Human Security and the Nigerian State: The Niger Delta Challenges

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Abstract

The Nigerian state over the years has been subjected to series of crises, violent attacks, ethnic and religious clashes and outright burst of conflicts, leading to general breakdown of law and order. These high spirals of conflicts and crises, which almost enveloped the nation is precipitated partly by colonial legacy and many years of military misrule, and partly by lack of justice, equity and fairness in the sharing and distribution of our God-given resources. Thus, the Niger Delta crisis posed serious challenge to human security in the region and the Nigerian state in general. Therefore, based on the above pathetic scenario, this paper critically examines the human security challenges of the Niger Delta crisis and its implications on the Nigerian state. That is, based on the human security factor, the paper systematically highlights and analyses four contentious issues inherent in the crisis; first, the major reasons behind the crisis; second, the dramatis personae in the crisis; third, the contribution of the Nigerian state and the Multinational Corporations to the crisis. Lastly, it looks at the impact of the crisis on the Nigerian state. The paper then concludes with recommendations on how best to manage and ameliorate the crisis with a view of finding lasting solution to the menace.

Key words: Human Security, Crisis, Poverty, Marginalization, Environmental Degradation.

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Introduction

The political entity now called Nigeria was midwifed by Lord Lugard who in 1914 brought together the three regions (in what is now popularly referred to as Amalgamation) into one corporate entity. The Nigerian state is the largest coastal country of West Africa and Africa's most popular country. The geo-political entity lies between longitudes 3.5^{0C} and 14^{oE} and latitudes 4^{0N} and 1.3^{0N}. Within this spatial dimension are various physical and human forms which provide the functional setting for the variation in the people of Nigeria (Iwaloye & Ibeanu, 1997:41).

Its population of over 140 million (2006 Census figure) is constituted and populated by over 250 diverse ethnic/linguistical groups, nationalities and almost as many languages, identities and dialects in the country (Anyanwu, 1997:36). Nigeria has a total land mass of 923, 77km^2 stretching from Atlantic Ocean to the South; it is bordered by Cameroon and Chad to the East, Niger Republic to the North, and Benin Republic to the West (Alkali, 1997:2).

The country is richly endowed with abundant mineral, human and natural resources such as cocoa, cotton, rubber, palm oil, tin, zinc, copper, gold, coal, iron ore oil etc. Indeed, Nigeria is the sixth largest oil producer and exporter in the world. Because of its size, human and economic potentials, Nigeria is often looked upon for leadership in Black Africa. Yet, in spite of this, Nigeria is considered to be among the 20 poorest countries of the world and one of the 25 least developed in Africa. By 1999 she slipped to 137 positions in the human Development index (World Development Report, 2000).

Unfortunately, since 1960 when she was granted political independence by the British Colonial Masters, Nigeria, over the years, has been subjected to series of crises, ethnic and regional tensions, religious clashes, ethno-regional agitation and sometimes outright bust of violent protests and attacks, leading to total breakdown of law and order and loss of lives and property- a state of insecurity.

These high spirals of crises are precipitated partly by colonial heritage and long years of Military rule, and partly by lack of justice, equity and fairness in the sharing and distribution of our God given resources. Thus, the Niger Delta crisis poses serious challenge to the Nigerian State and human security of her citizens. To this end, the instability and general insecurity in the country especially, in the Niger Delta region is rightly traceable to the above factors and therefore merit our urgent attention.

Based on the above pathetic situation therefore, this paper critically examines the human security implications of the Niger Delta crisis and its consequences on the Nigerian state. That is to say, based on the human security factor, the paper systematically highlights the

contentions issues involved in the protracted crisis and the need to find lasting and urgent solution to the menace.

Conceptual Clarifications

Human Security

To start with, there is no single definition of human security. In the literature devoted to International Relations and to development issues, it has been referred to in various terms: as a new theory or concept, as a starting point for analysis, a world view, a political agenda, or as a policy framework. Although the definition of human security remains an open question, there is consensus among its advocates that there should be a shift of attention from a state-centred to a people-centred approach to security, which concerns with the security of state borders should give way to concern with the security of the people who live within those borders (Owen, 2004).

The idea of the concept seems amorphous in the sense that human security is all-embracing. Infact, various attempts have been made to provide an adequate conceptualization of human security. The whole concept of human security can be traced back to dissatisfaction with the models of development and security that occurred between 1960s-1970s. The dissatisfaction was based on the models of economic development and the need to establish a more stable and just World Order. The ensuing debates helped to draw attention to the problems of individual well-being and safety (Peters, 2004: III). The concept has now gained wide usage and attention as the traditional concept of state security. What then is human security?

