

---

## Amnesty Policy, Violence and Insecurity in the Niger Delta Region: The Issues and Contradictions

<sup>1</sup>John Kalama & <sup>2</sup>Eyikorogha Queen

<sup>1&2</sup>Department of Political Science

Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

---

### Abstract

This study strived to unravel the reasons for the resurgence of violence, insecurity and other contradictions in the Niger Delta region despite the ongoing amnesty programme in the region. The paper argues that peace and sustainable development in the Niger Delta can only be a reality if policy actions such as the federal government's amnesty policy go beyond mere palliative measures. Data for the study were drawn from secondary sources while John Burtons basic human needs theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. Analysis was done qualitatively through content analysis of the data presented in the study. Findings of the study revealed, among other things, that the federal government's amnesty programme in the Niger Delta was not development centred but militant centred. The study also revealed that misappropriation and diversion of public funds and resources accounts for the underdevelopment and increased violence and insecurity in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region. The paper concludes that the ongoing amnesty policy/programme should be reviewed and re-evaluated to make it more effective and comprehensive.

**Keywords:** *Amnesty policy, Violence, Insecurity, Niger Delta region, and Amnesty programme.*

---

*Corresponding Author:* John Kalama

## **Background to the Study**

In spite of the ongoing amnesty programme in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria violence and insecurity persist due to decades of marginalization, alienation and environmental degradation coupled with unfulfilled promises on the part of the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies. These developments no doubt pave the way for increased protests, agitations and armed struggle by the Niger Delta people against the Nigerian state and its collaborators. During this period, actions such as kidnapping, vandalization of oil company facilities and hostage taking were intensified prompting the Nigerian government to militarize the entire Niger Delta region through its Joint Military Task Force (JTF). This development also led to the proliferation of militia groups and camps across the Niger Delta region hence, the conflict degenerated between 1995 and 2005, prompting the federal government of Nigeria to also review its policy action in June 2009 with the proclamation of amnesty to Niger Delta agitators and aggrieved youths. It is therefore instructive to state unequivocally that Nigeria's amnesty policy in the Niger Delta region has three major phases which include:

1. A disarmament phase which took place between 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009 and 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009 and included the collection of arms and biometric data.
2. A demobilization and rehabilitation phase that lasted six to twelve months and included the provision of among other things counselling and career guidance for the participants.
3. A reintegration phase which was expected to last up to five years and to include the provision of among other things, training and micro credit for the participants.

Records from the amnesty office indicate that about 30,000 people participated in the amnesty training programme in Nigeria and abroad. In spite of the amnesty programme in place, scholars have continued to wonder why violence, crime and insecurity still persist in the Niger Delta region hence, in an article titled "Niger Delta Amnesty Programme Fails to End Militancy" published in *The Wall Street Journal*, Drew Hinshaw, (2012) lamented that militants in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta began a campaign of kidnappings and pipeline bombings due to environmental pollution and the region's endemic poverty and unemployment. In his words: "Now oil theft appears to be on the rise again". It is also on record that between 2015 and 2016 new militant groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), Bakassi Strike Force (BSF), Ijaw Republic Army (IRA) etc. have commenced militant activities in the Niger Delta region. The position of this study is to critically examine and review Nigeria's amnesty programme with a view to address the issues, contradictions, and other factors responsible for the resurgence of the violence, insecurity and insurgency in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

This aspect of the study examined and reviewed materials relevant to the subject-matter under investigation. Thus, to further sharpen the focus of the study, the literature review is divided into two sub-heading: Nigeria's amnesty policy as a nonviolence conflict resolution strategy and the history and consequences of the Niger Delta crises.

### **Amnesty Policy as a Nonviolent Counterterrorism Strategy**

In a press statement titled "Go sin no more" published in *The Week Magazine* of 6<sup>th</sup> July 2009, Nigeria's former president Umaru Musa Yar'Adua proclaimed amnesty to militants in the Niger Delta region as part of measures to secure peace in the troubled oil-rich region. The full text of the amnesty policy statement further reads: "Pursuant to Section 175 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria whereas the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria acknowledges that the challenges of Niger Delta arose mainly from the inadequacies of previous attempts at meeting the yearnings and aspirations of the people, and have set in motion machinery for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta states: whereas certain elements of the Niger Delta populace have resorted to unlawful means of agitation for the development of the region including militancy thereby threatening peace, security, order and good government and jeopardizing the economy of the nation: whereas the government realizes that many of the militants are able bodied youths whose energies could be harnessed for the development of the Niger Delta and the nation at large. Whereas the government desires that all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in militancy in the Niger Delta should return to respect constituted authority and whereas many persons who had so engaged in militancy now desire to apply for an obtain amnesty and pardon.

