its supporters and cronies and sanctions to its perceived adversaries. Most of the six governments in the zone have been largely predatory and annexationist, looting and pillaging the resources of the people.

As Marx and Engels (1977) put it, the history of all hitherto existed society is the history of class struggle. Thus, the class analysis framework of the approach best explains the endemic struggle between the exploiters (the multinational oil companies and government) and the exploited (the Niger delta people, including the militant groups). Marxists hold that the dominated, exploited and marginalized groups, which paradoxically generated or bears the burdens of creating resources seeks to change the status quo when it becomes conscious (Libman and Borisox, 1985; Marx and Engels, 1977; Luckac, 1968). Therefore, militancy in the Niger Delta region is attributed to the consciousness of exploitation being perpetrated against the people, and the struggle to change the status quo. This struggle has also created a state of insecurity which has by extension affected Nigeria's economic growth, because of the monolithic nature of the national economy.

It was also observed that the situation in the Niger Delta region is, indeed, a paradox of poverty and underdevelopment in the mist of plenty. This is because in spite of oil wealth in the region, it

still remains one of the least developed parts of Nigeria, apparently characterized by widespread poverty. It is the deep rooted sense of neglect and marginalization by the government in providing or supporting critical human development and of basic social amenities that underlay the persistent militancy in the region (Ogege, 2011; UNDP, 2006). Ndoma-Egba (2004) collaborates this argument as he contends that it is the inability of the Nigerian state to address the development needs of the region that has led to the persistent agitation and violent crisis in the region. The agitation according to him becomes more violently expressed on the belief that the failure of the Nigerian state to meet their basic development needs is deliberate and a consequence of sheer lack of political will on the part of government leadership. In essence, the militants feel that they are in unjust situation and need to rise up in arms to redress the situation (Smith, 2002). Nigerian government itself clearly acknowledged this as President Umaru Musa Yar'adua noted in the 2009 Independence Day broadcast that the militants took up arms as a way of drawing attention to the plight of the people of the region.

Generally, it is noteworthy that the very core reason for the existence of the state and peoples' obedience to the state is the expectation that the state will provide the basic necessities of life. Consequently, in the environment of the states' inability or unwillingness to provide the basic needs for the citizens, armed groups may start to emerge as a means of getting answers to their agitation for the protection of their vital interests. This tendency is usually, reinforced by the fact that in such a situation of fragility, the state do not maintain a monopoly of possession and use of instruments of violence. For instance, the magnitude of arms surrendered by the Niger Delta militants following the amnesty indicates that the Nigerian state has come to lack the ability to maintain a monopoly of the possession and use of instruments of violence. Indeed, the much that was surrendered is possibly not even all that the militants had in their arsenal. Clearly, the Niger Delta militancy is a consequence of the Nigerian state fragility with particular reference to its unwillingness and inability to provide basic development needs of the people of the region. Indeed, the people of the region have come to consider it reasonable to form armed groups or join militant groups as a means of meeting their justice and social needs. And if the militancy is allowed to persist, it has the potential to further weaken the power of the Nigerian state to perform its functions of providing basic services or development.

No doubt, huge financial resources have, over the years, been voted to address the development needs of the region. Such financial votes have been spent through the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) set up in 1993, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) established in 2000 with the sole mandate of developing the region and the Ministry of Niger Delta established in 2008 to address Niger Delta issues. The existence of these institutions and the huge financial allocations to them have not yet translated to any meaningful development of the region as a result of general poor political leadership (Oтите and Umukoro, 2011). So even in the event of increased derivation beyond 13 percent or resource control by the states in the region as being demanded by the militants, such may not yet translate to any

meaningful development in the absence of good political leadership. Indeed, effective and efficient use of resources within the framework of given institutions, policies or programmes is dependent on the existence of good political leadership (Dike, 2003; Achebe, 1983; Derin, 2007).

As has been found in this study on Nigerian government and development by scholars like Derin (2007) and Dike (2003), Nigerian underdevelopment is a consequence of bad leadership principally characterized by corruption and prebendalism. Therefore, the assumption by the militants that once fiscal federalism or resource control by states is embraced, their development plights would become a thing of the past, contradicts the reality of political life in Nigeria as a whole and even in the region itself. This is because the political leaders in the region have not shown that they are in any way different from their counterparts in other parts of the nation especially when it comes to sacrificing the basic development needs of the masses on the alter of personal greed and aggrandizement. Indeed, the 13 percent derivation and the statutory allocations from the federation account being received by the states in the region and the internally generated revenue would have significantly resulted to improvements in their development state if large chunks of such funds are not being looted by the political leaders. This situation is attested to by the facts that Dieprege Alamiesiegha, ex-governor of Bayelsa state who, at several points claimed to be championing the development cause of the region, was convicted of stealing stupendous amount of state money that would have ordinarily been used for development in the region. Also, James Onanefe Ibori, ex-governor of Delta state and an acclaimed Ijaw youth leader, misappropriated substantial chunks of state government fund.

Timipre Sylva, ex-governor of Bayelsa state and lucky Igbinedion, ex-governor of Edo state were all accused of laundering state fund (Tell, 2008). As well, Asari Dokubo, Ateke Tom and other militant leaders are known for utilizing their prominent positions to acquire personal wealth rather than for effective agitation for the general development of the region (Lain, 2010).

In early 2005, according to Dimieari (2006) political representatives from the oil producing region walked out of a national conference on matters relating to the distribution of oil revenue. Few months later the Obasanjo government arrested a Niger Delta militant on charges of treason. This action escalated the violence across oil field in the region resulting into several humanitarian and economic tragedies. Between 1998 and 2003, there were four hundred vandalization of oil company facilities yearly across the Niger Delta. This number increased to 581 between January and September 2004. Ukeji (2001) holds that the emergence of two ethnic militias from Rivers State led by Ateke Tom (Niger Delta Vigilante) and Alhaji Asari Dokubo of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force heightened the war against the oil companies and the Nigerian State. Both men angered by the marginalization, economic as well as developmental backwardness of their people asked both the Nigerian State and oil companies to leave their oil and land alone. This provoked President Obasanjo who ordered for the militarization of the state to stop ethnic militia and to protect the business of oil exploration. The action of the president rather than quelling the storm angered the people. It was therefore not surprising the emergence of more ethnic militia after the president's declaration of Rivers State as one of the volatile breeding ground for militant groups that must be crushed.

