

Public Policy Makers at the Crossroads: Interrogating Economic Motive of the Resurgence of Militancy in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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Abstract: - Despite efforts made by successive administrations in Nigeria to stop militancy in the Niger Delta region, the situation has continued to remain aggravated. It is a fact that various activities of militant groups have continued to create a state of general insecurity in the region, thereby posing a monumental threat to human and national security. The study therefore, investigated factors that had contributed to resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The methodology is anchored on descriptive and historical methods, while frustration-aggression theory and greed versus grievance theory were employed as theoretical frameworks of analysis. At first, the emergence and subsequent militant activities in the region were strictly motivated as a reaction to years of perceived marginalization perpetrated by the Federal Government of Nigeria. However, the recent proliferation of militia groups and its attendant criminal activities has been largely motivated by personal quest for economic enrichment, thereby posing a colossal threat to the general public including indigenes of the Niger Delta. Both the Federal Government of Nigeria and Multinational Oil companies should desist from adopting 'divide and rule' strategy as an option, and adequately tackle general infrastructural decay in the region. National Assembly should come up with a legislation that can strictly prosecute any political elite funding militancy or using militants for personal political or economic gains.

Key Words: Niger Delta, Economic Marginalization, Economic Enrichment, Resurgence of Militancy, insecurity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite efforts made by the Nigerian government through various policy actions to stop militancy in the Niger Delta region, the situation has continued to remain aggravated. Militancy in the region has posed a colossal threat to human and national security in Nigeria. It is obvious that various activities of militant groups have created a state of general insecurity in the region. They have engaged in kidnapping, pipeline vandalization, piracy, killings, etc. All the programmes and agencies established by the Nigerian government have not effectively and sustainably reduced militancy let alone of eradicating it in the oil producing states.

Several militia groups including Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer

Force (NDPVF), Niger Delta Strike Force (NDSF), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) etc. have emerged, thereby leading to proliferation of armed groups in the Niger Delta. These groups have continued to justify their actions as a reaction to injustice, deprivation, marginalization and exclusion meted to the people of Niger Delta by the successive Nigerian state. Methods of operation of the militants, which also include blowing/shutting down of oil installations and facilities, setting off of car bombs, and illegal oil bunkering have negatively impacted on Nigeria's economic growth and development. In the light of this, the study posed two questions to serve a guide: (i) Do inadequate political inclusion of Niger Delta people and ineffective management of human security challenges contribute to unabated militancy in the region? (ii) Does personal quest for economic enrichment engender proliferation of militant activities in the Niger Delta region?

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The task here is to provide conceptual definitions of various key concepts in the study. The purpose is to expand our understanding on their meanings and usefulness in the current study.

Militant Group/Militancy

According to Sutcliff (2012), the meaning of 'militancy', therefore, is not straightforward. They cannot be conceptualised within a binary framework of true or false, bandits/common criminals or freedom fighters. They are socially constructed within the narratives of the state, powerful elites and various other groups. This must be also noted that, for some 'militia', such activities can be an opportunity to make a living. As some members being recruited in 'militia' groups in the context of their desperation to survive (often indirectly paid by the state or other political sources), while others drift into 'militant' activities having become involved in oil theft, in order for their subsistence.

In the same vein, Okumagba (2009) opines that an ethnic militia can be described as youth organization formed for the struggle against deprivation and marginalization which have transformed into violent militant youth some of who,

have also changed their objectives from struggles for ethnic desires into criminal activities.

Marginalization

The concept marginalisation has been variously defined in various ways by different writers. Scholars have conceptualise it the way it suit their environment and the time of their writing. According to Oshewolo, (2011), there is often a proliferation in the semantisation of the concept in a deeply divided society like Nigeria where virtually every geo-political zone complains of one form of deprivation or the other. Sommers, Mehretu and Pigozzi, (1999) maintain that “socio-economic marginality is a condition of socio-spatial structure and process in which components of society and space in a territorial unit are observed to lag behind an expected level of performance in economic, political and social wellbeing compared with average condition in the territory as a whole.”

Human Security

Hajaig (2006) it is the security that focuses on the protection of the people as compared to an exclusive focus on the protection of the State. Thus, human security must be seen as complementing State security, enhance human rights and consolidate human development. The concept of human security (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2008) emphasizes the protection of individuals. It comprises everything that is ‘empowering’ for individuals: human rights, including economic social and cultural rights, access to education and health care, equal opportunities, good governance etc.

