

## **Introduction and General Framework**

### **Aims and Methodology**

One of the aims of this academic work is to discuss the Niger Delta conflict, by analyzing the behavior of the actors and players involved in the conflict. The discussions in this paper, looks critically at the activities of the major actors in the conflict: The behavior of the Nigerian government, the unprecedented actions of the different militia groups in the region and the activities of the multi-national oil companies operating in the region. The thesis started by analyzing the history of the region and the process of human right activism, from its non-violent struggle, up to the stages of arm confrontation and the subsequence outbreak of full scale arm race. In particular, the study focuses on the Nigerian government and the militia groups in the region. Less emphasis are made on the activities of the Multi-national oil companies because the paper looks at the activities of oil companies as a complementary behavior with the Nigerian government hence the reciprocal actions of the militia groups are seen as counter behavioral attitude against, both the oil companies and the government.

Second aim for this research thesis is aimed at identifying the existing problems regarding the Niger Delta conflict and to develop solution based arguments. Thirdly, this research thesis is aimed at internationalizing the Niger Delta conflict through broader based discussions, and if possibly third party involvement, such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the United States, in finding a comprehensive and lasting solutions to the over six decades long crisis. The overall scope of the study tends to detect and recognize the causes of the conflict and prefer alternative solutions to the ongoing amnesty program in the Niger Delta.

The methodology employed in this thesis is a quantitative method, which is descriptive, correlative and causally comparative analysis. It is descriptive in the sense that, one of the objectives in this research is to provide a systematic description based on facts, figures and accuracy. That is, the thesis tries to identify the behavioral actions of the Nigerian government, the multi-national oil companies operating in the region, and the reciprocal actions from the armed groups in the region. It is correlative analysis because, the thesis attempts to describe the relationship between the parties involved in the conflict. It is also correlative because it tries to underline the strength, direction and magnitude of their relationship. It is causally comparative because the thesis tries to determine the causes and reasons for the existing difference in their behavior. In all, the research hypothesis identifies “governments’ ineffectiveness and ‘politics of ethnic identity” as the main causes

(phenomenon) of the conflict in its arguments. Therefore, the hypothesis of this thesis proposes 'good governance' as a bane to resolving the Niger Delta question. In this context, a critical review of the conflicts' history revealed two major challenges facing the region: Firstly, ineffective government institutions and, secondly corruption, which leads to the issues of under-development, environmental, economic, and political problems in the Niger Delta.

The sources used in this research are mostly e-books, articles and journals, and internet resources. Articles of institutions for peace and conflict studies, articles of African security and strategic study, journals of social, economic and conflict study, and reports from human rights organizations, journals of ethnic, culture and environmental study. Electronic sources from OPEC, NNPC, encyclopedia, and news media, and historical documents from British national archives.

The Niger Delta is a region in Nigeria. Its abound with oil resources, and this oil resources are directly under the sovereign control of the Nigerian government which has jurisdiction over all kind of resources within the territorial waters and lands of the Nigerian space. The region of Niger Delta, accounts for up to 80% of Nigeria's revenue generation through earnings from exploration of oil resources from the region hence she is regarded as strategic to Nigeria's economic survival as a domestic policy by the federal government of Nigeria. One of the main objectives of Nigeria's domestic policy towards the Niger Delta region has been to maintain stability and peace, to suppress secessionist and ethno-nationalist movements, to achieve prosperity from oil exploration, and to maintain security of oil flow at any cost because the region is the economic power house of the country. In this framework, the leaders of the Nigerian state, at the federal seat of power tends to sustain the continuous flow of oil and maintain security of oil installations because the oil revenue from the region is the lime wire (economic tree) of Nigeria's economy. Therefore, Niger Delta security, stability and peace are defined as strategic interest of the government.

This thesis is a non-polemic, and in writing a foreword to my undergraduate term papers on conflict analysis – African armed conflicts. It cannot be relishing, because, to unearth the problems of the Niger Delta conflict is even forbidden, so it amounts to re-opening an old wound at a time when the country is been governed by a minority from the Niger Delta. Then to sweep the problems of Niger Delta under the carpet, leaves an open sore which only the truth can heal because for decades, truth had eluded the Niger Delta conflict unhealed.

It is on this promise that former Ghanaian President, Jerry Rawling, in a launch of Ken Nnamani's Center for Development and Leadership Training in Abuja – Nigeria, May 2008, says that sycophancy is the bane of African leadership. He contended that truth is an elusive straw in African leadership and as such, good governance will remain a mirage as long as African leaders are not told the truth while in office but only come to light of the truth when they have left office. This situation persists due to the activities of sycophants who parade the corridors of power in perpetuation of their selfish agenda.

The following section of the study examines the history, and the causes of the conflict in an oil rich region, engaged in a struggle against the nature and manner of resource distribution which has disinherited and marginalized the Niger Delta region. The thesis argues that, the foundation of the Nigerian state from her independence was build and strengthened with ethnic enclaves instead of a united Nigerian federation. It also examined the ethnic dimensions of the conflict, from pre-colonial period up to the stages of escalation and the birth of relative peace and security as a result of the amnesty program which was introduced by late President Umaru Ya'adua in 2009.

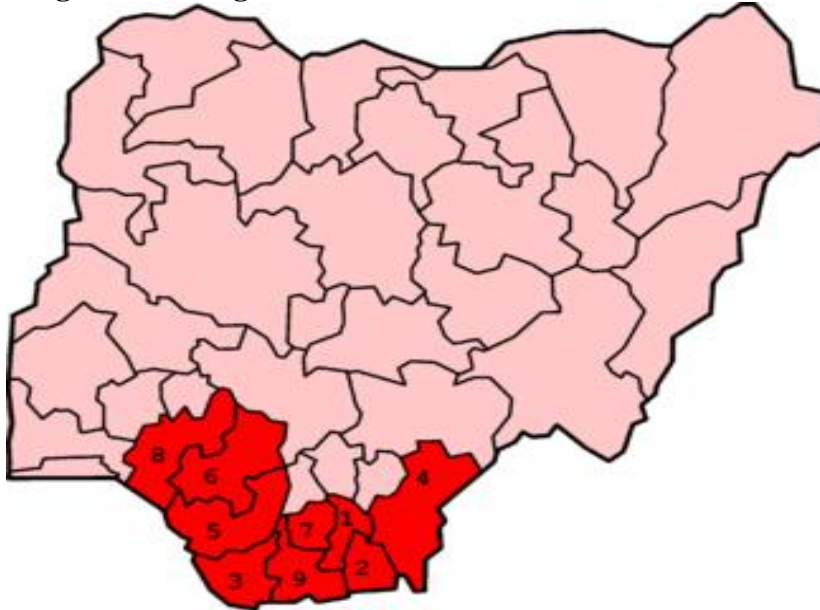
Chapter one of this thesis, starts with a background check Niger Delta. The chapter looks at the history of the region and analysis the stages of the crisis, from its non-violent process to the stages of arm confrontation. Furthermore, it examines the government structure and power distribution among the various branches of government. It also looks at the government formation from pre and post-independence federal structures based on the early political parties. Chapter two sheds light on the process of the amnesty program. The ills of the amnesty program are identified and exposed by comparing the advantages to the disadvantages. The achievements so far in managing the amnesty process are also discussed. Chapter three focuses, mainly on the effects of oil exploration, the conflict and recommendations. It bemoans on the prevalence of environmental and ecological effects, human rights abuse, under-development, economic backwardness, lack of effective government, and myriads of other social vices which abound the region, particularly, oil theft and illegal refineries in the Niger Delta region. Chapter four makes a case for postmodern analysis in the Niger Delta conflict.

## Chapter One: The Evolution and Perspectives of the Niger Delta Conflict

### 1.1 Background and History

The “Niger Delta”<sup>1</sup>, as now defined officially by the Nigerian Government, extends over about 70,000 km<sup>2</sup> and makes up 8.5% of Nigeria’s land mass. Historically, it consists of present day Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States<sup>2</sup> (States in Nigeria are provinces or subdivision of the Federation into regional authorities with some kind of limited autonomy such as legislative, judicial and executive powers, headed by a governor which has jurisdiction over its defined territory) . In the year 2000, President Obasanjo’s regime expanded its definition to include Abia, Imo and Ondo States. Some 32 million people of more than 30 ethnic groups including the Efik Eburutu tribes, Ibibio Nation, Annang Nation, Orin Nation, Ijaw Nation, Itsekiri Nation, Urhobo Nation, Isoko, Isan, Ekwere, Igbo and, so many different tribal groups as well as clans are among the over 200 dialects in the Niger Delta. Below is a map of Nigeria showing states typically considered as part of the Niger Delta region (1. Abia, 2. Akwa Ibom, 3. Bayelsa, 4. Cross River, 5. Delta, 6. Edo, 7. Imo, 8. Ondo and 9. Rivers)

**Figure 1.1 Map of Nigeria with Niger Delta states in numbers from 1 to 9**



Source: Google Maps Nigeria, 2001.

The founder of an American based Common Sense Media, James Steyer<sup>3</sup>, says: A generation that’s been repeatedly exposed to intense, realistic violence grows up with more acceptance of aggression,

<sup>1</sup> Toyin Falola, Ann Genova, **Historical Dictionary of Nigeria**, (Maryland, USA: Scarecrow Press, 2009), p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> **Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria**, 1999, Chapter 1, Part 1, pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> James P. Steyer, “Prejudice and Injustice: The Entertainment Industry”, **Awake**: March, 2012, pp. 6-7.

less resistance to brutality, and less compassion. Indeed, according to the aims of ‘Amala Foundation’, a non-governmental organization, focused on training youths for future leadership: ‘A true peace in a society, trains people to love and appreciate humans as their own bodies, help humans to develop deep respect for life, and teaches young ones in the society to be obedient to societal values, norms and beliefs. In addition, those entrusted with positions of authority in such kind of societies should show exemplary morals based on societal ethics, irrespective of their social, ethnic group. Such characteristic of any peace loving society is extended to neighbors, irrespective of the rivalry.

Ethnic rivalry, economic inequalities and resource control, nationalism<sup>4</sup> (self-determination) and, religious rivalry are common ideologies linked to conflicts and wars. Many conflicts around the world are primarily driven by such ideologies and lack of nation states’ political will to resolve domestic problems before leading to escalation. Like many conflicts in the African continent, the Niger Delta conflict inclusive, encompasses a struggle for its mineral resources and, according to the minority right advocates, an oppression by the Federal Government of Nigeria to marginalize and exploit the region from which the Nigerian economy is sustained, then according to general perception of Nigerians, a problem catalyzed by endemic corruption, fraud and ineffective government and, selfish leaders who are only interested in satisfying their selfish agenda.

It was found that though resource control and nationalism were not the main ideologies that started the struggle, but it has become an integral part of the resistance movement and a source to sustain power through which the Niger Delta problems could be resolved. Some of the problems within the Niger Delta region range from economic and political issues to, environmental and insecurity issues and even to inter-communal difference. Self-determination and true Nationalism underpin an extensive proliferation of arms and the institutions of social vices such as violence and the pervasiveness of crimes.

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<sup>4</sup> Athena Leoussi and Steven Grosby, *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism, History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 115

## 1.2 Nigeria's Federal Structure and Politics

While the British colonial authorities were able to complete the amalgamation of Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria protectorates to form a single administrative entity in 1914, the decolonization of Nigeria started in 1946 because of the growing trends of nationalism. In 1953, a conference for Nigeria's federal system was held in London, and subsequently, Nigeria held a constitutional conference in 1957, which formalized a political arrangement based on parliamentary system, for the national elections that took place in 1959. From its independence in 1960, Nigeria operated a parliamentary<sup>5</sup> system of government with Abubakar Tafawa Balewa from the 'Northern People's Congress'<sup>6</sup> (NPC) party as the Prime Minister and, Nnamdi Azikiwa from the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) party as the country's President and Governor General.

Nigeria, being an establishment of the British colonial authority, borrowed government style and structure from the colonial masters by running two (federal and regional) tiers of government and, three arms of government namely, the executive, legislative and judiciary, with all having separation of powers and some form of independence from each other, though the appointment of principal executive officers was closely inseparable from the legislative branch because the dominant political party in parliament was likely to lead in government formation. Prior to and within the early years of Nigeria's independence, the country was divided into three geopolitical regions. These geopolitical regions were headed by Premiers<sup>7</sup> and Governors. The Hausa-Fulani and Muslim dominated Northern regional government was headed by Premier Ahmadu Bello and Governor Gwamain Westray Bell from the NPC party, the Christian-Igbo dominated Eastern regional government was headed by Premier Michael Okpara<sup>8</sup> and Governor Francis Akanu Ibiam from the NCNC party, while the Yoruba dominated Western regional government was headed by Premier Samuel Akintola and Governor Adesoji Aderemi from the Action Group (AG) party.

At the federal level, the executive branch was headed by the Governor General and the Prime Minister. The Governor General was officially the head of state and performed mostly ceremonial duties, but from 1963, after revised constitutional amendments, the office of the Governor General was changed to the President. The Prime Minister was the head of government and had federal

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<sup>5</sup> John de St. Jorre, **The Nigerian Civil War**, (London: Hodder and Stoughton Publishing, 1972), pp. 29-30.

<sup>6</sup> John de St. Jorre, **The Nigerian Civil War**, (London: Hodder and Stoughton Publishing, 1972), p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Falola Toyin, and Julius Omozuanvbo Ihonvbere, **The Rise and Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic**, 1979-1983. London: Zed Books, 1985.

<sup>8</sup> Chambers Douglas, **Murder at Montpellier: Igbo Africans in Virginia**, University Press of Mississippi, 2005, p. 22.

ministers under him as administrative officers in charge of heading the various ministries. The federal ministers were subject to the Prime Minister, for the approval of their appointments and dismissal. Also at the federal level, there was parliament (federal law makers), headed by speaker of the national assembly with other principal officers, mostly from the majority ruling party or through a coalition of the majority and other parties.

Rather than self-government for the whole nation, the northerners wanted self-government as soon as practicable and only for any region that was ready for it. They believed that each region should progress politically at its own pace. When a constitutional conference was convened in London in 1953, a federal constitution that gave the regions significant autonomy eventually emerged. This constitution remained in force, with slight amendments until independence in 1960. It enabled the regions to become self-governing at their own pace, the two southern regions in 1956 and the northern region in 1959. With this pre-independence arrangement, there was to be a federal government, in conjunction with considerable autonomy for the regional governments.

Clearly defined and limited powers were allocated to the federal government including defense, the police force, and terms of national trade, custom duties, finance and banking. Other responsibilities and services such as taxation, health care, land allocation and agriculture, education and economic development were within the authority of the regional governments. Perhaps, one of the most significant problems during early independence federal structure was the disproportionate power of the Northern region, which was politically and economically advantaged because of its population and land mass. With this kind of unbalanced structure, it was obvious that, the minority ethnic groups within the Nigerian federal arrangement were inevitably and unfairly incorporated to remain minorities. They were made to have limited voice hence the agitations of minority groups within the federal and regional structures was a deliberate attempt by the minorities to question the unfavorable federal idea of the majority groups' dominated federalism.

In fact, in pre-independence federal structure, the regional economies were agro based. That is, over 70 percent of the federal and regional governments' spending comes from agro-exports (foreign exchange inflow) earnings. Furthermore, the federal governments' main source of revenue generation was through taxation, agricultural exports (major cash crops, such as rubber, cocoa, palm oil, cashew nuts, groundnut and cotton, among others.) and custom duties. According to Dr. Akinwunmi Adeshina, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, 'in the old good days, Nigeria accounted for over 60 percent of the global supply of palm oil, 35 percent of groundnut, 23

percent of groundnut oil and 25 percent of cocoa, while farmers from the north and south made money from their sweat’.

Ironically, from the advent of large scale oil production in the 70s, the sources of Nigeria’s revenue have shifted from the primary agricultural products that came from the three and later four regions of the post-independence years to oil. This is a product that came mainly from one (the Eastern region) out of the four regions. Revenue allocation has been a major issue in the Nigerian political system even from the pre-independence era. It is of a point to note that, between 1946 to early independence, four fiscal review commissions were appointed to recommend a satisfactory revenue allocation formula for the country. The worst that the old Eastern region would expect from the federal revenue formula was the ‘land use degree’ of 1979, which was promulgated by the then military government of Gen. Obasanjo’s administration. The country’s revenue generation, from the Niger Delta (old Eastern region) remain like this until 1999 when militancy and insurgency in the oil-ravaged Niger-Delta would force the Nigerian state to concede 13 percent of the revenue that came from oil to the states from which oil is derived.

