

CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND SECURITY BEYOND THE AMNESTY IN THE NIGER DELTA, NIGERIA

Crosdel O. Emedo

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Benin, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The amnesty programme embarked upon by late President Musa Yar'Adua in 2009, appears to have halted active conflict in the Niger Delta. Thus oil production has risen from 800,000 to about 2.3 million barrels daily. Consequently the state has not only flaunted the amnesty programme as its road map to peace in the Niger Delta but has concentrated all attention on it. This paper argues that despite the amnesty, sustainable peace remains elusive in the Niger Delta. The paper concludes that until and unless the factors conducting violent conflicts in the region; marginalisation, environmental despoliation, inequitable distribution of oil revenues and underdevelopment are addressed; the present peace in the region may not subsist for long.

Keywords: Sustainable peace, beyond amnesty, Niger Delta

INTRODUCTION

“I predict that a denouement of the riddle of the Niger delta will soon come. The agenda is being set at this trial. Whether the peaceful ways favoured will prevail depends on what the oppressor decides, what signals it sends out to the waiting public” – Saro Wiwa (1995)¹.

Nigeria's oil and gas basin, the Niger Delta, has been on the front burner of national and international discourse in recent years. The reason for this is not far-fetched. For the country's treasure trove, it has been a sordid tale of squalor, obtuse neglect and underdevelopment in the midst of its awesome wealth. Successive governments and the oil companies in the last five decades have made no attempts to ameliorate the huge environmental problems in the region, while only tokenistic gestures have been made to tackle the endemic poverty in the region.

Since the discovery of oil, the State has claimed “ownership” and “controlled” the resources. Worse still, very little is ploughed back into the region that bear the heavy environmental costs of oil production, and are impoverished by it. Only a paltry 0.000007% of the value of oil extracted has been spent by the oil companies on community assistance, while the State has spent less than 3% of total oil revenues on the region’s development (Rowell 1994). This contrasts sharply with what existed between 1946 and 1967 when the major ethnic groups were the main contributors to the nation’s wealth. Then revenue allocation to the regions (now states) was on the average 65%, as the principle of derivation was prioritised by all erstwhile revenue commissions. By 1967 however, derivation was de-emphasised in favour of population and landmass, areas of serious deficit in the Niger Delta. This conveniently coincided with the ascendancy of oil as the pivot of the economy. Thus, oil in five decades has brought only abject poverty, environmental degradation, and diseases; (HIV/AIDS) (Udonwa *et al*, 2004), hypertension and phobias (Akpofure *et al*, 2000) and deaths to the Niger Delta. The huge contrast between the region’s vast wealth and the pervasive poverty, decaying infrastructure and troubled environment has been variously described as “*the paradox of plenty*” (Karl 1997), “*blood and oil*” (Anderson 2001), “*where vultures feast*” (Okonta and Douglas 2001), “*the oil of poverty*” (ANEIJ 2004), “*oil on troubled water*” (Kemedi 2005), “*the antinomies of wealth*” (Ibeanu & Ike 2006), “*the burden of oil*” (Courson 2007), “*the resource curse*” (Ross 2003) and “*Dutch dieses*” (Sai-i-Martin and Subramanian 2003). Going by the available social and economic indicators compared to the crude oil and gas revenues taken out of the region these descriptions are largely justified.

The state, rebuffed attempts by the people to draw attention to their plight and set-up convoluted security architectures to repress them. Thus, Ogoniland was subjected to the worst form of repression by a military task force that climaxed with the killing of Saro-Wiwa for daring to protest albeit peacefully. However, Saro-Wiwa’s death changed the erstwhile “Gandhian” tactics to vitriolic violent conflicts in the region. As Saro-Wiwa predicted the state’s agenda in the region made resort to arms the only viable option. The result was such that by 2006 there were bewildering array of militant groups in the region with Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), as the arrow head. The activities of these groups turned the Niger Delta into an archetypal “zone of violence”; Keane (1996). Blood and oil flowed-side-by-side as oil production and revenues dwindled drastically. It was this scenario that forced President Musa Yar’Adua (2007-2010) to grant unconditional amnesty to Niger Delta militants on June 25, 2009. The amnesty proviso was that all militants should surrender all arms

and ammunition in their possession and sign the amnesty register within a 60-day window (August 6 to October 4, 2009).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The debate as to what constitute conflicts is far from settled but as Nicholson (1971), opined, a state of conflict exist where there is interaction between at least two individuals or groups whose objectives differ. Galtung, (1996) viewed conflict as a triangle with structure, attitudes, and behaviour as its vertices. The structure is the conflict situation, the parties, and the conflict of interest among them; attitudes refer to the inclination for the parties to see conflict from their own viewpoint, to identify with own side, diminishing concerns of others; while behaviour includes gestures and or communications, which may convey either a hostile or a conciliatory intent. Coser (1956:8), opines that “Conflict is a "struggle over values, claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the 'opposing' parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals". Several authors also share this view (Tilly 1969: 4, 45; Deng 1996: 220; Stagner 1997:8).