The simplest definition of security is "absence of insecurity and threats". To be secure is to be free from both fear (of physical, sexual or psychological abuse, violence, persecution, or death) and from want (of gainful employment, food, and health). Human security therefore, deals with the capacity to identify threats, to avoid them when possible, and to mitigate their effects when they do occur. It means helping victims cope with the consequences of the widespread insecurity resulting from armed conflict, human rights violations and massive underdevelopment. The broaden use of word "Security" encompasses two ideas: one is the notion of "safety" that goes beyond the concept of mere physical security in the traditional sense, and the other, the idea that people's livelihood should be guaranteed through "social security" against sudden disruptions (Mathews, 1994: 112).

In essence, human security means safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is a conditions or state of being characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety or even their lives (DFAIT, 199:5-6). From a Foreign Policy

perspective, human security is perhaps best understood as a shift in perspective or orientation. It is an alternative ways of seeing the world, taking people as its part of reference, rather than focusing exclusively on the security of territory or governments. Like other security concepts: national security, economic security, food security; it is about protection. Human security entails taking preventive measures to reduce venerability and minimize risk, and taking remedial action where prevention fails (Hubert, 2001: 162).

The Commission on Human Security (2002: I) has also provided a working definition of the concept. According to the Commission, the objective of human security is to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfillment. The Commission has also gone on to provide a human security conceptual framework. Leaning and Arie (2000:9) argue that any conceptualization of human security must at a minimum, address the need to ensure human survival at any point in time, develop and sustain a core psychological coping capacity for populations under stress.

Over the past few years, the concept of human security has increasingly centred on the human costs of violent conflict. While the safety of people is obviously at grave risks in situation of armed conflict, a human security is not simply synonymous with humanitarian action. It highlights the need to address the root causes of insecurity and to help ensure people's future safety (Alkire, 2002: 1). The objective of human security is to guarantee a set of vital rights and freedom to all people, without unduly compromising their ability to pursue other goals. That is, to create political, economic, social, cultural and environment conditions in which people like knowing that their vital rights and freedom are secure.

It has therefore, been recognized that this emerging concept of human security has the potential of revolutionizing society in the 21st century. A Forum in Tokyo in 1999 had identified three vital elements of human security: human survival, human wellbeing and human freedom. Globalization is offering great opportunities for human advance, but is also creating new threats to human security, both in rich and poor countries. Human life and dignity cannot be allowed to be negatively impacted in a world which has made such far-reaching technological advances.

In addition to the above, the UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report goes on to list seven specific values of human security; economic security, food security, health security, environment security, personal security, community security and political security. What are the threats to these values? Human security has been categorized in the context of social, economic, food, health, environment, personal, community and political security. Keeping that as a backdrop, Chowdhury (1999: 2-4), former Bangladesh Representative to the United

Nations, has identified four areas which should receive a priority attention in ensuring human security:

1)   Human security threatened by poverty and lack of development;

2)   Human security threatened by landmines, small arms and light weapons;

3)   Human security undermined by drug trafficking and trafficking of women and children; and

4)   Human security seriously jeopardized through human rights violation.

There are two, local and global threats, but based on the premise of this paper, we shall concern ourselves to the local threats.

State

All over the ages, academician/scholars from various disciplines have defined the term state in different forms. The late American President, Woodrow Wilson, once defined the state as 'a people organized for law within a definite territory'. Price (1970:11), a Political Scientist, used the word state to mean an association of men and women formed for certain purposes, within a clearly defined territory and an organized system of government. The state has also been defined as politically organized body of people occupying a definite territory and living under a government entirely or almost entirely free from external control and competent to secure habitual obedience from persons within it (Maclver, 1955:12).

It could be deduced from all the above definitions that states are territorially defined political units that exercise ultimate internal authority and that recognize no legitimate external authority over them. They are also the most important units in defining the political identity of most people. The state is also the most powerful of all political actors mainly because of its sovereignty (Rourke & Boyer, 2002: 130). Although most of the definitions emphasized the political authority as well as the monopoly of force or coercion possessed by government in a state and the political allegiance of citizens to their state, nevertheless, the modern state fulfils various social and economic purposes.

Therefore, for any state to survive it must enjoy the domestic support and acceptance of its citizens. This implies that the state is most active when a state's population is loyal to it and grants it the authority to make rules and to govern (legitimacy). Passively, the people must grudgingly accept the authority of the government. For all the coercive power that a state usually possesses, it is difficult for any state to survive without at least the passive acquiescence of its people. The dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and

Yugoslavia are illustrations of multi-national state collapsing in the face of separatist impulses of disaffected and dissatisfied nationalists.

Therefore, domestic support is based on pragmatic considerations, as well as, emotional attachment to the nation-state. The point is that states are political organizations created to perform tasks, to establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, promote the general welfare and by extension, the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Because states are meant to provide such benefits, states derive part of their domestic support-legitimacy-from their ability to deliver the proverbial goods. When states are unable to do so or seen not to be doing so, the domestic support of the state weakens. (Sprinyt, 1994:78-79). This is the origin of the legitimacy crisis Nigerian state is currently experiencing especially, in the Niger Delta region.