From its’ independence in 1960, Nigeria evolved from three to four regions in 1963, from four regions to twelve states in 1967, from twelve to nineteen states in 1976, from nineteen to twenty one states in 1987, from twenty one to thirty states, plus the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) in 1991, and from thirty plus FCDA to the present thirty six in 1996. Though, the present Federal Republic of Nigerian has 36 states (regional governments), plus a Federal Capital Territory - FCT (also regarded and administered like a state), and 774<sup>9</sup> local government area councils. Between 1976 and 1979, the country passed through its’ second face of democratic re-emergence under the then military Head of State, Lieutenant-General Olusegun Obasanjo. After series of talks and planning between the military leaders and the stake-holder, a constitutional conference<sup>10</sup> was held. Furthermore, Nigeria adopted the American style presidential system of government, and subsequently Nigeria held its’ second general elections in 1979, which one can refer to as, the birth of the so called ‘Second Republic’<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> USAID Nigeria mission, Nigeria administrative divisions, **United States Agency for International Development**, October 2004; accessed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Holman, Nigeria Politics: Religious Differences Intensify, **Financial Times**, 24 February 1986.

<sup>11</sup> Udofia, Nigerian Political Parties: Their Role in Modernizing the Political System, 1920–1966, **Journal of Black Studies**, June 1981; accessed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, 2012, pp. 437–447.



The second republic spanned from the years between 1979 and 1983. The five approved parties that contested the elections were the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) led by Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the AG in the 1950s, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), formed by veterans politicians like Alhaji Shehu Shagari and Makaman Bida both of whom had played prominent roles in the northern dominated NPC, in the pre and post-independence government. The others were the People's Redemption Party (PRP), the northern based opposition to the NPN under the leadership of former member of the NPC, Alhaji Aminu Kano, the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as its presidential candidate and the Greater Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, initial leader of NPP.

The present democratic regime came into effect on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1999, which is also referred to as the 'Fourth Nigerian Republic'<sup>12</sup>. General elections were held in 1999, three political parties were registered for the elections. The three political parties that participated were the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the Alliance for Democracy (AD), and the All People's Party (APP). Like previous formations, two of the parties (the AD and the APP) were ethnic and regional based. The AD represented the old western based Yoruba region while the APP represented the old northern based Hausa-Fulani region. The PDP was also viewed as a northern based but its' support cut across not only the northern region but also the old eastern region and parts of the old western region.

The parties participated without forming any alliances in the local and state elections, the Alliance for Democracy and the All People's Party formed an alliance in the presidential elections by filling a single candidate. The PDP filled a former military head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo as its' presidential candidate while the AD-APP allied block filled Chief Olu Falae as its' presidential candidate. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) won the presidential election with large majority. It pulled<sup>13</sup> 18,738,154 out of 30,280,052 votes, representing 63 percent of total votes cast while the AD-APP alliance pulled 11,110,287 votes, representing 37 percent. The PDP also won majority of seats in the bi-cameral (Senate and House of representatives) national assembly, and majority of state governors in the 36 states.

Borrowed from the American federal model, Nigeria's presidential democracy has three tiers of government, namely the federal, states and local government's administration. It also has three

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<sup>12</sup> **Fourth Nigerian Republic**, *Wikipedia-the free encyclopedia*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth Nigerian Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_Nigerian_Republic), [20-12-12].

<sup>13</sup> **Elections in Nigeria: African Elections Database**, *Wikipedia-the free encyclopedia* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian presidential election, 1999](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_presidential_election,_1999), [20-12-12].

branches of government which exists separately, namely the legislature, judiciary and the executive arms of government. Given the territorially delineated cleavages abounding in Nigeria, and the historical legacy of divisions among ethnic groups, regions, and sections, the federal idea was so fundamental that even military governments, characterized with unitary, hierarchical, and centralized, attached so much importance to the continuation of a federal system of government.

In the elections of 1979, the NPN won with widespread votes, scoring 37 percent of seats in the federal House of Representatives, 36 percent of votes in the regional state assemblies, and 38 percent of seats in the senate and, winning seven of the nineteen regional state governorships. In the presidential elections, the NPN candidate, Shagari scored 25 percent of the mandatory votes in twelve states, less than the thirteen out of the nineteen states but following a legal debate on the electoral petitions from the opposition parties. The Supreme Court upheld his election and he was sworn in as the President.

The formation of these political parties does not change from the old ethnic oriented identities. The analysis and arguments in this thesis indicates that, ethnicity<sup>14</sup> has deeply replicated itself in the Nigerian federal structure through political institutions. The ethnic based political institutions are the source of divisions, tensions and crisis. Thus, the people cannot really develop the notion of a 'United Nigeria' within the federal arrangement.

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<sup>14</sup> Lancia Nicole, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria: The Realities of Regionalism*, **George Town University Press**, (George Town: 2009); accessed on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 2011.

### 1.3 Power Distribution in Nigeria

Power distribution in Nigeria is mostly viewed on the bases of federal governments' appointment of individuals into ministries, departments and agencies. This process is seriously monitored by state Governors and regional political parties, through the federal character formula, in which a balance between the various geo-political regions and states are respected. The state powers are headed by a Governor with similar executive powers like that of a President. The power distribution in states' are similar to that of the federal character formula, by respecting the ethnic, tribal and religious composition of citizens within the state, such as executive arm of government, headed by the Governor, legislative branch, headed by the speaker of the assembly, and judicial branch of government, headed by the chief justice of the state. During post-independence democratic framework, some of the regional governments were able to even establish regional police force.

In the elections that took place in 1959, the NPC party dominated and won most of the seats, both in the federal parliament and the Northern regional government because it was the dominant majority political party in Northern Nigeria. The party also had the opportunity to form a government through coalition with NCNC party, another dominant party in the South-East. The NPC was able to dominant because the party's driven force was ethnic identity and ideology, and interest of the predominant Hausa-Fulani Islamic leadership through the Sultan and Emirs hence the NPC was viewed as an Islamic party representing the northern region.

Second reasons for the NPC's dominance can be related to the party's leader, Ahmadu Bello, the undisputed strong-man of Nigeria, who was also the Sarkin Sokoto, a traditional Islamic title given to him by the Sultan of Sokoto as the second in command to the Sultan. The point made here is that, before the coming of European colonial masters to Nigeria, and even in contemporary Nigeria, the Sultan of Sokoto is viewed in the Northern part of Nigeria as the highest stool of power and person with unquestionable authority, a dynasty inherited from the Ottoman Caliphate system, under the Ottoman Empire. His words are viewed as commands which no one can disobey. Lastly, the NPC was able to dominant because of the population ratio between Southern and Northern Nigeria. Northern Nigeria is three quarter<sup>15</sup> (3/4) of Nigeria's land area and more than half of the

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<sup>15</sup> Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence*, Public Affairs Publishing: New York, 2005, pp. 195-196.

total population of Nigeria. Thus, in the elections held in 1959, for the preparation of independence, the NPC won 134 seats out of 312 seats<sup>16</sup> in the federal parliament.

The NCNC was able to win 89 seats while the AG party also won 73 seats in the federal parliament. This is a similar population ratio which has repeated itself till date, thus the Northern region of Nigeria has dominated politics and government from independence. The majority dominated federal and regional political parties made it arduous for minorities to play significant roles in the government structures, because the three major political parties (the NPC, the NCNC and the AG) and subsequent parties that would emerge at that time represented the three major ethnic groups (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and the Igbo) within the federal and regional structures.

Politically, the Northern region had more than half of the total seats at the federal parliament, which gave them opportunity and advantage to produce the principal officers at the federal level, since democracy means that the majority opinions and resolutions inevitably decides the faith for the minority groups, irrespective of how important the opinion of such minority groups. Economically, with its' verse arable lands, the Northern region could benefit from trade through agricultural produce, because during pre and post-independence periods, the national revenue<sup>17</sup> mobilization formula was based on contributions<sup>18</sup>, from both the federal and regional governments. That is, the regional governments, contribution an agreed percentage from their overall revenue to the federal government to enable it maintain the security and defense, police force, finance and banking, and the federal civil services while the federal government allocate an agreed percent of its' revenue generated to be shared among the regional governments.

One of the many structural problems, within the Nigerian federal framework is power distribution through revenue and resource allocation. Many view power distribution as resource allocation through the election or appointment of sensitive and lucrative government positions based on ethno-regional lines, and most commonly between 'southern and northern' power sharing formula. Furthermore, the major political parties that emerge winners in elections, both at the federal and state levels tries to control the power distribution based on ethnic groups within the regions. With states' having some form of limited autonomy, the ruling party within such region becomes the major stake-

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence*, Public Affairs Publishing: New York, 2005, pp. 193-195.

<sup>17</sup> **Nigeria Economy**, Overview, <http://www.iss.co.za/af/profiles/Nigeria/Economy.html>, [20-12-2011].

<sup>18</sup> Nigeria's revenue sharing dilemma deepens, **The Economy Magazine**, <http://theeconomymag.com/news203.html>, [20-12-12].

holder of the federation government. Power sharing and political calculations of major ethnic groups have consequently centered on ensuring a balance of power along the lines of the four (north, south-south, south-east and south-west) geopolitical region. A consequence of these regional and ethnic divisions is the fragmentation of national elites and state leaders.

It's a point to note that, in the fifty three years history of Nigeria, the military had ruled the country for almost thirty years, involving several military coup d'état and unprecedented changes of government. Many of these military coups<sup>19</sup> within the military era, and even under the periods of democratic governments' were blamed on ethno-regional politics, socio-religious influences and motives, economic mismanagement and large scale corruption, causing political tensions. The allocation of resources and revenues across government and its' agencies have been a problematic issue, since the days of Nigeria's independent conferences and debates.

A major problem is the disagreement over the criteria used in revenue derivation, allocations and distribution because minority groups and even majority of people of the southern geo-political divide were opposed to the independence formula based on national population figures<sup>20</sup>. Though, to eliminate some of these political tensions, a 'federal character principle' was introduced in the 1979 constitution to balance government institutions and agencies concerning resource distribution among the geo-political regions. The unequal rates of development between the states' and the geo-political regions could be responsible for the tension and crisis, coupled with the unfair application of the federal character principle, and the unbalanced ethnic distribution which favors the majority groups.

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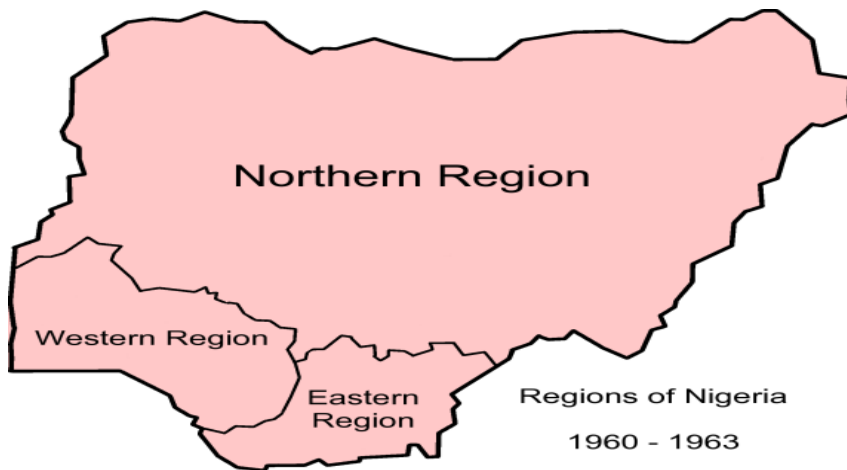
<sup>19</sup> **Nigeria - MILITARY INTERVENTION AND RULE**, [http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/nigeria/GOVERNMENT.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/nigeria/GOVERNMENT.html), [20-11-12].

<sup>20</sup> Nigeria, **CIA-World fact book**, Calculation from percentage and overall population count of Nigeria, accessed 23-11-2012.

### 1.4 Politics of Regionalism and Ethnic Identity

During the colonial period, the core Niger Delta was part of the “Eastern Region”<sup>21</sup>. Eastern Regional Administration which came into being in 1951 is one of the three regions, under the British Colonial Empire of Nigeria.

**Figure 1.2 Map of Nigeria Showing the Three Regions from 1960 to 1963**



Source: Wikimedia commons, PNG, 2010.

This Eastern region included the people from colonial Calabar and Ogoja Divisions, which are the present day Ogoja, Annang, Ibibio, Oron and the Efik people (old Calabar Kingdom), the Ijaws, and the Igbo people, with Igbo as the majority and the “National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon”<sup>22</sup> (NCNC) as the main ruling political party in the region. NCNC later became National Convention of Nigerian Citizens after Western Cameroon decided to cut-away from Nigeria and became part of Cameroon, largely due to the feeling of not-belongings in the then Eastern Region of Nigeria, and unfortunately, the ruling party of then Eastern Region of Nigeria never cared and perhaps encouraged losing western Cameroon for their political interest.

It is arguable to say that Nigeria’s multi-ethnic structure contributes to her socio-cultural differences, which is a major component of the Niger Delta conflict. The heterogeneity of the Nigerian society is also an obstacle to the advantages of globalization in Nigeria. For example, most indigenous citizens of Nigeria still hold strong to their native languages and dialect, identifies with ethnic groups for economic and political security. While multi-ethnic societies such as the United States of America (USA) have been able to co-exist in peace for many decades irrespective of their socio-cultural

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Pakenham, **The Scramble for Africa**, (Random House Press, 1991), pp. 196-199.

<sup>22</sup> Toyin Falola, Ann Genova, **Historical Dictionary of Nigeria**, (Scarecrow Press, 2009), pp. 145-151.

differences and historical rivalry during the “American independence wars”<sup>23</sup>. The Nigerian situation is mired with violence, civil unrest and, even economic and political disintegration. Above all, the diverse socio-cultural structure and ethnicity has made national identification a difficult task. The point made here is that owing to the advantages of globalization and factors of “David Ricardo’s”<sup>24</sup> theory of comparative advantage in a resources limited economic world. A country like Nigeria, with her verse potentials (resourceful lands and population), could use her economic potentials for national unity.

One common phenomenon in Nigeria is that, citizenship and national identification is under the authority of the States through their respective local government area councils. Most of the 774 local government councils in Nigeria, were established based on ethnic and tribal configuration hence the dominant groups maneuver the economic benefits, such as the administration and employment opportunity to favor their own groups. Another point to make here is that citizenship data registration is centered at the local government area council, where individuals have to acquire a certificate from the Local Government Area (LGA) of origin to be able to apply for national identity card, international travel documents and even in employment.

This obvious phenomenon is repeated at the national level, whereby ethnic identification is reflected in the political activities, such as in the distribution of national offices based on ethnic, geo-politics dynamics and rotational leadership based on Northern and Southern equality in the share of political offices. The consequence of this is that citizens may not be able to develop proper identification with the nation. Though, there were strong factors that prevented the possible breakup of the Nigerian federal framework. Firstly, before its’ independence, the British colonial authorities was able to held the country together as one unit despite the ethnic and regional divisions within the country through the 1914 amalgamation. Second, the regions were economically complementary to each other. In particular, given the export and import orientation of the colonial economy, the landlocked northern region depended greatly on the southern regions that had direct access to the sea for trade. Third, proceeding to the last faces of the independence arrangement, the leaders of Nigeria, finally realized the advantages of the country's large size, particularly its’ verse arable lands and population.

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<sup>23</sup> Stamp Kenneth, *America in 1857, A Nation on the Brink*, (Oxford University Press, 1990), accessed from Google books, 20<sup>th</sup> of June, 2011.

<sup>24</sup> David Ricardo, *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, (London: John Marray, 1817), accessed via Wikipedia, 9<sup>th</sup> of January, 2012.

### 1.5 The Early Phase of a Political Crisis

One major political crisis in the pre and post-independence Nigeria which has affected the major ethnic groups, particularly between the greater northern region and the lesser southern regions, is the issue of population distribution between the Islam dominated north and the Christian dominated south. The pre-independence population figures favored the northern region hence economically and politically, the north was advantaged to enjoy more benefits from the federal arrangement. The southern parties (eastern and northern regions), had hoped that the regional power balance could be shifted if the 1962 census favored the south because population determined the allocation of parliamentary seats on which the power of every region was based.

Since population figures were also used in allocating revenue to the regions and in determining the viability of any proposed new region, the 1962 census was approached by all regions, especially the major ethnic groups, as a key contest for control of the federation arrangement. The process was mired with many claims and complains of illegalities, such as inflation of census figures, violence during the electoral process, results falsification, and manipulation of population figures. Furthermore, the head of the census office also found evidence in some of these claims, but unfortunately, many of these illegalities happened in the southern regions; hence the northern region retained its numerical advantage in the final results of the population census. Southern leaders rejected the final census results, leading to a cancellation and called for another census in 1963. After a protracted legal battle between southern and northern political parties, the population count was finally accepted. The NCNC led southern region gave the Northern Region a population figure<sup>25</sup> of 29,758,975 out of the total 55,620,268.

The importance and sensitivity of a population census count have been national issue of debate because of its' expanded use of population figures for revenue allocations, electoral vote allocation, geopolitical allocations of the national quota system of admissions into federal schools and employment, and the establishment of industries and social amenities, such as schools, hospitals, post offices and other government institution. Furthermore, because of the volatility of the national census issues, leaders and stake-holder within the federal government have relied open the population projections based on 1963 census figures by increasing every region's population growth through a projected percentage and agreed figures for the whole country. In fact, the last national

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<sup>25</sup> **Nigeria – Government**, [http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/nigeria/GOVERNMENT.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/nigeria/GOVERNMENT.html), [17-10-11].



population count was held in 2006, conflicting and manipulated census figures emerged, leading to serious political tensions between south and northern divide hence no national population census figures were published.