III. THEORETICAL EXPLICATION

The frustration-aggression theory largely implies that aggression is often a result of frustration. This theory was proposed by psychologists Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, and Sears in their 1939 book entitled: Frustration and Aggression. Frustration is the feeling of irritation and annoyance when something blocks you from achieving a goal or deprive you what you think that is your right. Aggression is a malicious behaviour or attitude towards someone or something, usually triggered by frustration. Gurr (1990) argues that, just as frustration leads to aggression, so does it drive collective violence/aggression. However, relative deprivation can lead to aggression depending on the expectation of the aggressive group(s), as Gurr argues that aggression occurs based on the degree of disparity between people’s expectations and what they get. The frustration of the Niger Delta had its origin particularly during military regimes in Nigeria. The return of Nigeria to democracy opened a floodgate for agitations.

Despite the usefulness of frustration-aggression theory, the greed versus grievance theory opposes a popular explanation that armed conflicts are caused by grievances resulting from ethnic and religious fractionalization, political repression and inequality (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002). The theory however offers an opposing explanation which

maintains that combatants are involved in armed conflicts for personal enrichment rather than the so-called grievances. Collier and Hoeffler (2002) argue that the viability of rebellion depends on availability of finance, which they need to buy weapons, maintain their armies and enrich themselves. The theory argues further that decision to embark on rebellion depends on opportunity determined by cost-benefit analysis. This suggests that militants are analyse the possible gains and losses. Hence, economic benefits are the motivating factors not actually that the (armed groups) militants are frustrated. For instance, pipeline vandalization, kidnapping and the demand for ransom etc. by the militants are not carried out favour the entire community or region, rather they are executed with the intention of enriching a group or group of persons (militants).

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This part of the work is to specifically discuss each of the independent variables in retrospect for it possible relationship to and effects on the dependent variables.

Political Exclusion and Human Security Challenges in the Niger Delta Region

Over the years the clamour for political inclusion of the people of Niger Delta in Nigerian political landscape has remained an issue of unending debates. There are accusations that the people have been political excluded or have not been given adequate opportunity to run elective positions in Nigeria due to certain inherent internal contradictions which have characterized the Nigerian politics. Particularly, Niger Delta region has often felt embittered due to the manner at which they have been systematically excluded in certain national issues. For instance, financial resources required to run elective offices are inadequate or lacking, hence the youths do not have the financial muscle to compete favourably with the elderly men and women who have the resources to carry out political campaigns, lobbying etc. Nigerian politics is very expensive that the Niger Delta youths have not developed the financially to be included. In this case, opportunities are not provided for them to occupy elective positions.

Political marginalization is in fact one of the major sources of anger among the oil minorities, and has it manifest in their inadequate representation in government. It is most acute and evident in the appointments into oil related Federal government parastatals (Adeyeri, 2012). Ordinarily, preference ought to be accorded indigenes of the oil communities in such appointments, but in utter disregard of the Federal principle that requires a Federal government to serve as a device by which the Federal qualities of the society are articulated and protected, major appointments are often monopolised by the three ethnic groups with the Hausa-Fulani claiming the lion share (Ovwasa, 1999). In most cases, Niger Delta minorities can only be heard by the Nigerian state when protests or agitations are deployed. Only in this case that oil minorities cannot receive what seems like fair treatment from the Nigerian State. For instance, the increase in the

derivation revenue allocation formula to the current 13% was possible as a result of agitation for resource control and revenue allocation by the region.

Since 1946, revenue derivation to the Niger Delta has been on reducing trend. In 1946, revenue derivation to the region was 100 percent. This was reduced by 50 percent based on Raisman Commission in the 1950s when the exploration of crude oil in commercial quantity kicked off. The General Yakubu Gowon military regime further reduced it to 25 percent following Ojetunji Aboyade Technical Committee on Revenue Allocation recommendation. The civilian regime of Alhaji Shehu Shagari further reduced it to 5 percent while General Muhammadu Buhari's military regime cut it to 1.5 percent; the worst so far between 1946 and 1985 when the Buhari military regime was in power. When the Babangida administration took over from Buhari through a countercoup in December 1985, it raised it from 1.5 percent to 3 percent, which was later raised to its present 13 percent (The News, March 6, 2006 in Ojo, 2015).