Now therefore, I, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, after due consultation with the Council of States and in exercise of the powers conferred upon me by the provisions of section 175 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, make the following proclamation: I hereby grant amnesty and unconditional pardon to all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in the commission of offences associated with militant activities in the Niger Delta. The pardon shall take effect upon the surrender and handing over of all equipment, weapons, arms and ammunition and execution of the renunciation of militancy forms specified in the schedule hereto, by the affected persons at the nearest collection centre established for the purpose of government in each of the Niger Delta State: The unconditional pardon granted pursuant to this proclamation shall extend to all persons presently being prosecuted for offences associated with militant activities: and this proclamation shall cease to have effect from Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009".

The above policy action was accompanied with a clearly defined disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme which served as a peace building measure. While making a case for nonviolent conflict resolution strategies, Jones and Libicki (2008) argued that military force had rarely been effective in defeating terrorism and the reliance on conventional military force had often been counterproductive hence, he added that a military solution will not solve a political problem. On the contrary while citing the case of Afghanistan, where the United States military operation was successful in denying Al-Qaeda freedom of movement by removing pro-al-Qaeda regime from power, Smith (2007:6) argued that a properly deployed army can in the short term deny a terrorist group or individual the environment to operate. In his words: while long-term military campaigns have been faced with challenges, a short-term well defined military

mission could be effective in mitigating the threat of terrorism” (Blyth, 2013). The appropriate counterterrorism strategy to adopt remains a source of debate among scholars in the field of conflict resolution. In his work “we need nonviolent counterterrorism strategies” Niemela (2012), added his voice to the debate on counterterrorism strategies when he stated categorically that all violent counterterrorism intervention policies have completely failed. In his words: we are sowing and reaping perpetual tragedy with this violence machine and the only people benefiting are sitting on top of a mountain of cash in the conflict industry hence, it is time for a major shift in the conflict management strategies. While expressing the need for states to adopt nonviolent counterterrorism strategies he asked rhetorically “can we finally start listening to the numerous scholars and studies with scientifically supported strategies for nonviolent counterterrorism? To discourage insurgency and terrorist activities he urged states to adopt nonviolent conflict resolution strategies by investing massively in social and economic development initiatives in any region in which terrorist groups are engaged.

This position if adopted and implemented will help states to deprive terrorists of avenues to recruit new and intending members. This is a fact because the situation in Northeast, Nigeria clearly revealed that the less privileged children popularly called Almajiris constitute the vulnerable group from which the Islamic sect (Boko Haram) recruited most of their members. The call for states to adopt more proactive nonviolent counterterrorism strategies by investing massively in education, social and economic development initiatives made by Niemela (2012), is therefore, a step in the right direction. However, according to the United Nations (2005) report, about 25 African countries are engaged in armed conflict or were experiencing political crises. The report noted further that most African countries have also experienced UN/AU-led DDR nonviolent programme interventions. Within the African context, countries that have embraced nonviolent conflict resolution strategies based on amnesty policy framework include: South Africa, Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, (DRC) Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Republic of Sierra-Leone, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria etc. Pursuant to the United Nations Global counterterrorism strategies and in an attempt to check the excesses of militia groups in Nigeria the federal government and the national assembly passed and signed into law “The Terrorism Act 2011 and Amended Money Laundering Act 2011. This clearly indicates that Nigeria has taken several policy measures based on nonviolent conflict resolution strategies in its war against terrorism and insurgency.

### **Origin and Consequences of the Niger Delta Crises**

This aspect of the study x-rayed the origin, dynamics and consequences of the Niger Delta crisis. According to Preboye (2005), the Niger Delta crises can be traced to pre-colonial and colonial marginalization through trade and missionary activities which led to the signing of obnoxious treaties which in turn compelled Niger Delta people to transfer trade and economic resources in the hinterland to the colonial masters and their agents. He stated further that with the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region and the attainment of independence by Nigeria in 1960, the level of marginalization and alienation of the Niger Delta people and other minorities in the country became more

sophisticated and institutional. In his words: agents of the Nigerian state and their collaborators introduced policies such as quota system and other obnoxious decrees and legislations which technically excluded the Niger Delta people and other ethnic groups from the economic and political sphere of Nigeria. The discovery of oil in commercial quantity at Oloibiri community in Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State in 1956, coupled with the environmental degradation and pollution that characterized oil exploration and exploitation further strained the relationship existing between the oil producing communities, multinational oil companies and the Nigeria government.

