Amnesty Policy and the Resurgence of Violence in Nigeria's Niger Delta: The Issues and Contradictions

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Abstract

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

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

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Background to the Study

Years of environmental abuse and human degradation coupled with unfulfilled promises on the part of the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies led to violent agitations and armed struggle by the Niger Delta people against the Nigerian state. During this period, actions such as kidnapping, vandalization of oil company facilities and hostage taking were intensified prompting the Nigerian government to militarize the entire Niger Delta region through its Joint Military Task Force (JTF). This development also led to the proliferation of militia groups and camps across the Niger Delta region hence, the conflict degenerated between 1995 and 2005, prompting the federal government of Nigeria to also review its policy action in June 2009 with the proclamation of amnesty to Niger Delta agitators and aggrieved youths. It is therefore instructive to state unequivocally that Nigeria’s amnesty policy in the Niger Delta region has three major phases which include:

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

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

Literature Review

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

The History and Consequences of the Niger Delta Crises

This aspect of the study examined the history, dynamics and consequences of the Niger Delta crisis. According to Preboye (2005), the Niger Delta crisis can be traced to pre-colonial and
The Kaiama declaration of 1998, the Ogoni bill of right and several other agitations in the Niger Delta led to the following interventions by the colonial and Nigeria governments:

1. Establishment of the Willinks Commission in 1957
3. River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) in 1970
4. Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992

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

Intra and inter community conflicts, Inter-ethnic conflict, community-oil company conflict and community-state conflicts. While blaming the Nigerian government for allowing the crisis in the Niger Delta to escalate Ibeanu, (2008) stated categorically that the consequences of government inaction is youths restiveness, militancy, kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, oil theft and other forms of criminality and violent confrontations. He added that the inability
of the Nigeria state to address genuine demands of the Niger Delta people stimulated long
years of clashes and confrontations between several youth groups and security agencies as
well as oil multinational oil companies (MNOCs). In his words: with the return of
democracy in 1999, the military approach to containing the unrest exacerbated the already
hostile security condition in the area leading to loss of human lives, oil and increased
environmental devastation etc. While commenting on the consequences of the Niger Delta
amounted to 6.8 billion dollars and that a subsequent report prepared by a 43 persons
government commission released in late 2008 indicated that in the first nine months of
2006, the Nigeria government lost a staggering 23.7 billion dollars in oil revenue due to
also maintained that between January 2006 and the summer of 2009, over 400 expatriate oil
worker hostages were taken while maritime piracy equally increased. In their words:
Between 2005 and 2009, there were over 12,000 pipeline vandalism and over
3,000 oil spills. Over 1 million barrels of output were short-in as a result of
deepening insurgency and by the summer of 2009, output fell to around 1
million barrels per day. 124 of 174 oil fields were shut, Shell’s western
operations were closed and Nigeria as a consequence fell from its perch as
the largest producer (Joab, Porter & Watts, 2012:8).

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

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

In a press statement title “Go sin no more” published in The Week Magazine of 6th July 2009, Nigeria’s former president Umaru Musa Yar’Adua proclaimed amnesty to militants in the Niger Delta region as part of measures to secure peace in the troubled oil-rich region. The full text of the amnesty policy statement further reads:

Pursuant to Section 175 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Whereas the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria acknowledges that the challenges of Niger Delta arose mainly from the inadequacies of previous attempts at meeting the yearnings and aspirations of the people, and have set in motion machinery for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta states: whereas certain elements of the Niger Delta populace have resorted to unlawful means of agitation for the development of the region including militancy thereby threatening peace, security, order and good government and jeopardizing the economy of the nation: whereas the government realizes that many of the militants are able bodied youths whose energies could be harnessed for the development of the Niger Delta and the nation at large. Whereas the government desires that all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in militancy in the Niger Delta should return to respect constituted authority and whereas many persons who had so engaged in militancy now desire to apply for an obtain amnesty and pardon. Now therefore, I, Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, after due consultation with the Council of States and in exercise of the powers conferred upon me by the provisions of section 175 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, make the following proclamation: I hereby grant amnesty and unconditional pardon to all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in the commission of offences associated with militant activities in the Niger Delta. The pardon shall take effect upon the surrender and handing over of all equipment, weapons, arms and ammunition and execution of the renunciation of militancy forms specified in the schedule hereto, by the affected persons at the nearest collection centre established for the purpose of government in each of the Niger Delta State: The unconditional pardon granted pursuant to this proclamation shall extent to all persons presently being prosecuted for offences associated with militant activities: and this proclamation shall cease to have effect from Sunday, 4th October 2009.