Ikporukpo (2007) posits that three things worked against the Federal Police of President Obasanjo from recording success against the militants; (1) the geography of the state, an army of creeks and swamps, and the absence of effective transportation and communication infrastructure denied the president's policemen access to the interior of the state. (2) The ethnic militia was already reaping enormous wealth from the business of oil bunkering and was therefore able to raise the needed resources to oil their machinery of warfare against President Obasanjo's policemen. (3) Some of the president's policemen commissioned to crush the ethnic militia could not resist the carrot coming from the business of oil bunkering. With poor condition of service in the profession, some of them saw it as an avenue to fight their ways out of poverty. A romance with the ethnic militia therefore was inevitable. These militant groups operated outside the control of traditional governance institutions, and soon grew into a strong voice requesting for total control of the God given resources at their backyard.

With arms in hand and easy access to crude from pipelines and flow stations, the extraction in collaboration with recruited mercenaries from neighbouring communities, launched an aggressive attack on Ataba, a remote riverine community in Andoni Local Council of Rivers State. The resultant killings and wanton destruction of properties indicated that their mission was primarily to annihilate or drive out from the community persons perceived to be opposed to one of the persons involved in a local chieftaincy dispute. In the process, over sixty persons were gruesomely murdered in cold blood, many houses were razed and reduced to rubbles, and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. Those who survived the attack were maimed and several of them sent on self-exile (Ebiri, 2004).

Njoku (2009:39) states that to avoid the situation from which the world emerged after the two world wars, sources of conflicts and wars need to be sorted out so as "to enhance respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, to promote sustainable economic and social development for order and prosperity to alleviate distress and to curtail the existence and use of massively destructive weapons". This is necessary as the United Nations Secretary General's vision in 1992, to restore peace to a world upset by immense ideological barriers has created distrust and hostility among nations and brutal ethnic, religious, social, cultural and injustice are rife. He notes that other threats to social peace enumerated by the Secretary General include: new assertions of discrimination and exclusion and acts of terrorism seeking to undermine evolution and change through democratic means. Njoku states that world peace and security are also threatened by the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. Conceptualizing conflict management, Otite and Umuokoro (2011) notes that conflicts management is a wider concept encompassing conflict resolution and transformation when necessitated, and is more of a long term arrangement involving institutionalized provisions and regulative procedures for dealing with conflicts whenever they occur, he states that people must learn to manage conflicts productively, otherwise, the risk to society and its development are overwhelming. He observes that in some respects, the concepts of conflict resolution, conflicts transformation and conflicts management overlap both in content and

in practice. Otite maintains that conflicts management must occur in a polite atmosphere and context, noting that conflicts needs not be portrayed as welfare or violence. He observes that it promotes the success of conflict management if parties in conflict are portrayed as interdependent citizens, and if anger and strong emotions are minimized. Otite states clearly that conflicts must be resolved, transformed or managed to ensure social justice and peace between individuals and groups having divergent interest.

On the approach to conflict management in the Niger Delta, Onuoha (2008) notes that the violent and brutal repression of the extractive communities in the Niger Delta by the MNOC's neglect the principles that peace, stability and security are essential for resolution and prevention of conflict in the region. Onuoha states that Imobighe 1997 developed the concept of an integrated conflict management system involving three activities. These include conflicts prevention and peace promotion, conflicts control and abatement; and conflict resolution. He opines that the integrated conflicts management model emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to the management of conflict. Onuoha states that the development of an early warning system to indicate where conflict is brewing or imminent is necessary to facilitate an early response to prevent violence or communal carnage. He observes that a basic setback in conflict management in Nigeria is the use of suppressive apparatuses of the state, noting that the suppression of conflict in the Niger Delta by the deployment of security forces is often regarded as an end in itself. He observes that such conflict abatement effort is not followed up with intensive negotiation towards resolving the crisis.

Presidential Amnesty and Militancy in Niger Delta

According to Ikein (2009), a disconnection between the economic advantage of the Niger Delta and the quantum of resources disbursed for the development of the region has given rise to structural imbalances in Nigeria. Consequently, the Niger Delta of Nigeria is increasingly famous due to massive oil deposits and constant violence in the region. Estimates show that the Nigerian government generates over 90% of its revenue from the region, which is characterized by crisis of underdevelopment. The region remains underdeveloped despite the huge revenue it provides for the privileged social class including the public figures, public servants and beneficiaries from multinational oil corporations. The Nigerian government and multinational corporations are principal beneficiaries of the massive oil deposits in the region, while the majority of the people there battle against squalor occasioned by exploitative oil exploration, environmental degradation, climate change, inadequate infrastructure, unemployment and poverty. Actions taken to address this situation are diverse ranging from the state-led efforts and identity-based social movements as well as intervention of the civil society including the family, schools and religious organizations. A major problem that appears intractable in Nigeria is escalation of violence especially as a result of the emergence of deadly militant groups in the Niger Delta since the 1990s. The most disturbing militant activities in the region include oil pipeline vandalization, hostage taking, massacre and assassination. The realization of the need to seek redress for several years of neglect and

marginalization of resource-endowed communities of the Niger Delta fuels the growth of youth militancy and a new wave of social movement in Nigeria. Out of the thirty six states in Nigeria the Niger Delta communities spread across nine states with reliance on fishing and farming as their major sources of livelihoods. The communities are characterized by environmental degradation, chronic poverty and escalation of violence despite huge resources that the Federal Government of Nigeria generates from the region (Omotota, 2007 and Ikelegbe, 2001).

Unfortunately, the Nigerian government's military approach and other top down measures for alleviating the spate of violence in the region have not yielded desired results, hence the state adoption of Presidential amnesty to promote peace in the region. Several measures to promote peace and development in the region have failed until the adoption of amnesty, a relatively new strategy for peace building in the region. The Presidential amnesty programme was preceded by various measures such as the Ministry of the Niger Delta, Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, the Joint Military Task Force and the Niger Delta Development Commission. None of these measures has clearly demonstrated adequate plan for human capital development in the region.