Part of the present day Niger Delta problem started in 1953 when the Eastern region had a major political crisis due to the expulsion of Professor Ego Ita from office by the majority Igbo tribe of the regional government. Ego Ita, a former leader of the Eastern regional government in 1951 and also the main brain behind the formation of the NCNC after his early university studies in the United States of America. After his studies in the US, he returned to Nigeria, joined the political process and was one of the pioneer Niger Delta activists and a notable nationalists for Nigeria's independence. He was from the Efik tribe of the Calabar Kingdom. One of the ethnic minorities in the region, mainly people of the Calabar Kingdom, the Ijaws and Ogoja communities demanded a state or region of their own, the 'Calabar Ogoja Rivers' (COR) state as a result of the expulsion of their prominent leader by the Eastern regional government.

The struggle for the creation of COR state continued and was a major issue on the status of ethnic minorities in Nigeria during debates<sup>26</sup> in Europe for Nigeria's independence. Undoubtedly, there were several political movements formed by minority groups, within the three regions to press the demands for their separate regions. These minority pressure groups and parties even doubled as opposition parties in the regions and usually aligned themselves with the majority party in power in another region which supported their demands for separation. The ethnic minority movements also enabled the dominant regional parties to extend their influence beyond their regions, which inevitable caused ethnic tensions and crisis within the regional government.

A second phase of the struggle saw the declaration of Independent of the "Niger Delta Republic"<sup>27</sup> by Isaac Adaka Boro in 1966 as a result of the failures of the debates in Europe (The Nigerian Independent debates and agreements) to provide for minority rights and privileges. The third phase of the struggle saw the request for justice and the end of marginalization of the region by the Nigerian government with Ken Saro Wiwa as the lead figure of the struggle. The indigents cried for lack of development, even though the Nigerian oil money was from their lands. They also

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<sup>26</sup> BlackPast, **Nnamdi Azikiwe, Zik: A Selection from the Speeches of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Governor-General of the Federation of Nigeria, formerly President of the Nigerian Senate and formerly Premier of the Eastern Region of Nigeria**, (Cambridge University Press, 1961), accessed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Isaac Adaka-Boro, **The Twelve-Day Revelation, An Autobiography of IsaaC Jasper Adaka Boro**, (Idodo Umeh Publisher, 1982), accessed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2011.

complained about environmental pollution and destruction of their land and rivers by oil companies. Unfortunately the struggle has gotten out of control in the fourth stage of the struggle. This is further supported by a 1979 constitutional decree (addition) which afforded the Nigerian government full ownership and rights, to all territorial lands and waters; and also decided that all compensation for land would be based on the value of the crops on the land at the time of its acquisition and not on the value of the land itself. With the introduction of this decree, the Nigerian government could now distribute the land to oil companies as it deemed fit hence the situation resulted to armed conflict between the youths of Niger Delta communities and the Nigerian government.

## 1.6 Minority Right Activism and the Niger Delta Crisis

The Niger Delta Crisis is one of the oldest and unresolved problems in Nigeria's history. The conflict started as a struggle for minority rights, ethnic identity and, economic liberation, famously called the 'Resource Control Movement' which started in colonial periods.

Majority of the ethnic groups in the Niger Delta are of the opinion that, the "Amalgamation"<sup>28</sup> of the Northern and Southern Nigeria protectorates in 1914, by the colonial British authorities was one of the main causes of the Niger Delta problems. For them, the views and consent of ethnic minority groups were not asked for before the British colonial authorities forced the unification of the two protectorates. This is a view also shared by many minority ethnic groups across Nigeria, particularly because of the socio-religious divide between Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria, and secondly as a result of the ethnic tensions arising from the democratic power struggle at the federal level.

Facts remain that even the leaders of the Northern Nigeria protectorate was opposed to the Sir Fredrick Lugard's unification in 1914, fearing that Southern cultural influence could advance to the Northern region which was primitive and predominantly under the Islamic Sultan Caliphate. While a majority Hausa dominated Northern region was opposed to the amalgamation, the ethnic minority groups in the Niger Delta also made their objection to the amalgamation process. Their concerns and objections to a united federal Nigeria were based on the fact that the regional government structures and the political parties did not protect ethnic minority groups in the Niger Delta. These concerns were voiced by leaders such as Harold Dappa-Biriye, Anthony Enahoro, Ernest Sisei Ikoli, and others alike.

The contributions of Dappa-Biriye and others towards the Niger Delta struggle and other minority rights cannot be over emphasized. Harold Dappa-Piriye, a native of Bonny Town in the present day River State, who came into political leadership at a very young age in the 1940s. He was privileged to attend the Nigerian pre-independence constitutional conferences in 1957/58 at Lancaster House<sup>29</sup> (London, Britain) and also in Lagos. As a member from the Eastern delegation in the conference, he voiced his concerns and strong support for the protection of ethnic minorities from his Niger Delta region through fairness and equal justice. His bold initiative for the call to establish 'chieftaincy

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<sup>28</sup> Rex Niven, *Lugard and the Amalgamation of Nigeria: A Documentary Record* by Kirk-Greene, (London: Cass, 1968), pp. 200-281, accessed from *Oxform Journals of African Affairs*, 20<sup>th</sup> of June, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Zik: A Selection from the Speeches of Nnamdi Azikiwe*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 135, accessed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 2012.

house' in the Eastern region to balance the Northern regions' caliphate traditional institutions in the independence frame work. These concerns led to the constitution of the Willink Commission<sup>30</sup>, though the Willink Commission was unable to undertake and resolve all the fears and concerns<sup>31</sup> of minorities groups, but was able to recommend the establishment of a 'Niger Delta Special Area and Development board'<sup>32</sup> for the development of this area.

As a founding member of the, National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun in 1944, one of the early political parties, he was dissatisfied with the policies and organizational structure of the NCNC towards minority concerns and agitations, particularly ethnic groups from the Niger Delta, he abandoned the NCNC and formed his own political party, the "Niger Delta Congress"<sup>33</sup> (NDC) to champion his Niger Delta struggle. Continuing with his struggles in the late 1960s, he clamored for 'True-Federalism' and restructuring of the Nigerian federation (the Trio-Regions) into smaller administrative regions with autonomy based on the ethnic dynamics of such region.

Anthony Enahoro, an Esan, one of the ethnic minority groups from the Niger Delta in the present day Edo state, is a pro-democracy advocate, also known for his strong anti-colonial activism, is a figure Nigerian history will always remember. Called the father of Nigeria, in 1953 he was the first bold Nigerian to move the motion for Nigeria's independence though his independence motion triggered a walkout by parliament members from the Northern region hence his motion was rejected. The rejection was a setback for many of his supporters but this singular minority voice was remarkable in Nigeria's history. Though Anthony's independence motion failed to pass through parliamentary process in 1953, but his boldness encouraged Samuel Ladoke Akintola, another anti-colonial activist from the Western region, to move similar independence motion in 1957 and it was passed by parliament but failed acquiesced by the colonial British authorities. In August 1958, Remi Fani-Kayode was able to move a successful independence motion, it was passed by parliament and got acquiesced from the British authorities hence Nigeria was granted independence on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1960.

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<sup>30</sup> John Enemugwen, The Development of the Niger Delta of Nigeria, **Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa**, (Clarion University of Pennsylvania, 2009), Vol. 10, No. 4, p. 168

<sup>31</sup> John Enemugwen, The Development of the Niger Delta of Nigeria, 1900 – 1966, **Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa**, (Clarion University of Pennsylvania, 2009), Volume 10, No.4, pp. 164-174.

<sup>32</sup> **The Independence Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria**, 1960, Section 14; **The Republican Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria**, 1963, Section 159.

<sup>33</sup> K. W. Post, The Nigerian Federal Election of 1959: Politics and Administration in a Developing Political System, **The Journal of Politics**, (Oxford University Press, August 1964), Vol. 26, Issue 03, accessed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, 2012.

For many who link the Niger Delta crisis to ‘Resource Control’, it is arguable to say that the conflict predates the present drive. Long before Shell Petroleum Company made discovery of crude oil in Oloibiri (A rural village in Nigeria where crude oil was first discovered and explored for commercial production, in the present day Bayelsa State) in 1956, many of the minority peoples who dominate the Niger Delta had petitioned the British Colonial administration with concerns that they were being marginalized. The petition resulted in a commission of inquiry set up by the British Colonial Authorities and was headed by Sir Henry Willink on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, 1957. One outcome of the work of the Willink Commission of inquiry was the setting up of a Niger Delta Basin Authority by the early independent government of Nigeria to drive economic development for the people of the Niger River region.

The initiatives of the Willinks Commission inquiry was neglected by the British authorities and even the Nigerian authorities, who choose to ignore the plight and demand of the people of the region. The extraction of wealth from Niger Delta benefited the Nigerian government and the oil producing companies. At the same time, it despoiled the region’s environment and took away traditional means of livelihood from the region’s people who were offered no employment alternatives.

A widely celebrated playwright author and minority right activist from the Niger Delta, late Ken Saro-Wiwa, substituted Boro’s gun for a pen. He formed and spear headed the ‘Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People’<sup>34</sup> (MOSOP) in 1992. MOSOP became the major campaigning organization representing the Ogoni people in their struggle for ethnic and environmental rights<sup>35</sup>. Their primary targets are the Nigerian government and Royal Dutch Shell. Beginning in December 1992, the crisis between the Ogoni communities and the oil companies escalated to a level of greater seriousness and intensity was build up on both sides. Both parties began carrying out acts of violence and MOSOP issued an ultimatum to the oil companies (Shell, Chevron, and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation), demanding some \$10 billion in accumulated royalties, damages and compensation, immediate stoppage of environmental degradation, and negotiations for mutual agreement between host communities and the oil company on all future drilling.

The Ogoni communities, threatened to embark on mass action to disrupt oil operations if the companies failed to comply with their demand. By this act, the Ogoni communities shifted the focus

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<sup>34</sup> **Human Rights Watch**, The Ogoni Crisis: A Case-Study of Military Repression in South-Eastern Nigeria, 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1995.

<sup>35</sup> Okechukwu Ibeanu, Oiling the Friction: Environmental Conflict Management in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, **Environmental Change & Security Report**, Issue 6, Summer 2000, p.20

of their actions from an unresponsive Nigerian government to the oil companies in their own communities. The rationality for this assignment of responsibility was the benefits accrued by the oil companies from extracting the natural wealth of the people and neglect from the Nigerian government.

The government responded by banning public gatherings and declaring that disturbances of oil production were acts of treason. Military repression escalated in May 1994. On May 21, soldiers and mobile policemen appeared in most Ogoni villages. On that day, four Ogoni chiefs (all on the conservative side of a schism within MOSOP over strategy) were brutally murdered. Saro-Wiwa, head of the opposing faction, had been denied entry into Ogoni-land on the day of the murder, but he was detained in connection with the killings. The occupying forces under the command of the federal government, led by Major Paul Okuntimo of Rivers State internal security, claimed to be searching for those directly responsible for the killings of the four Ogoni chiefs. However, witnesses say that they engaged in terror operations against the general Ogoni population. Amnesty International characterized the policy as deliberate terrorism. By mid-June, the security forces had razed 30 villages, detained 600 people and killed at least 40. This figure eventually rose to 2,000 civilian deaths and the displacement of around 100,000 people.

In May 1994, nine activists from the movement who would become known as “The Ogoni Nine”, among them Ken Saro-Wiwa, were arrested and accused of incitement to murder following the deaths of the four Ogoni elders. Saro-Wiwa and his comrades denied the charges but were imprisoned for over a year before being found guilty and sentenced to death by a specially convened tribunal which was hand-selected by the then military ruler, General Sani Abacha, on 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1995. The activists were denied due process and upon being found guilty, were hanged by the Nigerian government. The executions were met with an immediate international respond and sanctions.

The trial was widely criticized by human rights organizations and the governments of other states, who condemned the Nigerian government's long history of detaining their critics, mainly pro-democracy and other political activists. The Commonwealth of Nations, which had also pleaded for clemency, suspended Nigeria's membership in response. The United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and the European Union (EU) all implemented sanctions, but not on petroleum exploration, production and marketing by European oil companies. However, a 2001 Greenpeace report found that, two of the witnesses which accused Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other activists later

admitted that Shell and the military had bribed them with promises of money and jobs at Shell. Shell admitted having given money to the Nigerian military, who brutally tried to silence the voices which claimed justice.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1998, youths and youth groups representing communities, clans, local government areas from Ijaw ethnicity came together in the home town of late Isaac Adaka Boro (Kaiama town, in Kolokumor and Opokumor Local Governmental Area of Bayelsa State), in a meeting called All Ijaw Youths Conference; crystallized solidarity for the Ijaw struggle to control oil and gas resources in their land. This Ijaw national youths' meeting, led to the formation of the 'Ijaw Youth Council'<sup>36</sup> (IYC) and the issuing of the Kaiama Declaration. In the declaration, and in a letter sent to the oil companies, the Ijaw youths called for oil companies to suspend all oil operations and withdraw from Ijaw communities. The youths' pledged to struggle peacefully for freedom, self-determination and ecological justice, and prepared a campaign of celebration, prayer for direct and action.

The action of the Kaiama declaration was called Operation Climate Change, which was to begin from December 28, 1998. In the following days after the declaration, two warships and about 20,000 Nigerian government troops occupied Bayelsa and Delta states as the IYC mobilized for Operation Climate Change. Soldiers entering the Bayelsa state capital of Yenagoa announcing that they were there to attack the youths trying to stop the oil companies. On the morning of December 28, thousands of young people processed through Yenagoa, dressed in black, singing and dancing. Soldiers opened fire with rifles, machine guns, and tear gas, killing and arresting the protesting young people.

As events became unprecedented, the military declared a state of emergency throughout Bayelsa and Delta states, imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew, banning all kind of meetings, military roadblocks where mounted in all major roads and rivers, local residents were severely beaten and some even detained. At night, soldier's invaded private homes, terrorizing residents with beatings and raping women and girls. On January 4<sup>th</sup> 1999, about one hundred soldiers from the military base at Chevron's Escravos facility attacked<sup>37</sup> Opia and Ikiyan, two Ijaw communities in Delta State. The traditional leader of Ikiyan community, who came to the river to negotiate with the soldiers, was shot

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<sup>36</sup> Basil Ugorji, **From Cultural Justice to Inter-Ethnic Mediation, A Reflection on the Possibility of Ethno-Religious Mediation in Africa**, (New York, USA: Outskirts Press, 9<sup>th</sup> of March, 2012), pp. 14-20

<sup>37</sup> **Human Rights Watch**, Delta Crackdown, May 1999.

along with a seven-year-old girl and dozens of others. The same soldiers set the village ablaze, destroying<sup>38</sup> canoes and fishing facilities, killing livestock, destroying traditional religious shrines. Nonetheless, Operation Climate Change continued, and disrupted Nigerian oil supplies through much of 1999 by turning off oil supply valves in Ijaw communities.

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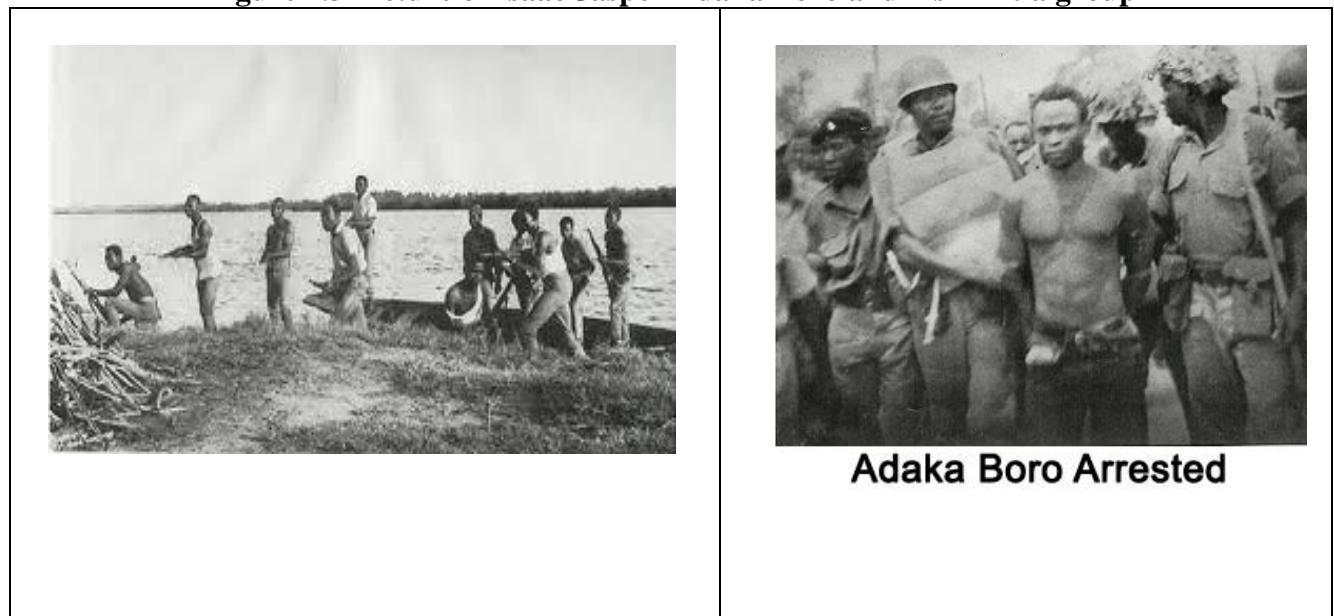
<sup>38</sup> Sola Adebayo, Niger Delta: We have lost over 2,000 persons-Gbaramatu Kingdom, **The Punch News Nigeria**, accessed from <http://archive.punchng.com/Article.aspx?theartic=Art20090523643265>, [10-06-2012].