Conflict is a pervasive phenomenon in human relationships, and is seen by some as the ‘basic unit for understanding social existence’ (Nnoli 1998:3-5). Thus, for scholars, conflict is an inevitability in human relationships (Weeks 1992:ix; Fraiser and Hipel 1984:3; Burton 1987a:8, 1987b:137-138). Conflict is “an essential element in human relations... the means to change.... and the means by which some social values of welfare, security, justice and opportunities for personal development may be achieved” (Burton 1987b:138). Since societies are not engulfed in violence always, conflict may either be peaceful or violent. Violence is "harm perpetrated on persons or property ranging from restriction of movement, torture and death (persons), and from simple damage to total expropriation or destruction" (Girvetz 1974:185). A conflict is violent, when inevitably the use of force or arms is applied in the resolution of differences (Francis 2006:20). But why do conflicts turn violent? Conflict turns violent as psychologists have noted when the anger and or worries that give rise to frustration (the source of conflict) are not resolved (Dollard *et al*, 1939). Similarly, avoidance or denial of conflict make conflicts violent, as the ignored group seeks to redress the issue at contention (Albert 1999; Francis 2006).

Conflicts in most Third World societies have been blamed on myriads of factors such as greed (Collier 1999, Collier and Hoefler 2000; Mwanasali 2000); economic deprivation and social disorganisation (Ikporukpo 2003); grievance (Ikelegbe 2006); frustration and aggression (Goor *et al.* 1996; Emuedo *et al.*, 2007), conflicting interpretations of rights and responsibilities due to values difference (Olokesusi 1996); exploitation and domination (Anele 1999); and the failure of social contract (Murshed and Jadjoedin 2008). Though the Niger Delta conflict appears to capture most of these perspectives, greed appears to be of least relevance to the conflict. The basic claim of the greed theorists appears not supported by empirical realities in the region. The Niger Delta people have only asked for constitutional reforms within the Nigerian federation and not separate statehood. Also, the conflict is an expression of long exclusion and alienation by which the region came to suffer all the social and environmental harms of oil activities, while receiving pittance of oil revenues. It is from this contradiction of oil without wealth that the conflict has drawn sustenance. Therefore, insurgency in the region appears not to lay credence to predation theory as proposed by greed theorists. In this view, insurgency is less about grievance than greed and rebellion is little more than organised crime.

Therefore, to see the Niger Delta conflict as a product of crime is to misconstrue its political and historical origins. Besides, the earliest militias were formed as political thugs to coerce and deliver votes in the shady and violent 2003 elections. Therefore, violence got started through support (finance and arms) from politicians. Thus, the idea of an impermeable membrane dichotomising two discrete entities; government and rebels is porous. Also, vast caches of arms used by the militias were acquired from the military. In addition, oil bunkering engaged in by the militias to finance their struggle, is organised through a vast syndicate linking high ranking persons; military, politicians, the security apparatuses, and the JTF. Indeed, the escalation of the conflict by the JTF in 2009 resulted from disagreement over sharing of oil bunkering money (Alike 2009; Obende 2009). Thus, the Nigerian state in its various expressions and the militias are both oppositional and organically self sustaining (Watts, 2008).

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTING CONFLICT IN THE NIGER DELTA

In terms of both material and human resources, the Niger Delta is one of the most blessed deltas in the world. The region is the bedrock of the country's oil resources that has sustained the nation's economy for decades. However, oil activities have caused severe environmental problems; surface and ground

water contamination from blanket dumping of drilling wastes, drill cutting and used water; soil contamination by oil spills; deforestation and soil degradation from gas flares. These have resulted in host of negative effects on agricultural practices, farming and fishing, with severe ramifications for the over 75% of the people that depend on the environment for livelihoods (CASS 2003; Omoweh 2005; Onakuse and Eamon 2007). Agricultural practices are critical for poverty reduction (Schultz 1964; Haggblade *et al.*, 2007) but these have been severely stifled in the Niger Delta. The severe negative impacts of oil activities in the Niger Delta may be gleaned from the fact that 80% of a survey of 150 respondents identified oil pollution (53%) and gas flaring (47%) respectively as the two main environmental problems in the Niger Delta (Emuedo, 2010). This may not be unconnected with their severe negative impacts on land degradation with concomitant effects on livelihoods especially farming (crop yields) and fishing (fish stocks). The result of the survey appears to be in tandem with the reality in the Niger Delta.