Bassey (2012) eloquently submitted that it is not, therefore, surprising that Akiri concludes that in 1965, the "Binns Commission, reading the collective mind of the oppressors, put an accent on equality of status and financial comparability as the dominant principle of revenue allocation". Further, even Obafemi Awolowo who astutely defended the principle of derivation in relation to the rights of the regions to "keep any wealth that accrues to it either by the sweat of its brow, or by cunning, or by the unaided bounty of nature", could not escape the inanity of propaganda double – lie when it came to the petroleum resources of the Niger Delta and helped shaped the Petroleum Decree (1969) and Petroleum Act (1969) that contradicts the grandiose postulations in his book "The Strategy and tactics of the People's Republic of Nigeria" (1961). During pre-oil era, the four commissions on revenue sharing formula – Phillipson Commissions of 1946 and 1951, the Chick Commission (1953) and Raismon Commission (1958) – took into consideration the peculiarities of the federating regions and plumbed for derivation as the best option for the country. But with the emergence of petroleum oil as the mainstay of the Nigerian economy in the mid-sixties, Nigerian leaders from the so-called three major ethnic groups (including Chief Awolowo) began to vociferate the oneness of the country, vigorously intoning and apotheosizing the oxymoronic conflation of "unity in diversity" (Guardian, September 30, in Bassey, 2008).

History has it that in various occasions those protesting against political exclusion and injustice are met with coercive apparatus of the state. For instance, in 1990, government repression of popular protests in Umuechem resulted in massive destruction of lives and property (Adeyeri, 2012). In July 1993 and April 1994, government and oil companies orchestrated violence against the Ogoni, while military

occupation of agitating oil communities and harassment of those protesting injustice in the areas became common from 1994 (Isumona, 2003). Other instances of violent repression by government include the Egbona crisis (1989 to 1991), Oburu violence (1989), Bonny Ijugba Square tragedy (1992), Egi-Obaji Mayhem (1994), Tai-Biara massacre reportedly sponsored by Wilbrose, a servicing company to Shell (1994) and the Ubima tragedy of 1995 (Ovwasa, 1999). Adeyeri further maintains that Abacha government was outstanding for its ruthless repression of resource control agitations. The regime responded to the Niger Delta crisis by stationing an "army of occupation" in the oil-producing communities to suppress protesting youths, individuals and groups through brutal force in order to maintain the free flow of oil for the Nigerian State. Sadly enough, the return of Nigeria to democracy was welcomed with the government deployment of the military in Odi community of Bayelsa state, which left many dead and properties destroyed.

In this regard, they are disenchanted and frustrated considering the fact that their region where the Nigerian economy is depended for survival and sustenance, has been intimidated and neglected by successive administrations in Nigeria. Nwogwugwu, Alao and Egwuonwu (2012), therefore maintain that the Niger delta region of Nigeria is reputed to be one of the most richly endowed Delta's in the world, contributes about 80% of Nigeria's national wealth. However, years of political and economic marginalization, environmental degradation, bad governance and policy inconsistency by the government, and the divide and rule policy of the oil companies led to emergence of militancy in the Niger delta in the early 2006. Ejibunu (2007) in the same position argues that "the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region in 1957 triggered a chain of events that has led to the political and economic marginalization of the inhabitants." Further, Nwogwugwu, Alao & Egwuonwu (2012) averred that:

While oil and natural gas deposits are in extraordinarily abundant in Niger Delta, Nigeria has failed to translate those natural resources to communal prosperity and infrastructural development in the appeasements of the regional residents. What we have seen in the last decades have been "massive environmental degradation and political and economic marginalization" The government violently and aggressively repressed the peaceful dissent exemplified by Ken Saro-Wiwa saga, thereby creating serious spurious flames of political and economic disaster for the country.

The militancy in the region can also have a correlation with the manner at which the Niger Delta has been under represented in the exalted leadership positions or political offices such as President, Vice President, Senate President, Deputy Senate President, Speaker, House of Representatives etc.

Senate Presidents and Speakers House of Representatives since Nigeria's Independence

Senate Presidents	Term	State	Speakers House of Reps	Term	State
Nnamdi Azikiwe	1960-1960	Anambra	Sir Frederic Metcalfe	1955-1959	Britain
Nwafor Orizu	1960-1966	Anambra	Jaja Wachuku	1959-1960	Abia
Joseph Wayas	1979-1983	Cross Rivers	Ibrahim Jalo Waziri	1960-1966	Gombe
Iyorchia Ayu	1992-1993	Benue	Edwin Ume-Ezeoke	1979-1983	Anambra
Ameh Ebute	1993-1993	Benue	Chaha Biam	1983-1983	Benue
Evan Enwerem	1999-1999	Imo	Salisu Buhari	1999-2000	Kano
Chuba Okadigbo	1999-2000	Anambra	Ghali Umar Na'Abba	2000-2003	Kano
Anyim Pius Anyim	2000-2003	Eboyi	Aminu Bello Masari	2003-2007	Kastina
Adolphus Wabara	2003-2005	Abia	Patricia Etteh	2007-2007	Osun
Ken Nnamani	2005-2007	Enugu	Dimeji Bankole	2007-2011	Ogun
David Mark	2007-2015	Benue	Aminu Waziri Tambuwal	2011 - 2015	Sokoto
Bukola Saraki	2015-date	Kwara	Yakubu Dogara	2015 (Incumbent)	Bauchi