### 1.7 The Armful Stages of the Conflict

Major Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro, fondly called “Boro”, was a celebrated Niger Delta nationalist and Nigerian civil war hero. He was one of the pioneers of minority rights activists in Nigeria and, also one of first to use militia groups to champion ethnic struggle. An undergraduate student of chemistry and student union President at the University of Nigeria, he left school to lead an armed protest against the exploitation of oil and gas resources in the Niger Delta areas which benefitted mainly the federal government of Nigeria and a remote Eastern Nigeria regional government. For Boro, the people of the area deserved a fairer share of proceeds from the oil wealth. He formed the “Niger Delta Volunteer Force”<sup>39</sup> (NDVF), an armed militia with members constituting mainly of his fellow Ijaw ethnic group. The NDVF declared independence for the region and called it the “Niger Delta Republic”<sup>40</sup> (the Niger Delta Volunteer Force and The Twelve-Day Revolution) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, 1966 and gallantly battled the Federal forces for twelve days but were finally overpowered by the far superior Nigerian government forces. Boro and his compatriots were captured, arrested and jailed for treason.

**Figure 1.3 Picture of Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro and his Militia group**



Source: Bayelsa New Media Team, July 24, 2012

<sup>39</sup> Gab Ejuwa, 45 Years after, Isaac Boro’s Second in Command Opens Up: Stark Realities of the Niger Delta motivated our armed rebellion, **Vanguard News Paper**, 24<sup>th</sup> of July, 2011. pp. 3-4.

<sup>40</sup> **Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**, Isaac Adaka Boro, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac\\_Adaka\\_Boro](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Adaka_Boro), [28-10-2011].

However, the federal regime of General Yakubu Gowon granted him amnesty on the eve of the Nigerian civil war in May 1967. He then enlisted and was commissioned as a major in the Nigerian army. He fought on the side of the Federal Government but was killed under mysterious circumstances in active service in 1968 at Ogu (Okrika) in Rivers State, after successfully liberating the Niger Delta from the Biafran Forces - Republic of Biafra.

The ethnic unrest and conflicts of the late 1990s such as those of “Ijaw and Itsekiri Conflict”<sup>41</sup> also indicates that a lasting solution for peace in the Niger Delta must seriously strive above and beyond national politics based on ethnicity. The crisis, which is characterized as a struggle to control the city of Warri, the largest metropolitan area in Delta State and therefore a prime source of political patronage, has been an especially fiercely contested prize. This has given birth to heated disputes between the Ijaw, the Itsekiri and the Urhobo about which of the three groups are ‘truly indigenous’ to the Warri region, with the underlying presumption been that the ‘real ethnic indigenes’ should have control of the levels of powers, regardless of the fact that all the three groups enjoy equal political rights in their places of residence.

Coupled with a spike in the availability of small-arms - Jacqueline Seck, in his ‘West Africa small Arms Moratorium’ define small arms as explosive hand used guns such as revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, sub-machine guns and light machine guns and, light-weapons. The United Nations (UN) and the Program for Coordination and Assistance on Security and Development (PCASSED) definitions which include heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles and mortars of calibers less than 100 millimeters, led increasingly to the militarization of the Delta. By this time, local and state officials had become involved; by offering financial and logistic support to militia groups to enable them achieve their own political agenda. Conflagrations have been concentrated primarily in Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States.

Before 2003, the epicenter of regional violence was in Warri and the riverine communities around the Itsekiri, Ijaw, Urhobo and Isoko areas. However, after the formation of different armed groups and the violent convergence of the largest militia groups and their war-lords. According to the English encyclopedia, war-lords are persons with military and civil powers within a sovereign state territory, that control sub-national areas and territories due to armed forces which are loyal to him

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<sup>41</sup> Bronwen Manby, *The Warri Crisis: Fueling Violence*, (**Human Rights Watch**, 2003), Vol. 18a, p. 4.

instead of a central or legitimate authority to do so. The Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) was led by Mujahid Dokubo Asari; the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) was led by Ateke Tom while the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) was led by Henry Okah.

With the out-break of communal conflicts between ethnic groups and rural communities within the Niger Delta and, the advent of large scale availability of illegal small arms in Nigeria, the region became militarized and security was a serious concern for many people living in the region. Most of the victims of these groups were innocent civilians because some of the activities of these militia members range from armed robbery in the water ways and roads to political toggerly. The three groups dwarf a plethora of smaller militia groups numbering in hundreds led by smaller war loads. These smaller groups are classified as Secret Cults (A common male dominated secret fraternity's in Nigeria higher institutions that often use violent means against others in order to achieve their aims) , many of which are linked to university fraternities.

The smaller groups are autonomous but their leaders or the so called smaller war loads had alliances with MEND, NDPDF or NDV and others that provide them with military support and instruction. MEND, NDPDFV and NDV sustain their structure and organization, and attempted to control oil resources in Ijaw homelands through 'Oil Bunkering'. Oil bunkering is an illegal process in petroleum business in which petroleum pipeline or well is tapped and the products are extracted onto carriers or vessel and transported through secret channels to their destinations then sold in the illegal market.

Though the international community, oil corporations and organizations and, the Nigerian government point out that oil bunkering is illegal but militants in the Niger Delta justifies bunkering – arguing that, they are being exploited and have not received adequate benefits from the oil produce in the Niger Delta, which has enriched some politicians and the ruling class, has ecologically destroyed their homeland and environment, and above all the oil revenue is used to develop cities and towns which does not generate any revenue for the Nigerian state.

**Figure 1.4 Picture of an armed group before the Amnesty**



Source: AFP and Getty Image, Google Pictures, 2007

The intense confrontation between NDPVF and NDV contributed to the violence and insecurity in Rivers state as a result of political disagreements between Asari and Peter Odili - former governor of Rivers State, between 1999 to 2007, following the politically motivated assassination of Marshal Harry and the April 2003 elections in Rivers state which Asari publicly criticized hence Peter Odili withdrew financial assistance to NDPVF and started financial and logistic support to Ateke Tom's led NDV to undermined the influence of Asari led NDPVF in the region. The government forces collaborated with the NDV during the conflict, and were protecting NDV militiamen from attacks by the NDPVF. Consequently the state government felt the escalation and the campaign against the governor by bringing in more security personnel from the specially trained mobile police, army, and navy units of the federal reserve forces that began occupation of the Port Harcourt in June 2004.

By September 2004, the situation was rapidly approaching a violent climax which caught the attention of the international community hence the Nigerian military launching a mission to wipe out NDPVF, approved by former President Olusegun Obasanjo in early September. While on the other side, Asari declared "All-Out War" against the Nigerian government and the oil companies operating in the region by threatening to disrupt oil production through attacks on oil wells and pipelines. This quickly caused a major crisis the following days as some oil companies, particularly Shell which evacuated more than 200 non-essential personnel from two oil fields, cutting oil production by 30,000 barrels per day.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, the principal militant group known as MEND, launched a guerrilla-style battle, beginning in late 2004. It attacks oil facilities and kidnaps foreign oil workers in what it calls a crusade to bring development to a region whose residents have enjoyed few of the benefits from over 30 years of oil production.

On May 15 2009, a military operation undertaken by a Nigerian government forces began massive offensive campaign against the Movement and the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), a militia group operating in the Niger Delta region. It has come in response to the kidnapping of Nigerian soldiers and foreign sailors in the Delta region. Thousands of Nigerians fled their villages and hundreds of people were killed in the offensive. The developments followed shows of force by the government and the militants in a conflict that has grown increasingly bloody and aggressive. Human rights groups said the bombings displaced and killed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of civilians. These claims could not be substantiated.

## 1.8 The Niger Delta Amnesty Program

Signs of possible truce and peace started building in the conflict-plagued Niger Delta region amid a government offer of Amnesty<sup>42</sup> to militia groups if they halt all kind of criminal attacks on oil facilities and kidnappings of oil company works, family members of political leaders and community leaders. In the early stages of the Amnesty proposal from the federal government, many analysts and observers warn that the calm from the federal government forces could be a prelude to a possible all-out war to eliminate militants.

The government was set to begin disarming as many as 10,000 militants in a 60-day amnesty program, though it revealed little about how it will reintegrate participants into society or address the demands for increased development and oil revenue that Niger Delta militants say drive their campaign though the Nigerian government says, it will give cash, job training and pardons to militants who turn in weapons. However, earlier before the start of the amnesty process, the Nigerian officials granted one of MEND's demands by releasing its leader, Henry Okah, who was jailed on treason and weapons-trafficking charges hence the group in response to Okah's release declare a 60-day cease-fire and free its last six hostages. But the group, which wants a military-led security task force to withdraw from the delta, initially shunned the amnesty offer.

It is a point to note that many of the militants began their careers as thugs hired by corrupt Niger Delta politicians to ensure electoral victory through intimidating and killing of their political opponents. Most rational and factual analysts regard them as "Cash-Hungry Gangs" often in cahoots with politicians and military members than freedom fighters as they claim.

In the months following the announcement of late President Yar Adua's amnesty program, and intense consultation from politicians, community leaders and the Presidential amnesty office led by Timi Alaabe with militant leaders such as Tom Polo, Ateke Tom, Boyloaf and others alike, the militia groups agree to a ceasefire, reconciliation and accepted the conditions of reinstating peace in the Niger Delta. The process of reconciliation which is an integral part of peace building and one of the main components of post-conflict management has seen the militant disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration, though many commentators and opposition parties have question the seriousness of the process without the answers to the fundamental problems of

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<sup>42</sup> Xan Rice, Nigeria begins amnesty for Niger Delta militants: Rebels in oil-rich region expected to hand in weapons for cash and pardon as 60-day offer by government comes into effect, **Guardian News Paper**, 6<sup>th</sup> of August, 2009, pp. 1-2.

developmental projects in the region; and the question of corruption? The many commentaries and concerns express by the rural oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta; particularly lack of infrastructural development, the huge amount of money spent on the Presidential Amnesty program and the process of the Amnesty program are some of the subjects of discuss in the next and following chapters of this Thesis paper.

Before ending this chapter with a short summary, the thesis draws attention to, some very critical questions. Who are the major actors in this Conflict? The actors to look at in this crisis are quite much, with each having a very distinct and important role to play in the struggle for domination and control of the resources that abound the Niger Delta region. They include, from state to non-state actors; from small to large groups, the list is large, probably because of the different ethnic groups that make up this region; the different oil companies and the Nigerian government itself that gets most of its resources from the sale of crude oil, for the sake of this academic work, they will be divided into three main actors, namely: The government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, The multi-national Oil companies (Shell, Mobil Chevron, Total, Agip and the state owned NNPC), and the Militants. There are many more of these organizations based in the Niger delta that are actors in this conflict, but these seems to be the most notable ones. The politics of this region is quite complex, the actors are quite interesting, and for these reasons they have been narrowed down to three.

## 1.9 Chapter Summary

Some of the basic and fundamental attributes to the Niger Delta conflict is the definition of power by the Nigerian leaders and the constitution and laws of the Nigerian state. Second characteristic or contribution to the conflict is fueled by ethnic and religious differences. The third attribute to the conflict is the struggle for power. This is because the laws of Nigeria are only enforced upon the poor or the less privileged class. The rich and the ruling class in Nigeria societies define power based on wealth, leadership and connections a person has to control the government channels of power distribution. Since the return of democracy in 1999 till date, the sovereign citizens of Nigerian, particularly the national assembly, empowered to deliberate and enact laws for the well-being of the ordinary citizens, could not drafted their own constitution even when eminent and respected scholars like Professor Wole Soyinka, Anthony Enhor.

In facts, majority of Nigerians have supported the called for a sovereign national conference to address the problems of Nigeria and to draft a constitution that should protect the interest and rights of all groups and classes in the society - majority and minority, poor and rich, but the so called ruling class in the society has refused the call for a new constitution which they feel will reduce their powers. Great leader and Nigeria national hero, Chief Obafemi Awolowo's proposals<sup>43</sup> for true federalism could have been one of the solutions to Nigeria long standing problem of constitutional irregularities. The Land Use Act 1978 and the Petroleum Act of 1969 and 1991 are example of how laws are made in Nigeria without consulting or considering the interest of the people in whose land the resources are been extracted from. Since Nigeria's independence in 1960 till date, the northern part of Nigeria's led military and their political leaders' had dominated the political power and economic resources of the country against Nigeria's federal arrangement. According to Professor Sagay, Political domination and economic centralization has characterized the current arrangement in Nigeria since 1966.

In the next chapter, I will discuss and provide understandable review of the amnesty program. While the next chapter will focus mainly on the analysis of the ongoing amnesty process, the intense nature of the region before the introduction of the amnesty will be examined also. The chapter will also defend the arguments (hypothesis) in this thesis by identifying the gains (advantages and disadvantages) of the process with commendations on the areas in which the program has impacted positively in the region.

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<sup>43</sup> Obafemi Awolowo, **Path to Nigerian Freedom**, London: Faber, 1949, pp. 48-49.



## Chapter Two: The Achievements and Challenges of the Amnesty Program

### 2.1 Introduction and Brief History

The Niger Delta conflict as it is currently can be said to have started proper in the early 1990s'. The region, blessed with vast oil "reserves"<sup>44</sup>, and having explored and exported crude oil for several decades; the region still remain amongst the poorest in the world. The Niger Delta region, is home to over 80% of the country's oil reserves , but yet remains largely under developed, with most of its villages lacking proper pipe bourn water, no electricity, schools are dilapidated and quality of life in a pathetic state. Nigeria gets more than 75% of its annual revenue from the sale of crude oil, since it was first discovered in Oloibiri in commercial quantity in 1956. High hopes of massive development (in the region), sudden and accelerated civilization and general great excitement had greeted the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in 1956. There was very little awareness though, about the hazards and pains related with the exploration of crude oil. Pollution of waters and loss of farm lands; deforestation and related ecological effects from the exploration of crude oil were alien to the people of the region.

The reality is that, having suffered decades of pollution, inability to cultivate crops on previous farm lands, and unable to fish on their waters hence all the ingredients for a violence and conflict became inevitable. It soon dawned on the people, the damaging effects of oil exploration on their environment and the continued neglect by respective governments and multi-national oil companies. The several decades of neglect and agitation from the people, had cultivated especially amongst youths, a saddening feeling of a very "bleak future"<sup>45</sup>, thus taking up arms seemed the only viable option to them.

As at 2005, the region accounted for about 23% of the country's population, with the population density amongst the highest in the world. It is estimated to be about 265 people per kilometer squared. Therefore with a growing young and vibrant population, increased struggle for very scarce resources, lack of federal government presence, the country was surely seating on a keg of gun powder, which was destined to explode, as it was just a matter of time. Thus the stage had been set

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<sup>44</sup> **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries**, Nigeria's facts and figures, [http://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/about\\_us/167.htm](http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/167.htm), [15-10-2012].

<sup>45</sup> United Nations Development Program (UNDP), **Niger Delta Human Development Report**, 2006, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/nationalreports/africa/nigeria/name,3368,en.html>, [10-12 -2012].

for a conflict that has lasted for more than a decade, mainly traceable to political and economic issues, but was triggered by ‘social and environmental factors’<sup>46</sup>.

The conflict itself, started out as pockets of peaceful demonstrations against multinationals operating in the region. The government’s response in collaboration with the multinationals was to crack down on the people. In mid 1990s, when the military government (headed by General Sani Abacha), executed the now famous ‘Ogoni nine’ (which included, the famous play writer, Ken Saro Wiwa), the conflict had gotten the final spark it needed.

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<sup>46</sup> Uwafiokun Idemudia & Uwem E. Ite, “Demystifying the Niger Delta conflict: Towards an integrated explanation”, *Journal of African Political Economy*, 2006, Vol.33, Issue 109, pp. 3-6.

## 2.2 Escalation of Violent Activities

The conflict quickly metamorphosed into well-coordinated violent resistance, utilizing well publicized attacks carried out by several armed militia groups. The region over the last decade, has witnessed the kidnappings of oil expatriate workers, and attacks on oil installations. The militia groups took it a notch higher in the early 2000's, improving to the breaking of oil pipelines to steal thousands of barrels of crude oil, to finance their purchase of weapons to fight against the federal government military forces. The militias saw the government, and its multinationals partners, as enemies, viewing them as the sole beneficiaries of the natural resources of the people. Originally these militias claimed a 'Robin Hood' manner and style of operations. Portraying themselves as Messiahs, who had come to free their people from years of suffering from economic, social and political deprivation<sup>47</sup>? Of course over the years, this has proven not to be the case, as the heads of these groups have only enriched and empowered very close family members and associates.