From the foregoing, it is clear that we can not divorce the state and its role from the issue of human security although human security does not supplant national security. It asserts that the security of the state is not an end in itself. Rather, is a mean of ensuring security of its people. That is, a State that values its own people and protects minorities is a central strategy for promoting human security. At the same time, improving the human security of its people strengthens the legitimacy, stability, and security of a state (Hubert 2001: 163). When states are externally aggressive, internally repressive, or too weak to govern effectively, they threaten the security of the people.

Theoretical Framework & Methodology

Cater (2003:13) has identified the need to fill both the theoretical and policy gaps between economic and political perspectives of conflict and state failure. He argues it must be addressed through a proper Political Economy Approach that integrates the two approaches. Consideration is given to the economic elements that drive and sustain conflicts, which are most notably detailed in Collier and Hoeffler's (2002: 28) study of the incidence of Civil Wars in Africa. The authors highlight the importance of 'greed', or economic incentives in both motivating and providing a means for conflict. They argue that the key determinant of conflict is the availability of exploitable resources to finance it. Similarly, Cooper (2002:955) analyzes the rise of conflict trade following the end of the Cold War, which is defined as non-military goods that finance war. He argues that it has particular salience in facilitating both contemporary conflict and the process of state collapse by providing economic incentives to maintain the comparative advantage of conflict trade, expressed by chaos. Thus, in theories of conflict and state collapse, both legal and illegal goods are considered important for the role

that they play in financing wars and providing economic incentives to maintain conflict. Moreover, both approaches suggest that organized crime or conflict economies have a political, as well as, an economic consequence.

Therefore, the Political Economy Approach is adopted in this paper. The Approach succinctly captures the incessant crisis in the Niger Delta and its manifestations. Political exclusion and inequalities in access to economic and social opportunities have combined with issues of identity and citizenship to result in genocide in Niger Delta. The crises and conflicts are accentuated by deep-rooted environmental problems related to access to, and use of land resources, and competition for natural resources such as minerals and water resources. This is the genesis of the crisis in the Niger Delta.

The main sources of information for this study shall be Library and Internet Research. The study will mainly be based on secondary sources of data obtained from books and articles by different authors that contain information relevant to the topic of study. This includes textbooks, journals, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, official documents, among others.

Niger Delta in Perspective

Nigeria's oil rich Niger Delta region occupies a broad geographical land bordering the Atlantic Ocean and housing a number of communities at different degrees of development. It is the largest wetland in Africa, and the third in the world. The whole area is traversed and criss-crossed by a large number of rivers, streams, rivulets, creeks, and twenty estuaries (Azaiki, 2008: 33).

It is a densely populated region sometimes called the Oil Rivers because it was once a major producer of palm oil. The area was the British Oil Rivers Protectorate from 1885 until 1893, when it was expanded and became the Niger Coast Protectorate (CRS Report, 2008).

The Niger Delta is a region of physical difficulties riddled with intricate and complex water systems and posing formidable and intractable development problems and practices. The region controls roughly 31 million population-over 40 ethnic groups residing in about 1,500 settlement/communities. It covers about 70,000km^2 and account for about 7.5 percent of Nigeria total landmass (Adeyemo, 2003:147).

Historically and cartographically, it consists of present day Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States. In the year 2000 however, Obasanjo's regime expanded its definition to include Abia State, Akwa Ibom State, Cross River State, Edo State, Imo State and Ondo State (NDDC, 2005).

The region experiences the lowest standards of living in the country, the least developed and yet produces the bulk of crude oil on which the economy of Nigeria precariously depends. Some 2 million barrels a day are extracted in the Niger Delta. Since 1975, the region has accounted for more than 75% of Nigeria's export earnings. Much of the natural gas extracted in oil wells in the Delta is immediately burned, or flared, into the air at a rate of approximately 70 million m3 per day. This is equivalent to 41% of African natural gas consumption, and forms the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions on the planet. (ERA Report).

The ecological problems that underscore underdevelopment of Niger Delta region were aggravated by bad governance in the country, poor political leadership in the region, unfavourable revenue allocation practices and ethnic violence.

Nature and Sources of the Crisis

At the heart and centre of the crises engulfing the Niger Delta region lays the historical reality of the Nigerian state. And as we all know, Nigerian state, like other states, is a product of colonialism. In the colonial production complex, Nigerians played the role of middlemen, the so-called comprador class which had an interest in the reproduction of colonial relations of production. Thus, the African economies were tied to the vagaries of the world capitalist market where they had not the least leverage in the determination and manipulation of its dynamics (Onimode, 1983:123).

At Independence, what Nigeria inherited from the colonizers was essentially the colonial repressive state apparatus and a monolithic mode of production. These were subsequently reinforced and reproduced in favour of capital accumulation. Colonial rule left mostly in Africa a legacy of intense and lawless political competition amidst an ideological void and a rising tide of disenchantment with the expectation of a better life (Ake, 2001:6).

