



The State, Militancy, Amnesty and Niger Delta

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ABSTRACT

The study was an examination of the Amnesty Programme proclaimed for militants in the Niger-Delta by the President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's administration in 2009, within the context of the role of the Nigerian State in the management and resolution of the conflicts. This was against the backdrop of the protracted conflicts that engulfed the region. At the peak of the conflicts, there were frequent attacks and vandalizations of oil and gas pipelines and installations, of and the rampant abductions of expatriates by militant groups spread over five hundred camps in the creeks of the Niger-Delta. The total population for the area studied was 31, 224,577. Major findings of the study revealed that the Amnesty Programme proclaimed for militants in the Niger-Delta was to stop the carnage perpetrated by the militants and usher in peace, progress and development in the region. This no doubt entrenched durable peace in the Nigeria-Delta Region of Nigeria. Thus the paper clearly elucidates on the importance of the Amnesty programme as a very vital instrument of sustainable peacebuilding, and emphasizes on the need for holistic reforms that addresses despoliation, pauperization and colossal underdevelopment of Niger Delta region, which were the *raison d'être* for the crisis. The paper further made some laudable recommendations towards an all-inclusive Amnesty programme which will usher in sustainable peace, security architecture, infrastructure, high human capital development and enduring sustainable development to the region.

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Introduction

The State in both its holistic and modern senses is by its nature a product of conflict and generator of conflict situations in the society. This is particularly evident in the fact that at all point in time, the State represents certain specific social, political, economic and general material interests of certain dominant social groups in the society and which also control it (State) (Ofoeze, 2006). However, it is very important to note that conflicts are inevitable facts of socioeconomic existence. Ddunmoye (2010), emphasized that in any social formation, conflict is as inevitable as co-operation. Conflict may be functional to the social system by creating a form of social cohesion within groups; but it is the dysfunctional aspects of conflict that are detrimental to the survival of the state. Thus, conflict is a barometer for testing the fragility or otherwise of every State, and creates the basis for future remedy and adjustments (Dunmoye, 2010).

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is indisputably one of the most richly endowed countries on the continent. It is blessed with immense natural and human resources which provides opportunity for national development. However, since de-colonization in 1960, the nation has been plagued with a civil war and series of conflicts ranging from: the Nigerian-Brafra civil war, Ife/Modakeke, Umuleri-Aguleri, Tiv-Jukun, herdsman versus farmers in Benue and Plateau States, several ethno-religious crises in Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi, Maiduguri, Adamawa and Plateau State, militancy in the Niger-Delta and Boko Haram crises in the North East Nigeria to mentioned but a few.

These conflicts, particularly the recent ones where our interest lies for this study, has continued to attract national

and global attentions. Successive administrations since independence in 1960 had adopted several constitutional and institutional remedies towards the resolutions of these conflicts. These include setting up of commissions of enquiries, establishment of developmental institutions and agencies, State creation, creation of grazing reserve areas for herds men, the use of armed forces, provision of political opportunities and seizure of land (under the land use decree) and the provision of additional incentives to resource producing areas (derivation formula) etc. (Iyayi, 2012, Nwozor, 2010). Some of these measures had relatively worked while some were seen as pacification methods and mere palliatives (Usman, 2010; Kimiebi, 2010).

Thus, some of the crisis in Nigeria, particularly, the militancy in the Niger-Delta Region had continued unabated. At its peak, there were frequent attacks on oil and gas installations and facilities by militant groups which spread over five hundred (500) camps in the Creeks of the Niger Delta. The destruction of Odi Town and the bombardment of Gbaramatu Kingdom could not deter the militants or resolve the conflicts. The activities of these militants have serious implications to peace and security in the region, oil exploitation, national revenue profit, development of infrastructure and other derivatives. No doubt these became a source of worry to peace-lovers, scholars and policy makers (Yar'adua, 2009; Abbe, 2009; Clark, 2013).

The Niger Delta is one of the world's largest wetlands, African's largest Delta, formerly covering some 70,000 square kilometers and presently consist of 112,110 square Kilometers (NDRDMP,2006).

The dominant views see the Constituent States of the region as Bayelsa, Rivers, Edo, Delta, Cross-Rivers and Akwa-Ibom (Tamuno, 2000).

The Region is evidently blessed with numerous resources including vast deposits of crude oil that accounts for about 96% of Nigerian's foreign exchange earnings (Tamuno, 2000). It has a population of about 31,224,577 million and more than 140 ethnic groups with links to the linguistic groups of Ijaw, Edo, Ikwerre, Igbo, Efik, Ibibio and Oron. At present, the Niger Delta Region seats on nine States: Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Edo, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Imo, Abia and Ondo. During the colonial period, the core Niger Delta was a part of Eastern region of Nigeria, which came into being in 1951 (one of the three regions and later, one of the four regions). The Niger Delta crisis can be classified into three epochs viz; the Pre-independence struggle, the Post-Independence crisis and the New wave of violence.

Pre-Independence agitations and crisis by the Niger Delta people to the environmental degradation that led to the systematic debasement and assault on the oil communities leading to the collapse of the eco-system began before the independence of Nigeria (Olaya and Ugbeyavwighen, 2009). The agitations against environmental degradation and for Resources control in the Niger Delta dates back to the pre-colonial era when the Royal Nigeria Company (RNC) tried to deprive the people of their legitimate trade and industry. When the British Merchants were challenged by King William Dappa Pepple of Bonny Kingdom in 1854, he was deposed and exiled to Fernando.

The Post-Independence Conflicts in the Niger Delta constituted the second epoch of the conflicts. The Post-Independence crisis in the Niger Delta for the control of oil resources and environmental problems began as far as February 1966, when former Police Officer from the Niger Delta named Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro as a young undergraduate from University of Nigeria, Nsukka, recruited forty (40) men into an organization known as the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF). Boro gave his men training with the use of firearms and explosives in the creeks and bushes. They blew up oil pipelines, engaged the Police in a gun-fight and declared the Niger Delta an Independent Republic.