Reports show that about 56.6 million cubic metres of natural gas is flared daily (Gerth and Labaton 2004), which is about 17.2 billion cubic metres of gas annually and about 16% of the world's gas reserve (GGFR 2002). This level of gas flaring is equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the power consumption of the African continent (GGFR 2002) and can serve the cooking needs of 320 million people. These flares constitute the largest single source of global warming (Hunt 2000). Over 74% of gas is flared in the Niger Delta compared to 8% in Canada, 5% in America, 20% in Saudi Arabia and 19% in Algeria (ANS 2003, Watts 2001). This waste is estimated at \$2.5 billion annually (Osuoka and Roderick 2005), besides, at temperatures of about 1,300°C to 1,400°C, the flares heat-up everything and produce cocktail of toxins; CO₂, VOC, CO, NO_x and particulates and emits 34 million tons of CO₂ and 12 million tons of methane annually (Ake 1996; Shelby 1996:28; World Bank 1995, 2000/2001). As a result, the flares have negatively impacted on the environment; plant growth, yield and human health in the Niger Delta. Gas flaring is considered illegal in most countries; occurring only in circumstances, such as unplanned maintenance or emergency shutdowns (Hyne 1999). However, the oil companies in the Niger Delta flare gas with impunity despite the existence of plethora of regulations guiding the environment including the ban on gas flaring for over three decades.

General Yakubu Gowon in 1969 ordered the oil companies to end gas flaring by 1974 but following the failure of the oil companies to act, the date was shifted to 1979. The date was shifted to 1984 when the

oil companies again failed to act but a fine was imposed on defaulters. In addition, the oil companies were required to furnish the state with their detailed gas utilisation plans. By 1983, at the behest of the oil companies the date was again shifted to 2008 but on November 17, 2007, the 2008 date was at the behest of the oil companies again shifted to 2011. The oil companies may have failed to comply for two reasons. First, the fine (₦10/ 1000 cubic feet of gas flared) is cheaper to pay by the oil companies compared to the amount required to acquire gas re-injection plants, secondly, gas flare fines have become source of revenue for the state, which earned over \$800 million from flare fines in 2007 (CDD 2007), hence the state's lack of will to enforce the law. Thus, despite the plethora of laws degradation of the environment has continued unabated, with oil being nothing but a "curse" in the Niger Delta (Robinson *et al.*, 2006).

Besides gas flares oil pollution constitute another source of environmental despoliation in the Niger Delta. Decades of unabated and unmitigated oil spillages have resulted in massive pollution that have wrecked havoc on the environment. Some well-known oil spills include; Oshika oil spill in 1979 (5,000 to 10,000 b); Forcados terminal oil spill of July 6, 1979 (570,000 b); the Funiwa number 5 oil blow out of January 1, 1980 (400,000b); Oyakama oil spill of May 10, 1980 (about 30,000b.) and NNPC oil spills of November 2, 1982 (18,000b). The main source of oil pollution is spillage from aged pipelines, some fifty years old criss-crossing the Niger Delta landscape. Most of these pipelines lie on the surface or barely beneath, thus, exposing them easily to damage. This practice is at variance with practices and the manner the oil companies operate in other climes. Shell, for instance, commissioned 17 different environmental surveys before a single turf was cut during the construction of its pipeline from Stanlow in Cheshire to Moss Moran in Scotland. Detailed environmental impact assessment (EIA) covered every length of the (pipeline) route. In addition, elaborate measures were taken to avoid lasting disfigurement as the route was diverted in several places to accommodate environmental concerns (Greenpeace, 1994). In the Niger Delta, the oil companies besides laying pipelines on the surface, also, do not carry out EIAs before pipelines are laid.

Shell admitted to spilling 1,626,000 gallons of oil into the environment from 1982 - 1992 in 27 separate incidents but attributes most spills to sabotage. The Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), however stated that of the 2,676 spills recorded between 1976 and 1990, only 18% was due to sabotage, while equipment failure and corrosion accounted for 38% and 21% respectively. Recent

figures obtained from DPR showed that between 1976 and 2005, 3, 121, barrels of oil were spilled into the Niger Delta environment in about 9,107 incidents. Most of the oil spilled was lost to the environment (Table 1).