At the peak of the conflict, the militias were able to cripple the country's daily crude oil production to as low as 500,000 barrel per day. This was a far cry, from its OPEC quota of 2.5million barrels per day, meaning a serious reduction in heavily dependent oil revenue. So these coordinated attacks, steaming from the endemic poverty of the people of the region, and the continued pollution of their waters, had for sure hurt the government, the way the militias intended. A lucrative criminal industry had developed as a result of the activities of the militias. Crude oil theft, which saw the siphoning of thousands of barrels of crude, from government owned oil pipelines.

**Figure 2.1 Picture of Heavily Armed Militia Group During 2007**



Source: Vanguard News Nigeria, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010

<sup>47</sup> Cyril Obi, "Oil extraction, dispossession, resistance and conflict in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta, *Canadian journal of development studies*, 2010, Vol.30, Issue1-2.

Politically the country seemed on the verge of another bloody civil war, considering the arms in the possession of these militant groups, and the disgruntled cries of the other parts of the country. So, when in 2009 the then President of Nigeria, Umar Yar'Adua, proposed an amnesty program, many saw it as a solution to achieve long lasting peace in the region and also to bring the desired levels of development, the people had clamored for many years.

### 2.3 The Amnesty Process and the Militia Engagement

In 2009 ( between August and October), militants were offered the opportunity to hand over their weapons, in exchange for government pardon, training in non-violence, vocational training in different crafts such as, welding, carpentry, ship and boat building, amongst others. Some of these training were to be carried out in Nigeria, while others were to be carried out abroad. After these trainings, the ‘Ex Militants’ as they were to be known, would be paid \$410 per month, until they are able to find employment. Thousands of youths took this offer, including several heads of these militia groups, handing over their weapons to the government, in well publicized ceremonies and thereby kick starting the Amnesty program proper.

**Figure 2.2 Pictures of Arms Recovered from Militants during the Amnesty Program**



Source: Isaac Umunna, Africa Today, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Prior to the introduction of the amnesty program, thousands of innocent people had been killed, hundreds of expatriate workers kidnapped, and the violence had reached its peak in 2008. The government had lost billions of dollars in oil revenue to the activities of these militia groups, and the program seemed a very viable and progressive formula for restoration of peace and resumption of oil production in the region. Thus it was considered a small price to pay, to address an issue that most past governments had failed to deal with decisively.

Today the amnesty program has reduced violence in the region, crude oil production is back up again, thousands of ex-militants have received one form of vocational training or another and overall the region is relatively peaceful. The aim here though, is to try to critically analyze the progress made so far; and also to look at the advantages and disadvantages of the amnesty program as a whole.

## 2.4 The Advantages of the Amnesty Program

The introduction of the amnesty program by the then president of Nigeria, Umar Yar'Adua, was viewed in many quarters as a bold step by the federal government to finally address the needs of the Niger Delta region. Considering what the country was losing economically, socially and even on the political front, the program, seemed a very reasonable platform to build future plans of peace and security in the region; and to attract investments that will create employment opportunities and development. Before the inception of the program, the violence in the region had been on the increase and the threat of spreading to other parts of the country was on the rise as well. Oil revenues were at an all-time low, expatriate oil workers were being kidnapped on a regular basis, forcing some of these multi-nationals oil companies to reconsider their continued operations in the region.

Therefore, in a coordinated attempt to rebuild peace in the region, disarm militants, rehabilitate them, and subsequently reintegrate them back to society, thus the birth of the amnesty program. There are three phases to the amnesty program. Phase one involves the disarmament and demobilization of the militants. Phase two, the rehabilitation and reintegration of the militants, and while the final stage is to be the post amnesty program, which will involve massive infrastructural development of the region. The ex-militants were gathered in designated centers in the core six Niger Delta states, with a monthly upkeep payment of \$407 approximately. The first phase has already been implemented<sup>48</sup>. Thousands of weapons were handed over by the former militants, as it was recorded that 26,358 ex militants accepted the amnesty program and handed over their weapons.

The second phase of the program kicked started in November 2010, had 6,166 ex-militants representing the ones that accepted the amnesty offer after October 2009. The trainings were carried out in batches, as each batch of ex-militants was billed in their training camp for four weeks. During this period, they were put through a reorientation program, counseling, moral and spiritual regeneration. While the final part, which involves massive infrastructural development, is still ongoing, especially with the current rehabilitation of the East-West road.

Today there are tangible benefits of the program to look at, despite the fact that a lot still remains to be done. Thus this part of the thesis is intended to explore critical attention to the advantages of the amnesty program; the disadvantages will also be looked into. This section will be rounded up, by looking at the way forward; that is, the post amnesty in the Niger Delta region. So, by this way, the

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<sup>48</sup> Gen. Israel Akpodoro, <http://www.nairaland.com/abolo/posts>, [20-12-2012].

economic, political and social gains will be better discussed and not lumped together as one and to clearly state the benefits reaped from the program.

An economy benefit of the amnesty program is probably the best place to start from when critically looking at the advantages of the program. As the importance of the region to the Nigerian economy, this is heavily built on the influx of oil revenue that accounts for over 75% of its annual revenue. Thus most people have argued that, when the amnesty initiative was conceived by the federal government, it had at the heart of its true intention, the economic gains from the region as well as for the people, instead of oil generating and better fortune which would translate into a better life, but the present state of the region, shows that most of the people still live below a Dollar per day<sup>49</sup>. The proceeds from oil revenue for the Nigerian government and the multi-nationals oil companies are massive, but have only created an impoverished population and resulted in an armed conflict.

In 2008 alone, the Nigerian government estimated to have lost over \$23 billion<sup>50</sup> to oil attacks, bunkering and sabotage, coupled with the inability to meet its OPEC quota. As well, the multinationals are estimated to have lost over \$21 billion, between 2003 & 2010. Today as a direct consequence of the introduction of the amnesty program, the country's oil production had risen back to about 2.6 million barrels per day, compared to the all-time low of about 700,000 barrels per day in 2009.

It is also important to note here that, oil pipelines and installations have been repaired, and the flow of oil has relatively returned to normalcy. The oil economy is booming once more, as well as all the associated industries. Thus from an economic stand point, the amnesty program, has proven to be successful, as the oil revenues of the country is up again. Though a criminal economy has also developed as well, oil theft and illegal activities has also grown too. The economic benefits though seem to outweigh the criminal economy that has developed side by side with the amnesty program. Thousands of ex-militants have acquired vocational training, entrepreneurship, all with the aim of contributing positively to the local economy and the national economy at large. That once they have received these trainings, they will be more useful to themselves, their families, communities, region and the country at large. Though this belief is hinged on the hope that, they will be able to secure gainful employment, pay their bills and stop criminal activities. Thus the amnesty program is

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<sup>49</sup><http://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org/index.php?mact=News.cntnt01,print,0&cntnt01articleid=50&cntnt01showtempl ate=false&cntnt01returnid=114>, [22-10-2012].

<sup>50</sup> William Wallis, **Nigeria losing \$1bn a month to oil theft**, Africa, June 26, 2012, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/61fb070e-bf90-11e1-a476-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2ON0VvOy9>, [12-11-2012].

believed to have improved the human capital development of the country, which is still relatively low, compared to other oil rich countries of the Middle Eastern region.

Some analyst have argued that the amnesty program, is simply the most aggressive step taking till date by the federal government, with regards to human capital building. As a direct consequence of the program, investors (local and foreign) are returning gradually, as the issues of kidnapping and violence (investment security) in the region has greatly reduced over the years. At the height of the conflict in 2008, the economy of the country had virtually been brought to a standstill. Local and foreign investors were massively moving out, preferring<sup>51</sup> to head to Angola or Gabon, as the case may be.

This thesis find out that pessimism has slowly given way to renewed optimism in the activities and actions of the federal government, with regards to the overall economic development of the Niger Delta region. Oil multinationals that had previously shut down their operations are back, and the country's oil production stabilized. This has increased confidence in the international community, of its ability to meet its contractual obligations with international consumers. As well the country has regained its influential position in OPEC, as a direct consequence of the return of peace in the region.

The first major political benefit of the amnesty program would be the cessation of violence in the region and the return of relative peace. The country seemed on the verge of another civil war outbreak taking into context the arms proliferation in the region, over the years. All of the previous initiatives of the federal government, such as development bodies set up, had all fail to bring the long lasting solution the people craved for. The activities of these militants had seriously threatened the nascent democracy of Nigeria, as political discourse was developing across the different parts of the country. Tensions were building, as these militants were viewed as criminals and terrorists by most political actors, who are not from the region.

Instability in the region had shaken the foundations upon which Nigeria's democracy was built. A country of over 250<sup>52</sup> ethnic groups and a region home to over 40 ethnic<sup>53</sup> groups, coupled with a history of political mistrust, violence in the region did not mean well for the politics of the country.

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<sup>51</sup> Nigeria losing investments in oil sector to Ghana, Angola?, <http://www.ghanabusinessnews.com/2009/02/16/nigeria-losing-investments-in-oil-sector-to-ghana-angola/>, [10-12-11].

<sup>52</sup> Category:Ethnic groups in Nigeria, **wikipedia-the free encyclopedia**, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Ethnic\\_groups\\_in\\_Nigeria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Ethnic_groups_in_Nigeria).

<sup>53</sup> **Oil and politics in Nigeria**, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth\\_coverage/africa/nigeria/ethnic.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/africa/nigeria/ethnic.html).



The other regions of the country had become very disgruntled and constantly complained of how the Niger Delta militants were holding them to ransom. Thus Nigeria as a country was facing a massive implosion of built-up emotions and anger, if nothing reasonably and creative was done to avert the crisis, many have argued that a second civil war was inevitable.

Thousands of innocent people had lost their lives during the conflict, hundreds of expatriate oil workers kidnapped in exchange for huge sums of ransom. Prominent political leaders had come in conflict with the armed militant groups, while even amongst the ethnic groups in the region; tensions were on the increase, culminating in the Ijaw, Urohobo, and Itsekiri conflicts in Delta state. Billions of dollars had been lost by the federal government as a result of the conflict, therefore when in 2009 the Yar'Adua administration introduced the amnesty program, it was a welcomed development. It seemed a very progressive idea to restoration of peace, resumption of oil production, reduction of political and ethnic tensions in the region.

Politically the amnesty program has created a platform for an enhanced cooperation between the multi-national oil companies, the government and the people of the region. Such cooperation has eroded the political instability that had previously threatened the status and political future of the country. There was an initial skepticism expressed in the region, Nigeria at large and even in the international community, as to the sincerity of the government on following through with this plan. Many saw it as another ill-conceived and failed project of the government.

The “military” presence in the Niger Delta was on the increase prior to the commencement of the amnesty program, and political tensions were also on the increase<sup>54</sup>. Some of the people in the region had viewed the amnesty program as a means for the government to increase its punitive measures (use of the proverbial ‘carrot and stick’ approach) against the militia groups. Despite these pessimistic and antagonistic views, the amnesty program has proven to be a grand breaking move by the federal government. This program has fostered unity of the ethnic groups, propagated peace, stability, harmony and the sense of togetherness in the previously violence ridden region.

This thesis cannot help but recognize the efforts of the late president Umaru Yar'Adua, who prioritized the Niger Delta conflict, and added it as part of his “seven point agenda”<sup>55</sup>, immediately

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<sup>54</sup> The Joint Task Force (JTF) in the Niger Delta over oil theft, <http://m.news24.com/nigeria/National/News/JTF-arrests-2-Shell-workers-for-oil-theft-20121122>, [22-11-2012].

<sup>55</sup> Emeka Oraetoka, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's 7 Point Agenda: How Correct Are The Army Of Critics (Kano, Nigeria: **Gamji News Editorial**, 2007), <http://www.gamji.com/article8000/NEWS8694.htm>, [16-10-2011].

he was sworn into office in 2007. This is a proved, for the first time in Nigeria's history that, the government is really interested in a long lasting, sustainable solution to the crisis in the region. As a fact, over 1000 people had lost their lives to the conflict in 2008 alone, about 300 others were victims of kidnapers and the government had lost over \$23 million. Thus the political tensions and threat of another outbreak of civil war had been averted by the government's offer of amnesty to the militants.

Today the threat of escalation of violence has seriously reduced in the Niger Delta, though there is a new security challenge emanating from an armed Islamic sect, 'Boko Haram'<sup>56</sup>, in Northern Nigeria, who are said to have links with international terrorists group such as 'Al-Qaeda' which is not the focus of this Thesis paper. This is not to say that, there is absolute absence of violence in the region today, as criminal activities still occur in the region. Kidnappings have not entirely ceased, but its occurrence cannot be compared to some years ago. Likewise, the amnesty has proven in other parts of the world to be a viable tool in achieving sustainable peace, and creating the foundation for future development, as it had been used previously by the UN.

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<sup>56</sup> Wikipedia, **the free encyclopedia**, "Boko Haram", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko\\_Haram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko_Haram), [13-11-2012].

## 2.5 The Disadvantages of the Amnesty Program

In 2009, when the militants in the Niger Delta hand over their weapons and ammunitions to government officials, accepting the amnesty offer of the federal government, many had greeted this move with some level of genuine, hope and belief that the program will finally usher in the desired sustainable development which the region had long craved for. One of the major questions that people have often asked is that, is the amnesty program really designed to address the socio-economic and developmental problems of the region? Or, is it just a means of pacifying the militants and buying peace, all with the aim of increasing oil production and revenue?

The true intentions of the program seem to be focused more on immediate solutions, rather than long term sustainable achievements. The first two parts of the amnesty program focus more on the militants and only the third part which talks about the people of the region. The program concentrated more on disarmament and demobilization, and the vocational training of these militants rather than the true aspiration and concerns of the regional voices of marginalization; neglect and unemployment; and underdevelopment. There is a point to make here that, while the initiative is appreciative and laudable from the part of the Nigerian government, scholars and commentators need to critically question the integrity of the process. That is, if this exercise is not one of the regular failed practice. It could be another ill policy of government, which might fail to address the issues surrounding the conflict.<sup>57</sup> Therefore for better and easier analysis, the disadvantages will be divided into two major sections namely: the economic and political disadvantages of the program.

Today the amnesty program is celebrated by the Nigerian government as a huge success. Well, depends on which part of the coin one is looking at it from. Of course oil production has gone back up to about 2.6million barrels per day, compared to the 700,000 barrels per day in 2008. Oil revenues are back up, the economy is growing and a lot has been achieved as a result of the amnesty program. Many have argued on the other hand that, the amnesty program was just a pacification move of the Nigerian government. That is, the program has also sent out a negative message to the law abiding citizens of Nigeria that, violent approach to similar crisis is good and the rewards are enormous.

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<sup>57</sup> Anger over Amnesty program, 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2012, **All Africa News Online**, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201209271254.html>, [11-11-2012].

The former militant warlords (kingpins) are the ones to have benefitted more than anyone else, they now buy and live in luxury, expensive homes in the Nigerian capital which is among the twenty most expensive cities in the world. Most of them have secured lucrative government contracts. This is apart from the money being paid to them as part of the dividends for accepting the amnesty program. To be very logical and honest, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, 2012, the America's Wall Street Journal<sup>58</sup> revealed that the Nigerian President and the state own oil company, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) paid former militant leaders Ateke Tom and Ebikabowei Boy-loaf Victor Ben, \$3.8 million a year, while Asari Dokubo receives \$9 million a year. According to the Journal, these moneys were paid to the former warlords to protect oil theft. Another former militant head Ekpumopolo, alliance Tom-polo was paid \$22.9 million a year to protect oil pipeline and the country's international water ways as well. All of these payments are not inclusive of what the government had budgeted (\$450 million) to spend on the amnesty program in 2012 alone.

Second and very important question to ask could be, how long can the Nigerian government continue to sustain such a lavish expenditure? Most of its estimated over 160 million people still live below the average global poverty<sup>59</sup> line, unable to acquire the basic needs of life<sup>60</sup>. The country, especially most the Niger Delta still does not have good roads, no existence of proper pipe borne water. The education sector is in dire need of proper attention, power supply (electricity) is very epileptic, as most people spend their hard earned money, to buy petrol to power their generators.

Infrastructural development is almost none existent, though the East West road has been awarded, not much has been achieved over the years. One is then left to ask, is the amnesty program supposed to just be measured on the regular flow of oil production? For sustainable development to take place, some level of peace is needed. As an aide to the current Nigerian President, Oronto Douglas lamented, 'for you to address the whole issue of poverty and development, you need some kind of peace'. Then what is the economic burden of such peace? How has it benefitted firstly, the people of the Niger Delta and Nigerians at large? The government continues to give beautiful figures of how the economy has grown, but has it translated to a better life for most of its citizens?

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<sup>58</sup> President Jonathan's High-Priced Militants: Asari Dokubo, Tompolo, Ateke Tom Paid Millions of Dollars Annually, **Sahara Reporters Online**, <http://saharareporters.com/news-page/prpresident-jonathans-high-priced-militants-asari-dokubo-tompolo-ateke-tom-paid-millions-d>, [10-11-2012].