Source: Author's Compilation

The table above indicates that from independence till date, Joseph Waya from Cross Rivers occupied the position of senate president and Niger Delta has not even for once produced Speaker, House of Representatives. This is a pointer to the fact that the region has been under represented as regards to occupying exalted positions as mentioned above. By implication, it can be adduced that other major ethnic groups have often used their influence to dominate the leadership of the 'Red and Green' chambers. From this, the people have the right to cry for inclusion since there is a

perceived exclusion that can also be interpreted as political marginalisation. The trend is not different when we look at the office of the president. From 1960 till date Niger Delta Region has not been adequately represented. Only in 2010 that Goodluck Jonathan emerged as the president of Nigeria as a result of the death of Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. A school of thought is of the opinion that Jonathan emerging as the president was accidental. The table below shows Heads of state in Nigeria and their different ethnic groups.

Table: Heads of State, their Ethnic Groups and Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria (1960 – 2010)

Date	Type of Govt.	Head of State/Government	Ethnic Group	Geo-political Zone	Duration
01 October 1960 – 15 January 1966	Civilian	Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (Governor-General/President)	Ibo	South (South-East)	5 years and 3½ months
01 October 1960 – 15 January 1966	Civilian	Alh. Tafawa Balewa (Prime Minister)	Hausa/Fulani	North (North-East)	5 years and 3½ months
15 January 1966 – 29 July 1966	Military	Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi	Ibo	South (South-East)	6½ months
29 July 1966 – 29 July 1975	Military	Gen. Yakubu Gowon	Angas	North (North-Central)	9 years
29 July 1975 – 13 February 1976	Military	Gen. Murtala Mohammed	Hausa/Fulani	North (North-West)	6 months
13 February 1976 – 01 October 1979	Military	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo	Yoruba	South (South-West)	3 years, 2wks and 3days
01 October 1979 – 31 December 1983	Civilian	Alh. Shehu Shagari	Hausa/Fulani	North (North-West)	4 years and 3 months
31 December 1983 – 27 August 1985	Military	Gen. Muhammadu Buhari	Hausa/Fulani	North (North-West)	1 year and 8 months
27 August 1985 – 26 August 1993	Military	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	Hausa/Fulani	North (North-Central)	8 years
26 August 1993-17 November 1993	Civilian	Chief Earnest Shonekan	Yoruba	South (South-West)	2 months and 3 weeks
17 November 1993 – 08 June 1998	Military	Gen. Sani Abacha	Kanuri	North (North-East)	4 years and 6 months and 3 weeks
09 June 1998 – 29 May 1999	Military	Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar	Nupe (Hausa/Fulani)	North (North-Central)	11 months and 3 weeks

29 May 1999 - 29 May 2007	Civilian	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	Yoruba	South (South-West)	8 years
29 May 2007 – 05 May 2010	Civilian	Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua	Hausa/Fulani	North (North-West)	3 years and 3 weeks and 4 days
06 May 2010 – 2015	Civilian	Dr. Jonathan Goodluck	Ijaw	South (South-South)	6 years
29 May 2015-Date	Civilian	Alh. Muhammadu Buhari	Hausa/Fulani	North (North-West)	----

Source: Gilbert, D. (2010).

Human Security Challenges in the Niger Delta Region

Despite over forty years of oil production in Nigeria and hundreds of billions of dollars of oil revenue (Oronto, Kemedt, Okonta & Watts, 2003), the inhabitants of the Niger delta region especially the riverine (creeks) remain in abject poverty. Poverty level is about 80% while unemployment level is about 70%. They live without even the most basic amenities such as pipe-borne water and electricity (Ibaba, 2005). Life in the region has remained unbearable for the people in the region. Inability of government to effectively and sustainably pay adequate attention to human security challenges confronting the region has remained an explanatory factor responsible for incessant armed attacks against any property and facility perceived to belong to the Nigerian state. Unending militancy in the region can be attributable to what the people termed as conspiracy by the government against the people. There is a relationship between unemployment and poverty; between poverty and hunger; and between hunger and crime. It has been said that a hungry man is an angry man. The situation in the region has provoked heated arguments from different quarters both in the region and beyond. For instance, as soon as Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, there were agitations upon agitations for 'resource control', '50% derivation revenue allocation formula', 'fiscal confederation' and so forth. Unfortunately, youths in the region decided to take laws into their own hands, as to secure their fate by force