Table 1: Records of Oil Spills in Nigeria, 1976 – 2005

Year	No of Spills	Qty Spilled (Barrels)	Qty Recovered (Barrels)	Year	No of Spills	Qty Spilled (Barrels)	Qty Recovered (Barrels)
1976	128	26,157.00	7,135.00	1991	201	106,827.98	2,785.96
1977	104	32,879.00	1,703.01	1992	378	51,187.96	1,476.70
1978	154	489,294.00	391,445.00	1993	428	9,752.22	2,937.08
1979	157	694,170.00	63,481.20	1994	515	30,282.67	2,335.93
1980	241	600,511.00	42,416.83	1995	417	63,677.17	3,110.02
1981	238	42,722.00	5,470.20	1996	430	46,353.12	1,183.02
1982	252	42,841.00	2,171.40	1997	339	81,727.85	
1983	173	48,351.30	6,355.90	1998	399	99,885.35	
1984	151	40,209.00	1,644.80	1999	225	16,903.96	
1985	187	11,876.60	1,719.30	2000	637	84,071.91	
1986	155	12,905.00	552	2001	412	120,976.16	
1987	129	31,866.00	6,109.00	2002	446	241,617.55	
1988	208	9,172.00	1,955.00	2003	609	35,284.43	
1989	195	7,628.16	2,153.00	2004	543	17,104.00	
1990	160	14,940.82	2,092.55	2005	496	10,734.59	
				Total	9,107	3,121,909.80	550,232.90

Source: Egberongbe *et al.*, (2006).

Independent researchers have contended that the volume spills is much higher. According to Banfield (1998:30-31), 56m gallon of oil were spilled into farmlands and water bodies, while Dublin – Green *et al.*, (1998) stated that 2.8 million barrels were spilled into the environment in 5,334 incidents from 1976 – 1998. As Greenpeace, (1994) has stated, it is difficult to estimate the exact figure oil spills as many go unreported. A major problem associated with oil spill is that under the DPR guideline, spills are classified into categories; small, medium and large and it is only mandatory for the oil companies to report medium and large oil spills based on their own assessment. Even where an oil spill is reported, the oil companies often engage in buck passing to avoid payment of compensations, leading to undue delays before cleans ups. Clean ups are mostly tardy and limited thus, little oil is recovered, making pollution impacts more severe (Kemedi 2005). This constant pollution of the ecosystem has severely impacted on biodiversity, fish stock and marine lives in the region.

PROTESTS AND STATE MILITARISATION OF THE NIGER DELTA

Due to the politics of domination by the elite of the major ethnic groups and the region's peculiar topography, the Niger Delta people, pushed for special development attention in the period preceding the country's independence. In 1958, the Sir Henry Willink Commission that was set-up to address their fears described the region as "poor, backward, neglected" and recommended the establishment of a special Development Board for the rapid development of the region. The insurrection by Major Isaac Adaka Boro in 1966 showed that improvement eluded the region. Boro's 53-man Niger Delta Volunteer Services (NDVS), declared the Niger Delta People's Republic on February 23, 1966. The insurrection ended 12 days, later on March 6, 1966 (Tebekoami 1982). The state hounded relations, wives and associates of the insurgents, who were arrested, tortured and detained in its effort to crush the insurgency. Boro emerged from Odi creeks with his followers to save their relations and friends from suffering. They were tried for treason and sentenced to life imprisonment. The high handed reaction of the state to the insurgency gave the mindset of the state; teach the insurgents a lesson to stem future occurrence. Since then, the state's trademark response to protests in the Niger Delta has been viciousness. Thus, a peaceful protest by Umuechem community in 1990 at the gate of Shell flow station asking for electricity, water, schools and roads resulted in Shell's invitation of the security forces. The force on arrival killed 80 unarmed protesters, including the king who was killed in front of his palace and also burnt and looted over 350 houses. The state it appears is only concerned with unhindered flow of crude oil hence the only felt presence of the state in the Niger Delta is felt always only in the sound of jackboots and guns.