Boro's declaration of the Niger Delta Republic in 1966 was engendered by the infrastructural neglect and menace of environmental degradation, largely a consequence of oil exploration, exploitation and oppression by the dominant ethnic groups that govern the Nigerian State (Boro, 1966; Wiwa, 2005; Daffinone, 2008). After Isaac Boro, Kenule Saro Wiwa; a human right activist. He vigorously campaigned and internationalized the Niger-Delta struggle on the platform of the Movement for the survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP). Unfortunately, because of Government's lack of political will and commitment to solve and /or address the development problem in the Niger-Delta Region, the struggle metamorphosed from passive resistance to the militancy.

The third epoch of the Niger Delta Conflicts was a new wave of Violence. Several militant groups were formed in the Niger Delta. This ushered in youth restiveness and militancy in the Region with all its manifestations. A higher dose of criminality was injected into the new wave of agitations in the Niger Delta Region. This entails killings, raids, murder, attempted murder of political figures, attacks on sensitive targets, sabotage, engaging security agencies in fire power, oil theft (bunkering), proliferation and arm-deals etc. As Ushie stated:

The militarization of the Niger Delta paradoxically facilitated the entrenchment of a lucrative "conflict economy", which extends from kidnapping workers for ransom, to crude oil theft (or bunkering), and the criminal activities of urban confraternity groups and local warlords (Kemedi, 2003, Ikelegbe, 2005 in Ushie, 2013:2).

The Amnesty Programme was then proclaimed for the Militants in the Niger Delta. However, there is a wide spread divergence in the opinions of analysts and commentators on the *raison d'être* for the proclamation of the programme for militants in the Niger-Delta (Soyinka, 2013). It is within this context that an examination of the Amnesty programme for Militants in the Niger-Delta became the Research Problematique.

Statement of the Research Problem

The study examined the Amnesty Programme for the Militants in the Niger-Delta within the context of the State and conflict management in Nigeria. This is against the backdrop of the long drawn combustible conflicts perpetrated by the militants in the Niger Delta to the corporate interest of the Nigerian State. The conflicts have a history from the days of the local Chiefs, Kings and Obas to the days of Isaac Adaka Boro and Kenule Saro-Wiwa to the days of Alhaji Asari Dkubo, Ateke Tom and Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo) etc, on development and environmental problems in the Niger-Delta. The failure to adequately address these environmental and infrastructural problems in the Niger Delta opened up a way for some restive youths within the region to take up arms against the State in agitation for fair and greater share of the Oil resources produced in their domain. The consequences of commercial kidnapping and sabotage of oil and gas pipelines across the Niger Delta depleted Nigeria's crude oil export and deprived the power stations gas, causing drastic decline in power generation and distribution across the country (Orode, 2009:50).

Thus, it became inevitable that the Nigerian State must manage the Niger Delta conflicts tactfully. The Nigerian State under President Umar Yar'Adua in 2009 included National Security, particularly in the Niger Delta in its Seven Point National Development Strategy and later proclaimed the Amnesty programme for the restive youths, called militants. The Amnesty programme was signed on 25th June, 2009 by Mr. President; Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua (Orode, 2009:51). Some antagonists of the programme had described it as pacifist.

Considering the controversies generated on the proclamation the Amnesty Programme, the juxtapositions on it, and the futility of previous regimes' efforts to resolve the Niger-Delta imbroglio; it became not only expedient but desirable to examine the Amnesty Programme for the militants in the Niger Delta within the context of the role of the Nigerian State in conflict management and resolution.

Research Questions

In a view examine of Amnesty Programme for the militants in the Niger Delta, this study will proffer answers to the following research questions:

- i. What is the rationale for the proclamation of the Presidential Amnesty Programme for militants in the Niger-Delta Region?
- ii. Is the Amnesty Programme packaged by the Nigerian State for the militants the best option?

The Proclamation of Amnesty Programme for the Militants in the Niger Delta Region

Processes and Terms of the Programme

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua made history as the first Nigerian leader to chart a course supported by all for the resolution of the hitherto intractable Niger-Delta conflicts or problems. He felt that except the Nigerian State adequately resolved the problem in the Niger Delta, it would be practically impossible to jump-start an economy capable of making Nigeria one of the World's 20 most developed economics in 2020 (Orode, 2009:51). In September 2008, the committee composed of forty-five (45) wise men and women (Ajaero, 2009:15), with sound knowledge of the Niger Delta terrain after series of consultations, negotiations, and interactions proposed an Amnesty for the Militants as one of the key strategies for amicable resolution of the crisis. The committee believed that the antidote to the problem was not military might (force) but persuasion and dialogue with the heavily armed militant groups who claimed they took to militancy because they felt the people of the oil rich region were marginalized by the successive governments in Nigeria. The Technical Committee on Niger Delta's recommendations on Amnesty was accepted and approved by the National Council of State (NCS). Thereon, the Presidential Amnesty Programme for Niger Delta militants was announced on 25th June, 2009 by President Yar'Adua for militants who agreed to surrender their weapons/arms and renounced armed struggle within 60 days in exchange for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The Presidential Amnesty Programme formally started on Thursday 6th August 2009. The programme provided pardon for all persons who directly or indirectly participated in militant struggles or commissioned in the course of militant activities in the Niger Delta. To take advantage, militants were expected to visit the nearest screening centers within the region to turn in their arms, register, take the oath of renunciation of violence, and thereafter register for the reintegration programme. This was consistent with Section 175 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999 Constitution of the FRN as Amended). Amnesty was perceived as a period of grace for ex-militants to drop their weapons and be treated as citizens rather than criminals. Though some factions described amnesty as a wrong notion and hence, refused to accept it, others accepted it and surrendered their weapons. Asari Dokubo, leader of NDVF initially refused to accept the amnesty because to him it was granted in the court of law. He opined that, those who accepted the amnesty were many known ex-generals and gullible 'foot soldiers'. However, according to the Freedom House report, Dokubo was released by an Abuja federal Court Order in June, 2007 after 18 Months incarceration. This was a prove that signpost President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's agenda for peace talk with the militants in the area (Ubhenin ,O.E,2013:191). He was to later accept the Amnesty and given a juicy pipeline protection contract by government worth 15 million per month (Ujah, 2010). According to Nwajaku-Dahou (2009:3) Yar'Adua's Amnesty offer was a way of buying out militants and making it pay not to attack the oil industry. The faction against accepting amnesty argued that the Government should first release those militants who were being held captive. That was a clear reference to Henry Okah (Obi and Rustad, 2011: 204 in Oluwatoyin 2011).