<sup>59</sup> World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/topic/poverty>, [16-11-2012].

<sup>60</sup> Nigerians living in poverty rise to nearly 61%, (**BBC News Africa**, 13 February 2012), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17015873>, [10-11-2012].

In the end, this program had sent out the wrong signals, as people now view militancy and violence, as a tool to better secure their futures. This amnesty program and the millions been paid to militants can be directly linked to the outbreak of the Boko Haram sect. Today there are renewed cases of oil theft even by the ex-militant heads who are supposed to be guiding against it. Foreign direct investment has not grown, as the consistent issue of insecurity in the region is gradually on the rise again.

Thus there is an urgent need for a more comprehensive program to address the desired needs of the people, which will go beyond just settlement of the militants. Economically, the people whose land and waters that the oil is explored from have not benefitted from the immense wealth the country makes. Over 80% of the population of the Niger Delta still lives below poverty, as they still depend on subsistence farming and fishing for their survival, a situation that has been described in many quarters as oil curse. This led to the violent conflict in the first place, and adequate efforts must be taken to address the root causes of the conflict. As the pacification of the militants alone, which is costing so much financially, is not a long lasting sustainable solution to the problem.

Politically, not much has been achieved either. Though violence has reduced and there is an absence of armed conflicts, yet this does not mean that, all is well in the Niger Delta region. Today militancy is gradually returning back, as those aggrieved of being left out of the program are gradually returning back to the creeks and engaging in oil theft.

Following the death of Umaru Yar'Adua, the then vice president Goodluck Jonathan (an indigene of the Niger Delta), was made acting president and subsequently elected president in 2011. This was greeted with wild celebrations from the region, as it was believed that development will trickle down to the region, as their own son is now the elected president of the country. This political reality has brought very little success, if any at all to the people of the region. As typical with past administration and their many promises, there has been the lack of proper political will to fully implement the envisioned provisions of the amnesty program.

These militants have been described by several names, depending on the side of the argument you are on. A renowned political elder, from the Ijaw ethnic group in the region, Chief Edwin Clark prefers to call them 'freedom fighters'<sup>61</sup> because he views them as, a younger generation hungry for justice and freedom for their people. While some other analysts have called them criminals, cultist,

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<sup>61</sup> Ajouni Suistola, **Lecture notes of Ajouni Suistola's on Global Terrorism**, One Man's Terrorist is another Man's Freedom Fighter, (Unpublished Work: Fall Semester 2009).

gangsters and all sorts of names. Whatever way you decided to see them as, one thing is for sure, there were criminal elements amongst them and most of these war-lords have been involved in oil theft in the past to enable them buy arms and ammunitions to fight against the Nigerian government forces. As some of them were just experts in kidnapping and oil installation attacks, with no real political aim. So on this backdrop, the political will to handle such a volatile group, must be firm, strong and consistent.

Thus to change the proverbial saying, ‘resource curse’ a proper functioning institutions must be in place, built on the ideals of accountability and transparency, coupled with good governance. This cannot be said of the government’s handling of the amnesty program. There has been reports of over bloating the number of the militants, while some of the training facilities have been found to be inadequate. Corruption, being one of the biggest undoing of Nigeria, with millions of dollars unaccounted in the amnesty program because the whole process is not properly backed by legislation. Hence moneys spent on the amnesty program cannot be investigated, since the program is under direct supervision of the Nigerian President without any oversight power from legislative authorities.

There were complains of political interest and motivation, behind the appointment and selection of members of the bodies set up to manage the amnesty program. Allowances to foot soldiers are sometimes unpaid<sup>62</sup>. There is a big disparity between the allowances to the foot soldiers and the heads of the militant groups. The program has also failed to recognize the people of the Niger Delta, whom are the most affected by the conflict. Meaning the government on its part, has once more failed again to correct the failures of previous government efforts.

Despite the arms that were ‘handed in, the region is still filled with arms, partly with those whom did not accept the amnesty program or those disgruntled ones that felt, been left out. Some of these groups have even become more sophisticated over the years. During the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of Nigeria, Henry Okah (the leaders of the Movement and the Emancipation for the Niger Delta), claimed responsibility for a car “bomb”<sup>63</sup>, that killed over 10 people. Besides, in 2012 there were several bomb attacks in the region, destroying oil pipelines and even the house of a serving Minister, Godsdan Orubebe.

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<sup>62</sup> Nigeria: Ex-Militants Storm Calabar Over Unpaid Allowances, (**All Africa News Online**, September 2011), <http://allafrica.com/stories/200912240418.html>, [24-09-2011].

<sup>63</sup> Oluwaseun Oluwarotimi, “Henry Okah Masterminded Independence Day Bombings, MEND Member Tells Court”, (Lagos, Nigeria: **Leadership News Paper**, 2012), 4<sup>th</sup> of October, 2012.

Thus politically, the amnesty program has failed in delivering the desired goals to the people. It has proven to be exclusive to the militants, ignoring the victims of the crimes committed by these same militants. Some of these victims had their bread winners kidnapped or even killed, some of them lost their homes. So is the message being sent to them, take up arms and the government will listen to you? Likewise some scholars have argued that, does the surrender of weapons and renunciation of violence automatically answer the agitations of the entire population of the region. Therefore to achieve sustainable peace, the opinions, desires and demands of these people must be taken into context and given proper attention.

The amnesty program then must be broadened to include everybody in the region, and not just focusing on the militants alone. A more comprehensive peace process must be embraced, so as not to send the message violence and crime pays and gets the attention of the government. This already seems to be the case, as the Boko Haram sect has grown stronger over the years. Though different in scope, ideals, aims and demands, there have been calls<sup>64</sup> in several quarters to offer them amnesty as well.

The continued abandonment of the deplorable conditions of the roads, no primary or even secondary health care facilities available and, the poor educational facilities, will only result in the emergence of armed conflict. Meaning, the political will must be concrete, precise and strong, if more is to be achieved with the amnesty program.

As a result of the amnesty program, the cases of oil spillage have reduced, and some of the previously broken oil pipelines has been fixed. Though the damage done to the ecosystem may be irredeemable, some gains have been made. A lot is still left to be done, as the activities of oil theft, and illegal bunkering is seriously harming the environment. In addition the number of illegal refineries has not also helped at all, as most of these refineries only just get out 2 or 3 products out of the crude oil and pour the rest back into the waters.

The rising concern about environmental issues, with respect to the protection and preservation of the ecosystem, led to the conflict proper. Oil exploration and gas flaring has caused irreversible damages in the Niger Delta, as the government and its multinational partners have consistently ignored this

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<sup>64</sup> The call for amnesty for members of the Boko Haram terrorist group recently by elder statesman, Dr. Paul Unongo, at a forum of the Northern elders, is to say the least unfortunate and condemnable, (Lagos: **The Tide News Paper**, December 2012), <http://www.thetidenewsonline.com/2012/12/12/unongo-and-the-call-for-amnesty/>, [28-12-2012].

reality<sup>65</sup>. The activities of the government and the oil companies operating in the region have robbed the people of their farm lands and polluted the water on which they use to fish. Therefore, this paper will not be so wrong to regard this gift of nature, as a curse on the people of the region.

Therefore, when the activities of youths (militants), started to grow and they became restive, they saw this as one of the legitimate means to pour out their anger and frustration. Utilizing peaceful methods originally and later resorting to violence since their immediate environment was being altered and their means of livelihood threatened, without any tangible benefits to them. Then the increase in oil theft and pipeline vandalism, meant huge amount of crude would flow onto lands and into the water, polluting the only source of water available to the local people.

Thus when the amnesty program was introduced in 2009, many had hoped it will finally give the environmental attention the region needed. The most important part of the amnesty should have been, addressing the huge environmental challenges facing the region, and how to include the people on whose lands these resources come from in the process. All the previous efforts of the government, at addressing the issue of environmental degradation, failed. As the government had failed in protecting the same environment it is making so much money from. Though the arguments in this thesis is not that, the government has not made efforts in the past to address environmental challenges but rather these efforts and initiatives have not yielded or translated into bettering the lives of the citizens of the Niger Delta, including the amnesty program.

Since the amnesty program has failed to take into proper context, the environmental hazards associated with oil exploration, instead of curbing oil theft and spillage occurrence, which is on the increase, especially with the criminal oil industry that has developed, alongside amnesty program, which has also greatly threatened food security in the region and the whole country at large, more efforts are needed from the government angle to re-examine the fundamental issues affecting the region. All of this, coupled with the lack of political will to follow through on promises made, the people of the region are more aggrieved and angered. Most especially owing to the fact that, the present President of the country is fortunate to come from a minority in the same Niger Delta region, the ethnic centered arguments of marginalization and neglect from the long ruling Northern region cannot be blamed for their region's problems.

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<sup>65</sup> David Ejoor, Federal Government of Nigeria and Niger Delta Problems, (Lagos, **The Guardian New Paper**, September 16, 2003), pp.2-3.



Therefore, when it dawned on the people again, that is, the government unwillingness and failure to address the environmental issues facing the region, the resultant effect could possibly be another violent struggle in the region. The forceful crack down on the people did not help either; neither was the killing of Saro Wiwa and 8 others in 1995, by the then military administration of General Sani Abacha. Today the region remains one of the most<sup>66</sup> polluted Delta's in the world and not much has been achieved environmentally.

The continued neglect of the rights of the people, in whose land oil is been exploited from, might possible lead to another possible conflict. The people, on whose land the oil is been explored from should be taken into consideration while efforts and programs should be focused towards environmental protection and development. Unless such are done, to minimize the effects of oil exploration, and gas flaring then not much could be achieved with the amnesty alone.

Though, it's an obvious fact that oil spillages has dropped significantly, some of the previously broken pipelines have been fixed, but these does not translate to all being well in the region. If the same reasons that triggered the conflict are again ignored, what then does the future holds for a sustainable peace in the region? Secondly, what is the assurance that, the youths and criminal elements in the region would not want to take advantage of governments' failure as excuse to begin another face of militia movements in the region? Are those who decided to be peaceful, not been instigated that, violence pays? Well, these questions are pretty difficult to answers but one thing could be sure, the environment cannot continued to be ignored and then the people are expected to fell that the amnesty could succeed and achieve its desired aim.

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<sup>66</sup> Chioma Chikere, Osita Chikere and Gideon Okpokwasili, Bioreactor-based bioremediation of hydrocarbon-Polluted Niger Delta marine sediment, Nigeria, (US National Library of Medicine, National Institute of Health: Published online, October 21, 2011), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3339588/>, [25-16-12].

## 2.6 Chapter summary

The conflict in the Niger Delta could be said to have started properly in the early 1990's, though there have been decades of peaceful demonstrations in the region. The country possesses huge oil reserves, with its economy a monolithic one more or less. Oil was first discovered in commercial quantity in Oloibiri (present day Bayelsa state) in 1956. After several decades of oil exploration, its people still remain very poor, with dilapidated schools, lack of pipe borne water, epileptic power supply (electricity) and the quality of life in a very sorry state.

The country generates over 80% of its annual revenue from the sale of crude oil, which comes from the Niger Delta. Despite its huge oil reserves, most of its population still remains poor; and the region from which the oil is explored remains largely under developed. Yes the discovery of oil in the region had brought high hopes of some intense levels of development in the region, but that hope had since vanished. The people had very little knowledge of the hazards associated with the exploration of crude oil, as deforestation and the ecological degradation were alien to the people.

The people soon realized the hazardous effects of oil exploration on their ecosystem and environment, while successive governments continued to ignore this stake reality. Several decades of suffering from pollution, deforestation and inability to cultivate crops on previous farm lands and of course a people who can no longer fish on their waters, and then the stage was set for an outbreak of violent conflict.

Several years of peaceful protests did not yield the desired results, and this would later mature into armed conflict, that will almost grind the nation's economy to a halt. At the height of the militancy, crude oil production dropped to an all-time low of about 700,000 barrels per day. This was a far cry from the OPEC quota of the country, thus the government in 2009 offered amnesty to the militants, in exchange for them handing in weapons.

Politically the country was on the verge of another civil war, as the weapons in the possession of these militants were huge. The disgruntled cries from other parts of the country did not exactly help the situation either, as tensions heightened. When the late president Umaru Yar'Adua offered amnesty to the militants, many saw it as the first genuine attempt of the government, to achieve long lasting peace in the region. The amnesty program was in three stages, disarmament and demobilization; rehabilitation and reintegration of the militants; and finally, massive investments in infrastructural development of the region.

As a result of the amnesty program, crude oil production is back up to about 2.6 million barrels per day, possible outbreak of another civil war was averted, and kidnappings of oil expatriate workers has reduced. Overall security in the region is relatively better, compared to the pre-amnesty program. Many broken oil pipelines have been fixed, and the frequency of oil spillages has reduced in the overall. Despite all of these gains, a lot still remains to be done, as the focus of the amnesty program seem to be centered around the pacification of the militants, just to get oil production back up. Considering the irreversible damages done to the environment, as a result of oil exploration, then a more robust approach should be embraced.

In the next chapter, the emphasis will be centered on the negative effects of the conflict in the region. The chapter is dedicated to mainly the environmental, economic and security challenges facing the region. Though, the analyses are broad-based, cutting across political, economic and even institutional failure in the region. The chapter appraises the governments' efforts under the ongoing amnesty program, in finding solutions to some of the challenges facing the region. The chapter also recommends solutions to the findings in this thesis. The proposals mainly focus on the areas in which improvement can be made under the ongoing amnesty initiative. It also recommends third party involvement in providing comprehensive and lasting solution to the over five decade's long crisis.

## Chapter Three: The Negative Effects of the Niger Delta Conflict

### 3.1 The Environmental and Ecological Effects

The effects<sup>67</sup> of the Niger Delta conflict are so many but for the topic of discuss in this thesis, analysis will be limited to the major negative effects in the Nigeria, particularly the Niger Delta region which is most affected. The effects to discuss here involves the security concerns, arms proliferation, environmental challenges and the major effects of unemployment as a result of lack of meaningful investment to create jobs in the region.

Attempts in this chapter will be made underline the environmental and ecological challenges; peace and security concerns; political and economic effects; with and other obvious concerns of minority ethnic groups in the region, and proposed solutions for comprehensive peace and security, as these issues are deeply related to the Niger Delta conflict. The arguments and analysis in this chapter are primarily examined from the various perspectives and arguments that present themselves and how these issues affect the overall view of the people in the region.

The environmental and ecological damage<sup>68</sup> done to the lands, waters and the atmosphere of the Niger Delta are huge and enormous, probably one cannot be able estimate the extend of such damage. The continued sufferings<sup>69</sup> of the people on whose land and waters this oil is been extracted from, led to violent agitation by the people turning some of them into militants and subsequently the crisis in the region. The failure of respective governments to address the environmental issues facing the region gave birth to the conflict, increasing political, economic and social tensions in the region and the country at large.

The issues of environmental concerns<sup>70</sup>, been one of the major contributors to the conflict in the Niger Delta still remains unresolved problems in the Niger Delta. Though the government of Nigeria claims that a lot of biological remediation exercises are ongoing in the Niger Delta to reduce the extent of damage and multi-national oil companies operating in the region has been instructed to

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<sup>67</sup> Cyril Obi, "Oil Extraction, Dispossession, Resistance, and Conflict in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Niger Delta", [http://www.uam.es/otros/gea/Documentos%20adjuntos/Obi-CJDS\\_v30n1-2.pdf](http://www.uam.es/otros/gea/Documentos%20adjuntos/Obi-CJDS_v30n1-2.pdf), [21-11-2011].

<sup>68</sup> Jon Gambrell, "U.N. reports widespread oil damage in Nigeria delta" **The Washington Post**, 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Widespread oil damage found in Nigeria delta, **The Independence News, UK**, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/un-widespread-oil-damage-found-in-nigeria-delta-2331891.html>, [10-11-2012].

<sup>70</sup> Pagaebi Beregha, "Environmental Issues in Nigeria: Oil Spillage in the Niger Delta", [http://thelawyerschronicle.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=115:environmental-issues-in-nigeria&catid=45:current-affairs&Itemid=57](http://thelawyerschronicle.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=115:environmental-issues-in-nigeria&catid=45:current-affairs&Itemid=57), [21-11-2012].

take remedy actions by maintaining their facilities regularly to avert damages that could arise from oil spills as a result of corrosion.

One of the major causes of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta is traceable to oil spills and gas flaring. This is a fact acknowledged by both the government and the oil companies, operating in the region. The only disagreement in their arguments and analysis is that, from the governments' perspective, part of the ecological and environmental pollutions arising from petroleum activities are also traceable to criminal elements, operating in the Niger Delta. For them, activities of sabotage are one of the main causes of environmental degradation which contributes to over 50% of the problem.

Figures 3.1 show a picture of local illegal crude oil refinery in the Niger Delta. The arguments from the government are facts which are not deniable<sup>71</sup> by local communities, independent observers and even the militants themselves. On the part of the militants, they do agree but point to the fact that, it is the behavior of both the government and the multi-national oil companies operating in the region that prompted them to take such actions of sabotage to get attention of the government and illegal refining to enable them generate cash to continue with the Niger Delta struggle. Without their militia actions, the government will continue to suppress and neglect the voice from the region and continue to marginalize them.

