

Nonviolent Counterterrorism Measures as a Panacea for Peace and Political Stability in the Niger Delta: An Analysis of Nigeria's Amnesty Policy

¹Frank Diepreye Prince, ²Grace Odon, ³Odu, Queen Ekiotuaere & ⁴John Kalama

^{1,2&3}Post Graduate School, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

⁴Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences
Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The best approach to resolve major conflicts confronting states remains a source of debate amongst conflict scholars; hence, this paper examined nonviolent counterterrorism measures as a panacea for peace, political stability and development in the Niger Delta. The paper argues that the cost of resolving conflict through nonviolence greatly outweighs the cost of resolving conflict via the use of force. Data for the study were drawn from secondary sources while the analysis was done qualitatively. In terms of theoretical framework, the paper relied on the idealist theory to guide the study. The paper posits that to address the problem of insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria, the Nigerian state and its leaders must invest more in the socio-economic development of its citizens through capacity building.

Keywords: *Nonviolent counterterrorism, Conflict, Political stability, Panacea and measures*

Corresponding Author: Frank Diepreye Prince

Background to the Study

Available records and statistic show that insurgency and terrorism is now ravaging most countries of the world. In some countries, it is self-induced arising from failure of the state to provide basic needs and infrastructure to drive the development process. On the other hand, insurgency and terrorism also occur as a result of irrational actions of citizens who believe in one religious ideology or the other. It is argued that conflicts driven by religious factors are difficult to resolve hence, a thorough conflict analysis process is required to study any conflict situation. Several insurgencies- related conflicts have taken place in different parts of Africa with its attendant consequences. Insurgency in Angola and the pre-election violence in Zimbabwe 2007, Kenya 2008, and Cote d' Ivoire 2010 led to the loss of several lives and destruction of properties worth millions of naira. The situation in Nigeria before the proclamation of amnesty by the Nigerian government was quite pathetic. From 1998-2005, movement of people and goods were restricted due to violence, kidnappings, hostage-taking and general insecurity in the oil rich Niger Delta. Despite the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000, the conflict between oil producing communities, multinational oil companies and the Nigerian security agencies continued unabated. Thus, the once peaceful region became a war zone. Within the period, Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations because of the gruesome murder of Ken Saro-wiwa and the famous Ogoni nine by the Sani Abacha-led government in 1995. Thus, the inability of the federal government and the oil companies to fulfill their obligations and implement the demands made by notable groups and associations from the Niger Delta (Ijaw Youths Council, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People etc.) helped to escalate the conflict and insecurity in the Niger Delta. Ibaba and Arugu (2013) captured the mood of the pre-amnesty Niger Delta when they observed that militia groups protesting against the Nigerian state and the activities of oil companies operating in the area for deprivation, neglect and environmental degradation, confronted security forces and attacked oil company workers randomly kidnapped oil workers subjecting them to inhumane treatments. This position was collaborated by the Delta Oil Producing Community Association (DOPCA) in these words: we implore the federal government to be sincere and fair to history by comparing the revenue allocation formula that obtained in the country in the 50s and 60s when cocoa, groundnut, palm produce and cotton were Nigeria's major export products with the present scenario in the Niger Delta now that oil is the major export earner and tell the world whether agitations in the Niger Delta were merely shouting wolf: Justice, equity and fair play is what DOPCA demands (The Guardian, 1999;20). It is in the light of the above challenges that this paper is written to chart a new course for the development of the Niger Delta.

Theoretical and Conceptual Analysis

Theoretical and conceptual analysis play a major role in any research work or study hence, relevant and related materials were reviewed and analyzed in other to strengthen and give flesh to the study. The study adopted the idealist theory in other to determine the impact and benefits of nonviolent counterterrorism measures and approaches. Scholars in this school of thought believe that it is possible to govern according to moral principles and laws for the purpose of creating a peaceful society through the establishment of acceptable laws and

regulations that can guide and protect members of the society. Idealist scholars argue that the use of force as a conflict resolution mechanism can only lead to more force and tension in the society. This was the situation in Nigeria's Niger Delta region before the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua-led federal government introduced the amnesty programme in June 2009. It is in the light of this that idealist scholars like David Mitrani and Joseph Nye advocated for the creation of appropriate mechanism where states can settle disputes among conflicting parties and interests who in turn must also cooperate actively in the conflict resolution or mediation process (Ogonor, 2002, 79-80). The federal government's amnesty policy and its anti-terrorism and money laundering Act clearly represents nonviolent counter insurgency and counterterrorism measures as advocated by idealist scholars.