On assumption of office, late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua realized that youths were the perpetrators of violence and militancy in the region, and that there was, therefore, a need to address the problem of militancy in the Niger Delta. His government identified that many of these militants were "able-bodied youths whose energies could be harnessed for the development of the Niger Delta and nation at large" (Kuku, 2012). He therefore set up mechanism to tackle the problem of insecurity and youth restiveness in the region. That mechanism is the Presidential Amnesty program, which was set up on June 25, 2009. According to Udeme (2013).The amnesty program proclamation did not compel any of the militants to accept the offer of amnesty. The government signed a contract with only those who voluntarily accepted the offer; and these were later taken through a proper and non-forceful DDR process. Vitalis (2002), observe that the Presidential Amnesty granted to the militants seems to serve only as a strategy to enable the government and oil companies to continue with oil exploration in order to bring in revenue to government. This strategy that the government adopted amounted to throwing money at issues affecting the Niger Delta instead of addressing them head on. Most recently, the federal government voted N56 billion for the post-amnesty programme without proper plans for its proper usage. Considering the inflationary rate in the country, it was doubtful if the amount can do any tangible development in the region or cater for the needs of the militants. In most cases, scholars have argued that the money voted into the Presidential Amnesty programme found their ways into the pocket of the political elites for use in electioneering campaigns, others ended up in private pockets as the issues of corruption continue to grow becoming worst and entrench in the fabric of Nigeria's social life (Punch, 2013).

Presidential Amnesty, in the general sense according to O'shea (2002), is a political tool of compromise and reunion granted by a sovereign to individuals that have committed acts against

the State; usually treasonable offences and/or rebellion. O'Shea who defines amnesty as immunity in law from either criminal or civil legal consequences, or from both, for wrongs committed in the past in a political context opines that granting of amnesty implores the following:

1. That its grantee has committed some form of offence which is identifiable and punishable under some national criminal legal system or in other cases a crime recognized and punishable under international law.
2. That the granting authority forgoes all legal sanctions or remembrance of the offence(s) committed by the offender.
3. That the grantees are given a clean slate in the eyes of the law.

Mallinder (2009) summarizes Presidential Amnesty as a trade off on justice in the interest transition, peace, reconciliation, forgiveness and truth. Peace in the Niger Delta was the major factor for the initiation of the Presidential Amnesty programme in Nigeria as it is a crucial element to ensure the optimal exploitation of oil resources required to satisfy varied interests including the federal government and oil-multinationals that pecuniary interests and the global community that requires a steady supply of the resource. The Federal Government's amnesty initiative was calculated to reduce the spates of violence emanating from the Niger Delta region where the inhabitants were expressing their desire for economic self-determination specifically to determine if, and to what extent, these demands were (or, are capable of being) satisfied.

Leba (2009), observes that in the eyes of MEND, Presidential Amnesty in the context of the Niger Delta militancy is a misplaced notion because amnesty is a lifeline for criminals not militants whose motivation is the emancipation and survival of their lands and people. They argue that it is the federal government that has committed crimes of oppression against the Niger Delta people and should rather, as a sign of good faith, withdraw its security operatives from their region and provide a comprehensive plan to improve the lives of the region's inhabitants.

However, Nwajiakwu-Dahou (2010), notes that demilitarization of the Niger Delta is not in sight despite the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process under the Presidential Amnesty initiative which is meant to rid the ex-militants of their weaponry retrain them and reintegrate them into society. Indeed, it will be foolhardy to suggest that militancy in the Niger Delta has ended with the amnesty deal but clearly, there is still a large military presence in the area that does not augur well for long-term peace. Interestingly, about the same time the federal government announced its amnesty deal, it invested N440 billion on the 'security' of the Niger Delta which afforded the Joint Task Force (JTF) the opportunity to upgrade its weaponry and resolve to expel 'militant elements' from the region so that oil exploration and production activities could continue as usual.

While most of the militant groups keyed into the Amnesty Programme, surrendered their arms and got their members to renounce militancy, others (particularly the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) backed out claiming that the Amnesty Programme was not far reaching enough and that the pace of development of infrastructure in the Niger Delta was too slow. MEND ‘neither accepted amnesty nor surrendered their arms’ (Bayagbon 2010b:18).

According to Amaize, (2009:5). While claiming responsibility for the Warri bomb explosion at the venue of Vanguard’s Post- Amnesty conference, MEND said ‘it was to let the world know of its continued relevance in the region’ and to further protest the alleged continued marginalization of host people from control and management of the resources of their region ‘which have been distributed among mostly Northerners while indigenes of the Niger Delta can barely survive’ There are also the factors on the part of government – of delayed considerations of the issues that led to the declaration of Amnesty. Thus the renewed militants’ activities were to provoke the authorities to reconstitute the Amnesty Implementation Committee to address the specific demands of the ex-militants and make those concerned to go back to the drawing board to replan the Amnesty Programme. This is so because, as admitted by a member of the Post-Amnesty Committee, Dr Tony Uranta, ‘the amnesty process is a failure.’ In his view, post-amnesty violence like the bomb blast in Warri has ‘no intention to hurt people but possibly angry elements still complaining about the failure of the process of amnesty may need to be engaged’.

This contention according to Ahon, (2010:9) validates MEND’s claim to seek continued relevance and the need to get the amnesty idea right. This has become imperative given the contention of the likes of Ann’Kio Briggs that post-amnesty violence ‘shows very clearly that the Federal Government, the state governments that make up the Niger Delta, all of them have missed the point of the amnesty’. Even from the rehabilitation centres, there have been echoes of protests and threats to return to violence by ex-militants who have alleged several breaches by government authorities of ‘most of the agreements reached between the Amnesty Committee and the former militants’. In this regard, for instance, a group of former militants at the Sapele Naval Base Rehabilitation Centre had alleged incompetence on the part of the resource person engaged to train them who ‘was either ill-equipped or was cutting corners’ a situation that ‘has made them to stay idle in the past three months in the training camp’.