Niger Delta region has remained the economic backbone of Nigeria since the discovery of oil in commercial quantity. Not less than 90% Nigeria's export earnings are derived from the region through crude oil. The mono economy of Nigeria has been sustained by the political elites of the country as a result of continuous oil production from the region. For more than forty years, Nigerian economy has depended on the Niger Delta for oil extraction. Before the discovery of crude oil in region, the indigenous people of the Niger Delta were mainly involved in farming and fishing as their main sources of living. However, oil exploration and its attendant negative effects contributed to environmental degradation in the region. As a result of this, lands and waters in the region do not actually have adequate economic values.

Testimonies from various quarters lend credence to the claim that environmental degradation occasioned by oil spillage has made life extremely difficult for the local people. The destruction of farmlands, fishponds and rivers had radically altered the economic life of the once self-reliant and productive region for the worst (Okonta & Oronto, 2001).

As bad it has appeared, Nigerian government has been accused of insensitivity, irresponsibility and irresponsiveness to the plight of the people in the region. Empirical evidence has shown that the level of poverty, hunger, unemployment, health and physical insecurity etc. is on the increase astronomically. Oil multinational corporations operation in the region have in connivance with the federal government of Nigeria claimed oblivious and unaffected of the degrading and demining conditions of the people. Enormous money had been derived from oil export but the area has been subjected to severe land degradation, socio-economic disorganisation, increasing poverty, misery, military occupation and bloody violence (Pegg, 1999). There has been a popular argument that the attendant frustration of the whole situation has culminated into aggression which has metamorphosed into unabated militancy and insecurity. The communities in the region have from all indications left neglected, hence anticipated development has eluded the region. Nwogwugwu, Alao and Egwuonwu (2012) therefore captured the situation thus:

The Niger Delta communities have remained grossly socio-economically underdeveloped and pauperised amidst the immense oil wealth owing to systematic dis-equilibrium in the production exchange relationship between the state, the Trans-national companies and the people. Oil extraction has impacted most disastrously on the socio-physical environment of the Niger Delta oil bearing communities massively threatening the fragile subsistent peasant economy and bio-diversity and hence their entire social livelihood and very survival. The oil producing communities have basically remained dependent and underdeveloped, persistently dis-empowered, socio-culturally marginalised and psychologically alienated.

Quest for Economic Enrichment and Militancy in the Niger Delta

Though years of political domination and suppression have provided an explanatory reason for militancy in the region. For instance, economic and political marginalisation as widely perceived by many were in the past ushered different explanations to the emergence of militant organisation such as Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). The activities of MEND in 2006 upward received both national and international attention. Then, many justified operation of the group as it was seen as a reaction to intimidation, oppression and alienation meted to

the Niger Delta people. In those days, frustration-aggression and relative deprivation theories were popular, as many agreed that militancy in the region was in reaction to frustration the people in the region experienced in the hand of Federal Government and Multinational Oil Companies. As Nwogwugwu et al. (2012) rightly put it that militancy in the Niger delta which was caused by the combined activities of the oil producing companies and the government has created a state of insecurity in the region which has affected the Nigerian economy. In those day, elite in the region were in support of the activities, hence sponsored. For instance, the face of between the federal government led by Chief Obasano and Alamieyeseigha, a former governor of Bayelsa, was as a result of the latter strong support for resource control and liberalization of the region from the oppressive grip of the government at the centre. People though that movement for liberalisation of Niger Delta has a vision and purpose. The situation in the region, in fact, attracted sympathies from various quarters, regions, groups etc. People were of the view that the colossal social and economic neglect the region had experienced was too much to bear. Environmental degradation, gas flaring, poverty, unemployment, destruction of ecosystem etc. were absolutely undesirably. The fact that MEND championed the cause of resource control, coupled with the heavy-handed militaristic approach adopted by the Nigerian state, prompted several Ijaw and other Niger Delta political elite to sympathise, support and identify with the goals and travails of the militia group (Gilbert, 2013).