Conceptual Analysis

Conceptual analysis contributes immensely to the success of any research endeavor hence, Lieber (1973) posited that behind every conception or an analysis, there is a theory or view point, which makes it possible for the presentation and interpretation of facts. Clearly therefore, issues relating to the subject matter will form the major thrust of this section. The best form of conflict resolution framework to adopt has always been a source of debate amongst conflict scholars hence, Niemela (2012) posited that all violent counterterrorism interventions have completely failed. In a publication titled "we need nonviolent counterterrorism strategies" he stated that modern states should invest in nonviolent conflict resolution measures and strategies. In his words: we need nonviolent counterterrorism strategies he stated thus, 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 conflict management strategies. He therefore asked rhetorically can we finally start listening to the numerous scholars and studies with scientifically supported strategies for non-violent counterterrorism. Hastings (2004) in his book, "nonviolent response to terrorism" warned that nonviolent counterterrorism strategies will be less effective in a society where basic social amenities and infrastructure are lacking. However, Richardson (2007) and Cragin (2003) in their study on social and economic development to inhibit terrorism argued that terrorism can only thrive where there is no inclusiveness in the governance process. In an attempt to get a better understanding of the concept "terrorism", some scholars have come up with some categorization of terrorism into criminal terrorism and psychological terrorism. Criminal terrorism according to Thornton relates to the use of acts of terror for private material gains such as kidnapping people for ransom, while psychological terrorism deals with terror perpetrated without a rational or definite purpose or motive. This clearly indicates that the concept terrorism can be analyzed from different perspectives. While advocating for nonviolent approach in addressing insurgency and terrorism related conflicts Banki-moo, former Secretary General of the United Nations in his opening address to the 65th General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2010 stated in a position paper titled "Rediscovering preventive diplomacy: A view from the United Nations" reiterated the need for governments and international organizations to place renewed emphasis on preventive diplomacy as a cost effective means to stop crises before they escalate. Also stressing the need for nonviolent approaches to conflict, Lynn Pascoe, former United Nations Under Secretary for Political Affairs, maintained that

preventing conflict is easier said than done and that the challenge for political leaders across the world is translating political and theoretical commitments into effective preventive action in the field. In a speech at the Brookings Institute in Washington DC in July 2010, he stated thus, we must become better not only at stabilizing conflicts easing the suffering they cause, but at preventing and resolving them through political means. Other concepts used and analyzed in this paper include:

1. **Nonviolent counterterrorism measures:** United States Department of Defense defined terrorism as the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear intended to coerce or intimidate government or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or sociological. Nonviolent counterterrorism measures and actions aimed at ending or preventing the threat of terrorism without any form of force or military action. Nonviolent counterterrorism measures within the context of this study refers to Nigeria's amnesty policy which was proclaimed and sign into law by the Umaru Musa Yar Adua's administration in June 2009.
2. **Amnesty policy:** violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria prompted the President Umaru Musa Yar Adua-led administration to embrace peace via nonviolence by proclaiming amnesty for aggrieved Niger Delta agitators (militants) thus, amnesty policy in this context refers to the peace building policy introduced by the Yar Adua-led federal government which disarmed, demobilized and re-integrated over 20,000 armed Niger Delta youths.
3. **Niger Delta Region:** The Niger Delta region is situated in the southern part of Nigeria and bordered to the south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the east by Cameroon. The region occupies the surface area of about 112, 110 square kilometers representing about 12% of Nigeria's total surface area. The Niger Delta Development Commission. (NDDC) Act 2000 recognized the following states as states in the Niger Delta region: Abia state, Akwa Ibom state, Bayelsa state, Cross River state, Delta state, Edo state, Ondo state, Imo state and Rivers State respectively.

Nonviolent Counterterrorism Measures as a Panacea to Peace and Political Stability in the Niger Delta: An Analysis of Nigeria's Amnesty Policy