However, General Godwin Abbe, (the former Minister of Defense, who became the Chairman of the Presidential Panel on Amnesty and Disarmament in the Niger Delta) insisted on

the need for the JTF to remain, as a way to keep criminal elements out of the communities, to ensure that only genuine people returned to their communities, and ensure that people were protected from the activities of criminal opportunists who might want to take advantage of the situation (Adde, 2012). It was meant to serve as a pre-condition for the development of the region and mainly aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict, taking militants through the process of changing their attitudes, transforming them into instrument of development and change, and working towards justice and peace.

Thus, according to President Yar'Adua

This Administration understands the challenges of the Niger-Delta Region and the challenges people are facing and that is why from the beginning I made Niger-Delta a top priority in our Seven-Point Agenda. The Government will work with the youth to ensure that they have a meaningful life through the kinds of programmes that would evolve, train them, help them to establish businesses and help those who want to further their education to whatever level... to ensure that each and every one of them has a career and a life to be proud of and he would stand to be proud of himself, his family and his country and he will be proud that he is a Nigerian (Yar'adua, in Ikuomola, 2009: 1-2).

The decision of the Nigerian State to give Amnesty to militants shows that ex-militants were primarily perceived as perpetrators of crime against the state. The Amnesty programme started with the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). This is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame principally taking place in communities at local levels. It started from 6th August – 4th October 2009, after which ex-militants were promised a payment of N65,000 monthly in addition to vocational training pending the end of reintegration (Ujah, 2010).

The Nigerian State took total ownership of the whole process, including shouldering the financial and political responsibilities for guiding the process to fruition. The international community was appealed to for support of the Amnesty programme in more practical ways, especially the involvement of foreign embassies in the issuing of visa to ex-militants to travel abroad for educational and vocational training, and in prevailing on oil companies operating in the Niger Delta to develop the region through economic empowerments and job creations for the restive youths. The international presence could also be seen in the inclusion of the South African and American scholars of the HerberLurtini Non-Violence Centre, South Africa and University of Rhode Island, Centre for Non-Violence and Peace Studies, United State (Oluwaniyi, 2013).

Disarmament

Disarming ex-militants in the Niger Delta region followed a drastic process because of the timeline provided for the exercise by the Federal Government for the militants to surrender their weapons. The collection was carried in different ways; the major way was the disposition of arms by group leaders and their members. UNDP Report (2006:8) provides a more detailed clarification of disarmament thus: it is the collection, verification of usability, documentation, control (storage) and disposal (disabling and destruction) of small arms, ammunition, explosives and high and heavy weapons of combatants and some times of civilian population. This scenario was depicted at the Obubra Camp

of the Niger Delta militants; delays in the commencement of the programmes led militants to terrorize the villagers, raped innocent girls, stole their goats and patronized dangerous joints (FGD on 18th Nov. 2012 with three Obubra youths).

Basically, the major category was the disposition of arms and ammunitions by group leaders and their members, based on one man, one gun/weapon, to the joint Task Force members in the creek where they surrendered. But in reality, it was discovered that first, the number of men that supposedly submitted weapons outweighed the total number of weapons disposed. Secondly, it was also observed during fieldwork that, figures of total participants surpassed the number of genuine militants. The need to justify this, led to further enquiries and it was realized that most of the participants joined the Amnesty to benefit from the Government largesse, which to them was revenue from the oil extracted from their backyard (FGD with some ex-militants in Delta State on 21st Nov. 2012). Camp Commanders went to their communities and appealed to households to release their children and wards for the Amnesty and other benefits. In the end, group disarmament, which relies on the identification of combatants by their commanders, made it possible for commanders to include non-combatants in the programme.. By 4th October, 2009, most militant leaders had surrendered their weapons to the disarmament committee in their respective Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Ondo, Edo, Bayelsa, Delta and River States.

The 2nd category of disarmament was carried out by the Bayelsa State government led by Timipre Sylva at the State's Stadium. The collection was publicly carried out with the media, both print and electronic, available to broadcast the submission and acceptance of Amnesty by the different militant groups. Camp groups, including Ebikabowei Victor Ben's (popularly known as Boyloaf) group, converged in Yenagoa in Fun fare where the disarmament took place. The Bayelsa State government recognized the disarmament day (22nd August, 2009) as Annual Peace Day that must be marked and observed as public holiday. All the groups surrendered 95,970 live ammunitions, 520 rifles, 14 gun boats and many military fatigue during the disarmament programme (Olaniyi, 2009:3).

Based on the United Nations (UN) regulation of one man, one gun, 8,299 militants out of the total number of militants who disarmed were documented by early October 2009. However, by 25th October, 2009, the total number of ex-militants had increased to 15,260 registered. Subsequently this number increased to 20,192 out of which 780 were women, but it was later realized, especially with the case of Edo State, that all disarmed militants were not genuine, but were only interested in the financial and other benefits that accrued to genuine one. Out of the 450 militants who disarmed only 250 weapons were counted. This reveals that 200 men were not part of the militant groups (Osagie, 2009:8-9).

The Amnesty office show 133 registered females after disarmament, but based on records at the Amnesty Camp, over 700 women participated in the demobilization programme.

Table 1. Showing Disarmed Militants.