However, the paradigmatic case of protest in the Niger Delta is the Ken Saro-Wiwa led Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) that embarked on protests of passive resistance to draw attention to the harmful effects of oil activities in Ogoni land. In reaction, the state set up a task force that ensured the economic strangulation of Ogoni and the systematic torture and killings of people. The activities of the task force headed by a Major Okuntimo; who boasted of knowing over 120 ways of killing a man, climaxed with the hanging of Saro-Wiwa in 1995. The killing of Saro-Wiwa sparked a wave of protest that culminated in the "Egbesu wars"; the 1997 co-ordinated protest by 10,000 youths at Aleibiri against Shell; and the 1998 Kaiama Declaration, marking a period of deepening disorder in the Niger Delta. The state responded by upping the ante of repression in the region. This led to the wanton destruction of Odi town by soldiers, killing 2483 persons (1460 men and 1023 women) in 1999

on the orders of the then newly, elected President Olusegun Obasanjo. Other cases of vicious state repression abound in the Niger Delta (see Table 2). However, repression escalated more violence in the region as activism hitherto localised to Ogoni, spread region-wide (Osaghae 1995). Between 1990 and 1993 many communities in the region became engulfed in anti oil protests; Ogbia 1992, Igbide 1992, Diebu 1992, Uzere 1992, Burutu and Bomadi 1992 and Irri 1993 (Naanen 1995; Welch, 1995). Thus the spate of draconian state repressions across the Niger Delta led to the transformation of the conflict.

Table 2: Militarisation of the Niger Delta 1990 - 2006

Year	Place	Operating Force	Action Carried Out
1990	Umuechem	Security forces	Killed 80 unarmed demonstrators destroyed 395 houses
1993	Choba	Mobile police	Razed houses and destroyed properties
1999	Odi	Army	The entire community completely destroyed as only one house remained standing after the attack. 2,483 persons killed
January 2004	Uwheru	Joint Task Force	20 persons Killed and 11 houses burnt down
July 2004	Egbema	Joint Task Force	A total of 13 communities destroyed, over 500 buildings razed and over 200 persons, mostly women and children, feared dead
August 2004	Olugbobiri and Ikebiri	State security forces	About 16 peaceful and unarmed persons killed
October 2005	Odioma	Joint Military Task Force	Over 50 persons, mostly women and children killed
February 2006	Gbaramatu	Joint Task Force	15 women and children killed in their homes
October 2006	Afiesere	Police	Over 80 houses burnt and 20 persons killed

Source: Compiled by author

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND DECLARATION OF AMNESTY

The situation in the Niger Delta was such that by December 2005, there was a slide into full anarchy. Professor Wole Soyinka, expressed fears about the unity of the country when he said "I consider that Nigeria is on the verge, on the brink of a massive implosion that will make what's happening in the Sudan child's play. I know that everybody is preparing for the contingency of breaking up..." (Reuters Alert, July 8, 2004). Soon, the international community got sucked into the vortex of the conflicts. In early 2006, the state in furtherance of its vicious repression in the Niger Delta aeri ally bombarded five communities in Gbaramatu Kingdom; Okerenkoko, Seigbene, Perezouweikoregbene, Seitorububor and Ukpogbene with helicopter gunships, killing 15 women and children in their homes. According to the state the cause of the attack was to sink oil bunkering badges; the real reason however, was to deter support for militants in the area. This action changed the face of the Niger Delta

conflict and escalated it to dangerous levels. It marked the first case of kidnapping (9 foreign oil workers) and the dramatic emergence of a well organised group of masked insurgents Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) that claimed responsibility for the kidnapping.

MEND threatened violent attacks on any oil company that failed to vacate the Niger Delta by February 12 2006, as its goal was to drastically cut Nigeria's oil production and they wasted no time in achieving it. MEND achieved this feat by "Columbianisation" of the Niger Delta; taking of foreign oil workers as hostages to cripple oil activities or as human shield in communities targeted for reprisal attacks by security forces and subversion of oil facilities; blow up of pipelines, flow stations and installations. The indices of MEND's exploit include; remotely detonated car bombs (Warri and Port Harcourt), highly sophisticated arms, abduction of over 300 foreign hostages in 15 months and abduction of about 1,000 Nigerian workers and endemic attacks on offshore and onshore facilities (see Table 3). By May, 2008, Angola (900,000 bpd) overtook Nigeria (2.4 million bpd) as Africa's leading oil producer. The conflict was damaging: Warri and Kaduna refineries were crippled due to lack of crude oil supply, while the two in Port Harcourt barely operated at about 20% capacity. Nigeria has since then relied on almost 100% importation of refined petroleum products for domestic consumption, as local refining capacity was acutely compromised. Thus, with good reason the MEND spokesperson Jomo Gbomo boasted in March 2007 that he has 'the oil industry by the balls' (*Economist*, 17 March 2007:52). In an attestation to the above fact, the MEND leader who was then paying his fighter a minimum monthly salary of ₦50, 000 (five times the national minimum wage), sent a big bullet and a bottle of brownish water to President Yar'Adua, through Senator Brigidi². The bullet represented violence and the polluted water deprivations and sorrows occasioned by crude oil activities in the Niger Delta.