The above policy action was accompanied with a clearly defined disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme which served as a peace building measure. While making a case for nonviolent conflict resolution strategies, Jones and Libicki (2008) argued that military force had rarely been effective in defeating terrorism and the reliance on conventional military force had often been counterproductive hence, he added that a military solution will not solve a political problem. On the contrary while citing the case of Afghanistan, where the Unites States military operation was successful in denying Al-
Qaeda freedom of movement by removing pro-al-Qaeda regime from power, Smith (2007:6) argued that a properly deployed army can in the short term deny a terrorist group or individual the environment to operate. In his words: while long-term military campaigns have been faced with challenges, a short-term well defined military mission could be effective in mitigating the threat of terrorism (Blyth, 2013). The appropriate counterterrorism strategy to adopt remains a source of debate among scholars in the field of conflict resolution. In his work “we need nonviolent counterterrorism strategies” Niemela (2012) added his voice to the debate on counterterrorism strategies when he stated categorically that all violent counterterrorism intervention policies have completely failed. In his words: we are sowing and reaping perpetual tragedy with this violence machine and the only people benefiting are sitting on top of a mountain of cash in the conflict industry hence, it is time for a major shift in the conflict management strategies.

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

Theoretical Framework
The need for an analytical framework in an investigation was re-enforced by Lieber (1973) who argued that behind every concept or an analysis, there is a theory or view point which make it possible for the presentation and interpretation of facts. Clearly therefore, this study relied on John Burton’s basic human needs theory in order to explain and analyse the factors responsible for the prolonged conflict in the Niger Delta region which eventually led to the
proclamation of amnesty by the Nigeria government in June 2009. In the opinion of Dexit (2004) human needs are issues creating the conflict and violence in the first place hence; ignoring such fundamental issues no doubt makes the interest-based model and others limited and contradictory. In the same vein, John Burton (1997) argued that when an individual or group is denied its basic need for identity, security, recognition or equal participation within the society, protracted conflict becomes inevitable hence, he advised that it is imperative that needs that were threatened be identified and placed at the front burner. He stated further that to ensure sustainable peace and development in any political system, the needs of all individuals and groups must be accommodated in the decision making process. Basic human needs according to Burton (1997) can influence our beliefs, the values we place on then hence, he emphasized that people who are aggrieved can go any length to pursue their heartfelt needs. This no doubt explains why despite the creation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the ministry of Niger Delta Affairs and other policy measures in place, the Niger Delta people still insist that they must be part of oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta region. Outright disregard for the people and the militarization of the Niger Delta region by previous administrations further helped to escalating and prolong the conflict in the region.

Thus, the basic human needs theory clearly explains the plight of the Niger Delta people within the political structure of Nigeria. Because these needs are perceived to be more important than food and shelter hence, when these needs are denied or frustrated by institutions and government, individuals and groups are prepared to go extreme length to defy authorities and systems in order to pursue their deeply felt needs even through death by suicide bombings or by hunger strikes (Sandole, 2001). The value groups place on their cultural and religious rights explains the courage and determination with which terrorist and militia groups carry out their operations. Advocates of the basic human needs theory therefore cautioned that the needs for security, identity, personal socio-cultural and religious development are indeed salient to the understanding of destructive social conflicts and the failure of existing state systems to satisfy the need for identity is the primary source of contemporary ethno-nationalist struggles (Burton, 1997). Failure on the part of states to guarantee the basic needs of their citizens according to Sandole (2001) will lead to anarchy and revolts against the system. In his words: deterrence cannot deter and coercive methods are not effective to modify behaviour when individuals and groups are compelled to act on the basis of imperative needs.

The above analysis clearly shows that the agitation and uprising in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria can be explained using John Burton’s basic human needs theory which is closely related to Robert K. Merton’s theory of anomy (crime). Within the Nigerian context, it is a fact that decades of frustration, alienation, and marginalization of the Niger Delta people from their environment and resources (basic needs) no doubt helped to intensity the conflict in the region while the initial policy action of the Nigerian government also did not recognize the needs and aspirations of the people hence, the bloody confrontation which led to the proliferation of militant groups and camps across the Niger Delta region. Proponents of the basic human needs theory include: Burton (1997), Sites (1973), Maslow (1943), and Galtung (1990).
Methodology and Scope
The concept of methodology according to Kaplan, cited in Obasi (1999) is to help in understanding in the broadest possible fashion both the products and the process of scientific investigation. Nachmias and Nachmias (1985) also see methodology as a system of unambiguous rules and procedures upon which the basis of an enquiry is formed and claimed knowledge evaluated. Thus, this section of the paper provides a description of the sources of data used and the applicable methodology. The data used in this study were curated from published scholarly works such as textbooks, published articles, journals and the internet (secondary sources) data collected from these sources were analysed through qualitative method and content analysis. In terms of scope, the study is limited to the impact of Nigeria’s amnesty policy in the Niger Delta region.