To survive and sustained its selfish interest of primitive accumulation, the Nigerian state increasingly relied on coercion rather than authority for compliance. Thus, without exception, all states in Africa are extractive in character and nature. This extractive nature of the African states creates a security dilemma for the people. Infact, Young (1985:169) aptly captured this reality in Zaire:

> The poor and powerless suffer a state of permanent insecurity due to the arbitrary nature of revenue collection at the local levels and to all kinds of extortion by soldiers and other state agents . . . the system as a whole is incapable of providing for the welfare of the population. Mobutu Zaire never fails to bare the privacy of its exploitative and repressive functions.

The situation was not different in Nigeria and other African countries. That is the trend of continuing with the extractive state is not peculiar to the Democratic Republic of Congo, but pervades African countries. For instance, barely 20 months in office, the Balewa government declared a state of emergency in the Western Region and imposed a Sole Administrator on an autonomous region. The immediate consequence of that act contributed to the first military *coup d'état* on January 15, 1966. The quest for over-centralization by the Balewa government was engendered by the extractive goals of the ruling elites (Ilarnie; 200:12). The consequence of this unbridled quest for power domination was a failed state and the subsequent military interventions.

In Nigeria, Military rule further compounded the country's security problems. That is the military built an authoritarian framework to ensure what Cesaire (1997:79) calls "a relationship of domination and submission". There is no doubt that the extractive nature of the Nigerian state and the private accumulation of its oil partly explains why, in spite of, its immense wealth, the country has not only remained poor and under-developed, but has also been unsafe and insecure. Thus, the outburst of violent protest, attacks, demonstrations, kidnapping and resurgence of ethnic militias in the Niger Delta region, after many years of military (Mis)rule could be attributed partly to the domination and marginalization of the people in the sharing and distribution of their God-given resources and the subsequent failure of the state to deliver the goods, leading to loss of domestic support and acceptance for the constituted authority-legitimacy crisis.

In essence, the root cause of Nigerian human security crisis resides with the nature of the Nigerian state as played out in the bloody political competition that characterized Nigerian politics. As a consequence, political competition for the control of state resources and political power assumed a warfare status. Hence, those who are in control of the state political power hold on to it by all means and at all cost, and even deny the losers their unalienable rights (Sklar, 1997:531). This degenerates into large-scale violence, military coup, ethno-regional tensions and clashes, which in turn, threaten human security.

The politics of the Nigerian State, therefore, precipitates some trends- endemic mass violence, violence that stems largely from authoritarian rule, exclusion of minority by majority from governance, environmental crisis resulting in reckless resource exploitation, misappropriation of national revenue, social and economic deprivation, inequity and justice.

It is this misappropriation of the common good of the Niger Deltans to their exclusion that has intensified the protracted crisis in that region (Nnonyelu, 2001:3).

In support of the above, Gurr (1959) in his Theory of Relative Deprivation argues persuasively that people are very likely to compare their fortunes with those of their immediate environment, and then exploit these as a means of defining their position and that if they are not doing as well as their neighbours they make efforts to address the inequity; at other times, they look for scapegoats.

Thus, the restiveness of the oil-rich Niger Delta poses human security threats to the inhabitants of the oil-rich producing areas, the Nigerian people and the Nigerian state in general. As stated earlier, the root cause of the crisis resides with the Nigerian state and its mode of surplus extraction. Like its predecessor, the Nigerian state vested into itself the sole ownership of all minerals including the land where they are explored, produced and stored. The major interest of the state and the oil companies is the extraction of oil without ensuring capacity of the environment from where oil is produced to renew itself (Obi, 2001: 172).

 It is regrettable that in the full glares of both the state and MNCS, gas flaring is still the order of the day in the area, after more than forty years of oil exploration.

Also, incidences of oil spillage across the area are taken as normal hazards in an oil field; an oil field that happens to be the farmlands, swamps and creeks where the economic activities of the people are centred. Worse still, the Nigerian state and the foreign oil companies do not carry out post oil spillage research to ascertain the extent of damage done to the ecology with the hope of restoring normality (Ekpo and Omoweh, 2001: 96-97).

Thus, their environment has been visited with the worst form of ecological disaster. The aquatic life of the people has been destroyed. Their profession, ways of life etc, have been dislocated and disorganized. Environmental pollution with its health hazards have become the hallmark of the activities of the MNCS involved in oil exploration and exploitation. Farmlands have been rendered infertile through oil and gas pollution to the extent that most of the staple crops like cassava, yams and plantain are no longer grown in most of the oil-producing communities. It is no longer possible for the local fishermen to subsist on their local occupation (fishing). Worse still, these people are not even offered any meaningful employment in the emergent modern work structure of the oil companies. No schools, no facilities, lack of access roads, lack of portable drinking water, lack of electricity, lack of functional health care facilities, etc (Nnonyelu, 2001:5-6).