The effect of the confrontation on the economy was enormous. The oil industry lost 117 working days, while Shell alone lost about 11 million barrels of crude oil. Attacks on oil facilities and installations cost the Nigerian state about \$160 million daily, roughly \$4.4 billion annually in damages and lost revenue (Watts 2007). This cost further went up after the attack on Bonga fields on June 19, 2008, leading to its shut down by Shell. The attack on Bonga, which is 200 nautical miles offshore, forced then President Obasanjo to order the military in mid-2006, to adopt a "force for force" policy in the Niger Delta in a vain effort to gain control of the creeks. In pursuance of that order, the Nigerian navy in early 2007, embarked upon its biggest sea manoeuvre in over two decades deploying 13 warships, 4

helicopters and 4 boats to the Bight of Bonny to test its operational capability. However, May 2007, also witnessed the largest monthly tally of attacks since MEND emerged in the scene (BRS 2007). The emergence of MEND in the Niger Delta mark something of a watershed but it should be noted that it arose on the back of a long arc of deepening violence and protest across the region, most especially since the late 1990s.

Table 3: Major Attacks on Oil Infrastructure and Kidnapping in the Niger Delta 2006 - 2007

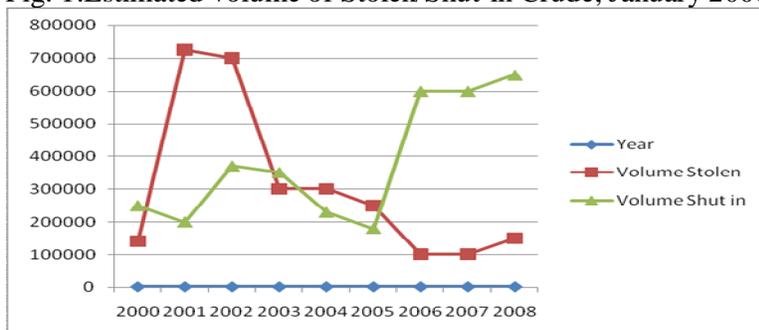
S/No	Date	Type of Attack	Company Attacked	Outcome
1	10-01-06	Kidnapping of 4 oil Staff and blew up an oil pipeline	Shell offshore E. A oilfield	All hostages freed on January 30 but with threats of new wave of attacks.
2	13-02-06	9 oil workers abducted during attack on a US oil services company barge. Crude oil pipeline and a gas pipeline blow up. Forcados loading platform bombed.	Willbros	Suspension of export from the 380,000 bpd facility Shell shut 115,000 bpd E. A. platform as precaution. March 1, 2006 6 of the hostages abducted February 18 release; 1 American, 2 Egyptians, 2 Thais, 1 Filipino 2 Americans and 1 Briton
3	10-3-06	An oil executive killed in port Harcourt	Baker Hughes	
4	18-03-06	Militants blow up oil pipeline	Agip	Shut down of 75,000 bpd facility
5	11-05-06	Kidnap of 3 oil workers	- Saipem	
6	02-06-06	- 6 Britons 1 Canadian and an American kidnapped from Bulford Dolphin oil rig.	Fred Olsen Energy; oilfiled services	Hostages released two days later
7	07-06-06	Militants attack a natural gas facility in the Niger Delta, 6 Soldiers killed and 5 South Koreans kidnap	Shell	
8	20-06-06	2 Filipinos Kidnap in Port Harcourt	Beaufort international	Freed 5 days later
9	06-07-06	Dutch oil worker Michael Los, abducted in Bayelsa State.		Released 4 days later
10	25-07-06	Flow station attack and 24 oil workers taken hostage	Agip	Hostages released and flow station abandoned July 31 after pay off by government
11	03-08-06	German oil worker Guido Schiffarth 62, abducted from car in Port Harcourt by men in army uniform.	Bilfinger and Berger	Released on 19-08-06
12	04-08-06	3 Filipino oil workers abducted from a bus near Port Harcourt		10 days later, they were released.
13	07-08-06	2 Norwegians and 2 Ukrainian oil workers kidnapped		Released on 15-08-06
14	10-08-06	A Belgain and a Moroccan abducted in Port Harcourt		Both released on 14-08-06
15	13-08-06	1 American abducted, later same day, 5 oil workers (2Britons, 1German, 1 Irish and a pole) abducted from a night club in port Harcourt		
16	16-08-06	A Lebanese kidnapped in Port Harcourt		