S/N	States/Organization	Male	Female	registered
1.	Akwa-Ibom	155	8	163
2.	Bayelsa	6,900	61	6,961
3.	Cross –River	159	1	160
4.	Delta	3,361	-	3,361
5.	Edo	450	-	450
6.	Imo	297	3	300
7.	Ondo	1,198	2	1200
8.	Rivers	6,958	39	6,997
9.	NDDC	571	19	600
	Total	20,049	133	20,192

Source: Amnesty Website Available at <http://www.nigerdeltaamnesty.org>.

The 3rd category was the surrendering of arms to the disarmament committee in November, 2009 by self-inspired ex-militant groups after the initial deadline has been met. This category included militants who submitted arms after realizing that there were benefits to be gained by ex-militants who surrendered arms at the inception of the programme. The total number in this group was 6,160. The various disarmament periods brought the total case load to 26,352 militants disarmed. However, the issue of total number of militants raised a lot of controversies. Osagie (2009) observed that many non-militants joined in order to take advantage of the monthly allowance and vocational training. It was learnt that commanders or leaders actually added a lot of names including names of friends, siblings, relatives and kinsmen. The result is that the leaders benefitted extremely from allowance paid to members.

All the arms surrendered were moved to the Enugu Depot of the Nigerian Army and were demolished on 18th May, 2009. A total of 934 rifles, 107 pistols, 1,424 guns, 11 RPG from Delta, Bayelsa and Edo States were destroyed, while 864 rifles, 557 guns, 59 RPGs and 50 pistols were destroyed before the end of May 2011 (Oluwaniyi: 2013). Though a lot of weapons were retrieved during the disarmament, the one man, one gun strategy revealed that, the probability that not all weapons were surrendered was very high.

Demobilization

This was the formal and controlled discharge of active militants from armed groups. It involved the processing of individual militants in designated camps during demobilization process; reinsertion packages were given to disarmed militants. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance offered to help cover the basic needs of ex-militants and their families. This included, transitional safety allowance, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short term education, training, employment and tools (UNDP: 2006).

In a layman's term, demobilization was to bring back ex-militants to purely civilian life. Sequel to disarmament, ex-militants were paid a stipend of N65,000.00 monthly allowance and this payment lasted until the end of their reintegration. The allowance serves as reinsertion package to divert their minds away from militant attitudes. In addition to the payment of allowances, accommodation arrangements were made for registration and rehabilitation and training purposes in six designated areas in the region namely two in Aluu, Rivers State, two in Agbarho, Delta State and two in Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State. But Government had to change its decision due to potential cost of maintaining the facility and used only the Obubra Camp. Due to the inadequacy of the camps to accommodate the whole 20,192 ex-militants simultaneously, decisions were made at the initial stage to

divide them into batches, with each batch spending four (4) weeks on reorientation, counseling and spiritual regeneration (Oluwatoyin: 2013). Registration for the ex-militants included data capturing, certification of eligibility for benefits, allocation of cards, receipt of reinsertion allowances and preparation for full demobilization.

Reintegration

According to the UN Report, reintegration is a critical process of the amnesty by which ex-militants acquire full civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income (UN: 2005). It plays a critical role in the transformation of ex-militants from combatants to peace, to the extent that it has repeatedly proved to be vital to stability on conflict situations and in turn contribute to sustainable peace and the prevention of conflict resurgence (UN Report, 2005).

Reintegration of ex-militants began with their absorption into the society, training and community empowerment. Leaders of the groups were the first to be reintegrated into the society immediately after the disarmament phase. They were given reinsertion allowances, and awarded sumptuous contracts in the Niger Delta region and Abuja in order to keep them financially buoyant till the end of the reintegration process. Their members had to pass through all the phases of the Amnesty Programme (DDR). Immediately after the two-week demobilization at the Obubra camp, names were submitted to the Amnesty office in Abuja where preparations were made to start off with their reintegration into the society. Based on the skills selected by the rehabilitated ex-militants, interested training centers pick trainees for the reintegration.

“Three major groups handled the individual reintegration of ex-militants. They are FG (carried out by the Amnesty Office), Post-Amnesty oil and Gas Foundation, and NDD (Orubebe: 2012). As part of government’s efforts in facilitating ex-militants reintegration in terms of training and empowerment, it had discussions with other partners to participate meaningfully in a programme that would have a life span of three years. Different Organizations work under these groups to train ex-militants in fish production, poultry farming, wilding, marine, baking and hairdressing etcetera (Orubebe: 2012).

Juxtapositions: Argument for and Against the Amnesty Programme: protagonists’ and antagonists’ Views of the Amnesty programme

Protagonists’ View of the Amnesty Programme

Some Protagonists for instance; (Abbe, 2012; Clark, 2012) had argued that the Amnesty Programme Proclaimed for the Militants in the Niger-Delta was to usher in a long lasting peace. At the peak of the militancy in 2006, the Nigerian State haemorrhaged in oil activities and nosedived in national revenue generation. Significantly, it is against this socio-economic dysfunction that the Amnesty programme was enunciated in 2009, as a window to redress the Niger Delta imbroglio. It is against the above backdrop, that the Amnesty programme is adjudged the most prominent peacebuilding infrastructure in post-democracy Nigeria. To be sure, the essence and overall objective of the Amnesty programme was to engender security stabilization in the Niger Delta region via the DDR program as a medium and long time framework. Indeed, this framework mark a complete departure from the primordial use of state militarization to suppress indigenous revolt and “militia groups in the Niger Delta region, and signified a realization that the Niger Delta crisis required a democratic, participatory solution and not one that legitimized militarization and brutal

oppression of impoverished maritime communities” (Ushie, 2013: 4).

Going further, Amnesty programme created a new political dawn for the Nigerian State where distinct attention was giving to the people of Niger Delta region beyond mere rhetoric and empty promises. Within the period under review and shortly before the declaration of the amnesty, a Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs was created in 2008 by the Nigerian government to oversee and coordinate Socio-economic development and security architecture of the region. This again was followed by the creation of the office of the Special Adviser to The President on Niger Delta Affairs. This Office was charged with the sole responsibility of the implementation of the Amnesty programme.