Ojakorotu (2006:35) has identified seven causes of conflicts in the Niger Delta. These are:

i.   The structure of the Nigerian federation

ii.   Perceived/real marginalization of the Niger Delta region

iii.   Activities of Oil and Gas Companies

iv.   Ethnic identifies/Nationalism

v.   The retention of legislations widely perceived as obnoxious

vi.   The role of government

vii.   Militarization /Proliferation of arms

The list is endless, the deprivation is total. Not only are the people unable to feed themselves, the proceeds from oil exports have been used to develop non-oil producing area like Lagos and Abuja, while the immediate host oil-producing areas in the Niger Delta are being left as the "wretched of the earth" (Omoweh, 1998).

The above pathetic situation has been compounded and made worse by many years of military (Mis) rule. The military government took over what used to be state's exclusive and residual legislative list, thereby depriving the states of the more lucrative sources of revenue. Also the abolition of the deprivation formular meant that more revenue now accrue to the federal government at the expense of the state and local governments. The cumulative deprivation of the states of their resources and revenue by the federal government is the main reason for the persistent clamour for a Sovereign National Conference and the much popularize resources control. This has caused increased opposition, confrontation and conflicts between the federal government of Nigeria and ethnic minorities on the one hand, and between the oil-producing companies and their host communities who are protesting against economic hardship and environmental degradation (Adegamhe; 2003:21).

It was this military inspired state oppression of the resources of the Niger Delta that has culminated into the ethnic rivalry, acrimony, lost of taking and general state of insecurity of lives and property in the Niger Delta. Starting with the Ogoni Bills of Rights and their opposition to the continuous destruction of their homeland led by the late Playwright, Ken Saro Wiwa, to the Kiama Declaration of the Ijaws, the rise of Asari Dokubo and Tony Ateke as ethnic militia leaders, the Niger Delta has seen one crisis after another. Also, the military occupation of Ogoniland, the encounter with the Egbesu Warriors, the destruction of Odi town, the alleged torture and rape of Choba women, have all combined to worsen the human-security situations in the oil-rich region. (*The Guardian*, 2002:16).

In fact, the above tragedies have heightened the insecurity problems of the Nigerian state in general and that of the Niger Delta in particular and the combined role of the Federal Government and the MNCS in the underdevelopment of the rich, but impoverished region. But, the reactions of the state have only helped to harden the `intransigence of the aggrieved people of the Niger Delta as they see the state as distant, exploitative, wicked and colluding with oil companies to exterminate them and therefore, are ready to resist them at all cost (Musa and Fayemi, 2001).

The Human Security Implications of the Crisis

The Niger Delta crisis has witnessed the undermining of human security on a very massive scale. The protracted crisis has claimed toll in human life and suffering, generated a state of chaos and anarchy, precipitated violation of human rights, lost of property worth billions of naira, destruction of oil installations, breaking of oil pipelines and closure of business by many MNCS in the area.

The above situations have precipitated serious political and socio-economic insecurity. The Niger Delta entered into this century with a grin picture of its human security crisis: poverty, famine, squalor, diseases, starvation, ethno-regional tensions and rivalry, and environmental degradation.

The Niger Delta and its people are mired, suffering from chronic poverty. The region is a paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty, contributing over 85 percent of government revenue through oil and gas production but receiving scant support in return for basic human services and infrastructure through government (Adeyemo, 2002:147). One of the most traumatizing aspects of the crisis revolves around the issue of kidnapping and the general state of insecurity of lives and property. The crisis has devastated the economy of the region almost completely, decimated their youths and displaced hundreds of people. The social infrastructures have been destroyed. The constant oil explosions and spillage in the region have reduced farming and fishing areas, agricultural productivity leading to the cultivation of marginal land area. The frequent oil pills have deleterious impacts on the health and productivity of the people and area and contributed to "human flight" from the region. Men and women in the region have continued to experience high infant mortality, deteriorating rural infrastructure, inappropriate social policies, inadequate and poorly distributed social investments, unemployment and general decline in welfare.

There are also cases of oil bunkering, deliberate cutting of pipes carrying crude oil and refined petroleum products like petrol and kerosene. These acts are, in most cases, the manifestations of the struggle by those sidelined from governance or deprived of access to the state political power who, now resort to cutting oil pipes in an attempt to get their own share of shrinking oil wealth. The expertise with which flow-lines are tapped with high-tech-equipment and the use of barges to evacuate the products shows that there is high level conspiracy between the culprits and those who are in charge of maintaining and protecting the flow-lines. Also, in some cases, the cuttings of oil pipes are done to cause tremendous loss for the state and oil companies notwithstanding the negative impact on their environment (Ekpo and Omoweh, 2001:98).