17	24-08-06	An Italian oil worker is kidnapped by gunmen in Port Harcourt.		Released on 29-08-06
18	02-10-06	25 Nigerian oil workers abducted from boats carrying supplies to shell facilities in the CawThorne channel	Shell	Released on 04-10-06
19	03-10-06	7 oil worker (4 Britons, 1 Indonesian, 1 Malaysian and 1 Romanian) abducted from an estate for expatriate contractors		All of them released on 21-10-06.
20	02-11-06	A Briton and an American abducted from a survey ship in Bayelsa state.	Petroleum Geo-services (PGS)	Released on 07- 11-06
21	22-11-06	A British oil worker, killed in an attempt by soldiers to free 7 hostages abducted by militants earlier, same day.		
22	07-12-06	3 Italians and 1 Lebanese abducted from a residential facility by gunmen		
23	14-12-06	5 people abducted from a logistics base in Nun river, Bayelsa state.	Shell	
24	16-12-06	2 car bombs explode in Port Harcourt in an oil company and oil company residential compound. No casualties	Agip Shell	
25	21-12-06	3 persons killed at the Obigi filed facility, Rivers state.	Total	
26	05-01-07	5 Chinese telecom workers abducted. A car bomb planted in an oil company residential compound in Port Harcourt	Shell	Shell evacuates Staff from Compounds in Port Harcourt, Bonny Island and Warri. 5 Chinese telecom workers freed on January 18 2007. An Italian is also released, 3 foreign hostages remain in captivity.
27	10-01-07	Gunmen attacked a base in Bayelsa state kidnapping a South Korean and a Nigerian oil worker	Daewoo Engineering & construction	Released on 12-01-07
28	16-01-07	3 people including a Dutch oil worker killed during an attack on a boat sailing to the Bonny export terminal.	Hyundai	
29	20-01-07	A cargo ship seized on its way to Warri Port and all 24 Filipino crew members abducted.	German shipping line Baco liner	Released on 13-02-07.
30	23-01-07	An American and British engineer, abducted, on their way to work in Port Harcourt		
31	25-01-07	9 Chinese staff of China National Petroleum company abducted.	Shell	Released on 04-02-07
32	06-02-07	A Filipino oil worker abducted on Port Harcourt- Owerri road.		
33	07-02-07	A Filipino woman abducted in Port Harcourt. Also abducted same day, is a French oil worker, Gerard Laporal	Total oil Co.	
34	17-02-07	4 Nigerian missionaries abducted from their home in Port Harcourt.	church of Jesus Christ of latter day saints	
35	18-02-07	3 Croatian oil workers abducted in Port Harcourt	Hydro dive Nigeria	

Source: Compiled by author from various sources; Bergen Risk Solution, 2006, 2007, 2008, ICG, 2006 and Nigerian Newspapers, Vanguard, This Day and Guardian

Violence provides a veritable hue for criminal activities and the Niger Delta was no exception. This is logical because the region had spawned a confusing array of militias, many of which mix ideological aims with criminal enterprises; kidnapping of oil workers and the illegal trade in oil (bunkering). Thus, from 2000 oil bunkering activities increased vastly in the Niger Delta with the intensification of youth militancy but reduced drastically by 2006 when MEND appeared on the scene. These exploits endeared MEND to over 76% of the people of the Niger Delta as against 11% that expressed negative views (Emuedo, 2010). The estimated volume of crude oil stolen or shut in from January, 2000 - September, 2007 is shown in Figure 1.

Fig. 1: Estimated volume of Stolen/Shut-in Crude, January 2000–September 2008



Source: Created by author based on data obtained from Coventry Cathedral, (2009:159); Peace and Security Secretariat, (2006:25), Stolen crude.com (2010)

POST AMNESTY AND SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN THE NIGER DELTA

Agitations in the Niger Delta though reoccurring have been premised on issues vital for the enhancement of the region. During the colonial era, issues of marginalisation underlie the agitations. The Willink’s Commission (1958) affirmed this when it described the region as “poor, backward, neglected”. That the same issues underlie Isaac Boro’s 12-day revolt in 1966, almost a decade later shows the seriousness of the state’s response to the plight of the region. By the 1990s these ossified issues were joined by issues of livelihoods and exploitation. The pervasive perception in the region is that the state through the instrumentality of the Land Use Act and the Petroleum Act divested them of their lands, accruable incomes and advantages thereof. Also, the environment has been exposed to unmitigated pollution and degradation by the oil companies (Obi 2008). The resultant frustration from the state’s aversion to improve the region and the oil companies’ failure to exhibit best practices in their operations gave vent to the bouts of violent agitations against both parties. The state’s draconian and vicious response to the agitations escalated and fuelled further violent conflicts that forced the state