Analysis Showing the Issues, Contradictions and Challenges Inherent in Nigeria’s Amnesty Programme/Policy
This section of the paper relied on the views and positions of scholars and eminent Nigerians as expressed in journals, articles, the internet etc. Where necessary, tables and graphs will be presented and analysed via content analysis method. Immediately after the amnesty proclamation in June 2009, the federal proclamation of Nigeria set up a presidential panel on amnesty and disarmament of agitators in the Niger Delta region. According to Abazie (2014), the committee comprised of a pool of experts and consultants from different backgrounds with skills in development and security projects including key stakeholders and government officials. He therefore contented that the presidential panel on amnesty and disarmament of agitators in the Niger Delta that managed the DDR programme complied with best practices and international standards. In his words: through the committee, a working plan was developed and the project was designed as an intervention project where amendments to its components are regularly reviewed and up-dated as its standard operating procedures (SOP). It should be noted that the committee stands as the consensus building platform of the DDR project.

The table below further revealed that Nigeria’s amnesty policy and its subsequent DDR programme contains in-built mechanisms that enabled the agitators and ex-militants to embrace peace and also acquire training and skills at the end of the DDR programme.
Table 1: Components of the Federal Governments Amnesty Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISARMAMENT</th>
<th>DEMOBILIZATION</th>
<th>REINTEGRATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration: August 6-October 4, 2009</td>
<td>Rehabilitation Duration: 6-12 months</td>
<td>Duration: up to 5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Activities**
* Collection of Arms and Ammunitions, explosives etc.
  * Ex-militants report to camp
  * Verification and documentation
  * Transformational training
  * Peace building and conflict resolution
  * Counselling
  * Career guidance
  * Wellness assessment
  * Reintegration classification
  * Education and vocational placement
  * Graduation and Demobilization

**Key Activities**
* Knowledge and skills acquisition
* Financial empowerment
* Placement programmes
* Microcredit
* Education
* Reconciliation with local community
* Conflict resolution framework/mechanism
* Monitoring and Evaluation
* Exit of Amnesty

**Key Enabler**
Disarmament camps
Massive campaign

**Key Enabler**
Transformational training centres rehabilitations camps

**Key Enabler**
Partnering government agencies, NGOs and private organizations, OGIS tracking and Support framework

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

In writing about the amnesty programme’s objectives and deliverables, the Nigerian government identified the following three phases:

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

How well or otherwise the amnesty programme and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) exercise carried out by the Nigerian Government affected the life of the Niger Delta people and Nigerians as a whole is basically the major thrust and driving force behind this dissertation. Thus, identifying the challenges encountered will no doubt aid further research in peace and conflict studies in Nigeria and Africa where conflict, especially violent conflicts has become a tradition.
The data in the table below further revealed that majority of the agitators and Niger Delta youths took advantage of the government’s amnesty policy by surrendering their weapons and also participated actively in the DDR programme which took place in Nigeria and abroad.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>REGISTERED</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF TOTAL AMNESTY BENEFICIARIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Akwa Ibom</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>1st phase 20,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bayelsa</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>6,961</td>
<td>2nd phase 6,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cross River</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>3rd phase 3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>3,361</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,361</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Edo</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>450</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Imo</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ondo</td>
<td>1,198</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>6,958</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6,997</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>NDDC</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>20,049</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>20,192</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Issues