Sarowiwa (1995) cited in Ikporukpo (2011) captured the plight of oil producing communities and stated thus: the Ogoni are embattled and imperilled since oil was discovered in the area in 1958, they have been the victims of a deadly ecological war in which no blood is spilled, no bones are broken and no one is maimed. But people die all the time. Men, women and children are at risk; plants, wildlife and fish are destroyed, the air and water are poisoned and finally the land dies. Today, Ogoni has been reduced to a wasteland (Sarowiwa, 1995:p. 131). The Kaiama declaration of 1998, the Ogoni bill of right and several other agitations in the Niger Delta led to the following interventions by the colonial and Nigeria governments respectively:

1. Establishment of the Willinks Commission in 1957
2. Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1960
3. River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) in 1970
4. Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992
5. Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000
6. Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs in 2008 etc.

Citing Courson (2011), Ibaba and Arugu (2013), corroborated the above position and added that the community oil was a major factor responsible for violence and insurgency in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. In their words: Oil related conflicts which transformed into insurgency were triggered by the interface of grievances, greed and quest for survival. In their work "preventing the next insurgency; highlighting the risk to violence in post-amnesty Niger Delta", they contended that the conflict in the Niger Delta can be better understood if it is studied from the following perspectives:

Intra and inter community conflicts, Inter-ethnic conflict, community-oil company conflict and community-state conflicts. While blaming the Nigerian government for allowing the crisis in the Niger Delta to escalate Ibeanu, (2008) stated categorically that the consequences of government inaction is youths restiveness, militancy, kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, oil theft and other forms of criminality and violent confrontations. He added that the inability of the Nigeria state to address genuine demands of the Niger Delta people stimulated long years of clashes and confrontations between several youth groups and security agencies as well as oil multinational oil companies (MNOCs). In his words: With the return of democracy in 1999, the military approach to containing the unrest exacerbated the already hostile security condition in the area leading to loss of human lives, oil and increased environmental devastation etc. Also commenting on the

consequences of the Niger Delta crises Ibeanu, (2008) and Okonta, (2005) lamented that between 1999 and 2005, oil losses amounted to 6.8 billion dollars and that a subsequent report prepared by a 43 persons government commission released in late 2008 indicated that in the first nine months of 2006, the Nigeria government lost a staggering 23.7 billion dollars in oil revenue due to militant attacks and sabotage (Joab Peterside, Porter and Watts, 2012). Ibeanu (2008) and Okonta (2005) also maintained that between January 2006 and the summer of 2009, over 400 expatriate oil worker hostages were taken while maritime piracy equally increased. In their words: between 2005 and 2009, there were over 12,000 pipeline vandalism and over 3,000 oil spills. Over 1 million barrels of output were short-in as a result of deepening insurgency and by the summer of 2009, output fell to around 1 million barrels per day. 124 of 174 oil fields were shut, Shell's western operations were closed and Nigeria as a consequence fell from its perch as the largest producer (Joab Peterside, Porter and Watts, 2012:8).

While analysing the character and nonchalant posture of the Niger Delta states and political elites Ibeanu (2008), reaffirmed his earlier position and described the Niger Delta region as a paradox. According to him, "it seems that every development strategy that has been developed for the Niger Delta has paradoxically under developed the region". Despite the huge budgetary allocation including the 13 percent derivation fund released to Niger Delta states on a monthly basis, scholars have continued to wonder why poverty still persist in the Niger Delta region. Thus, while corroborating the view that Niger Delta region is indeed a contradiction, Onah and Ifedayo (2010) stated that a critical look and analysis of the states in Niger Delta region with emphasis on infrastructural development/ facilities, social capital and welfare programmes may lead one to infer that most of the states could barely justify the whooping allocation to them from the federation account under this democratic dispensation. In their words: after more than five years of continuous receipt of the derivation miseration of the people fester, while the governing elites live in opulence and grandeur (Onah and Ifedayo, 2010).