Ezema, (2010:5) argues that Scepticism over governments commitment towards the Amnesty Programme were further heightened by ‘a new definition of oil producing states which includes states through which pipelines for evacuating crude or refined products pass. As they are to become beneficiaries of funds meant for oil producing communities’. Again, there were speculations during the arms-surrender exercise that not all the arms in the cache of the militants were turned in. ‘Information has it that not up to 40 per cent of the war arsenals in their possession was eventually surrendered. So, the incidents you’re getting today are to confirm that they have not totally disarmed’. Further quoting Ayo Opadokun, Ezema (2010:5) notes that:

These militants have been busy engaging in bunkering and bunkering provides them with hard currencies. There is no amount that the Federal Government can give them on monthly basis that will satisfy them. So each time they are broke, they will like to do something to create confusion [and] explore the situation for their own economic gains.

For government, it needed 'to rid the Niger Delta of criminal elements masquerading as militants' as 'government would not fold its arms and some criminals plunge the region into another orgy of violence'. It therefore 'had the responsibility to nip in the bud all threats of militancy'. Thus the renewed (post-amnesty) violence derived from the effort of the military to stem the resurgence of militancy in the region. (Amaize 2010:5)

In the same vein, according to Ako and Oluduro (2010), there is no evidence to suggest that the government intends to enforce extant laws to protect the Niger Delta from oil-induced pollution. If anything, the converse has been the case as the federal government has been postponing the date to end gas flaring in the region for the umpteenth time since January 2010. While it remains uncertain whether the flare-out will ever come to pass, experiences from past postponements instil a sense of scepticism regarding both the oil-companies likely adherence to any other date and the federal government's enforcement of the law thereafter. Consequently, it is suggested that the amnesty deal is a vertical policy shift rather than a vertical one towards the Niger Delta peoples' aspiration of economic self-determination. With the benefit of hindsight, one may argue that the federal government's Presidential Amnesty package is a volte face following the failure of its security forces to overrun the militants after increased funding and military operations in the Niger Delta. Indeed, the government's lackadaisical attitude towards its post-amnesty commitments reinforces the above suggestion, which according to Nwajiakwi-Dahou (2010), suggest that the Presidential Amnesty deal was initiated as a process to 'increasingly insulate oil companies from over-exposure to militant pressure'. If this is really the case, one might be tempted to suggest that the Presidential Amnesty deal has succeeded; even if momentarily, to curb the hitherto widespread violent expressions for economic self-determination.

However, given the unsatisfactory implementation of the Presidential Amnesty deal and recurring threats of violence from factions of MEND that refused to be a part of the amnesty deal, the final word is that violent claims for economic self-determination in the Niger Delta are bound to recur. Although some scholars believe that violence in the region is a result of the unjust exploitation of the environment and its consequences on the lives of the people, others attribute violence in the region to greed (Collier, 2000; Keen, 2005; Reno, 2005). It is believed that most resource-based conflicts in Africa are caused more by greed than by grievance. Collier & Hoeffler (2004), posit that armed militancy's are mainly caused by the desire of militants to enrich themselves rather than any altruistic reasons. Greed in conflict is fuelled by opportunities available in armed conflict. These opportunities may be in terms of financing, recruitment, or geography. Of relevance to this

study is the issue of recruitment as an element of greed in armed conflict—this is in terms of the ability to attract fighting manpower; “something made easier when there is a high proportion of young unemployed males in a population, in a setting of endemic poverty and poor education” (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004: 563-595). In the Niger Delta, majority of the perpetrators of violence are able-bodied youths who have no source of income, are not educated, and have not gone through any form of skills training.

David Keen (2000) does not support the position of Collier and Hoeffler (2004) that greed is the major fuel for armed conflicts, but that both greed and grievance are motivations for armed conflict. He says that because the two are powerful incentives, the result is that “greed generates grievance and rebellion, which in turn further legitimizes further greed” (Keen, 2000:32). The conflict in Nigeria’s Niger Delta is a continuous cycle of both greed and grievance. The grievance of the people toward MNCs and the Nigerian state has resulted in the “struggle” being hijacked by their leaders who exploited it to their own advantage. The grievances exploited include injustices meted out to the people and exploitation of host communities by oil companies operating in the region; anger at the force and military action used by the Federal Government of Nigeria against the people of the region; desire for the creation of a distinct region with a political and administrative structure for the Niger Delta; and the desire for total control of their resources, with appropriate tax paid to the federal government (Isumonah, 2003).

Despite the fact that the people had legitimate reasons for their grievances, these factors are closely related to greed, especially the desire by stakeholders to benefit personally from new opportunities that open from the “struggle.” An ex-combatant says in Okafor (2010),

Let no one be deceived, it is all about oil. If there is a separation between political power and oil, a lot of Niger Delta politicians will not contest elections and there will be no militancy. Militancy is the child of greedy and corrupt politicians who will stop at nothing to make money for themselves, their families, and their friends.

What this suggests is that the militancy in the Niger Delta region is fuelled by corrupt politicians who use the excuse of environmental degradation and exploitation to incite youths to further their own ambitions and interests.

There is abundant evidence in literature on the Niger Delta militancy that the major demand of the people of the region is development as would be reflected in availability of basic infrastructures and services, improved sanitation of the environment, enhanced human development opportunities etc. Against this, the basic concern has been that the Presidential Amnesty Programme, as it is, cannot actually address the demand for development in the region. Enu and Ugwu (2011), expressing this doubt, argues that government hurriedly granted amnesty to the militants and

engaged in cash lobbying and settlement of the militants and their leaders without corresponding policy measures to address the root cause of the militancy in the region. Again, the gains of the Presidential Amnesty are exclusively for those who renounce militancy and became beneficiaries of the programme of the amnesty constitute a very infinitesimal part of the population of the region. So taking them to camp and reintegrating them does not in any way address the general problem of underdevelopment of the majority of the people in the region.

Osa, (2014) posit that in any given society, programmes geared towards or that is focusing on development is central to ensuring peace. To achieve development, the importance of infrastructural development is a priority. Among these are; connectivity through telecommunication, quality roads, water and sanitation, and energy are basic requirement for development. The Niger Delta is unarguably the richest and most endowed region in Nigeria. In fact, it produces the vast majority of the oil and gas wealth of the country. It's also accounts for 95 per cent of the foreign exchange earnings, about 83 per cent of the Federal Government revenue. Yet, the Niger Delta people remain poor, unemployed and the region remain underdeveloped. It's important that the government should holistically develop the region because it is one of the major factors that gave rise to the Niger Delta conflict.