**Figure 3.1 Picture of illegal Crude Oil Refinery in the Niger Delta**



Source: Akintunde Akinleye, Reuters News, November 27, 2012. The young man in the picture is fetching crude oil from a storage pit into a locally constructed refining unit.

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<sup>71</sup> Nigeria oil spills: Shell rejects liability claim, **BBC News UK**, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-19905694>, [20-12-2012].

Before the advent of the Natural Liquefied Gas (LNG) project in Bonny, the normal practice of crude refining in Nigeria was gas flaring without considerations to its environmental and ecological damages. Above all, the World Bank report in 2004 indicates that, Nigeria flares up to 75% of its gas produce. This figure do not take into account the gas flared through illegal and local refining by criminal elements in the Delta creeks because their activities are not officially recorded.

Environmental pollution as a result of oil spillage and gas flaring was very common in the area prior to the amnesty program. As oil exploration had contributed greatly in the destruction of the ecosystem and had made the region one of the most crude oil polluted environments in the world (Niger Delta Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Project, 2006). Prior to the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in the region, the people survived on fishing and on subsistent farming, but the activities of oil exploration had destroyed this, and deprived them of their means of livelihood.

Furthermore, long before the start of the amnesty program, the exploration of oil had already caused irredeemable<sup>72</sup> ecological and environmental damages. It is estimated that, over 9000 oil spills have occurred in the Niger Delta, but the inception of the program has ushered in some environmental benefits. Today as a result of the amnesty program, there is increased awareness about oil spillages and the responsibilities of both the government and the multinationals operating in the region. The causes of oil spills are mostly as a result of corrosion from pipelines, oil tankers and sabotage from criminal activities. Major consequences of this actions has greatly damaged the ecosystem; destruction of crops and aquacultures; and serious health problems such as skin lesion and breathing problems.

The previous lackadaisical attitude of the oil companies and the government as well as the large scale of sabotage has gradually changed. On the part of the government and the oil companies, they have realized that continued neglect, would only lead to the total failure of the program, and a return to armed confrontation with the former militants and probably new aggrieved ones. This has offered the oil companies the opportunity to fix previously broken oil pipeline, thereby reducing the remote and long term effects of oil spillage from broken pipelines. The significant reduction in pollution as a direct result from oil spillage cannot be overemphasized, despite the fact that gas flaring has still not come to an end.

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<sup>72</sup> Adam Nossiter, "Far From Gulf, a Spill Scourge 5 Decades Old", (New York: **The New York Times**, 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2010), [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/17/world/africa/17nigeria.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/17/world/africa/17nigeria.html?_r=0), [20-10-2011].

While many environmental activists and commentators cannot easily trace environmental issues to the aftermath of the Niger Delta conflict, as one of the negative effects; many of the armed militia groups have long claimed that the multi-national oil firms operating the Niger Delta are the cause of pollution and destruction of their farmlands, fishery and other means of livelihood. It is a point to note that, the militia groups were as good as culprits in the arguments in this thesis. The worst forms of ecological damages are caused by warlords and their criminal oil theft in the Niger Delta environment. It is a common knowledge in rural Niger Delta communities that most of the oil pipeline leakage<sup>73</sup> and explosions are caused by oil bunkering though large amount of environmental and ecological destruction is attributed to the multi-national oil companies in the Niger Delta.

Ecological devastation as a result of oil exploration has kept the Delta region inhabitable, poor and desolate. None of the actors (the Nigerian government, Militant groups and Oil companies) mentioned in this thesis, which are directly involved in Ibeanu's so called 'Petrobusiness' are ready to take responsibility for the environmental damages caused by this multi-billion naira business in the Niger Delta. According to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) report<sup>74</sup> issued in 1983, oil spillage and other environmental damages caused by crude oil production, directly affects the environment such as slow poisoning of the waters and the destruction of vegetation and agricultural land by oil spills which occur during petroleum operations since the beginning of petroleum exploration in Nigeria. The region could experience a loss of 40% of its inhabitable terrain in the next thirty years, though most of the emphasis of the environmental damage is attributed to extensive dam construction.

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<sup>73</sup> "Offshore Oil Leak in Nigeria, "Worst Ever" in String of Many: Twenty-mile oil slick destroys local fishing industry", <https://www.commondreams.org/headline/2012/11/19-6>, [11-12-2012].

<sup>74</sup> "Environmental issues in the Niger Delta", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental\\_issues\\_in\\_the\\_Niger\\_Delta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_issues_in_the_Niger_Delta), [18-10-2011].

### 3.2 Insecurity and Proliferation of Small Arms

Insecurity and proliferation of small arms is a serious concern and a major problem in the region. The issue of insecurity and small arms is deeply connected to the militarization of the different armed groups in the region before the advent of the amnesty program. Part of the small arms in the region is linked to political leaders who choose to play the politics of 'Do or Die' by arming local youths to fight against their political rivals, particularly during elections. While the amnesty program and process was able to bring relative peace and security in the region, facts remained that small arms are still common and readily accessible to criminal elements in the region. The arguments in this thesis reflect the activities of criminal elements used by political leaders during the last 2011 general elections in Nigeria. The point to make here is that, the Nigerian government still faces a major challenge in her amnesty program, though these challenges are greed, based on behavior of politicians and poor institutional capacity of Security establishments.

For example, in June 2012, a heavily fortified convoy of the present serving Governor of Edo State in Nigeria was attacked by heavily armed gang prior to the governorship elections in Edo State. According to official reports<sup>75</sup> from the Governors' office, the attack on the Governors' convoy was politically motivated by opposition political parties. In January 2011, before the governorship election in Bayelsa state, Mr. Timi Alaibe, a Governorship aspirant in Bayelsa State was attacked by unknown gun men in the aspirants' home town in Opokuma. According to an official report from the Bayelsa state government, the attack on Timi Alaibe and his supporters was as a result of rival secret cults, while the Alaibe campaign organization accused Timipre Sylver, the then governor of Bayelsa state for the attacks. Though, unlike previous general election in Nigeria, the 2011 elections were mired with less violence in the Niger Delta region but one of the reasons for the less scale of electoral violence was because the candidate of the ruling People Democratic Party (PDP) Goodluck Jonathan happens to come from the Niger Delta region and was fortunate to be the incumbent President of the country hence, the state security apparatus was under his direct control.

Another point to make here is the process of the amnesty negotiations. In the early amnesty, a lot of warlords and smaller militia groups were involved. More pessimistic and unrepentant groups were observing the events from outside as they unfold, but along the process, arguments of distrust made

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<sup>75</sup> Oshiomhole survives assassination attempt: Gunmen attacked the Edo State governor's convoy, (Lagos: **The Nigerian Daily Times**, November 2011), <http://dailytimes.com.ng/article/oshiomhole-survives-assassination-attempt>, [26-10-2012].



some groups like MEND and their leader, Henry Okah to split hence some of the militants are back in the creeks. It is not a proven fact, but many point to the independence day bomb attack, in Nigeria's capital city, as a result of disagreements' between the leader of MEND and the amnesty management. Some of the militants who left the amnesty process and went back to the creeks also accused President Goodluck Jonathan of not following the process envisaged by his predecessor. Though, President Goodluck's administration has denied these claims and accusation, calling them criminal elements used by opposition parties to discredit the amnesty efforts of his government.

Just before the commencement of the amnesty program, the then President Umaru Yar'Adua, created a new federal ministry, Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs for the purpose of directly engaging the concerns and demands of the Niger Delta people and he even subsequently made the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) an administrative unit of government under the Niger Delta ministry. This move was intended to tackle the delivery of the administration's plan on rapid socio-economic and environmental development and security. As well the NDDC, since the inception of the amnesty program, has intensified its efforts towards community development. Several contracts have been awarded, and several projects completed, all aimed at the overall improvement of the living conditions of the people of the Niger Delta region. Reports from the federal government has claimed that, efforts been made have increased by the government and multi-national oil companies, operating in the region to achieve a safer environment for the people of the region. The 'East-West' road project is ongoing (though at snail speed), but work is taking place, as this road cuts across the heart of the region, and needs adequate attention.

One of the effects of the Niger Delta conflict is the economic challenge faced by the people of the region. The economic problems ranged from unemployment to under-development and from poverty to corruption as a result of poor government policies<sup>76</sup> and weak institutional capacity of government. These economic challenges are deeply connected to the political leadership of the governments, both at the states and local government levels. It is politically connected because the structural industrialization needed to resolve these challenges can only be initiated by the government and its institution.

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<sup>76</sup> Sulaimon Olanrewaju, "Nigeria: Still wallowing in poverty: poverty in Nigeria and the challenges of the poverty alleviation programmes embarked upon by various governments", (Lagos: **The Tribune News**, 2011), 18<sup>th</sup> of October, 2011, pp. 2-3.

Today, in the Niger Delta, government is the biggest employer of labor, and this kind of situation cannot sustain the growing number of graduates which is the least industrialized regions in Nigeria. Majority of the unemployed in the region are youths, just like in many other economies of the world. It is a common knowledge<sup>77</sup> and also a fact acknowledged by the Nigeria's government that youth unemployment in the Niger Delta is at an all-time high rate. The greater challenge to be contended with is, the rapidly increasing number of university and college graduates, mostly of youths being admitted into the job market with very few job vacancies available to absorb insignificant percentage. The point to make here is that, one of the main causes of limited job vacancies is the obvious fact of limited private sector to create employment though the government can actually do a lot by focusing on providing the enabling environment for private businesses and the entire economy to thrive instead of seeking to provide direct employment for youths. Doing the former will consequentially result in job creation as many private companies and businesses will be attracted to the region and hire more hands to join their establishments in achieving their business goals, whereas doing the latter will not yield any significant result.

The issue of poor policies and corruption is also a major problem in the region. Many in Nigeria attribute the problem of under-development to large scale corruption in government institution. The voice against corruption is even louder in the Niger Delta. This is coming on the grounds that, most of the core Niger Delta oil producing states and local government receives oil derivation of 13% from the federation account as states and local government which are advantaged to have oil and gas in the territories.

For many, the 13% oil derivation received by oil producing states', if properly managed and channeled towards meaningful developmental programs and projects, it could attract direct and indirect investments from the private sector to drive employment generation and drastically reduce poverty in the region. Another point been make here is that, the economic problems in the region needs a responsive and effective government policies and such policies can only be visible with a political leadership that is less corrupt. The issue of political corruption is a serious challenge to the amnesty program. Some of the honest fears and concerns are Nigeria is ranked 139th out of 176 countries in Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index, tied with Azerbaijan, Kenya, Nepal, and Pakistan.

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<sup>77</sup> Paul Francis, Deirdre Lapin and Paula Rossiasco, **Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and Conflict Analysis for Change**, [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/AFR\\_110929\\_Niger%20Delta\\_0113.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/AFR_110929_Niger%20Delta_0113.pdf), [22-11-2012].

The economic issues in the Niger Delta have emerged as a core conditions for the conflict, though it is not the overall important explanatory factor in the Niger Delta. My attempts to force a connection between the economic and political challenges as one of the effects of the Niger Delta conflict cannot be misleading. It is a common fact that, violent conflict can easily develop if large number of people, particularly unemployed youths, are convinced that taking up arms is not just legitimate but may be the only option to overcome their economic, social and security challenges as a necessity to guaranty the survival of life.

### 3.3 Proposals for Solution

When a conflict looms, it can be very tempting for the parties not to take any unilateral action on the fundamental causes because either side of the conflicting parties tends to believe that approaching the other side through direct negotiation might signal an indication of weakness and a possible dead end without proper consideration of the long term benefits of such early negotiation strategies. This has been the case of the Niger Delta conflict since the violence started in the early 1990s. Profoundly, it's a welcome development today since the pronouncement of the amnesty initiative by late President Yar'Adua.

The true intentions of the late President Yar'Adua must be followed and all well-meaning Nigerians, both at home and abroad have a role to play in achieving this reality. Infrastructural development must follow the amnesty program. Owing to the arguments in this paper, there are indicating elements and factors, which could encourage the growth of a new form of militants or arm race in the nearest future. Also considering Islamic elements like 'Boko Haram' and the present insecurity situation in Northern part of Nigeria, influenced by religious sentiments. If authorities and leaders rest on the amnesty strides alone, it will be regrettable in the nearest future and the Niger Delta crisis would have gone back to square one. There are several benefits achieved so far in terms of environmental gains, but the Nigerian government, the multi-national oil companies, the warlord and their respective groups, as well as every Nigerian and all other stake holder of global and regional peace must do more to better secure the Niger Delta environment for long lasting peace and a better future.

It's also important to note that the linkage between environmental issues and conflict in an unevenly interconnected world, owing to the effects of globalization, this thesis detects that new modalities are needed to explore the varying ability of the Nigerian state and local communities within the Niger Delta region, to adapt to ever changing environmental conditions without employing the old tactics of 'carrot and stick' approach by resorting to violence in resolving issues. If the Nigerian government is able to engage the stake holders in the region without a timeline for negotiations while the relative peace sustained by the amnesty is still in effect, this will exponentially improve the government's chances for possible tradeoffs which will satisfy both parties and trust for similar future conflict resolutions.

All of these though do not translate to a situation of all being well, as a robust post amnesty plan must be put in place to sustain the economic “gains”<sup>78</sup> witnessed so far. The ex-militants, whom have received vocational training should be given the opportunity to receive guided career, must also be given equal opportunity to pursue their desired careers. Developmental policies and industries must be put in place to sustain the relative peace achieved so far, and to build on the economic benefits from the amnesty initiative. The agricultural sector must be revamped (the activities of the current minister for agriculture must be commended). A proper loan scheme that is built on the ideals of transparency and accountability must be propagated by the government. The idea behind this is to give the ex-militants the opportunity to set up their own businesses and cater properly for themselves and their families. A more robust policy implementation must be pursued by government in other to sustain the long term economic benefits witnessed so far.

The Nigerian government should accept the call for a sovereign national conference. This is because majority of its citizens, support the voice of sovereign national conference to create ethnic participation in addressing the basic and fundamental problems which is one of the best forms of nation building in this 21st century. The Nigerian government’s developmental efforts to meet the so called ‘millennium development goal’ - Vision 2020, cannot be achieved without local communities participation. Hence a new constitution and laws are needed to meet modern flexible law reforms, which are taking place in most developed and rapidly developing countries around the globe. Good example of such drives can be seen in Turkey, Brazil, Ghana and South Africa, which started the race through vigorous constitution and law reforms.

Nigeria’s multi-dimensionality in ethnic, religious, cultural and lingual identities should be reflected in both in the constitution and the laws. Nigeria should practice true democracy based on the principles of ‘Communitarianism or Communitocracy’ because Nigeria is a multi-cultural society which has more than 250 different unique dialects, languages and ethnic tribes. That is, the communities should be the guidance of the new Nigerian constitution and laws of the government should be based on community identities such as culture and ethnic practice. History of Nigeria and present day realities have shown that the main source of authority to control citizens within the rural communities rest on the community leaders, such as community chiefs and clan heads; and above over 60% of the Nigerian population are rural dwellers. Majority of this rural dweller hold strong to their ethnic beliefs and customs hence they keep to principles of laws and customs of their societies.

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<sup>78</sup> The Niger Delta: No Democratic Dividend, **Human Rights Watch Short Report**, October 2002, pp. 27-28.

Instead of just negotiating and appeasing the heads of the militant groups and elites from the region, extensive consultation should be carried out for the purpose of achieving long lasting and sustainable peace in the region, because most of the leaders who present their selves as negotiators are only interested in selfish benefits. The reason for such a process and involvement in the Niger Delta conflict is because there has been lack of trust in the process of conflict resolution from the Nigerian government, the politicians and the oil companies operating in the area. That is, almost all the parties involved in the Niger Delta conflict have lost confidence and hope in the future of a peaceful Niger Delta and a united Nigerian state.

Now that the “current”<sup>79</sup> president of the country is from the region, he should understand better the challenges facing the people. A grass root approach must be utilized, one built on the ideals of transparency and accountability. The focus must be the people of the Niger Delta and Nigerians at large. It’s not enough to give huge financial benefits to ex-militants and ignore the root causes of the conflict. That will only result in another conflict, as some of these ex militants are already heading back into the creeks. As well a criminal crude oil industry has developed, backed by former militant heads. Kidnapping is returning, though the scope and focus is slightly different, but it shows there are still enough weapons in the region.

If sustainable peace, turning into sustainable development is to be achieved in the region, then the approach must change. The elements of true representative democracy must be borrowed by encouraging active public participation that will cut across all stake holders, from youth groups to women groups, civil society organizations, militants and government officials, as well as the oil companies operating in the region.

The political will to implement previous passed environmental laws, must be really strong. There must be sincere desire on all parties involved to ensure the environment is better protected. In addition, new laws must be put in place, comprehensive enough to look into the challenges facing the region. The focus must be shifted towards the people, not just concentrating on the militants alone and ignoring the ethnic, environmental, political, and economic and even security issues surrounding the region.