In spite of the contradictions and conflicts in the region, scholars are of the view that the amnesty policy of the Nigeria government helped to restore peace and stability in the Niger Delta region hence, while reviewing the pre-amnesty events in the Niger Delta region, Ibeanu (2008) applauded the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua-led administration for introducing the amnesty programme/policy which he argued have helped to reduce violence in the oil-rich region. In the same vein, he castigated previous Nigerian leaders and governments for maintaining a hard-line position concerning the Niger Delta crisis. The issues, contradictions and factors responsible for fresh violence in the Niger Delta including challenges in the on-going federal governments amnesty programme will no doubt form the major thrust of this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The need for an analytical framework in an investigation was re-enforced by Lieber (1973) who argued that behind every concept or an analysis, there is a theory or view point which make it possible for the presentation and interpretation of facts. Clearly

therefore, this study relied on John Burton's basic human needs theory in order to explain and analyse the factors responsible for the prolonged conflict in the Niger Delta region which eventually led to the proclamation of amnesty by the Nigeria government in June 2009. In the opinion of Dexit (2004) human needs are issues creating the conflict and violence in the first place hence; ignoring such fundamental issues no doubt makes the interest-based model and others limited and contradictory. In the same vein, John Burton (1997) argued that when an individual or group is denied its basic need for identity, security, recognition or equal participation within the society, protracted conflict becomes inevitable hence, he advised that it is imperative that needs that were threatened be identified and placed at the front burner. He stated further that to ensure sustainable peace and development in any political system, the needs of all individuals and groups must be accommodated in the decision making process.

Basic human needs according to Burton (1997) can influence our beliefs, the values we place on them hence, he emphasized that people who are aggrieved can go any length to pursue their heartfelt needs. This no doubt explains why despite the creation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the ministry of Niger Delta Affairs and other policy measures in place, the Niger Delta people still insist that they must be part of oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta region. Outright disregard for the people and the militarization of the Niger Delta region by previous administrations further helped to escalate and prolong the conflict in the region. Thus, the basic human needs theory clearly explains the plight of the Niger Delta people within the political structure of Nigeria. Because these needs are perceived to be more important than food and shelter hence, when these needs are denied or frustrated by institutions and government, individuals and groups are prepared to go extreme length to defy authorities and systems in order to pursue their deeply felt needs even through death by suicide bombings or by hunger strikes (Sandole, 2001).

The value groups place on their cultural and religious rights explains the courage and determination with which terrorist and militia groups carry out their operations. Advocates of the basic human needs theory therefore cautioned that the needs for security, identity, personal socio-cultural and religious development are indeed salient to the understanding of destructive social conflicts and the failure of existing state systems to satisfy the need for identity is the primary source of contemporary ethno-nationalist struggles (Burton, 1997). Failure on the part of states to guarantee the basic needs of their citizens according to Sandole (2001) will lead to anarchy and revolts against the system. In his words: Deterrence cannot deter and coercive methods are not effective to modify behaviour when individuals and groups are compelled to act on the basis of imperative needs.

From the foregoing analysis, it is pertinent to state unequivocally that the violence, agitation and uprising in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria can be explained using John Burton's basic human needs theory which is closely related to Robert K. Merton's theory of anomie (crime). Within the Nigerian context, it is a fact that decades of frustration,

alienation, and marginalization of the Niger Delta people from their environment and resources (basic needs) no doubt helped to intensify the conflict in the region while the initial policy action of the Nigerian government also did not recognize the needs and aspirations of the people hence, the bloody confrontation which led to the proliferation of militant groups and camps across the Niger Delta region. Advocates of the basic human needs theory include: Burton (1997), Sites (1973), Maslow (1943), and Galtung (1990).

### **Methodology and Scope**

The concept of methodology according to Kaplan, cited in Obasi (1999) is to help in understanding in the broadest possible fashion both the products and the process of scientific investigation. Nachmias and Nachmias (1985) also see methodology as a system of unambiguous rules and procedures upon which the basis of an enquiry is formed and claimed knowledge evaluated. Thus, this section of the paper provides a description of the sources of data used and the applicable methodology. Data used in this study were culled from published scholarly works such as textbooks, published articles, journals and the internet (secondary sources) data collected from these sources were analysed through qualitative method and content analysis. In terms of scope, the study is limited to the impact of Nigeria's amnesty policy in the Niger Delta region.