However, the involvement of youths in militancy today appeared from all indications as a personal business or adventure, not necessarily to liberate the region or to achieve a common goal, for economic enrichment. This has regrettably changed the fight for liberation to fight for individuals economic benefits. In this regard, there has been proliferation militia groups who are today involved in criminal activities, not because they are frustrated, but due to greed and perpetual quest for accumulation of wealth. Today, both militants and non-militants are involved in kidnapping both the expatriate and indigenous people, the rich and the poor, politicians and non-politicians. From only the expatriates as victims in pre-amnesty period, victims now include well-meaning Niger Delta indigenes such as politicians, traditional rulers, business men and women and middle class professionals like doctors, lawyers and their relations (Saheed, 2016). It is basically used as a mean of livelihood and survival by people indulging in it in post-amnesty Niger Delta. They ask for ransom in millions before their victims could be released. Based on this, it is rather convincing to believe that militant groups kidnap not because they fight for the liberalisation the people in the region but for personal economic purposes. This expressed itself that even there brother and sisters in the region are also kidnapped for ransom. Beyond this, militants have also accused of their involvement in politics as political thugs who are used by the politicians to threaten or kill their perceived political opponents. Due to manner at which militia groups relate with politicians for economic gains, Gilbert, (2013)

therefore, maintains that some members of the political elite used some of the militias as instruments of personal political aggrandisement and this was a particularly worrisome feature of MEND. The political trends in the Niger Delta, particularly in Rivers state is enough evidence of hyper-political thuggery in the state. Bassey (2012) thus averred that Niger Delta youths have been extensively associated with clandestine activities such as the sale of small arms and light weapons, drugs and political thuggery during elections (“hired guns”).

The question that should agitate our minds is: Do militants go into political thuggery, kidnapping of innocent citizens, cultism, oil bunkering, sea piracy, killing of individuals that are not in government etc. in the interest of the region. The kidnapping episodes in the region which has turned to alternative means of livelihood by the militant youths forced Saheed (2016) to disclose that:

The use of kidnapping as a means of livelihood for the militants to complement oil bunkering business of these militants and to finance their insurgency during this period cannot be ignored. The inability of Tom Polo, Farah Dagogo, and Boy Loaf to agree on the sharing pattern of payment of ransom for kidnapping led to breakup of the trio in the early days of MEND. While Farah Dagogo went back to Rivers State, Boyloaf departed for Bayelsa State. The departure of Farah Dagogo to Rivers State saw him aligning with Soboma George to form a coordinated kidnapping syndicate in the State. As Asuni noted, kidnapping became a big business in Rivers State which was not in anybody’s interest to stop because even government’s hostage negotiators and security agents were involved and sharing in the proceeds of the kidnapping syndicates.

As one member of the current National Assembly has noted: “What is going on in the Niger Delta is no longer the legitimate struggle of the people for a fair deal, but an “economic war” between the JTF and militants who are fighting for their pockets.” (TELL, June 22, 2009). The level of aggressiveness the militants are involved in war of among themselves over sharing money made through illegal sources is quite alarming. They even engage sometimes in killing themselves when there is a perceived cheating by any of them. This has been experienced in various occasions where there are violent conflicts resulting from money distribution among members of militia groups.

Due to criminal activities associated with the militants, Garba (2017) maintains that besides the grievances, some involvements of the militants before and after the 2005 Niger Delta Militancy resurgence suggest that the campaign was not only about grievances but also driven by greed. According to Nwodo (2009), these activities included oil bunkering, kidnapping of oil workers for ransom and political patronage. For example, with the resurgence in 2005, MEND kidnapped 118 foreign oil workers, including the 4 at AE oil field in 2006 (Paki and Ebienfa, 2011). Philip (2009) put the number over 200. Obi (2009) also reported that about 100 personnel of