Further and still in the above respect, it has even been observed that the money that actually goes to the commanders of the militants, contractors and consultants is more than the one that goes to the militants. In this case, the amnesty programme is being seen as a lucrative business opportunity rather than a transformational strategy. Indeed, according to the panel set up in January, 2010 to review the rehabilitation aspect of the amnesty programme, about 80 percent of the budget for the amnesty programme had gone for payment to consultants and contractors leaving just a paltry 20 percent for the rehabilitation of the ex-militants (Oтите and Umukoro, 2011). Even beyond this, the argument has again been that the financial advancement to the militants does not constitute an adequate compensation for the socio-economic deprivation in the region that underlies the militancy.

Also Ikelegbe & Umukoro, (2014) hold the views that PAP is now seen as narrow by a large section of the people that is regarded by many as an Ijaw programme or affairs. The payment for reinsertion and economic empowerment for 30,000 ex-combatants is likened to be a settlement for the Ijaw youths. After some time, other tribes like the Urhobo and Itsekiri youths and others were incorporated and were part of the Ijaw led struggle .It is seen from this perspective that the leadership and beneficiaries of the programme are pro Ijaw which favour the Ijaw and excluded other ethnic nationalities in the region. Thus, however the amnesty and the DDR mainly accommodated youths from Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers and Ondo States. While the non Ijaw groups like those from Edo, Akwa Ibom Cross River to mention but a few agitated for inclusion in the activities of the amnesty programme in the areas of appointment and development. For example in April, 2012 there was demonstration by aggrieved youths in the amnesty programme over

neglect of the oil communities in Akwa Ibom (Saharareporters.com). The question to answer is if other ethnic nationalities are not incorporated in the scheme of things as it is in the aforementioned scenario or situation, will there be justice and equity in the equitable sharing and distribution of wealth in the Niger delta region?

Akinwale, (2010) argues that compensation of victims of the Niger Delta struggle will ensure justice, stability and equity in the region. However, this was done without considering the victims of militancy and hostage taking. Mothers who have lost children, children who had lost fathers, families that have lost homes and persons who have been displaced by the conflict should be compensated. This should be done otherwise it will send a wrong signal to others that crime/violent pays and may serve as a driving force for others who want to carry arms.

In all, the Presidential Amnesty Programme has a short term goal which is the cessation of hostilities in the region. In essence, it is not so much forward looking in terms of ensuring long and sustainable development in the region. By inference, the major objective or motivation behind the policy is just to return peace to the region for the oil exploration and production to continue and not to address fundamental development demands and aspirations of the people of the region. Indeed, as Otite and Umukoro (2011) argue, the amnesty policy does not constitute a long term solution to the Niger Delta militancy that is a product of neglect and underdevelopment. So the relative peace brought about in the region by the amnesty programme if not followed by immediate general development of the region may remain precarious and fragile.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Frustration-Aggression theory because of its imperative to the research and its effectiveness and merits among other means for the study and understanding of the social system and related phenomena. Frustration Aggression theory was formulated by John Dollard et al, Leonard Doob, Neal Miller, O. H. Mowrer, and Robert Sears in (1939). The theory concentrated on the limited interference with an expected attainment of a desired goal on hostile (emotional) aggression. Developments since then have shown that the frustration-aggression theory is intended to suggest to the student of human nature that when he sees aggression he should turn a suspicious eye on possibilities that the organism or group is confronted with frustration; and that when he views interference with individual or group habits, he should be on the look-out for, among other things, aggression (Green, 1941).

The frustration aggression theory states that aggression is caused by frustration. When someone is prevented from reaching his target, he becomes frustrated. This frustration then can turn into aggression when something triggers it (Berkowitz, 1980). Aggression is usually directed towards the cause of the frustration, but if this is not possible, the aggression may be displaced onto another person or object.

The oil producing Communities of Delta state have for so long craved to enjoy the proceeds of the oil deposit in their lands. Unfortunately, what they get in return is pollution and environmental damage caused by activities of the oil Companies. The frustration emanating from the insensitivity of the state and oil companies eventually turned the region into a complex operating environment, characterized by intra and inter-ethnic conflict, conflict between the communities and the oil companies and conflict between armed groups and the oil companies and Nigerian security forces. The multi-dimensional crisis is driven by the actions of the security forces and militant groups, extensive pollution of land and water, corruption, corporate failures and bad practice and serious government neglect.

According to Best (2012) in a situation where feelings of frustration become widespread among the population and the feeling is that people are getting less than what they deserve, the most advisable thing that political leaders can do is to find out what the expectation of such individuals and groups are and to seek ways of negotiating with them. Most times, however, those in position of authority believe that giving in to public demands or entering into negotiations is a sign of weakness.

Thus, it is appropriate to aver that when people perceive that they are being prevented from achieving a goal, their frustration is likely to turn to aggression. As seen in the extant Niger Delta issue, the hitherto peaceful region have snowballed into crisis because for over half a century, the closer they get to their goal of enjoying the proceeds of oil which nature deposited in their land, the greater the excitement and expectation of the pleasure. However, the closer they are, the more frustrated they get by being held back. Frustration produced by interrupting a person's progress toward an expected goal will always elicit the motive to aggress. The people of Burutu and Warri Southwest Local Government Areas of Delta State have long been denied by the government of Nigeria the right to enjoy the proceeds of the resources that are deposited in their land, this has been going on over a long period of time that has brought about frustration and the only outcome from that is what we see today as militancy activities in these areas.

Assumption of the Frustration-Aggression Theory

1. The theory says that aggression is the result of blocking, or frustrating a person or group's effort to attain a goal (Friedman and Schustack, 1999).
2. The frustration-aggression hypothesis attempt to explain why people scapegoat (Whitley and Kite, 2010). It attempts to give an explanation as to the cause of violence. The theory, developed by John Dollard and his Colleagues, says that frustration causes aggression, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target.
3. There are many examples of this. If a man is disrespected at his work, but cannot respond to it for fear of losing his job, he may go home and take his anger and frustration out on his family. This theory is also used to explain riots and revolutions. Both are caused poorer

and more deprived sections of society who may express their bottled up frustration and anger through violence.