### **The Issues, Contradictions and Challenges Facing Nigeria's Amnesty Programme/Policy Implementation**

To achieve the overall objective of this study, this paper relied on the views and positions of scholars and eminent Nigerians as expressed in journals, articles, the internet etc. Where necessary, tables and graphs will be presented and analysed via content analysis method. Immediately after the amnesty proclamation in June 2009, the federal proclamation of Nigeria set up a presidential panel on amnesty and disarmament of agitators in the Niger Delta region. According to Abazie (2014), the committee comprised of a pool of experts and consultants from different backgrounds with skills in development and security projects including key stakeholders and government officials. He therefore contended that the presidential panel on amnesty and disarmament of agitators in the Niger Delta that managed the DDR programme complied with best practices and international standards. In his words: through the committee, a working plan was developed and the project was designed as an intervention project where amendments to its components are regularly reviewed and up-dated as its standard operating procedures (SOP). It should be noted that the committee stands as the consensus building platform of the DDR project. The table below further revealed that Nigeria's amnesty policy and its subsequent DDR programme contains in-built mechanisms that enabled the agitators and ex-militants to embrace peace and also acquire training and skills at the end of the DDR programme.



**Table 1:** Components of the Federal Governments Amnesty Programme

<b>Disarmament</b>	<b>Demobilization</b>	<b>Reintegration</b>
Duration: August 6-October 4, 2009	Rehabilitation Duration: 6-12 months	Duration: up to 5 years
<b>Key Activities</b> * Collection of Arms and Ammunitions, explosives etc.	<b>Key Activities</b> * Ex-militants report to camp * Verification and documentation * Transformational training * Peace building and conflict resolution * Counselling * Career guidance * Wellness assessment * Reintegration classification * Education and vocational placement * Graduation and Demobilization	<b>Key Activities</b> * Knowledge and skills acquisition * Financial empowerment * Placement programmes * Microcredit * Education * Reconciliation with local community * conflict resolution framework/mechanism * Monitoring and Evaluation * Exit of Amnesty
<b>Key Enabler</b> Disarmament camps Massive campaign	<b>Key Enabler</b> Transformational training centres rehabilitations camps	<b>Key Enabler</b> Partnering government agencies, NGOs and private organizations, OGIS tracking and Support framework

**Source:** Adapted from Arugu and Okoye (2014: p.80)

While drafting the amnesty programme's policy objectives and deliverables, the Nigerian government identified the following three phases:

1. A disarmament phase to take place between 6 August 2009 and 4 October 2009 and to include the collection of biometric data and oath taking.
2. A demobilization and rehabilitation phase to last 6 to 12 months and to include the provision of, among other things, counselling and career guidance for the ex-combatants and participants.
3. A re-integration phase to last up to five years and to include the provision of, among other things, training and microcredit for the participants.

How well or otherwise the amnesty programme and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) exercise carried out by the Nigerian Government affected the life of the Niger Delta people and Nigerians as a whole is basically the major thrust and driving force behind this dissertation. Thus, identifying the challenges encountered will no doubt aid further research in peace and conflict studies in Nigeria and Africa where conflict, especially violent conflicts has become a tradition. The table below further

revealed that majority of the agitators and Niger Delta youths took advantage of the government's amnesty policy by surrendering their weapons and also participated actively in the DDR programme which took place in Nigeria and abroad.

**Table 2:** Demography of amnesty participants and the total number of beneficiaries

S/N	States	Male	Female	Registered	Summary of Total Amnesty Beneficiaries
1	Akwa Ibom	155	8	163	1 <sup>st</sup> phase 20,192
2	Bayelsa	6,900	61	6,961	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase 6,166
3	Cross River	159	1	160	3 <sup>rd</sup> phase 3,600
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	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20,049</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>20,192</b>	<b>30,000</b>

**Source:** Adapted from Arugu and Okoye (2014: pp. 82). The Punch Newspaper, 20 December 2012, Premium Times 24 December, 2012 And Africa Today November, p.19, 2009)

### The Issues

In spite of the achievements recorded by the amnesty policy and its subsequent DDR programme, scholars have argued that the problem of the Niger Delta is beyond the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. Scholars in this school of thought believe that except the development question of the region is addressed holistically, conflict and insecurity will persist in the Niger Delta region. Prof. Wole Soyinka, in a press statement captioned "between amnesty and amnesia" published in The Week Magazine of 6<sup>th</sup> July 2009, faulted the federal governments proclamation of amnesty to Niger Delta militants. The Nobel laureate stressed that except there was a holistic approach anchored on internal restructuring of Nigeria, the amnesty policy and programme will be a mirage. In his words: The stubborn retention of the status quo and its manifest rejection by component parts is at the heart of Niger Delta crisis (The Week Magazine of 6<sup>th</sup> July 2009).