In spite of the achievements recorded by the amnesty policy and its subsequent DDR programme, scholars have argued that the problem of the Niger Delta is beyond the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. Scholars in this school of thought believe that except the development question of the region is addressed holistically, conflict and insecurity will persist in the Niger Delta region. Prof. Wole Soyinka, in a press statement captioned “between amnesty and amnesia” published in The Week Magazine of 6th July 2009, faulted the federal governments proclamation of amnesty to Niger Delta militants. The Nobel laureate stressed that except there was a holistic approach anchored on internal restructuring of Nigeria, the amnesty policy and programme will be a mirage. In his words: the stubborn retention of the status quo and its manifest rejection by component parts is at the heart of Niger Delta crisis” (The Week Magazine of 6th July 2009). While joining the debate as to the validity and reliability of the amnesty policy, David Adeyemo and Lanre Ola-Adeyemi (2009) in their paper titled “Amnesty in a vacuum: The unending insurgency in the Niger Delta of Nigeria” posited that the Yar’Adua-led administration ignored a lot of factors in its amnesty policy initiated in June 2009. According to them “the first matter arising from the 50 billion naira amnesty fund that was expected to be operational between August 6, 2009 and October 4, 2009 did not follow any known conventional pattern”. After a careful appraisal of the entire amnesty programme/policy David, A. and Adeyemi O. (2009) contended that the best amnesty would have been the total development of the Niger Delta region and the improvement of the quality of life of the people and their living standards. One can but agree that the whole amnesty policy of the Nigerian government was over politicized and limited in scope to carter for the welfare of militants alone. It is important to
Apart from monthly allowances and stipends enjoyed by ex-combatants, records also revealed that top leaders of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) also got security and surveillance contracts from the same federal government. Thus, Zibima, T. and Allison, T. F (2013) concluded that the fundamental objective of any DDR exercise is to discourage ex-combatants from engaging in activities that could re-militarise their psyche or put in jeopardy the existing peace. While reiterating their position, they insisted that the fact that the amnesty programme succeeded in drastically reducing incidences of violence is a short-term gain arising from the greed of militant commanders and generals under the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) flagship and of the state represented by the political class. In their words: the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta may collapse and hostilities may resume because addressing the social and institutional drivers of the conflict is far removed from the objective of the Nigerian state when it moved to implement the programme hence, rather than address the social issues that led to the conflict, the entire programme was monetized with the militant leaders and commanders earning huge allowances and stipends before the usual nonviolent test and trainings...

Apart from monthly allowances and stipends enjoyed by ex-combatants, records also revealed that top leaders of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) also got security and surveillance contracts from the same federal government. Thus, Zibima, T. and Allison, T. F (2013) concluded that the fundamental objective of any DDR exercise is to discourage ex-combatants from engaging in activities that could re-militarise their psyche or put in jeopardy the existing peace. While reiterating their position, they insisted that the main aim of a DDR programme is to help ex-combatants and militants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income without compromising the security of the state and its institutions. Citing UNAMID 2012, Nzeshi 2012, and Ezigbo 2012, they lamented that the amnesty policy in the Niger Delta region is full of inconsistencies and contradictions which could scuttle the entire amnesty programme. In their words: it is inappropriate and a threat to national security, the deliberate strategy of the Nigerian ruling class to co-opt ex-combatants into the economic mainstream while the fundamental issues instigating armed conflict in the Niger Delta region remained unattended to.

Reiterating this position, they maintained that in Bayelsa state which arguably was the boiling pot of militant activities before the commencement of DDR, a group of ex-combatants were awarded oil pipelines and facilities security contract in the state through their security firm BAJEROS while in Delta State where hostilities were equally intense, the Oil Facilities Surveillance Limited (OFSL) also owned by a former militant leader was contracted to police oil facilities wondering why this form of patronage must continue even with the DDR programme in place, they concluded that the relationship between the Nigeria government and ex-combatant leaders raise doubts about the potentialities for DDR sustaining peace in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria as a whole. Details of the security/surveillance contract according to The Wall Street Journal 2012 and Aluede 2012 are listed below.
Table 3: Security/surveillance contracts awarded to top ex-militant Commanders in the Niger Delta Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>NAME/BENEFICIARY</th>
<th>CONTRACT VALUE</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gen. Ebikabowa Victor Ben (Boy Loaf)</td>
<td>US $3.8 million (N559.64 million)</td>
<td>Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Bayelsa State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gen. Ateke Tom</td>
<td>US $3.8 million (N559.64 million)</td>
<td>Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Rivers State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alhaji Mujahid Asari Dokubo</td>
<td>US $9 million (N1.420 billion)</td>
<td>Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Rivers State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo)</td>
<td>US $22.9 million (N3.614 billion)</td>
<td>Oil pipeline security/surveillance in Delta State</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