4. Frustration is the “condition which exists when a goal-response suffers interference”. While aggression is defined as “an act which whose goal-response is injury to an organism (or organism surrogate)”. However, aggression is not always the response to frustration. Rather a substitute response is displayed when aggressive response is not the strongest on the hierarchy. Furthermore, the theory raises the question if aggression is innate? (Pastore, 1950)

Relevance of the Theory

Niger Delta is one; if not the most important region in Nigeria considering the fact that more than 90% of her revenue comes from the oil that is deposited in that region. However, one begin to wonder how come the region that is almost the life wire of the country turn out to be the most volatile with different militant groups that have carried arms against the state at various time? Could the natural blessing endowed on that region by nature seen as a ‘curse’? Media reports have shown that poverty caused by long neglect and underdevelopment of the region by successive governments may have led to the constant threat and attacks, kidnapping among other things in the region.

Applying frustration-Aggression theory, it is popularly say that a hungry man is an angry man hence militancy in the Niger Delta is not unconnected to the plight of the people in the area. Having watched their means of livelihood been destroy by oil exploration and activities of the Multi-national corporations with government doing nothing about it, the people became frustrated and show-off their anger in aggressive way by taking up arms to fight the government that is indifferent to their plight. Militant leaders like Asari Dokubo and Ateke Tom among others were able to indoctrinate already frustrated masses by portraying the Nigerian state has been responsible for their terrible condition and enjoined them to fight for the control of their own mineral resources as the only way to get their problem solved.

Critique of the Theory

1. The theory cannot say why the specific out-groups were chosen to be scapegoats why others are not.
2. The theory tend to provide a justification for behaving aggressively with the popular saying “being frustrated made me do it” (Selg, 1971)
3. The theory suggests frustrated, prejudiced individuals should act more aggressively towards out-groups they are prejudiced against, but studies have shown that they are more aggressive towards everyone.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted qualitative approach. This is considered most suitable given the nature of the research that requires in debt information from participants with vast experience on the phenomenon that would be investigated. Qualitative approach allows the interviewees to air their views freely without restriction, in that giving useful information that would be of a value to the research. The adoption of this approach would enable us to identify the most severe threats to validity and reliability of the topic under study particularly as it affects these selected local government areas in Delta State. The study employed both the primary and secondary means of data collection. This means that the primary data was sourced through unstructured interviews. The secondary data was sourced from institutional and official documents from organizations such as NDDC, NNPC quarterly reports, and other related documents that concern the research topic. Other secondary data sources such as textbooks, journals and magazines, articles and other written works bordering on the subject matter was used. The aim of this is to make the literature up to date with current issues affecting the case study of this research. Purposive sampling method was adopted in selecting participants which was based on individual capacity to participate in adding value to the study. Respondents were selected for in-depth interviewing from the selected local government areas of Burutu and Warri Southwest including ex-militants, traditional rulers, politicians, and academicians from Delta State University Abraka. Thematic content analyses method was adopted.

RESULT OF FINDINGS

Analyses of the findings were done in line with the stated research questions. In other words, the review tried to provide answers to the above research questions.

Nexus between Presidential Amnesty and Militancy in Delta State

In examining the impact of Presidential Amnesty Programme this study examined the relationship between the presidential amnesty and militancy in Delta State.

In the interviews conducted all the respondents that is, traditional rulers from the study areas, politicians and academics from Delta State University Abraka maintained that the Presidential amnesty actually brought succor to militancy in the volatile Niger Delta region specifically the study areas, and restored peace and tranquility to a great extent. To the respondents, there is a super connection between the introduced amnesty programme by the presidency and combating militancy in the oil rich Niger Delta especially since the militants were able to surrender themselves and renounced all forms of militancy such as abduction of expatriates and oil workers, oil pipeline vandalisation, bunkering among others.

On the part of the ex-militants who were interviewed, Respondent 1 had this to say:

A good number of us, militants oh! Ex-militants are well informed but we felt denied and marginalized considering the fact that we lay the golden eggs which the country rely on and boast of both in domestic and international markets yet we can't afford a safe drinking water, good agricultural land or even enjoy fishes any more. We engaged in militant activities as a result of these ill treatments but with the amnesty, we feel relieved and better now. That is why we are out of the creeks.

This position on the link and success of the amnesty offered was captured by (Uduagban, 2009, and Ofehe, 2009). However, Ajaero (2010) seems to capture these positions well when he argues. "For those who actually know the cost of violence and the quantity of arms and ammunition in Delta state, the decision of the repentant militants to embrace peace is one of the best things that have happened to the country in 2009. A state of war has been averted by their decision to lay down arms. This is a great act of patriotism" (Ajaero, 2010:11-13). He further stated that for laying down their arms, the Niger Delta militants were voted man of the year 2009.

This opinion also agrees with the views of Fagge and Alabi, (2016) which maintained among others that an amnesty may be given to an individual or a group of individuals when the authority believes that bringing such citizen into compliance with a law is more crucial than punishing them for past crimes. Amnesty after the cessation of hostilities helps to put an end to a conflict. Thus there is a direct relationship between the presidential amnesty and addressing militancy challenge in Delta state.

It was also discovered that not all violent activities in Delta State can be attributed to militancy. This is in line with Aslem (2001) who remarked that faith differences place a barrier between people of the same decent. Also, Jegede (1991) further emphasized that religion causes differences in families by observing that when a husband and his wife subscribe to different religion disagreements may arise about the children's religious upbringing. Bur (2001) also observed that conflicts occur as a result of a disagreement with the view of other, which is usually fuelled by differences in cultural background.

Disarmament of Niger Delta Militants and Oil Production in Nigeria

The respondents interviewed were of the opinion that the disarmament of militants in the Niger Delta area automatically made oil exploration to shoot up. They maintained that as soon as the Presidential amnesty was declared, militants who embraced it dropped their arms and even encouraged other members to do same. This gesture suddenly brought peace to the area and made oil workers especially expatriates to settle for business as usual. Thus, oil exploration increased and revenue also increased.