While joining the debate as to the validity and reliability of the amnesty policy, David Adeyemo and Lanre Ola-Adeyemi (2009) in their paper titled "Amnesty in a vacuum: The unending insurgency in the Niger Delta of Nigeria" posited that the Yar'Adua-led administration ignored a lot of factors in its amnesty policy initiated in June 2009. According to them "the first matter arising from the 50 billion naira amnesty fund that was expected to be operational between August 6, 2009 and October 4, 2009 did not follow any known conventional pattern". After a careful appraisal of the entire amnesty programme/policy David, A. and Adeyemi O. (2009) contended that the best amnesty would have been the total development of the Niger Delta region and the improvement of the quality of life of the people and their living standards. One can but agree that the

whole amnesty policy of the Nigerian government was over politicized and limited in scope to cater for the welfare of militants alone. It is important to state categorically clear that several years after the proclamation of amnesty in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, the communities and villages in the region have remained underdeveloped while the people in the rural areas live below poverty line. While reaffirming the fact that Nigeria's amnesty policy is full of contradictions and unresolved issues, Zibima Tubodenyefa and Allison Timipere Felix (2013) in their article "The state in conflict management: The amnesty programme and the nature of stakeholder cooperation in Nigeria's Niger Delta", published in the Journal of the Centre for Niger Delta Studies volume 7, number 1, contended that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration exercise carried out by the Nigeria government did not follow international standards in terms of content and methodology. They observed further that the fact that the amnesty programme succeeded in drastically reducing incidences of violence is a short-term gain arising from the greed of militant commanders and generals under the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) flagship and of the state represented by the political class. In their words: the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta may collapse and hostilities may resume because addressing the social and institutional drivers of the conflict is far removed from the objective of the Nigerian state when it moved to implement the programme hence, rather than address the social issues that led to the conflict, the entire programme was monetized with the militant leaders and commanders earning huge allowances and stipends before the usual nonviolent test and trainings...

Apart from monthly allowances and stipends enjoyed by ex-combatants, records also revealed that top leaders of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) also got security and surveillance contracts from the same federal government. Thus, Zibima, T. and Allison, T. F (2013) concluded that the fundamental objective of any DDR exercise is to discourage ex-combatants from engaging in activities that could re-militarise their psyche or put in jeopardy the existing peace. While reiterating their position, they insisted that the main aim of a DDR programme is to help ex-combatants and militants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income without compromising the security of the state and its institutions. Citing UNAMID 2012, Nzeshi 2012 and Ezigbo 2012, they lamented that the amnesty policy in the Niger Delta region is full of inconsistencies and contradictions which could scuttle the entire amnesty programme. In their words: It is inappropriate and a threat to national security, the deliberate strategy of the Nigerian ruling class to co-opt ex-combatants into the economic mainstream while the fundamental issues instigating armed conflict in the Niger Delta region remained unattended to. They maintained that in Bayelsa State which arguably was the boiling pot of militant activities before the commencement of DDR, a group of ex-combatants were awarded oil pipelines and facilities security contract in the state through their security firm BAJEROS while in Delta State where hostilities were equally intense, the Oil Facilities Surveillance Limited (OFSL) also owned by a former militant leader was contracted to police oil facilities wondering why this form of patronage must continue even with the DDR programme in place, they concluded that the relationship between the Nigeria government and ex-combatant leaders raise doubts about the potentialities for

DDR sustaining peace in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria as a whole. Details of the security/surveillance contract according to The Wall Street Journal 2012 and Aluede 2012 are listed below.

**Table 3:** Security/surveillance contracts awarded to top ex-militant commanders in the Niger Delta Region

S/N	Name/Beneficiary	Contract Value	Purpose
1	Gen. Ebikabowa Victor Ben (Boy Loaf0	US \$3.8 million ( <del>₦</del> 559.64 million)	Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Bayelsa State
2	Gen. Ateke Tom	US \$3.8 million ( <del>₦</del> 559.64 million)	Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Rivers State
3	Alhaji Mujahid Asari Dokubo	US \$ 9 million ( <del>₦</del> 1.420 billion)	Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Rivers State
4	Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo)	US \$22.9 million <del>₦</del> 3.614 billion)	Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Delta State

**Source:** Adapted from Tubodenyefa and Felix (2013: pp 17-18).

This further explains why scholars have castigated the amnesty programme. The view of scholars on this matter is well articulated in the study. The above financial inducement given to top militant leaders by the Nigerian government have constantly pitched the ex-combatants in fierce battles with oil facilities saboteurs (some of whom are former militant foot soldiers who feel short changed by their leaders) who have proved relentless in sabotaging critical oil installations (The Wall Street Journal, 2012: Amaizi, 2012). Several scholars have argued that there was nothing wrong in engaging top ex-combatants in securing and protecting oil facilities which they once destroyed and vandalized.