From the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on the Niger Delta, we garnered that 26,358 and eventually, 30,358 repentant militants participated in the DDR programme of the Amnesty. Consequently, these forgiven militants are in the reintegration module of the Amnesty programme with definite attention on formal and vocational education, skills acquisition and entrepreneurial development. It is recorded by the PAO that, after the demobilization period 7,556 militants were placed on skills acquisition training centres in 33 locations across Nigeria, while over 90 ex-militants were offered employment in Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and United Arab Emirates (UAE) after their trainings in Maritime jobs, welding and fabrication. Significantly, in a region where the volatility of youth restiveness has risen to an unacceptable crescendo occasioned by frustrated and unemployed youth, this is highly commendable of the amnesty program (Ushie,V, 2013:7).

Indeed, the preponderance agitation of youths in the region led to a regime of restiveness which cumulated into the formation of several militia groups responsible for the initiation a “Conflict Economy” in the region which was lubricated by the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons(SALW) in the area. At the turn of the crisis, the Niger Delta region became a hotbed and depot for Small Arms and Light Weapons from the Gulf of Guinea. The fact that the Presidential Amnesty Office recovered over 2,700 sophisticated guns and 300,000 rounds of ammunitions surrendered by 15,000 militants in 2009 was a remarkable progress for the Amnesty programme.

We further argued in this paper that, the Amnesty programme created a sustainable peace podium in the region that ensured the state to pursue its economic interests in collaboration with the Multinational Oil Companies. Nigeria operates a mono- cultural economy principally pivoted on Oil and Gas. An analysis of Nigeria’s revenue drive reveals that 95% of export and 85% of State revenues are generated from Oil and gas. Thus at the “height of the Niger Delta crisis, oil production dropped to around 700,000bpd. The relative stability that accompanied the decline in the oil-related violence, conflict and criminal activities has resulted in an increase in oil production to 2.2million bpd in 2012” (Ushie, V, 2013).

The Amnesty programme, also showcased a clear manifestation of some stance of peacebuilding strategy by the Nigerian State. In order to make the Amnesty programme a resounding success, the Nigerian State devoted large sums of resources in human, material and monetary terms. Clearly stated, between 2009 and 2011, the Amnesty received a whooping sum of N127 billion (US\$819 million) in the Nigerian National budget. In the sectoral allocation of this amount, N3 billion was earmarked as the “take-off grant, N30

billion was to be used for the Militants stipends while N96 billion was for the feeding of the militants in training. In 2012 following, N74 billion (US\$447) was further allocated to the Amnesty project. Thus between 2009 and 2012, a total sum of N1.74 trillion has been literally invested by the Nigerian state in the Niger Delta littoral States. A breakdown of this figure is thus: Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, N241 billion (US\$1.55 billion), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), N246.6 billion (US\$1.6 billion). The region became awash with developmental money never experienced before as a result of the Amnesty programme.

One very important factor of the Amnesty programme was the transformation of the Niger Delta region as a credible power bloc in the Nigerian polity. This political elevation of the region among the hegemonic ethnic coloration in Nigerian State, has "positioned the ex-militants and their acolytes as government contractors, middlemen, private militia and leading political actors. This redistribution of political power, influence and patronage has occurred against the backdrop of the deployment of the Amnesty programme as the major instrument of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the restive Niger Delta" (Ushie, V, 2013:6). Indeed, this political manifestation of the area, where the militants and activists are seen as genuine power-brokers has changed the "political calculus" in Nigeria.

However, despite the good sides of the amnesty mentioned above, there several socio-political contradictions that contravenes its efficacy and credibility. Davidheiser & Nyiayaana observed that, "by presenting Amnesty as a beneficent gift to Delta militants, the state seeks to reinforce its claims to exclusive legitimacy and sovereignty. Additionally, the legalistic nature of the Amnesty programme reflects the State's effort to criminalize the militants, thereby sidestepping their claims of grievances, many of which are shared by the general population. The construction of Amnesty as the state's gift to criminals was the major challenge to a durable peace because the state ignored the local population's widely shared grievances and fails to address the structural violence in which militancy germinates" (Davidheiser, M and Nyiayaana, K, 2011: 1-2). It will be called that, the wake of democratization of the Nigerian State in 1999, created 'additional cleavages' that midwifed intense struggle for resource control by the "political entrepreneurs to create and sustain networks of distributive patronage" (Ifeka, 2000; Gore and Pratten, 2003, Watts, 2004b; Obi, 2006 in Ushie, 2013:2). This in turn led to serial political violence, several militia and cult wars, youth restiveness that fueled proliferation of arms and weapons in the Niger Delta region, and indeed the failure of social provisioning typified by abject lack of social amenities, pauperization, underdevelopment and unemployment of the Niger Delta region by the Nigerian state which are antithetical to peacebuilding engineering in the area.

The humongous fiscal profligacy on the Amnesty programme has been described in some public domain as a 'political liability' to the Nigerian government. It is on record that in 2012, the Nigerian government allocated a whopping sum of \$450 million to the Amnesty programme "which is more than what the government spends to deliver basic education to children" (Ubhenin, O.S, 2013:195). Thus the State's monetization of the community grievances is unsustainable, because it implies that the state is simply paying militants to be peaceful based on oil revenues which are finite and volatile (Ushie, V, 2013:6).

Again, critics are of the view that the Amnesty programme has a top-down approach implementation methodology or channel susceptible to the whims and caprices of the powerful ex-militant generals without recurs to the original *raison de'tre* that created the militancy regime in the region. This indeed robbed on the government's good intentions, as the ex-militants were more interested in the ensued monetary largess than in addressing the very pathological needs of the region.