This explains why scholars have castigated the amnesty programme. The view of scholars on this matter is well articulated in the study. The above financial inducement given to top militant leaders by the Nigerian government have constantly pitched the ex-combatants in fierce battles with oil facilities saboteurs (some of whom are former militant foot soldiers who feel short changed by their leaders) who have proved relentless in sabotaging critical oil installations (The Wall Street Journal, 2012: Amaizi, 2012). Several scholars have argued that there was nothing wrong in engaging top ex-combatants in securing and protecting oil facilities which they once destroyed and vandalized. Scholars in this school of thought maintain that it is a form of empowerment to the youths in the Niger Delta since oil facilities are located in the creeks and hinterlands. On the other hand, the researcher observed that exposing ex-combatants and their foot soldiers to such huge financial transactions immediately after a disarmament, demobilization and re-integration exercise is a breach of international standards prescribed by the United Nations Organization (UNO). However, running the amnesty programme in parallel with controversial joint military task forces in the region remains a major paradox. It is on record that the following military task forces exist in the Niger Delta region: Operation Delta Safe, Operation Pullo Shield and the recently launched Operation Crocodile Smile. In a swift reaction, members of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) through their, spokesman launched a counter operation code named Operation Crocodile tears in July 2016. The above analysis clearly indicate that Nigeria’s amnesty policy in the Niger Delta is militant centred hence, it failed to address critical issues that bother on community development and environmental justice. The table and figures below also shows that Nigeria’s amnesty policy and its development framework for the Niger Delta contains several debatable issues and contractions.
Table 4: Budget receipt by Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, 2009 – 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>97bn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>46bn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>39bn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N181bn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Table 5: States, years and Net allocation to states and local government councils in Niger Delta 1999 – 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akwa-Imo</td>
<td>N4.216 billion</td>
<td>N27.457 billion</td>
<td>N37.119 billion</td>
<td>N29.394 billion</td>
<td>N45.819 billion</td>
<td>N40.454 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>N4.391 billion</td>
<td>N31.941 billion</td>
<td>N45.623 billion</td>
<td>N53.152 billion</td>
<td>N64.399 billion</td>
<td>N48.768 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imo</td>
<td>N3.293 billion</td>
<td>N13.097 billion</td>
<td>N17.150 billion</td>
<td>N19.862 billion</td>
<td>N24.297 billion</td>
<td>N19.918 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>N4.459 billion</td>
<td>N22.815 billion</td>
<td>N27.963 billion</td>
<td>N40.308 billion</td>
<td>N53.580 billion</td>
<td>N40.960 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Omah & Ifeayo (2010: 277-279)

Table 6: Amnesty Budget Summary from 2010 – 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naira (N)</td>
<td>8,000,000,000</td>
<td>102,176,411,902</td>
<td>66,176,411,902</td>
<td>66,781,093,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD$</td>
<td>48795365.33</td>
<td>623216918.4</td>
<td>408637774.4</td>
<td>407325983.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Abazie, 2014
The huge allocation to the Niger Delta States and the high level of poverty and underdevelopment in the region further explains what most scholars refer to as internal colonization and subjugation of the Niger Delta by the political elites in the region. Thus, the Niger Delta is seen as a region that is at war with its self yet, it points fingers to external factors for its woes. The contradictions in the Niger Delta are indeed enormous and visible. The
consensus opinion of scholars was however summarized by Ibeanu (2008), Onah and Ifedayo (2010) who stated thus: after more than five years of continuous receipt of the derivation, miseration of the people fester, while the governing elites live in Opulence and grandeur (Onah and Ifedayo, 2010). It seems that every development strategy that has been developed for the Niger Delta has paradoxically under developed the region (Ibeanu, 2008).

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

Recommendations
To consolidate on the gains recorded by the federal government in its amnesty programme/policy, the following suggestions are hereby proposed:

1. Issues relating to gas flaring and other environmental crimes that endanger the environment and human life should also be addressed through policy measures. Thus, the Nigerian government should take necessary steps to implement the United Nations Environmental Programme report (UNEP) on Ogoni land which was released in June 2012.

2. Since the study observed that poor leadership on the part of local, state and federal governments in Nigeria accounted for the prolonged conflict in the Niger Delta region, the enthronement of quality leadership (honest, patriotic and disciplined) at all levels of government coupled with electoral and judicial reforms will no doubt help to strengthen the leadership recruitment process and at the same time, promote accountability and transparency in government. This is important because in Nigeria, issues relating to corruption and maladministration have been traced to poor leadership hence, quality and effective leadership will help to check and minimise conflict arising from inequality and alienation in Nigeria’s Niger Delta region and Nigeria in general.

3. African countries engaged in post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes should adhere to laid down international standards and procedures as contained in the United Nations integrated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration standards (UN-IDDRS 2004/2006). It will be recalled that Nigeria maintained only one quartering area at Obubra, Cross Rivers State during the demobilization and reintegartion of ex-militants whereas; Nigeria ought to have maintained several quartering areas and locations for the exercise which could have held simultaneously. The DDR
programme in Nigeria also witnessed excessive monetization of the entire exercise which narrowed the focus of the whole amnesty programme.

4. Legislations such as the Niger Delta Development Commission Act 2000 and other obnoxious policies that give undue advantage to multinational oil companies should be repealed or discarded to ensure equity, fairness and justice to both the oil producing communities and other critical stakeholders in the oil and gas sector.

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

References