Also, when one considers the quality of arms and ammunitions, boats and vehicle the militias use in their operations, one would realize that they are not just urchins disturbing the peace of the public. This is why it has become very difficult for the police, the army and even the Navy (as they operate more through water) to control their nefarious activities. These speak volume of the level of operations, the quality of support and the depth of their operations. (Nwanegbo, 2005-48).

Added to the above facts is the issue of massive loss of jobs due to closure of most companies operating in the region. Infact, the international community has declared the Niger Delta region as a security risk to foreign investors. Lives and property are no longer safe and secure, thanks to hostage taking activities of various militants groups especially Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF). To state the fact, no state in Nigeria appears safe. The Niger Delta no longer stands isolated; the region is as bad as any other part of Nigeria on the matter at hand. The region has become endangered specie.

In fact, the release of Asari Dokubo and former Governor of Bayelsa State Alamieyesagha following a political deal which many thought would bring peace and stability to the region, is yet to materialize. On the contrary, there have been upsurges in the cases of cultism, oil pipe vandalization, kidnapping for ransom and hostage taking. This is, in spite of, the increasing activities of Joint Task Force (JTF) in the area. To state the fact, the increasing militarization of the region has heightened and endangers human security situations of the inhabitants of the area.

The Federal Government's challenge to a free-for-all duel with the warlords, for all intents and purposes, was ill-advised. It has stirred the hornet's nest. In their myopia, the lethargic federal government failed to see that the cancer of the Niger Delta has suddenly grown to

very gigantic dimensions. The Niger Delta is no more a Niger Delta problem. We agree with Professor Gambari. It is now a Nigerian problem and more (Okocha, 2008: 37).

The militants themselves, who claim to be defending the Niger Delta region, are in fact, a threat to its people, stability and existence. They raid villages at will and kill innocent people with ease. They paint the streets of Port Harcourt and other upscale areas in sleek state-of-the-art cars, showing off what they acquired through terrorizing their own people. The militants groups, who proliferated since the rise of Asari Dokubo, have marketed fear by indulging in kidnapping and murder on a regular basis to the extent that residents wonder when Nigeria will become Somalia (Bello-Barkindo, 2008: 80).

The army JTF, charged with the responsibility of stopping them is not a match. They are not only inferior in fire-power, they also travel in ramshackle jalopy trucks. The disparity between the militants and the JTF, in readiness to conquer is as clear as a flame and their greed is as scary as sighting Satan at heavens-gates (Bello-Barkindo, 2008)

Indeed, the JTF are becoming accomplices of the militants. Others are creating mayhem on their own. Being Soldiers of fortune, some have even joined the illegal bunkering business, competing with militants in inflicting pain on the people and drain on the resources. It is sad that the so-called preventive duties of the JTF may be necessary, but it is suspect and costly.

The end result of the above is the proliferation of crime, cult activities and arms and ammunitions. The proliferation of arms and ammunition in the region is aided by politicians who engaged the unemployed youths as political thugs, therefore using these weapons to cause more trouble, and hostage-taking. This situation had led to a total break down of law and order in the Niger Delta and most oil companies have so far stopped oil production since the Nigerian police can no longer guarantee the safety of the workers and their equipment.

To put the situation under control, the federal government has embarked on massive deployment of troops to the whole area; unfortunately, this militarization has led to blood shed and destruction of lives and property.

Finally, the crisis in the Niger Delta and the apparent inability of the then PDP led federal government to apply the principles of equity and justice in the sharing and distribution of our resources and infrastructures, had led to the demand for resource control. That is, the people of the Niger Delta feel short-changed by the Nigerian state. They therefore, feel that they should be allowed to partake in the benefit accruable from this oil which comes from their hand and hence their demand to control the resources from their ancestral land.

Recent Development: Amnesty Programme

At the time President Umar Musa Yar'Adua came into office on 29 May, 2007, the crisis in the Niger Delta region was at its zenith. Resentment in the region had been festering for so long that in fact the crisis in the region had become an albatross to the Nigerian project (Omotola, 2010; Egwemi, 2009).

The initial Institutional Approaches adopted by Yar'Adua such as the re-organization of the NDDC, the Niger Delta Master Plan and the creation of a Niger Delta Ministry did not seem to meet the wishes, needs and aspirations of the Niger Delta people. This led to the adoption of amnesty as a last ditch option.

Amnesty is a legislative or executive act by which a state restores those who may have been guilty of an offence against it to the positions of innocent people. It includes more than pardon, inasmuch as it obliterates all legal remembrance of the offense (Wikipedia,2010). Amnesty offer is a transversal approach towards addressing socio-economic problems of the people. It was believed that by granting amnesty to the militants in the Niger Delta region, means of enhancing development-induced alliance between the government and the people in the oil-producing commodities could be realized. Such an alliance would defy initial threat status posed against the survival of Nigerian State. The subdue belligerent and eventual serenity would institute an environment for government to properly embark on capacity building policies and projects in the region, boost the revenue of the national government and eventually, have multiplier effects on international oil production and supply (Paul-Sewa and Adio, 2010:7).