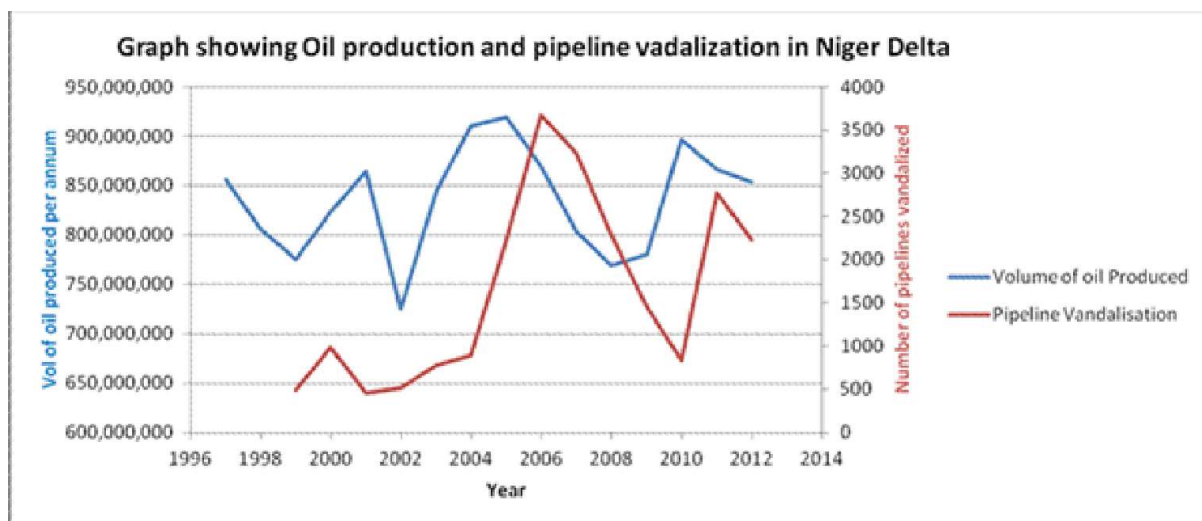
Agip, Chevron and Shell were kidnapped by militants for ransom between 2006 and 2007 alone. The number grew to 390 in 2008, and from January 2008 to January 2009 alone 1,128 kidnapped (Saheed, 2016).

Militancy and Insecurity in the Niger Delta Region

The alarming dimension of militant activities in the region has attracted both local and international concerns. The Nigerian economy has recorded a colossal loss as a result militant activities which include: Kidnapping and hostage taking, illegal oil bunkering, murder, pipeline vandalization etc. Today, it is no longer 'fairy tale' that militancy in the Niger Delta has remained a threat to the national economic growth and development in Nigeria. The crises in the Niger Delta have made the region prone to armed conflict and

violent crimes where series of terror-related violence such as deliberate attacks against government installations, piracy, oil bunkering, kidnapping and hostage taking, among others are recorded on daily basis (Saheed, 2016). Adegami (2013) asserted thus:

Unfortunately, ordinary citizens as well as the nation's economic resources are at the receiving end of this wanton destruction. The series of bombings and killings in the north; kidnapping and armed robbery attack in the south; political and economic related assassinations as well as the politically-influenced communal wars has become a multi-hydra headed monster which security agents in Nigeria appear incapable of handling.



Source: Nigeria National Petroleum Commission Database)

Between 2006 and July 2009, the coordinated attacks by 'militant groups' such as the MEND accounted for about 300 deaths and 119 oil workers being held hostage. The daily oil production also drastically reduced during this time, from 2.6 million barrels of oil per day to just 700,000 barrels per day. This was despite \$3 billion dollars annual spending by the federal government and oil companies on security to protect oil facilities in the region. No surprise the state and oil companies labelling these protests as 'militant activities' (Tantua & Kamruzzaman, 2016).

According to the authors, protesting groups were labelled or framed by the state/media in various ways, as oil thieves, criminals, kidnapers, cult gangs or restive youths. While 'militants', on the other hand, see themselves as freedom fighters, liberators or resource agitators. These labelling manifest a particular kind of reality with varied meanings and interpretations both at the individual and collective levels.

The militants resorted to armed struggle with government security forces and triggered a reduction in oil

production through kidnapping and hostage taking of expatriate and national oil workers, illegal oil bunkering, and vandalism of oil installations, until the Nigerian government secured a ceasefire through the Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP) in 2009 Foundation for (Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta, 2016). According to the report, the PAP ended the insurgency and entitled some militant leaders to lucrative government security contracts to guide oil installations and monthly stipends, while others were provided with scholarships. But barely seven years after many of the militants accepted the PAP and dropped their arms, there has been a resurgence of militancy and violence in the region. In the same position, Saheed (2016) also summarises in this manner:

The thinking of the Federal government of Nigeria that led to the implementation of the amnesty programme was that if armed groups fizzled away, all activities associated with them will naturally disappear and this will lead to uninterrupted oil exploration. The number of militants disarmed and enrolled in the amnesty programme gave the impression that the programme was a success. In the first

phase of the programme 20,192 ex-militants enrolled. In the second phase, 6,166 were enrolled while the third phase saw the disarmament of 3,642 ex-militants. Thus, the total number of ex-militants enrolled in the programme was 30,000. The number of militants that turned out and calibre of weapons submitted ordinarily suggested that armed group had fizzled out in the Niger Delta region and their activities have stopped. However, this is not.