One of the politicians had this to say,

No serious business can thrive in the state of violence. As you know, the militant activities almost kill oil exploration here in our region. None of the oil workers especially the foreigners had the confidence to work or even close their two eyes while sleeping. The situation was really tensed and hostile for oil production. So, one can say that the disarmament of militants has curbed the tension and encouraged oil exploration which is in the interest of Nigerian nation.

The ex-militants in line with the interviewed respondents admitted that there is serious connection between disarmament of militants through presidential amnesty and increase in oil exploration and production. People now go about their daily businesses particularly in the oil sector hence, exploration activities have increased tremendously since militancy was curtailed.

To further buttress this claim, the 5th Respondent interviewed had this to say:

When we were active in our operations, I mean carrying out militant operation, no worker dared go to work at the oil fields even the native worker could not because it was really disastrous to even think of that. Lives were not assured at home let alone mere oil exploration sites which could be blown up at any given time. But now peace has returned in the area so, more oil business is being carried out these days and you know what that means? It means more money to the government and foreign nations.

Although, the presidential amnesty has reduced militancy in the area of pipeline vandalism, respondents identified oil bunkering is another challenge faced by the nation and oil companies yet it cannot be compared to the era of militancy which claimed lives as well as frustrated oil production in the Niger Delta areas. Bunkering mostly focused on oil theft by some criminal elements and does not necessary take human lives unlike militancy.

This finding also corroborates the submissions of NNPC, (2009) and Amaize (2016) that at the height of the conflict in 2009, Nigeria's crude oil production dropped from 2.2 million to 700,000 barrel per day and as a result of the post amnesty period, crude oil production increased to 2.4 million bpd in 2013. In 2014 it equally increased to 2.6 million and in 2015 it further rose to 2.7 million bpd. The drop from 2.2 million bpd to 700,000 bpd in 2009 was as a result of various attacks on oil installations and pipelines vandalism.

To sustain the increase in oil exploration which is already witnessed in the business, it was revealed that government should not for any reason abort the amnesty programme instead, it should be improved upon by way of reviewing upward the allocation that is meant to cater for the repentant militants. Renewal of agitation can only come up if government and or her agencies fail in their

agreement with the ex-militants. It would be easy for the boys to return to the creeks if they are disappointed with the government offer but on the contrary peace can be sustained in the oil exploration areas once the need of repentant militants are met.

Tanimu (2009) observed gains from the disarmament programme to include:

1. Rise in the nations crude oil export,
2. Rise in oil and gas infrastructure to the three tier of government as well as the return of oil companies to the Niger Delta region,
3. Repair of oil and gas infrastructure destroyed during the pre-amnesty periods.

The success of the disarmament programme for the militants' spawned immediate results as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) announced that the countries crude production per day has increased (NNPC Report, 2009). From the foregoing evidence, we accepted the assumption of the study; hence the disarmament of Niger Delta militants increased crude oil production in Nigeria.

The Amnesty Programme and Reduction in Criminalities in Delta State

The study further revealed that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the Niger Delta militants has reduced the rate of criminalities in Delta state unlike what was obtainable throughout the period of militancy.

Respondents who were interviewed maintained that it would be an understatement to say that demobilization and reintegration of the militants in Delta state has not contributed to the reduction of cases of kidnap in the study areas. As a matter of sincerity, the traditional rulers, politician and scholars in the study area acknowledged that the spate of kidnapping is no longer a common phenomenon as it were before the presidential declaration and implementation of amnesty. There is relative peace and tranquility as people now go about their daily businesses without fear of abduction. It is important to mention that ex-militants also function as security agents by ensuring that criminal activities are not recorded in their locations respectively.

Ex –militant allocation is also one key instrument that government has adopted to reduce cases of kidnapping in the study areas. Ex – Militant's allocation refers to as oil allocations assigned to the repentant militants through Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (N.N.P.C) to sale and earn some money like other oil marketers, as a way of reducing kidnapping government's amnesty programme has contributed to a great extent in that direction because, most of the militants who were initially in the business of kidnapping and abduction of expatriates and indigenous workers have stopped such heinous activities.

One of the ex-militants confirmed this during the interview session when he said that,

Government has not only introduced the presidential amnesty but has equally given us the opportunity to benefit from oil sales through what they call Ex-militants allocation. With this it has been difficult for most of us to return to criminality since our needs and those of others persons are met.

This finding is in agreement with the position of Onukwugha, Eke-Ogiugo and Okhomina (2014), which state that amnesty package has helped in the reduction of violent crimes as most youths who were involved in anti-social activities have been integrated into the programme; thereby makes violence unattractive. Such crimes include; attacking oil installations, engaging in illegal oil bunkering and kidnapping of oil workers. It is of course, a truism that violence has now declined but not disappeared. To this end, there is no gain saying that amnesty has made significant impact addressing the issue of kidnapping in Delta state. According to Amnesty Office, Abuja, (2010) the number of disarmed militants in Delta state as at December 2009 stand at 20 female militants and 4,396 male militants bringing the total number to 4, 416 disarmed militants which have drastically reduced cases of kidnaps in Delta state. Also militants in Delta state cannot easily be known or identified by local government area of origin because there are operating base on camps headed by a 'General' as they are commonly addressed as disclosed by amnesty office in Abuja. Example is Camp5 headed by General Tompolo, Plantation Camp headed by General Moses, Yudoro Camp headed by General Akpororo and Baruku Camp8 headed by General Yukore.

Impact of Presidential Amnesty on the youths of Burutu and Warri Southwest Local Government Areas of Delta State.

It was found out that Presidential amnesty has impacted positively on the lives of youth in the Local Government Areas studied from 2009 to 2015 and even till date. This finding is in line with the contributions of Akinwale (2010:201-207); Osah and Amakihe (2014:1-7); and Atumah (2015), which state that amnesty is supposed to improve the human capital development of the country which is at present low. They maintained that the programme in a way has presented an opportunity to build capacity of youths as well as reintegrate agitating militants of Delta state into the mainstream in Nigeria as a confidence-building strategy while gradually addressing the root causes that necessitated the conflict in the first place. As long as the youth in the area are empowered, the spate of violence reduced thereby making them to become useful to themselves, their families and the communities in general. Thus a good number of the youths particularly the ex-militants are now reformed and focused in life.