The amnesty granted by President Yar'Adua has elicited different reactions. While some think amnesty has been a success, others think it has not succeeded at all. We will examine these two positions briefly. There are many positions on the success of the amnesty offer (Uduaghan, 2009; Jega, 2009; Ofehe, 2009).   In explaining the goals of the programme within the context of challenges faced by the people of Niger Delta, Late President Yar'Adua noted that:

> 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. I want to say that the amnesty is not an end in itself but a means to an end. It is a means to peacefully and lovingly with brotherly understanding bring to an end all insurrection and misunderstanding between brothers. It is a means to bringing stable peace and security to the Niger Delta region. It is a means of making the two of us work together to ensure that our youths do not take up arms again (Ogbuenyi, 2009:20).

The essence of amnesty is to bridge the unfriendly lacuna between the government and the people clamouring for environmental, political and cultural freedom. It intends to ensure that youths in the regions have meaningful lives through the programme, be trained and help in businesses, and those that have a flare for education attain that to his/her utmost level, which is a reversal of expectation and a significant change in strategy of resorting to violence and repression with maximum ferocity– an unmistakable footprint of blood, tear and sorrow (Amula, 2009:64). Thus, it trails towards youth capacity building through working together with the people by knowing their problems and laying down arms against the state. This was later followed by rehabilitation and re-integration.

According to Egwemi (2010: 3-4), whatever the reactions, amnesty has elicited two thing(s) that are clear. First, it is an unprecedented action in the history of political engineering in Nigeria. The amnesty offers was a masterstroke in terms of giving Niger Deltans a sense of belonging in the Nigerian project. As a corollary, amnesty has helped to advance the course of national integration and the forging of unity in the country.

Secondly, and as a fall out of the first, there has been a high level of peace and stability in the Niger Delta region in particular and Nigeria in general. The peace and stability in the area have in turn given way to more profitable oil exploration activities in the area, which has impacted positively on Nigeria's revenue profile. This in turn, has enhanced development efforts in the area.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

One argument that has dominated the literature on amnesty is the question of legitimacy (Slye, 2002; Heine, 2007; Sadat, 2007; Scharf, 2007; Laplante, 2012). Amnesty has long been a political tool used by governments for both good and bad purposes. It is a tractable political tool that lends itself to wide-ranging purposes, some of which are morally right and some that are self-serving. Slye (2002:174) argues further that amnesties "have been granted at times of great social stability and at times of great social unrest". We may therefore scrutinize amnesties from the basis of their intentions or morality. However, the most scrutiny of amnesty comes from the domain of law, especially international law.

From the perspective of fundamental human rights of victims, amnesties are criticized on the grounds that they violate five crucial principles- right to justice, right to truth, right to judicial protection, right to reparations, and, right to access to Court (Slye, 2002: 191). Amnesties are also viewed as providing short-lived social stability, and are inimical to the long-term enjoyment of a stable democracy, human rights and rule of law. Sadat (2007:240) describes

amnesties as having "little moral or persuasive force" and Slye (2002:200), using the examples of the amnesties given by the governments of Argentina and Chile, posits that "short-term amnesty eventually gives way to individual accountability". Amnesties, as can be deduced, are not undesirable. They can gain enhanced legitimacy if they fulfil certain conditions: strive for accountability and truth, and guarantee reparations and participation.

Also, despite the Amnesty Programme, it is also worrisome that pipeline attacks (oil theft) is on the increase and about 20 per cent (400,000 barrels per day) of the country's fuel production is lost to oil thefts (Reuters, as cited by Jamestown Foundation, 2013). The Nigerian government loses about $7 billion yearly to oil pipeline attacks, and loses a further $5 billion to the repair of the pipelines (Jamestown Foundation, 2013).

The Niger Delta crises cannot be resolved outside the Nigerian crises. These include the peoples feeling of injustice, domination, marginalization and alienation. That is, the restiveness in the Niger Delta is a true reflection of inadequacies in the pitfalls of the Nigerian federation.

The efforts of then PDP led federal government since 1999 to 2015 to address grievances of the Niger Delta did not yield any fruit mainly because it focused on the manifestations, but not the root cause of the crisis. Any effort aimed at addressing the crisis must start with a critical assessment of the environment, economy and social lives of the people in order to ascertain the extent and enormity of the situation in the region.

The attitude of the Nigerian state is that, activities of militant groups disturb the peace of the region, which paralyzes oil production activities, which in turn affect the revenue and economy of the state. So, the concern of the state is to checkmate the activities of the militants to pave the way for oil multinationals to carryout their oil prospecting and exploitation activities unhindered. So long as this is the case, the state is satisfied (Idoko, 2008: 39).