to declare the amnesty. The amnesty has no doubt brought “relative peace” to the Niger Delta, which is reflected in the volume of daily production of oil that stands presently at about 2.3 million barrels. As a result the state seems to have forgotten the genealogy and root cause of the conflict. For instance, the state has failed to implement other core aspects of the 2008 Ledum Mitee’s chaired Presidential Technical Committee. This includes increase of derivable revenue from its present 13% to 25% and the restructuring of the federal structure for greater autonomy for the federating units. Indeed the state is yet to release a white paper on the report.

The flaunting of the amnesty as the panacea to sustainable peace in the Niger Delta has invoked unease as this optimism appears not altruistic. One such source of apprehension is the perception that the militants may not have ceded their full arsenal. During the arms buy back deal by the Rivers state government in 2004, Asari Dokubo ceded 2,377 G3 rifles, 611 AK 47s, 47 GPMGs and two rocket launchers. However, Dokubo only ceded weapons unfit for fighting and then used the funds to acquire modern weaponry (see Dokubo interview, 2007). This unease is given fillip by the fact that over a year into the amnesty John Togo was able to form a group that routinely blew up pipelines for over four months and it took several combined air, land and sea attack by the JTF before he was subdued. Presently, over 16,336 out of the 26,358 militants granted amnesty have been sent to undergo one form of training in and outside the country but, jobs are not available for them presently. This is because the Niger Delta master Plan regarded as the pivot of infrastructural development and job creation in the region has remained in the cooler. The question is what will the ex-militant do when the current monthly ₦65,000 stipend is stopped? Considering the ease with which Togo was able to mobilise and armed men even during the period of amnesty, your guess is as good as mine.

Another issue is that as part of the amnesty programme the Joint Task Force (JTF) was to be withdrawn to the barracks, however, almost two years after, the JTF remained deployed for active operations in the region. The state has thus, failed to restore confidence to both the citizenry and militants in the region. This has fuelled speculations in the region that the amnesty was declared for altruistic reasons. The common opinion is that the amnesty is only a conduit for the siphon of funds and a time buying device by state officials. In 2010 for instance, 80% of the Amnesty Committee’s budget was for consultancy, while only 20% was for the beneficiaries (*The Guardian* November 14, 2010). Out of the 20%, the Committee spent ₦175 million on lunch and declared over ₦600 million missing (*Saturday*

Punch April 17, 2010). This turning of the amnesty to mere conduit for making money is not surprising because obsession with power makes many politicians to do “everything possible” to acquire and hold on to public positions which are rather lucrative due to sweeping corruption (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Peel 2005).

CONCLUSION

We have argued that the amnesty programme was foisted on the state due to the huge reduction of crude oil production and the drastic constriction of states revenue by the Niger Delta conflicts. In spite of misgivings, the amnesty was considered a good idea as it was expected to provide an environment conducive for the state to embark on massive infrastructural development of the region. More so, when security challenges have been used as excuse by the state for the region’s lack of development; it seems two years on however, that the amnesty is merely a time buying device. The Niger Delta Master Plan on which huge sums of money was used to develop and all other programmes associated with the amnesty that were expected to commence immediately after the amnesty remained untouched.

In addition, the region’s militarisation continues, as withdrawal of the JTF to the barracks, as part of the amnesty programme to restore confidence in the region remained unimplemented. The reasoning in certain quarters is that the amnesty was only meant to buy time so that the military can consolidate its hold in the region, while the amnesty lasted. The focus of the state only on the amnesty without any attempt to address the underlying issues of the conflict seems to suggest that the state only respond to violence. This may be read as an invitation to those that have remained passive to carry arms. Beyond the amnesty, this could have grave implication for sustainable peace in the region and unity of the country.

NOTES

1. Ken Saro Wiwa’s, mitigation statement before he was sentenced to death with his compatriots on the floor of the Ibrahim Auta Military Tribunal October 31, 1995.
2. These gifts were given to Senator Brigidi, chairman of the Presidential Peace Committee on the Niger Delta for President Yar, Adua when he led his committee to visit the camp of MEND in company of journalist the mangrove groves of the Niger Delta on Thursday, November 29. The committee was inaugurated by the Vice-President, Dr Goodluck Jonathan in Port Harcourt, Rivers State on July 2, 2007.

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