There are some explanations to this trend as Saheed (2016) further observed that the coverage of victims of kidnapping in Niger Delta region has become widened to include all classes of people: expatriate, rich and poor indigenes. Secondly in pre-amnesty Niger Delta, perpetrators of kidnapping episodes were known to be members of militant groups alone, but in post-amnesty Niger Delta, the perpetrators are not only limited to member of armed/militant groups, other people that are not members of militant groups also carry out the act. Thirdly, there is a change in motivation for kidnapping from what it was in pre-amnesty period. According to him, kidnapping in pre-amnesty period was motivated by grievances resulting from negligence of the region by federal government of Nigeria and inequity in the sharing of oil revenues. Therefore, kidnapping was carried out as part of the strategies to advance the cause of Niger Delta struggle for resource control. However, post-amnesty kidnapping cases in Niger Delta are motivated by greed. The greed motivation can also explain why militants are also involved in political thuggery, cultism, kidnapping of indigenous rich people who never contributed to their frustration of the community or the militants. To actually understand the whole episode is to properly scrutinize economic motivation behind militancy in the region.

V. CONCLUSION

It is clear that there is existence of armed conflicts in the Niger Delta region as a result of combined activities of the oil producing companies and the Nigerian government. This has unfortunately created a state of insecurity in the region and has been affecting the Nigerian economy. In attempting to curb the situation Nigerian government has adopted both diplomatic and military approaches. However, there has been proliferation of militia groups in the region, thus militancy has continued to threaten both human and national security. Today, there are kidnapping, sea piracy, destruction of government installations, oil bunkering, vandalization of oil pipelines etc.

The study found out that political marginalisation which has manifested in form of political exclusion, oppression, intimidation etc. is responsible for unabated militancy in the region. For instance, it was discovered that Niger Delta has been underrepresented or has not been provided a level play ground to equally or proportionally occupy political positions or offices such as Executive President, Senate President, Speaker, House of Representatives etc. Also, the Nigerian state had in the past

adopted military force to suppress the people of the region, which led to the destruction of lives and properties as exemplified in the Obasanjo administration where military men were deployed in Odi, Bayesa state. Further, there have been agitations for equitable distribution of revenue to the region. Revenue allocation formula which was once based on 100% derivation was decreased to a point that it was 1.5%, and today 13%. These and others have contributed to perpetual frustration which eventually led to aggression in form of militancy.

Despite, the perceived injustices the region has faced, the study however, observed that some criminal elements have hidden under the guise of marginalization to engage in criminal activities in the region. Today, militancy is now popular because it has provided the members the opportunity to make quick money, and to accumulate easy wealth. In other words, personal economic enrichment or benefit is a motivating factor that drive youths to go into militancy. For instance, militants are today involved in political thuggery, kidnapping of their brothers and sisters, killing of themselves over money etc. These are activities do not in any way channelled towards emancipation or agitation for collective development rather they are for individual interests and benefits. This development has justified the point that greed not frustration or grievance is the motivating factor that has led to the resurgence of militancy in the region. However, there are still existing human security challenges as well as inadequate political inclusion in the Niger Delta.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussed findings, the study therefore recommended that the 'divide and rule' the multinational oil companies have adopted to pacify or assuage groups believed to be more powerful than others is not the best approach to solve the problems in the Niger Delta. Rather, compensating acclaimed powerful groups while neglecting the main problem has contributed partly to the proliferation of militia groups in the region. Hence, oil companies in the region should engage in a holistic and comprehensive approach to provide adequate and requisite infrastructures in the region. The Federal Government should desist from militarization of the region to initiation of sustainable human empowerment and poverty reduction programmes. Unfortunately, Amnesty programme was initiated but management was a fundamental problem. There are accusations that the main people who are supposed to benefit from the programmes were not actually identified, rather some political elites corruptly cashed in on the said programme to compensate individuals who are believed to be their friends, cronies, relatives, loyalists etc. In this scenario, the real targets (militants) were not adequately located. For example, it was said that graduates who are looking for jobs or even employed were sent abroad for further study.

Beyond the human capital development programmes, government should be sincere and act accordingly in its diversification campaigns so as to reduce over dependence on

oil revenue, which has been the main cause of conflicts, accusations and counter accusations and unjust reduction of derivation revenue sharing formula. Based on the manner at which militants are utilised as political thugs in the region, there should be a legislation that severely punishes any politician that makes use of militants during elections or otherwise. In this case, National Assembly is to come up with law that prosecutes any individual funding militancy or using militants for personal political or economic gains. The study is optimistic that when all these suggested are put in place, there would be reduction in resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta.

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