Another canvassed criticism of the amnesty is high incidence of corruption. The Amnesty programme is characterized with corruption leveled against some high ranking officials in government. Ajibola, contends that "the amnesty agreement between the government and ex-militants was signed by the ex-generals on behalf of the militants, and the majority of the militants were not privy to the contents or details of the agreement, especially the part that pertains to the empowerment process does not indicate transparency in the process" (Ajibola, I.O, 2015:1). His position, supports the postulation of Collier and Hoeffler, who argued that greed more than any view was the underlining factor behind conflictual scenario in the Deltaic region. They argued that armed conflicts are mainly perpetuated by the strong feeling of primitive acquisition of the militants for themselves than any other reason. Greed in conflict they agreed, is triggered by socio-economic lures in the armed conflict. These beckoning could be in forms of monetary, recruitment, or geography (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004: 563-595 in Ajibola, I.O: 2015:4). To be sure, the Niger Delta crisis and the amnesty following, was one of the socio-political contradictions of the Nigerian state encapsulated in a vicious cycles of grievance and greed. The venomous vent of the Deltaic people on the Multinational Oil Companies and the Nigerian State on the parlous state of the region which has brewed a volatile struggle being hijacked by their political entrepreneurs who exploited it to their own advantage (Ajibola, I.O, 2015: 4).

Another dark side of the Amnesty was its perpetual exclusion of 'important conflict actors' that could trigger inter-communal fracas. From the PAO's, the Amnesty project enlisted over 27,000 ex-combatants in the region with high poverty rate and youth unemployment. However, the implementation of the Amnesty excluded some factions of the militant groups in the area which led to disaffection among the groups. Also, the exclusion of "grassroots community, civil society and vulnerable groups, such as women and children who did not join the violent struggle but continue to live under the despoliation of oil activities, environmental degradation and loss of livelihoods, projected the entire exercise as a mere monologue by the Nigerian State, only interested in creating a source for the flow of oil in a deteriorating mono-cultural economy hinged on oil and gas.

The Amnesty project has also been criticized for the failure of the Nigerian State to adequately address the deltaic environmental issues and put in place a clear mechanism for providing sustainable development in the area. Again, delay in the payment of militants' stipends and seemingly lukewarm of the government to their affairs have downgraded the integrity of the programme (Oluwaanni, 2011:50 in Ushie, 2013:10). Conversely, aggrieved ex-militants in some cases have resorted to self-help of public protests, blocking major roads and destroying public property and in severe circumstances have resorted to criminality as a result of their frustrations in getting government attention.

The continued militarization of the Niger Delta region by the Nigerian State as a guise towards the protection of live

and property of the people and International Oil Companies operating in the area, is a complete negation of the commitment of the Nigerian government towards peace in the region. We agree in this paper that “security initiatives would be much more effective if local stakeholders- communities, former combatants, youth groups, community gate-keepers and civil society activists- were involved and considered important partners in protecting oil investments in the region” (Ushie, V, 2013: 11). The all-important praxis is the conscientization of the people of Niger Delta towards the affairs of the Nigerian state and IOCs operating in the region thereto.

Conflict Resolution Theory: The Theoretical Framework

Several theories have sought to explain the Amnesty programme as a conflict resolution mechanism but the most suitable theory adopted as theoretical framework for this study is the conflict resolution theory. The theory focuses on the management of deep rooted conflicts. Conflict management initiatives are often characterized by long time horizons and intervention strategies at multiple levels aimed at changing perception and improving communication skills at addressing the roots of the conflict including inequality and social injustice (Search for Common Grounds, 2007). Accordingly, Conflict resolution management, is primarily hinged on the intervention to change the course of conflict. It creates a podium to interact and interface with the parties involved in the crisis with the hope of de-escalating the scope of intensity, propensity and the consequences of the conflict. It is further seen as a wider concept involving conflict resolution and transformation which ensures long-term permutation encapsulating institutionalized provisions and regular procedures for tackling conflicts when they arise (Otite,O and Albert,I.O, 1999: 6-14, in Etekepe, A et al, 2010: 270-271).

The Berghoft centre of conflict studies (2009) views it as a comprehensive term referring to actions and processes seeking to alter the various characteristics and manifestation of conflicts by addressing the root causes of a particular conflict over the long term. It aims to manage and transform negative destructive conflicts into positive constructive conflicts and deals with structural, behavioral and attitudinal aspects of conflicts. The term refers to both the process and completion of the process, as such it incorporates the activities of the process such as conflict prevention, conflict resolution and conflict management. This framework provides a marker to view conflict management as a mechanism which introduces healing, truth telling, trust, restorative justice and reparation as sources of relationship building. The basis for this approach is anchored first on relationships, which form the basis for the conflict as well as the solution (Laderach, 1998:34-35).

In another dimension, conflict management theory suggests approaches to changing conflict to peace through the implementation of activities and programme that have structural implication for peace and security in violent region and addresses the causes of the conflict. Such approaches include changing the social structure, economic viability and infrastructural development within which disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes are extremely inevitable/unavoidable. It is within this theoretical framework and/or platform that the Amnesty programme will be evaluated and its rationale investigated and/or examined.

Burton's Conflict Resolution theory provides the holistic explanation for conflict management through four (4)

processes of Negotiation, Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation (NMAC), better still called Conflict Management methods. The main thrust of the theory includes the following: It was a strategy and tactics for conflict prevention, settlement, termination, resolution, transformation and peace building through Negotiation, Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation. These are called conflict management methods (Borton, 1986:30) and are very critical in conflict management. They are combined with the conflict management styles in resolving disputes. Indeed, Burton uses the word “Conflict Prevention” to mean containment of conflict through steps introduced to promote conditions in which collaborative and valued relationships control the behaviors of conflictual parties (Burton,J, 1990 in Best, G.S 2006: 95). As Best, opine, the term “Conflict management” is a clear quintessence that in any given human society, conflict is inevitable, but not all conflicts can always be resolved, therefore, what practitioners can do is to manage and regulate them (Best, G.S, 2006: 95).

In this regard, two dimensional frameworks are used to define conflict management styles (Borton, 1986:30):

- **Dual concern concept:** Concern for self and concern for others. This is a degree to which a person satisfies his or her own concerns, and satisfies the concerns of others in the conflict. These had been explained under the five conflict management styles, above.