Scholars in this school of thought maintain that it is a form of empowerment to the youths in the Niger Delta since oil facilities are located in the creeks and hinterlands. On the other hand, the researcher observed that exposing ex-combatants and their foot soldiers to such huge financial transactions immediately after a disarmament, demobilization and re-integration exercise is a breach of international standards prescribed by the United Nations Organization (UNO). However, running the amnesty programme in parallel with controversial joint military task forces in the region remains a major paradox. It is on record that the following military task forces exist in the Niger Delta region: Operation Delta Safe, Operation Pullo Shield and the recently launched Operation Crocodile Smile. In a swift reaction, members of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) through their spokesman launched a counter operation code named Operation Crocodile tears in July 2016. The above analysis clearly indicate that Nigeria's amnesty policy in the Niger Delta is militant centred hence, it failed to address critical issues that bother on community development and environmental justice. The table and figures below also shows that

Nigeria's amnesty policy and its development framework for the Niger Delta contains several debatable issues and contractions.

**Table 4:** Budget receipt by ministry of Niger Delta affairs, 2009 – 2011

Year	Budget (N)
2009	97bn
2010	46bn
2011	39bn
Total	N181bn

**Source:** Adapted from Ubhenin, (2013: 179-203)

**Table 5:** Amnesty Budget Summary from 2010 to 2013

Years	2010	2011	2012	2013
Naira (N)	8,000,000,000	102,176,411,902	66,176,411,902	66,781,093,786
USD\$	48795365.33	623216918.4	403637774.4	407325983.6
exchange rate USD\$1 = N163.95 accessed on 03/03/2014				

**Source:** Adapted from Abazie, 2014

**Table 6:** States, years and Net allocation to states and local government councils in Niger Delta 1999 – 2004

STATES	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Abia	N2.688 billion	N10.311 billion	N12.807 billion	N15.861 billion	N19.732 billion	N13.157 billion
Akwa-Ibom	N4.216 billion	N27.457 billion	N37.119 billion	N29.394 billion	N45.819 billion	N40.454 billion
Bayelsa	N2.671 billion	N19.087 billion	N24.518 billion	N21.637 billion	N37.329 billion	N36.502 billion
Cross River	N3.208 billion	N11.333 billion	N12.722 billion	N15.422 billion	N19.994 billion	N15.253 billion
Delta	N4.391 billion	N31.941 billion	N45.623 billion	N53.152 billion	N64.399 billion	N48.768 billion
Edo	N3.253 billion	N11.810 billion	N14.267 billion	N15.027 billion	N20.102 billion	N16.551 billion
Imo	N3.293 billion	N13.097 billion	N17.150 billion	N19.862 billion	N24.297 billion	N19.818 billion
Ondo	N3.026 billion	N14.656 billion	N20.151 billion	N19.990 billion	N25.696 billion	N20.256 billion
Rivers	N4.459 billion	N22.815 billion	N27.963 billion	N40.308 billion	N53.580 billion	N40.960 billion

**Source:** Adapted from Onam & Ifedayo (2010:277-279)

**Figure 1:** A public primary school in Tungbo community in the Sagbama local government area of Bayelsa State where children are learning without modern facilities



**Source:** Kalama, 2016.

**Figure 2:** Burutu community in Delta State where there is complete Absence of Basic social amenities (infrastructure)



**Source:** Kalama, 2016.

Heavy budgetary allocation to the Niger Delta States and the high level of poverty and underdevelopment in the region further explains what most scholars refer to as internal colonization and subjugation of the Niger Delta by the political elites in the region. Thus, the Niger Delta is seen as a region that is at war with its self yet, it points fingers to external factors for its woes. The contradictions in the Niger Delta are indeed enormous and

visible. The consensus opinion of scholars was however summarized by Ibeanu (2008), Onah and Ifedayo (2010) who stated thus: After more than five years of continuous receipt of the derivation, miseration of the people fester, while the governing elites live in Opulend and grandeur (Onah and Ifedayo, 2010).It seems that every development strategy that has been developed for the Niger Delta has paradoxically under developed the region (Ibeanu, 2008).