The prevailing situation in the Niger Delta prompted the Nigerian government to review and re-appraise its hard-line position on the Niger Delta. It will be recalled that insecurity and violence in the oil rich Niger Delta reached its peak when armed youths in the region started kidnapping oil workers and expatriates for ransom. Thus, pre-amnesty Niger Delta was characterized by sea-piracy, hostage taking, kidnapping, pipe land vandalism etc. Thus, this section of the study will therefore examine the impact of the federal government's amnesty policy in the Niger Delta region. The position and views of scholars and experts will form the major thrust of the analysis. Zibima and Allison (2013) in their work "the state in conflict management: The amnesty programme and the nature of stakeholder cooperation in Nigeria's Niger Delta" argued that the disarmament, demobilization and re-integration exercise carried out by the federal government as part of its amnesty policy did not follow international standards in terms of content and methodology. According to them, the fact that the amnesty policy and its DDR programme succeeded in drastically reducing the incidence of violence is

a short-term gain arising from the greed of militant commanders and their foot soldiers in the Movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and of the state represented by the ruling class. They argued further that the fundamental objective of any disarmament, demobilization and reintegration exercise is to discourage ex combatants and militants from engaging in activities that could re-militarize their psyche or put in jeopardy the existing peace. They reiterated that the main objective of any DDR programme is to help ex- combatants and armed youths to acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income without compromising the peace and security of the state and its institutions. Citing Nzechi (2012) and Eziegbo (2012), they contended that the DDR program in the Niger Delta was characterized by inconsistencies and contradictions. According to them “it is inappropriate and a threat to national security the deliberate strategy of the Nigerian government to co-opt ex combatants into the economic mainstream while the fundamental issues instigating violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta region remain unresolved. They noted that awarding security contracts to ex combatants undergoing nonviolent training as part of the amnesty program was unethical and against the practice. The table below shows a list of militant leaders who got security and surveillance contracts while undergoing the federal government's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program.

Table 1: Security/ Surveillance Contracts Awarded to Top Ex-combatants from the Niger Delta Region

S/NO	Name/Beneficiary	Contract Value	Purpose
1	Gen. Ebikabowei Victor Ben (Boyloaf)	US\$3.8 Million (₦559.64 Million)	Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Bayelsa State.
2	Gen. Ateke Tom	US\$3.8 Million (₦559.64 Million)	Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Rivers State.
3	Alhaji Mujahid Asari Dokubo	US\$9 Million (₦1.420 Billion)	Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Rivers State.
4	Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo)	US\$22.9 Million (₦3.614Billion)	Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Delta State.

Source: Adapted from Tubodenyefa and Felix, 2013, 17-18.

It is often argued that there was nothing wrong in engaging ex-militant commanders in securing and protecting oil facilities which they once destroyed and vandalized. Scholars in this school of thought maintained that it is a form of empowerment to the youths who have embraced peace. They reiterated that the geography of the Niger Delta gives the ex-combatant leaders from the area an advantage over the conventional security forces. On the other hand, other scholars disagreed and posited that exposing ex-combatants and agitators to huge financial transactions immediately after a disarmament exercise is a clear breach of international standards as prescribed by the United Nations Inter- Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (UNIAWGDDR). Apart from the corruption issues identified in the amnesty program, the program and its DDR scheme also

brought political and economic stability which in turn increased Nigeria's oil production capacity within the period (2009- 2020) as reflected in the table below:

Table 2: Components of the Federal Governments Amnesty Programme

Disarmament	Demobilization	Reintegration
Duration: August 6- October 4, 2009	Rehabilitation duration:6-12 months	Duration: up to 5 years
Key activities ❖ Collection of arms and ammunitions, explosives etc.	Key activities ❖ 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	Key activities ❖ Knowledge and skills acquisition ❖ Financial empowerment ❖ Placement programmes ❖ Micro credit ❖ Education ❖ Reconciliation with local community ❖ Conflict resolution framework/mechanism ❖ Monitoring and evaluation ❖ Exit of amnesty
Key Enabler Disarmament camp Massive campaign.	Key Enabler Transformational training centres Rehabilitation camps.	Key Enabler Partnering government agencies, NGOs and private organizations, OGIS training and support framework.