Table 2. Population Figures of the Niger-Delta States by 2006 Census

State	Land Area (Square Kilometer)	Total	Capital City
Abia	4,877	2,833,999	Umuahia
Akwa-Ibom	6,806	3,920,208	Uyo
Bayelsa	11,007	1,703,358	Yenagoa
Cross River	21,930	2,888,966	Calabar
Delta	17,163	4,098,391	Asaba
Edo	19,698	3,218,332	Benin
Imo	5,165	3,934,899	Owerri
Ondo	15,086	3,441,024	Akure
Rivers	10,378	5,185,400	PortHarcourt
Total	112,110	31,224,577	

Using the multi-stage sampling model, these senatorial District clusters were further sub-divided into smaller clusters of Local Governments Local Governments Clusters. This was presented in Table 3..

Table 3. Local Government Clusters

States	Local Government Areas
Bayelsa	Brass, Ekeremor, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Nembe, Ogbia
Delta	Aniocha North, Aniocha South, Ika North East, Ika South, Ndokwa East, Ndokwa West, Oshimili North, Oshimili South, Ukwuani, Okpe, Ethiope East, Ethiope West, Sapele, Ugheli North, Ugheli South, Uvwie, Udu, Bomadi, Burutu, Isoko North, Isoko South, Warri North, Warri South, Warri South East, Patani.
Rivers	Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Ahoada West, Ahoada East, Abua/Odual, Degema, Akuku-tour, Asari-Toru, Bonny, Port Harcourt, Ikwere, Okirika, Ogu/Bolo, Obi/Akpor, Etche, Omuma, Emohua, Opobo/Nkoro, Andoni, Oyigbo, Tai, Eleme, Khana, Gokana.

The three clusters were sub-divided into Local Government, which produced fifty six (56) cluster; thereafter the local Governments were further sub-divided into smaller clusters to form ward-clusters. This gave us a total of 1,120 wards. These Ward Cluster were further sub-divided into villages. Thereafter the villages were subdivided into smaller clusters to form the streets clusters. At the stage, the

systematic Random sampling was used to randomly select every 5th street in the areas chosen. This approach was adopted in the total areas sampled and a total of fifty (50) streets were chosen.

S/N	Streets
1.	Okaka
2.	Kpasia
3.	Yenagoa
4.	Edepie
5.	YenizueEpie
6.	Amarata
7.	Ebis
8.	Etegwu
9.	Bendel Estate
10.	AshesheStree
11.	Japka
12.	Ekpan
13.	Edjeba
14.	Warriani
15.	P.T.I Road
16.	Uti
17.	Effunun
18.	COE
19.	Niger
20.	Nwagu
21.	Harmony
22.	Rumuonumiri
23.	Kolokuma
24.	Borokipei
25.	Diobu
26.	Rumoudananya
27.	Agip
28.	Etepiye
29.	Kpanlhan
30.	Egbogene
31.	Azikoro
32.	D.S.P. Alaniesiya
33.	Olokomo
34.	Warri
35.	Jasper
36.	Ateke
37.	Rumuomasi Eke
38.	Rumuomasi Opia
39.	Olokori
40.	Mika
41.	Oknea
42.	Otei
43.	Osei
44.	Omini
45.	Komari
46.	Shedemi
47.	Okpobo
48.	Akakabo
49.	Ologidi
50.	Rivers

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The analysis of data for the study involved the use of a combination of descriptive as well as statistical techniques which are presented in form of tables, percentage and frequencies. This method is believed to help organize, describe and represent data in logical ways.

The table 4 exposed the high returned rate of respondents which validated and gave Credence to the research findings.

Table 4. Determination of Sample Size and Rates of Returns/Responses of Question Distributed.

Area	Total Population	Square Kilometer	Questionnaire Administered	No. Returned	No. Not Returned	% of Return	% of Non Return
Niger-Delta Region scope to three Niger Delta States of Bayelsa, River and Delta	31,244,577	110,112	1,500	1,325	175	88.3	11.7

3.7 Main Complaints of the Niger Delta Communities

Several commentators and analysts on the plights of the oil producing communities in the Niger-Delta Region have attributed the main complaints of the Niger Delta communities to plural factors; an enquiry was made through the questionnaire on this matter. The opinions of respondents were displayed in table 5.

Table 5. Main Complaints of the Niger Delta communities

	Frequency	Percentage
Environmental Pollutions/Degradation	236	17.8
Lack of Infrastructural Development	114	8.6
Neglect by Oil Companies	48	3.6
All of the above	925	69.8
No Response	2	2
Total	1325	100.0

Competition for resources and other factors were some of the reasons that made the debate on resource Control by the political leaders in the Niger-Delta Region topical in Nigeria. The table below presents the analysis of respondents.

Table 6. The demand for resource control was borne out of the neglect of oil companies, local, state and federal governments.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	1101	83.1
No	210	15.8
No. Response	14	1.1
Total	1325	100.0

Table 7. Have the government of the Niger-Delta States judiciously used the funds allocated for the benefit of the Niger-Delta people?.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	503	38.0
No	819	61.8
No. Response	3	2
Total	1325	100.0

The above table projected that 819 respondents out of the 1,325 investigated, said the government of the Niger-Delta States have not judiciously used the funds allocated to the States for the benefits of the Niger-Deltans. The popular opinion expressed here is that public funds were largely mismanaged and fraudulently embezzled by some political leaders of the Niger-Delta States.

That the Violent Agitations by the Niger-Delta Youths and the Formation of Militant Groups and Their Attendant Activities led to the Militarization of the Region by the Nigeria State.

Under this sections, respondents' opinions were sought on the reasons for the militarization of the Niger-Delta region by the Nigerian State and on the phrases that best described the situation in the Niger-Delta region before the proclamation of the Amnesty Programme.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	1077	81.3
No	248	18.7
Total	1325	100.0

The table above exposed that the majority of respondents, totaling 1077, representing 81.3% said – Yes, while 248 respondents representing 18.7% said No. Practically, it was obvious that with the proclamation of the Amnesty Programme, violence reduced drastically in the Niger Delta and the Military's Joint Task Force, Operation Restore Hope in the Niger Delta were gradually withdrawn from some communities.