Thus, the Nigerian state is neither concerned about the prospects of good life for the people of the Niger Delta nor is the state really interested in the enduring peace and development of the region. The illegal trading in crude bunkered by an assortment of armed groups forming alliances with state officials and agents has guaranteed spoils that oil the conflict and fuel violence (Idoko, 2008: 39).

Curiously, the various actors, leaders and organizations involved are more concerned with the wealth created by conflict-resolution and peace-building measures and exercises rather than contributing to the national or international blue-print or architecture of peace for the region (Okocha, 2008: 37).

Any kin observer of the events in the Niger Delta will come to the disturbing conclusion that the elite of the region have become hostage to their greed, and rendered the rest of the country captives to violence and perpetual state of lawlessness. Niger Delta people are tired of the unrests but some leaders of the region are working hard at settling personal scores that they are unaware of the presence of death. The killings have turned the region to a market of graves and no one is more culpable than the region's leaders whose desire to draw blood knows no bounds (Bello-Barkindo, 2008: 80).

In the interim, this descent to chaos and anarchy may only be stopped by addressing not only the injustices of the past but also, by originating a strategic law-backed mechanism that ensures the region benefits to a large extent from the revenue that accrues from resources found therein (Effa, 2007:14).

Addressing the problem of human security in the Niger Delta region requires measure to promote human development through investment in human capital, access to reliable employment, education and social services. Investment in human capital forms the bedrock of any society without which development, peace and security will be a mirage.

Good governance is another essential factor needed to address the protracted crisis in the Niger Delta region. The recent pronouncement of the Nigerian Senate that the leaders/governors of the Niger Delta are corrupt and insincere is an attestation to that fact. This is coming against the backdrop of the fact that the region enjoyed an unimaginable increase in its revenue allocation in the last eight years. Ironically, this appears to have translated to very significant changes in the socio-economic and welfare status of a few.

Therefore, combining efforts to attack poverty while enhancing the environment and economic development required, first and foremost, the political will to eradicate poverty and corruption, sound and intelligent leadership and good planning (Adeyemo, 2003:144).

The federal government, in collaboration with major oil companies, should establish a comprehensive programme for developing the Niger Delta. The launching of a Master Plan for the region is a welcome development. That this is happening at all is a belated admission that the NDDC Scheme is incapable of genuinely addressing the peculiar needs of the region. Also, the MNCS operating in the area should be compelled to give priority to the indigenes in the areas of employment, award of contracts and investment in human capital development. These companies should also live up to their social responsibilities to their host communities.

The federal government should on its part involve the people of the region in the decision making process on issues that concern their welfare, and grant them adequate representation.

This is because the politics of exclusion always give rise to militant groups. This is one of the known grievances of MEND, Egbesu Boys, etc.

There should also be a constitutional amendment that will take into consideration the peculiar problems of the Niger Delta and to increase the revenue accruable to them as the region that generates over 80 percent of revenue for the nation. Indeed, as far back as 1957, the Niger Delta through the Willink minority Commission had demanded and pleaded to the colonial powers to recognize the danger's peculiar to their environment. Nothing was actually done to assuage those legitimate concerns of the people and the region continued to degenerate even with the subsequent discovery of oil in the same Delta swamps.

Furthermore, the federal government should discard the military solution to the crisis as this has not achieved the desired peace in the region. Rather, the Navy should be well equipped to enable them effectively monitor and patrol oil installations to check the activities of vandals and criminals who utilize the Creek and water ways to steal the nation's crude oil.

The youths of the Niger Delta should be encouraged to lay down their arms and realize that sustainable peace and development could only be achieved through dialogue and compromise. To this end, the "Triple E" formular recommended by the Bayelsa State Governor should be embraced. According to him "we need to engage the militants, we need to empower them, and we need to talk to them because they are human being".

Finally, the establishment of a true federal system will go a long way towards addressing the perceived injustice, marginalization and alienation of the region and its people. This can only be achieved through the restructuring of the Nigerian State to make it democratic, just and responsive to the needs and aspiration of the Nigerian people. Thus, by restructuring and transforming the state through a genuine process of decentralization and democratization, it will become more accountable, responsive, and transparent and subject to the rule of law.

In other words, there should be progressive movement toward fiscal autonomy. Above all, the President should demonstrate that he is really committed to developing other mineral resources by supporting an upward review of derivation.

To achieve any meaningful result and a lasting solution that would bring about peace and stability in the Niger Delta region nay Nigeria, the Federal Government should perhaps adopt the view of the former Rivers State Governor, Rotimi Amaechi. As he puts it (2008: 8);

> We want to bring development to the grassroots, make people feel
> the benefit of democracy, the benefit of oil. We want to touch the
> lives of our People with good governance and effective service
> delivery... our work involves listening to people, their complaints,

need, ideas, grievances and factoring them in our policy making process.

Most importantly, the Niger Deltans, to borrow Bello-Barkindo's words, 'would have to liberate their minds socially and politically to give the region some essence'. This process of change will take time and it requires the efforts and contributions of everyone.

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