Source: Adapted from Arugu and Okoye 2014, 80

Table 3: Arms and Ammunition Surrendered by Young Shall Grow

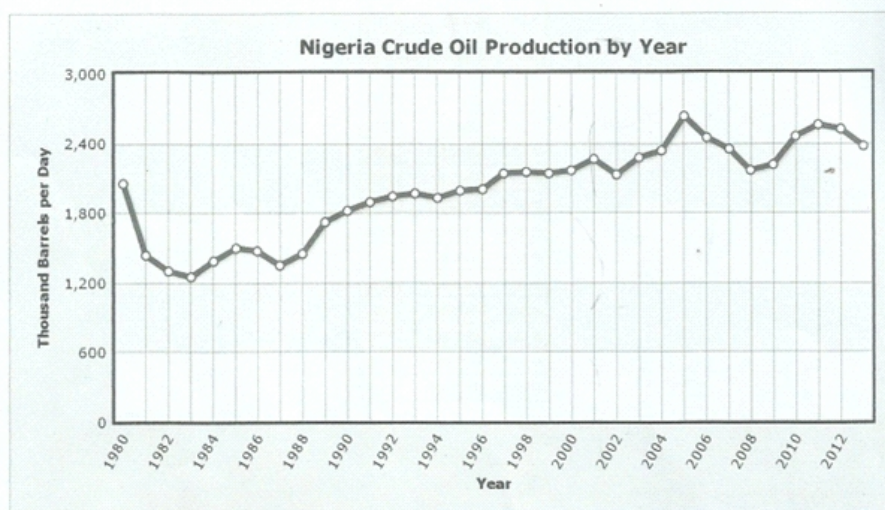
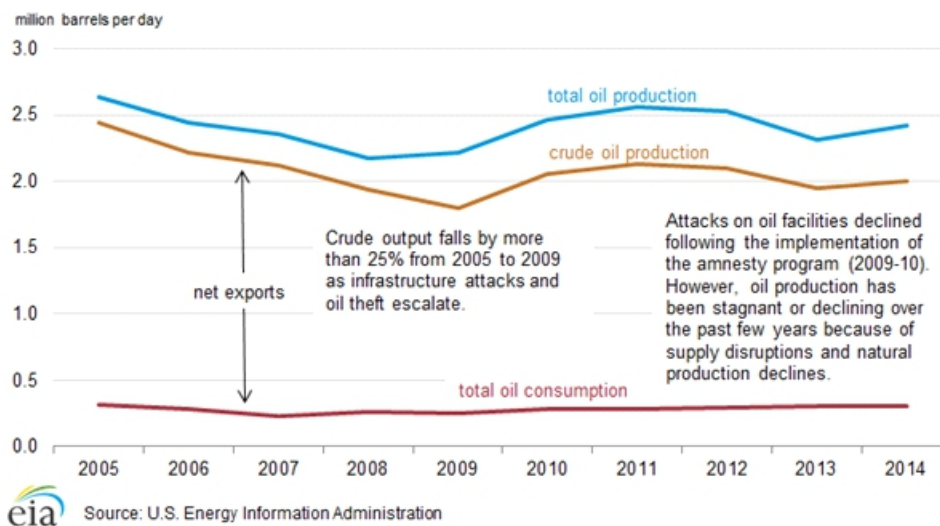
S/NO	Types of Weapon/Ammunition	Quantity	Date Submitted
1.	AK 47 Rifle	1	5/09/2022
2.	AK Machine Gun	4	5/09/2022
3.	FN machine Gun	1	5/09/2022
4.	DPL MG	4	5/09/2022
5.	Mark 4 Rifle	1	5/09/2022
6.	SMG	5	5/09/2022
7.	K 2 Rifle	1	5/09/2022
8.	RPG 7	2	5/09/2022
9.	Pump Action	3	5/09/2022
10.	Signal Pistol	9	5/09/2022
11.	Locally made short pistol single barrel	3	5/09/2022
12.	G 3 Rifle	21	5/09/2022
13.	English Made Single Barrel	4	5/09/2022
14.	HMG (High Machine Gun)	4	5/09/2022
15.	AGL (Automatic Grenade Launcher)	2	5/09/2022
16.	7.62 MM (SP) Ball	2,350 RDS	5/09/2022
17.	7.62 MM (SP) Link	71 RDS	5/09/2022
18.	7.62 MM Rim Ball	1967 RDS	5/09/2022
19.	7.62 MM Rim Ball	2500 RDS	5/09/2022
20.	7.62 MM Rim Link	340 RDS	5/09/2022
21.	7.62 MM NATO Metal Ball	11616 RDS	5/09/2022
22.	7.62 MM NATO Metal Link	329 RDS	5/09/2022
23.	K2 Rifle Ammo (223 Remington)	1530	5/09/2022
24.	50mm Link	2,440 RDS	5/09/2022
25.	40mm H.E. (For A.G.L)	54 RDS	5/09/2022
26.	RPG 7 Bomb (Big Size)	2 RDS	5/09/2022
27.	RPG 7 Bomb (Small Size)	3 RDS	5/09/2022
28.	Anti-riot Bomb	88 RDS	5/09/2022
29.	AK 47 Magazine	155	5/09/2022
30.	FN Magazine	9	5/09/2022
31.	G3 Magazine	17	5/09/2022
32.	RPG 7 Charger	5	5/09/2022
33.	SMG Magazine	3	5/09/2022
34.	Mark 4 Magazine	1	5/09/2022
35.	AGI HMG Accessories	9	5/09/2022