What is the Rationale for the Proclamation of the Amnesty Programme for Militants in the Niger-Delta Region?

	Frequency	Percentage
To stop violence and to bring peace, stability and development to the region.	1314	99.9
No response	13	1
Total	1325	100.0

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, November, 2012.

The table above revealed that majority of the respondents totaling 1,314 representing 99.9% said the rationale for the proclamation of Amnesty Programme for militants in the Niger-Delta was to stop the violence and destructions, and to bring peace, stability and development to the region. While 13 respondents, representing, 1% did not answer. The point made and noted here, was that majority of the respondents averred that the rationale for the proclamation of the Amnesty Programme by President Yar'Aua's administration was to stop the carnage that ushered crimes and criminalities in the region.

Do you think that Government's Programme has brought peace and stability in the Niger-Delta Region?

In this section, respondents view were obtained on whether the Government's Amnesty programme brought peace and stability to the Niger-Delta region. The table below presented the responses.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	1021	77.1
No	202	15.2
Don't Know	97	7.3
No. Response	5	4
Total	1325	100.0

This table showed that 1,021 respondents, representing 77.1% answered to the positive while 202 respondents, representing 15.2% answered to the negative. Furthermore, 97 respondents, representing 7.3% said they did not know if the Amnesty Programme has brought peace and stability in the region. Only five respondents, representing 4% did not answer the question. In sum, the analysis showed that the majority of respondents believed that the Amnesty Programme of the Nigerian-State brought peace and stability in the Niger-Delta Region.

Respondents' Assessment off the Amnesty Programme of Government for the Militant in the Nigeria-Delta Region

The research examined respondents on the assessments of the Amnesty Programme proclaimed for militants in the Niger-Delta region. These responses were explicitly stated in the table below.

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Successful	869	65.6
Successful	336	25.4
Not successful	120	9.1
Total	1325	100.0

Conclusion

This section of the study gives an inference drawn from the major findings, challenges encountered during the study, and conclusion was then drawn on the basis of the data presented and analyzed. The study has shown that the Nigerian State is endowed with abundant natural resources and principal among them are crude oil and gas, which are largely deposited in the Niger-Delta juxtaposing the wealth produced in the region and the level of development, some Niger-Deltans activists and militants.

The study thus concludes that, the Amnesty Programme initiated by the Nigerian State for the militants in the Niger-Delta Region guaranteed and safeguarded life and property,

restored durable peace and created conducive environment for the region to become an Investment Destination. This had led to tremendous gains in national revenue for the implementation of the Post-Amnesty Projects in the Niger-Delta and development of Nigeria in general. This has also restored Nigeria's international image, particularly in the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS), African Union (A.U.), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and United Nations Organization (UNO).

Recommendations

Thus in pursuit of the research objectives, and major findings, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The Federal Government should ensure that necessary steps are taken to consolidate on the gains of the Amnesty Programme. We therefore appeal to all stakeholders to be patient as there can be no meaningful development in the theatre of war and atmosphere of violence.
2. The post Amnesty Programmes must be implemented to their logical conclusions. There are fears in certain quarters that in the event that Government reneged, the relative peace in the region will crumble. Hence sustaining the peace remain a source of serious concern to all peace lovers.
3. The root causes of the crisis in the Niger-Delta Region which has been the drivers of the conflict must be addressed by the Federal, State and Local Governments and the multinational oil companies doing business in the region. As a sine-qua non, to tackle the myriad and complex grievances that engulfed the Niger Delta crisis, the Amnesty programme must brutally be subsumed into political, economic and structural reforms 'which allows policy makers to identify entry points for policy reforms that targets incremental, progressive changes over time'.
4. Offering rehabilitation and development to ex-militants is commendable but fundamental address of the underlying social, political and economic problems faced by the region is very necessary, if not, the peace that the Amnesty Programme facilitated will be short-lived.
5. We observed that one of the major constraints to peacebuilding and sustainable development is the lack of social provisioning in the region which has created class and inequalities. We suggest that the Nigerian state should urgently create the enabling environment to herald sustainable development goals in the area that will signpost the emergence of backward linkages built around oil and gas production "activities and creating non-oil employment in agriculture, fisheries and small-scale manufacturing".
6. Government should intensify the creation of inclusive models of sustainability that extend beyond mere monetary benefits to repentant militants but also to women, children and other vulnerable entities that may have not benefited from the Amnesty programme. This calls for an all inclusivity of the programme.
7. We also recommend that, in order to justify the humongous amount of money espoused by the Nigerian State into the Niger Delta region, all monetary transactions must be matched with correspondent effective public spending that delivers adequate people oriented development projects that creates employments and alleviates poverty in the region. Conversely, absolute poverty has been seen as a major cause of political instability.
8. We further call on the Nigerian State to abrogate the obnoxious Land Use Act that deprived the oil bearing communities access to customary ownership of land and address the issues of land alienation and environmental damage.

9. We recommend the need for a corporate synergy between the Nigerian State, MOCs and oil bearing communities towards the corporate development of the area. We recommend very highly the Akassa community initiative model in this regard. This will usher in sustainable peace, security, infrastructure and high human capital development to the region.

10. Finally, we recommend that the Nigerian State should be unbundled. The politics of fiscal federalism in Nigeria must be truly fiscal and structural in all ramifications. The principle of derivation where federating entities held sway over the majority of derived revenues in their region will diffuse tensions between the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta and Nigerian State by instilling an equitable fair/formula of revenue allocation; for where there are profound inequalities, there will be resentment and discontent with a system of decision-making that is unable to redress the imbalance or is controlled by those intent on preserving the status quo. Under distribution of income is likely to be a strong predictor for political violence. This will also encourage states and regions to be less fiscally dependent on the center.

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