This also agree with the position of Olatoke and Olotokunba (2012:26) that the objective of amnesty is not to punish but to choose a path that will yield the best possible scenario for the triumph of peace. Thus, amnesty emphasises the supremacy and expediency of a conducive atmosphere in promotion of public welfare than prosecution. They further stated that in the course of Nigeria's post-colonial experience, it has deployed the tool of amnesty on two occasions. The

first was in connection with the Nigerian civil war. At the end of the war in 1970, the federal government declared the outcome of the war as “no victor, no vanquished”. This was a general amnesty that serves the purpose of closing the unfortunate chapter which the war opened. Also, Ukaogo, (2010) stated that amnesty and pardon consist of penalty cancelation for the perpetrator of the criminal act granted by the appropriate records brought into decision by the highest governmental bodies and the youths of the study areas and Niger Delta as a whole were pardoned and rewarded with welfare packages.

Although there is no accurate data on the distribution of beneficiaries under the reintegration programme in terms of local government area of origin, in formal and informal education training, it is useful to state that the universities being offered to the demobilized combatants and youths of Delta state and indeed the Niger Delta are some of the high-profile and expensive universities in the world. Some of them are Coventry University, Portsmouth University, Salford University, Bradford University, University of Liverpool, University of Reading, University of Newcastle, University of Dundee, University of Kent, Leeds University, Kings College and others in the United Kingdom. Others include high profile universities in Malaysia, Dubai and Sweden (Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Amnesty 2014).

It cannot be disputed that a graduate from any of these universities has better prospects for job and economic independence than reintegrated combatants in other parts of Africa. This also goes for some of the vocational and skills training institutes available to the beneficiaries of the reintegration programme. Some of the training centres include Schlumberger Technologies based in France (for drilling engineering), Lufthansa Aviation Academy based in Germany (for advanced pilot training), CAE Oxford Aviation Academy in the United Kingdom (for advanced pilot training), Schneider Electric in France (for electrical engineering), Institute of French Petroleum in France (for petroleum industry technicians), Airstar Flight School in Italy (for pilot training), Comair in South Africa (pilot training), Flight Simulation Company in Netherlands (for pilot training), Africa Union Aviation Academy in South Africa (pilot training), Adcorp Technical Training in South Africa (mining industry technicians), Furntech Furniture in South Africa (for furniture making), and a host of others in different parts of the world.

The high quality training acquired by the beneficiaries of the reintegration programme from these study areas is, of course, providing good employment opportunities for them according to the (Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Amnesty 2014). Some examples include the following: fifty of the trainees that went for welding and fabrication training at Proclad Group in Dubai were automatically offered employment by the institution upon completion of their training; forty-nine trainees who underwent training at Scuola Edile Genovese in Italy also gained employment at different shipping companies locally and internationally after their training; fourteen trainees who trained as mechatronics and welding engineers got employed at Samsung

Electronics, and Schneider Electric in France employed fifteen trainees in power management after their training at the company (Daniel 2014).

Below is the breakdown of beneficiaries of presidential amnesty programme in the four local government areas under review.

Number of Beneficiaries of Amnesty from 2009 to 2015

Local Government	Number of Beneficiaries
Warri Southwest	49
Burutu	50

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study gave an in-depth explanation on the Impact of the Presidential Amnesty Programme in Niger Delta, using Delta State as case study. Before the advent of the Boko Haram Terrorist Organization in the north east, militancy posed the greatest security threat to Nigeria since the end of the civil war in 1970. Though it started as mere agitations owing to poor governance, reliance of the state essentially on repression and the military option in managing these challenges to its legitimacy, led to the radicalization of violent non-state actors.

Environmental pollution by way of oil spillage and gas flaring, general underdevelopment are still the lots and bane of some parts of the study areas of Warri southwest and Burutu local government areas of Delta state of Nigeria, where the country's oil exploration activities are carried out by the oil multinational companies (MNCs). The crisis of the people as well as several non-governmental organizations for attention to the area were not only spurned, but were at intervals rebuffed with crackdown and repression from successive administrations in the country, with the strong connivance of the oil MNCs. The situation reached a crescendo, when the people of these areas took to self – help by bombing, kidnapping and abducting the expatriates and other categories of personnel of the oil MNCs in exchange for monetary ransom. The government not able to bear the embarrassment and the drop of oil production daily, coupled with the substantial loss of revenue devised the amnesty programme in 2009 as a solution to the quagmire. Though the disarmament led to increase in oil productions which translate to more revenue for the government some of the underlining issues that brought about militancy in the first place are still very much before the people.

There is no denying the fact that many ex-militants has benefited from the amnesty programme which is largely responsible for the reduction in crime and criminalities, the government must do more in the area of infrastructural development and ensure that youths are gainfully engaged and empowered to become useful to themselves and the society which is the only guaranty that militants and militancy activities will not come up again in the nearest future.

The following recommendations are made:

- i. The Amnesty Programmes skill acquisition packages promises a better future for both the local populations and the companies if well managed. Upon the completion of the training of ex-militants in oil related skills, the companies should ensure that they are recruited and engaged in the industry through the reservation of some employment quota for the local inhabitants, thus making the local people identify with the companies operating in the region.
- ii. Government must ensure the inclusion of other militant groups in Delta state that now desire to join in the Amnesty programme., There have been agitations from some of the militants, mostly youth in the state, who failed to avail themselves of the window of opportunity opened to them to accept the Amnesty offers from the onset for perceived lack of trust and sincerity in the government over the programme.
- iii. It is an old maxim that violence cannot check violence. Militarizing the state with combat ready armoured personnel carriers, police helicopters, members of the Joint Task Force and the like will only help to infuriate both the genuine freedom fighters and the criminal elements in the struggle. The result will be a vicious circle of violence begetting violence.
- iv. The success of the Amnesty package depends on the collaboration of the state governments, local governments, the oil malls, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the ministry of Niger Delta affairs and other intervention agencies. Each of these levels of government, corporations and agencies must strive to contribute their own quota to the success of the programme, practically in the area of training and skill acquisition
- v. There should be rapid development of Delta state especially the study areas which are the oil producing communities through the provision of infrastructural facilities. It is time to adopt the simple method used for the rapid development of Abuja in developing the Niger Delta especially the study areas.

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