Source: Kalama and Chilaka 2022 p.11-35

The above analysis clearly shows that Nigeria's amnesty policy witnessed some setbacks which include corruption and over monetization of the entire process. In the same vein, majority of scholars and stakeholders interviewed in course of the study maintain that the federal government's amnesty policy and its DDR program contributed immensely to peace and political stability in the Niger Delta. The data above clearly shows that militancy and violence in pre-amnesty Niger Delta was more pronounced in Bayelsa state, Delta state, and Rivers state respectively. Thus, the largest number of arms, ammunitions and militants camps was

also recorded in these states. The acceptance of the amnesty program and the subsequent submission weapons and arms to the presidential amnesty committee no doubt helped to reduced tension, violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta as reflected in the figures below:

Figure 1: Petroleum and other Liquids Production and Consumption in Nigeria



Nigeria's oil production capacity also increased after the proclamation of amnesty in 2009. Prior to the proclamation of amnesty, it is on record that Nigeria's economy and production capacity declined due to militancy in the Niger Delta region from 1999-2008. Apart from turning the economy of Nigeria around, the amnesty policy and the DDR programm also

helped to restore peace and stability in the Niger Delta region. Affirming the fact that the amnesty policy served as a panacea for peace and economic development in the Niger Delta and Nigeria in general, Ibeanu (2008) applauded Yar Adua's administration for introducing the amnesty policy which helped to restore peace in the oil rich region. In the same vein, Abazie (2014) posited that the amnesty policy is of strategic economic importance to the Niger Delta and Nigeria in general. In his words: in 2005, crude oil production and exploration was at 2.2 million barrels per day but reduced drastically in 2009 as a result of crisis which led to vandalism in the Niger Delta region. Ibeanu (2008) and Okonta (2005). Reiterated that between 2006 and 2009, more than 400 expatriates were taken hostage and that oil production increased to 2.4 barrels per day due to the amnesty policy and DDR scheme. The paper therefore concludes that the cost of resolving conflict through nonviolence greatly outweighs the cost of resolving conflict through the use of military force.

Conclusion

The study examined nonviolent counterterrorism measures as a panacea to peace and political stability in the Niger Delta: An analysis of Nigeria's amnesty policy with a view to assessing the impact of the policy on the people of Niger Delta. In terms of structure, the paper was arranged in the following order: Abstract, introduction, theoretical and conceptual analysis, nonviolent counterterrorism measures as panacea to peace and political stability in the Niger Delta, conclusion and recommendations. Relying on secondary data, the paper observed that the federal government's amnesty policy in the Niger Delta suffered several setbacks which affected the effective implementation of the programme and the welfare of ex-combatants. Despite the initial hitches, the study reveals that over thirty thousand youths embraced the amnesty policy and participated actively in the government's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration scheme which led to the recovery of large catchment (quantity) of arms from ex-combatants. The acceptance of the program greatly helped in restoring peace, political stability and socio-economic development in the Niger Delta and Nigeria in general. This is clearly demonstrated in the data presented in the study. The paper however proposed that a comprehensive review of the programme with a view to accommodating all stakeholders will go a long way in promoting lasting peace in the Niger Delta and Nigeria in general.

Recommendations

Ending insecurity and violence in the Niger Delta and Nigeria should be a collective responsibility hence, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The culture and practice of nonviolence should be extended to primary and secondary schools across Nigeria. This will help to change the orientation and mentality of the people especially the youth population who erroneously believe that violence is the only way to conflict resolution. The ongoing amnesty policy and its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme should be re-organized and re-evaluated to make it more effective and development based. This re-organization is necessary because the ongoing amnesty policy is centered on the welfare of ex-combatants and not development centered.
2. The federal government should as a matter of urgency channel more resources towards the development of the Niger Delta through alternative channels such as the

- ministry of Niger Delta Affairs and the Niger Delta Development Commission.
3. The government at all levels should also address the issues driving conflict in the country. For instance, issues like poverty, unemployment, deprivation and exclusion from the political process should be given attention to avoid the spread of conflict and violence in the country.
 4. Government policies should be geared towards development and welfare of the citizens. For instance, the recent removal of fuel subsidy which led to increase in the cost of petroleum and gas should be avoided to avoid uprising and insecurity. Rather, economic policies that will promote sustainable development should be formulated and implemented across the country.
 5. Institutions of the state especially anti-corruption agencies and the judiciary should function independently and transparently. This is because judicial pronouncement and actions of government agencies and institutions can either promote peace or violence within the state.

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