### **Conclusion**

From the above analysis, it is obvious that the initial policy actions of the Nigerian state through the militarization of the region and massive deployment of the armed forces across the Niger Delta region no doubt helped to escalate the conflict in the region. In the same vein, the proclamation of amnesty to Niger Delta agitators in June 2009 by the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua-led administration also helped to calm the tension in the Niger Delta hence, the gaps challenges and contradictions raised in this paper accounts for the resurgence of violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta region. In view of the observed shortcomings and contradictions inherent in the amnesty programme, it is therefore, the position of this paper that the Nigerian government should as a matter of urgency re-evaluate and restructure its polices on the Niger Delta region with a view to addressing the real issues responsible for the unending violence and insurgency in Nigeria's oil-rich but troubled region via these recommendations:

### **Recommendations**

1. Laws such as the Niger Delta Development Commission Act 2000 and other obnoxious policies that give undue advantage to multinational oil companies should be repealed or discarded to ensure equity, fairness and justice to both the oil producing communities and other critical stakeholders in the oil and gas sector.
2. African countries engaged in post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes should adhere to laid down international standards and procedures as contained in the United Nations integrated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration standards (UN-IDDRS 2004/2006). It will be recalled that Nigeria maintained only one quartering area at Obubra, Cross Rivers State during the demobilization and reintegration of ex-militants whereas; Nigeria ought to have maintained several quartering areas and locations for the exercise which could have held simultaneously. The DDR programme in Nigeria also witnessed excessive monetization of the entire exercise which narrowed the focus of the whole amnesty programme
3. Gas flaring and other environmental activities that endanger the environment and human life should also be addressed through policy measures. Thus, the Nigerian government should take necessary steps to implement the United Nations Environmental Programme report (UNEP) on Ogoni land which was released in June 2012.
4. Since the study observed that poor leadership on the part of local, state and federal governments in Nigeria accounted for the prolonged conflict in the Niger Delta

region, the enthronement of quality leadership (honest, patriotic and disciplined) at all levels of government coupled with electoral and judicial reforms will no doubt help to strengthen the leadership recruitment process and at the same time, promote accountability and transparency in government. This is important because in Nigeria, issues relating to corruption and maladministration have been traced to poor leadership hence, quality and effective leadership will help to check and minimise conflict arising from inequality and alienation in Nigeria's Niger Delta region and Nigeria in general.

5. Rather than rely on ex-combatants for the protection of oil and gas pipelines, the Nigerian government should make use of conventional security agencies such as the navy, police, air force and the army hence, all security and surveillance security contracts given to ex-militant leaders should be terminated since this will in the long run constitute a threat to national peace and security

### References

- Abazie, H. M. (2014). *Engaging the Nigerian Niger Delta ex-agitators: The impacts of the presidential amnesty programme to economic development*. Abuja: Office of the Special Adviser to the Nigeria president on Niger Delta.
- Achebe, C. (1984). *The trouble with Nigeria*, Lagos: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Amuwo, A. (2002). The political economy of terrorism, *African Development*, 27 (1 & 2), 205-235.
- Arugu, O.L & Okoye, A. C. (2014). The amnesty programme and peace-building in the Niger Delta. *Journal of Behavioural Sciences and Development Studies* 1, (1), 75-86.
- Azaiki, S. (2003). *Inequities in Nigerian politics*, Yenagoa: Treasure communications resources.
- Azar, E. (1990). *The management of protracted social conflict: Theory and cases*. Aldeeshot: Partmouth.
- Bassey, C. & Oshita, O. (2007). *Conflict resolution, Identity crisis and development in Africa*, Lagos: Malthouse Press.
- Berridge, G. R. (1992). *International politics: State power and conflict since 1945*. New York: Harvester Wheath Sheaf.
- Black, J. A. & Champion, D. J. (1976). *Methods and issues in social research*, New York: John Wiley and sons.
- Chenoweth, E. & Stephen, M. (2011). *Why civil resistance works*. USA: Portland State University press.
- Collier, P. (1994). *Demobilization and insecurity: A study in the economics of the transition from war to peace*", in the *Journal of International Development* 6, (3), 343-352.