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<sup>79</sup> Allwel Okpi, Niger Delta divided over support for Jonathan, (Lagos: **The Punch News Nigeria**, 2011), <http://www.punchng.com/news/2015-niger-delta-divided-over-support-for-jonathan/>, [25-12-2012].

### 3.6 Chapter Summary

The amnesty program which has proven for the first time to be a successful attempt at handling the Niger Delta issue, has brought several benefits. The broken oil pipeline, most of which have been fixed, has reduced the occurrence of oil spillage, and the gross reduction in oil bunkering, has also helped to reduce pollution in the area. So, this thesis is not far from the truth in asserting that, the amnesty program has greatly brought about huge environmental benefits. Even though the damage done is irredeemable, the actors and players can't continue to add to the damage. It's never too late to start thinking about a collective future, and the lives of the generations to come. Thus the amnesty program has provided a launch pad, for the actors to build upon the gains made so far. People are more aware, oil companies are more responsible and responsive to the environmental needs of the region. Amnesty, coupled with the growth of democratic values, the amnesty is helping every player to take action, either individually or collectively towards the environmental challenges facing the country.

The Niger Delta people do not have any other geographical space to called Nigeria. They must build on the positives of this amnesty program, rather than just seat back and grumble. Instead of complaining too much of the things that have not been achieved yet, another way forward is to collectively hold government more accountable and responsible. Ensure through peaceful and civilized means, that the multinationals oil companies operating in the region, live up to their corporate responsibilities. Niger Delta is part of Nigeria, the amnesty program is not just a Niger Delta project, but a Nigerian project. Especially considering the monolithic nature of Nigeria's economy, heavily built on the proceeds from crude oil sale. Therefore if Nigeria must successfully turn around her economy, she must politically become stronger, socially understand each other, and better cooperation at all levels, and better secure the environment, then Nigerians must all support the efforts of the government in seeing the amnesty program become a success.

Chapter four will make a case for postmodern argument and analysis of the Niger Delta conflict. Though using contemporary international relations theories, such as postmodernism to analyse complex conflicts like the Niger Delta one is not an easy task. This is because postmodernism disagrees with most modernist (enlightenment) arguments of human nature and conflicts. The postmodernists' analysis in chapter four also uses 'vicious triangle' as an illustration to connect the relationship between the three main actors in the conflict.

## Chapter Four: Postmodernists Perspective of the Niger Delta Conflict

### 4.1 The Postmodernists Arguments

Prior to the announcement and the eventual commencement of the amnesty program, the rate of oil pipeline sabotage and kidnapping of oil workers was on the increase, with huge sums of monies been given out both by the oil companies and the government to secure the release of those kidnapped. On the 7th of December 2007, the federal government of Nigeria signed a peace agreement with twelve militant groups operating in the creeks of the Niger Delta, to end all acts of hostage-taking, pipeline vandalisation and invasion of oil platforms, which the government said would allow it carry out its developmental plan for the region, but one of the major militant group (the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta [MEND]) in the region distanced itself from this agreement. Thus this very complex conflict rages on without an end till date, and there is no sign or proof that the crisis will come to an end any time soon.

It is a common reasoning among people in the region that, few regions in the world could be as unfortunate as the Niger Delta region. The region's abundant natural wealth stands in stark contrast to its underdevelopment challenges. Following the Amnesty offered by former President Yar'Adua in 2009 to armed fighters, an uneasy quiet has settled over the area. Though, one of the fundamental issues of extreme deprivation still remained unchanged. The developmental challenges facing the Niger Delta are still linked to its unstable history and also relatively shaped by repeating scales of instability.

Like analyzing human conflicts through the perspectives in sociology, which emphasize the social, political, and even the material inequality of any social group by criticizing the broad socio-political system, the postmodernists arguments of conflict borrows part of classical Marxists conflict analysis, drawing attention to power as one of the core influences<sup>80</sup> in human conflict explanation. Postmodernism is a critique<sup>81</sup> that tries to expose the problems of the enlightenment (modernism) in its modern form. It looks at how social activities have meanings ascribed to them, thereby creating

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<sup>80</sup> Smith James, Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church. **Grand Rapids: Baker Academic**, 2006.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Salberg and Robert Stewart, Postmodernism and Its Critics: ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORIES, **Department of Anthropology, The University of Alabama**, <http://anthropology.ua.edu/cultures/cultures.php?culture=Postmodernism%20and%20Its%20Critics>, [17-11-2011].



hierarchies of power that are now accepted as normal and natural, thus the structure, that it creates is regarded as socially constructed and is historically subjective to humans.

It borrows from literature and does not really believe in the enlightenment. Therefore it abandons it and tries to create a way forward that is more objective, instead of the one created by the enlightenment which it argues is disjointed, because it imposes meaning on social activities and creates hierarchies of power that are then accepted as natural. Postmodernism has some similarities with critical theory, but criticizes it, because of its position on the enlightenment; therefore it is about meta-narratives<sup>82</sup>. For them, these meta-narratives are stories about self and others, and because of this there are no truths, because we keep interpreting and reinterpreting. This is how culture is produced and reproduced; this is why the whole world is confusing.

Postmodernist argues that, there are no true readings of any particular text, but many interpretations, therefore every single text or concept does not have a single true and ultimate meaning. This makes the intention of the speaker or author totally unimportant in the analysis of any given event, but because meaning is power it is arranged in such a way that one meaning becomes opposite of the other, whereby some things are elevated and seen as right while the others are regarded as wrong and is put down. This pattern becomes truth in the society and turns into natural practice<sup>83</sup> and discourse that individuals do not question but they reproduce and recreate the world through them. Therefore, meaning is then imposed and the subjugation of humans continues unquestioned and unchallenged.

The theory is very skeptical of all meta-narratives, and it try to look at how this meanings, we as humans impose on events to create continuity undermines politics and reduces or restricts individual's freedom. It also look at the role an individual should play in politics, which it believe, the individual should play a more prominent role than the state, and looks at how discourse is concerned and related to human subjugation and construction, and since it encourages the individual to play a more prominent role, it encourages pluralism, contests and the meeting of power with power. While modernist theories and analysis argues that conflict of interest exists in all societies and is the result of the political struggle among different groups attempting to promote or enhance their life chances, postmodernist might argue that conflict of interest exist in societies because citizens tend to play more active role in the power analysis of legitimacy and authority.

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<sup>82</sup> Macquarrie John, Postmodernism in philosophy of religion and theology, **International Journal for Philosophy of Religion**, December 2001, pp. 9-27.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Cooper, The Post-modern State: Conflict Resolution and Sustainable Peace Building, April 2002, <http://www.world-governance.org/spip.php?article86>, [10-10-2011].

#### 4.2 The Postmodernists Analysis of the Niger Delta conflict

In the context of postmodern conflict, winning hearts and minds are replaced with asking and understanding what is known. This complex interaction of discourses which is created by the vast increase in the flow and access of information as a result of globalization challenges the logical arguments of modernity (enlightenment). The role of virtual communities, local narratives, and levels of reality in the creation and re-creation of new identities is at the heart of postmodernism and this reflects how crisis and conflicts are perceived. Global communications networks transcend the identities and loyalties of communities and citizens, bound in nation-states. The ever shifting ethnic, religious, regional, or marginal identities are created in a postmodern world, which inevitably negates nation states' the ability and monopoly on the use of force to maintain power, authority and legitimacy in society based on twenty first century ideology of international peace and security, though conflicts in the postmodern context appears to have several components.

Postmodernists would most probably start from the point of what made or compelled the government of Nigeria to undertake a military campaign<sup>84</sup> against its own citizens in the Niger Delta? And what compelled the militants to start using the tactics<sup>85</sup> of sabotage, kidnapping of oil workers and more recently, oil theft and illegal refining? Postmodernism shines in exploring paradoxes, thus it tries to reveal how force and humanitarian intervention are intertwined, and reproduce each other, thereby looking at how one cannot survive without the other, and since meaning is imposed through power, as well as interpretation, so, on one hand, from the perspective of the government, it is trying to impose discipline in the Niger Delta, thus the use of force against its own citizens in the region is mandatory, to restore order and to ensure that the value system is restored. This, for postmodernists is the nature of politics, while on the other hand, they would argue that the activities of the militants is individuals trying to play a more prominent role than the state and to attain freedom from the system.

Since meaning is arranged in oppositional terms, then the name militants naturally reveals that these people are violent and not fighting for the emancipation of the people of the region and improved provision of amenities as the militants claim. Thus it will look at how power and morality meet to explore the truth in the Niger Delta, and it would reveal the various 'wills', that exists, the will of the

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<sup>84</sup> John Keegan, The Radical at the Pentagon, Vanity Fair, **The Journal of Conflict studies**, The GEEG CENTRE for the study of War and Society, 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2003, p. 126.

<sup>85</sup> Keith Dickson, War in (Another) New Context: Postmodernism, **Joint Forces Staff College, National Defense University**, Vol 24, No. 2, 2004.

government being, the restoration of peace, order and security within its territories, and to ensure that revenue that it gets from the resources in the region will not be put to a stop; while for the militants, the will is the provision of the basic amenities, the reduction of the suffering of the people in the region, and there is also the struggle for the meaning of the spread of the revenue that the nation gets from the vast oil resources in the region, the moral truth.

Then what values does the region hold for the government and also for the militants. Under the doctrine of “national security”<sup>86</sup> - the government and the large oil resources, which necessitated the ‘land use act (land laws) of 1979,’ is to put all the lands and coastal territory in the country under the control of the federal government of Nigeria. While for the militants, the land belongs to them because it’s their ancestral land, thus they should benefit from the oil exploration and the revenue it generates, since they can no longer farm on their lands and fish in the waters. Postmodernist conflict approach is firmly in the critical and radical tradition, in which it views the law as an oppressive instrument of the rich and powerful, through the state but it rejects the modernist view of the world. For the oil companies, the resources it has invested in the region, it has to make profits out of it, but because of the discipline issue the government has been able to use certain practices like continued permanent coercion, to impose this discipline and this has become valid in the eyes of some individuals and states, and not leaving out the problem of multiculturalism<sup>87</sup> in Nigeria and ethnic politics.

One common approach of the militia groups in the Niger Delta, using the postmodernist analysis is that, the enemy is not fixed – it can be attack against the government and the oil companies today, then against the innocent people who may voice their concerns against their criminal acts tomorrow. Anybody and everybody can be their energy<sup>88</sup> and the notion of loyalties can shift with identities. The goals and motivations also shift with conditions. The choice of ‘targets and attacks’<sup>89</sup> are not always based on rational analysis. The ideas are more powerful than ideologies. Their individual self and gains are seen as more important than the cause. Above all, their actions or reactions are based

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<sup>86</sup> Michael Peters, *Globalism and its Challengers: The Postmodern State, Security and World Order*, (University of Glasgow, 2002).

<sup>87</sup> David Solway, *The Problem With Multiculturalism*, 29<sup>th</sup> of November, 2012, <http://frontpagemag.com/2012/david-solway/the-problem-with-multiculturalism/>, [15-11-2012].

<sup>88</sup> Anthony Burke, *Thinking World Politics: paradoxes of force and security: postmodern conflict*, weblog-Posted on December 9, 2010, <http://worldthoughtworldpolitics.wordpress.com/2010/12/09/paradoxes-of-force-and-security/>, [27-11-2011].

<sup>89</sup> Cooper R., *The Postmodern State* (Mark Leonard [Ed.] *Re-ordering the world: The long-term implications of September 11<sup>th</sup>*), (London: **Foreign Policy Centre**, 2002).

on an understanding of what is known within them and not based on general needs of their respective societies.

Thus the government has used sovereignty<sup>90</sup> ( the government been the sovereign authority in the country), to impose a particular value system, and to give meaning to the acts of the militants, thereby legitimizing its use of force on its own citizens, and since all societies have meta-narratives, where the dominant story always prevails, hence the attack on the militants and the villages in the Niger Delta, and the use of force by the government is for the security of Nigeria as a country, and since humans recreate the world through meta-narratives, where language is used to impose meaning, therefore meaning is power, so we say certain things to impose meaning (the term militants), to impose discipline and the imposition of a particular value system by the government, then the government glorifies what it has done and condemns the acts of the militants. On the other hand, the militia groups might oppose such logical argument of the government by saying that all knowledge is ‘socially constructed’<sup>91</sup> and has no independent reality apart from the minds of those who create it. The recent memorandum of understanding signed by 12 militant groups and the federal government in December 2007 was as a result of force, because every compromise is as a result of force which is related to power and legitimate authority.

The point been made here is that, by using the postmodernists argument, a three dimensional analysis of ‘in-group and out-group’<sup>92</sup> is drawn based on the perspective of the actors involved in the conflict. This is so because, all the three actors mentioned here has its own distinct role to role in the conflict hence their actions and reactions can be interpreted as meta-narratives in the postmodernist analysis. Using a common and logical sense, one can argue that, all the three actors are in a ‘vicious triangle’<sup>93</sup>. That is, the existence of the Nigeria state attracted the oil companies to the Niger Delta region, while the discovery of oil and gas resources in the region made the region an important asset to both the Nigerian government and the oil companies, wherein, the exploration of these resources made the oil companies and the Nigerian government an important partners to the region because without the work of the oil companies, the region will not be able to discover the valuable assets in

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<sup>90</sup> Andrew Rathmell, Towards postmodern intelligence: Intelligence and National Security, (**Routledge Publishers, part of the Taylor & Francis Group**, 2002), Volume 17, Number 3, September 2002 , pp. 87-104.

<sup>91</sup> Bartley Madden, Management's Worldview: Four Critical Points About Reality, Language, and Knowledge Building to Improve Firm Performance, **Social Science Research Network**, 7<sup>th</sup> of May, 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Flenri Tajfel, Billig, Bundy and Flament, “Social categorization and intergroup behavior”, **European Journal of Social Psychology**, April/June, 1971, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., pp. 149-178, accessed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, 2012.

<sup>93</sup> David Harvey, **A Vicious Triangle of Organisational Conflict**, <http://www.cateams.com/downloads/ViciousTriangle.pdf>, [20-11-2012].

their region. This analogy, bound the three actors into a vicious triangle, wherein a triangle is made out of the three ‘independent’<sup>94</sup> actors which are logically joined in three connecting point by making them dependent of each other because the main purpose of the triangle’s formation is linked to the abundant oil resources in the region. The terms ‘independent and dependent’ does not mean that each of the actors cannot be involved in resource exploration without the second and third actors, but rather it denote an illustrative explanation for their involvement in the Niger Delta conflict.

The ‘dominant language’<sup>95</sup> in any society is the language of the rich and powerful, and by virtue of owning the dominant language their interests and views will privileged. Furthermore, the ongoing Niger Delta crisis, postmodernists would argue is a conflict that is based on the use of meta-narratives by both sides in the conflict, by interpreting meaning to the acts of the other side, and to impose its will on the other side, and that understanding the conflict better will reveal that, there are various wills. Struggle for what the truth is, in this analysis, the truth is the will to power, which is the imposition of meaning through social concepts, such as national security hence the government believes its value must prevail, unchallenged and unquestioned, and probably why the conflict is still ongoing, and as a result of the fact that the crisis is ongoing, therefore it would be difficult to predict an out-come. While postmodernism cannot be clearly used to explain the source and origin of the complex conflicts, it identifies the social conflict between the Nigerian government and the militia groups in the Niger Delta and, as a basic factor of life by criticizing the modernist arguments of legitimacy, power and authority to under-mind the genuine demand of the people.

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<sup>94</sup> Frank Hecker, Trying to unite civility and truth in a few long blog posts: Post-modern politics and the Pew typology, <http://frankhecker.com/2011/05/06/post-modern-politics-and-the-pew-typology/>, [10-11-2012].

<sup>95</sup> Geoffrey William Lord, Postmodernism and Notions of National Difference: A Comparison of Postmodern Fiction in Britain and America, Postmodern Studies, Volume 11 of Utrecht Studies in Language and Communication, 1996, **Oxford Journals of International Studies**, [ywes.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/77/1/601.pdf](http://ywes.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/77/1/601.pdf), [16-10-2011].

### 4.3 Chapter Summary

Since post modernism shines in exploring paradoxes, the chapter looks at the reasons why both the government and the militants have taken the line of actions they have taken, for the government what is the motivation for using force against its own citizens, like the use of excessive force by the Nigeria military against the militant hideouts in rural villages in the Niger Delta. Looking at how force and humanitarian intervention and discipline are intertwined, revealing that each cannot exist without the other, and how meaning is imposed through the use of power. That, the term militants is now naturally accepted as people that are just violent and not fighting for the emancipation of its people.

This chapter also examines the different 'wills' by the different actors. For the government, the will to restore peace, order and security and to ensure that the revenue it gets from oil sale is not disrupted or put to a stop. For the militants, their concern is the lack of provision of basic amenities, to get fair share from the oil revenue. Then, for the oil companies, the protection of its investments and to ensure it makes profit and explore oil unhindered. Thus since as humans, there are no truths, but stories about self and others, and since we keep interpreting and reinterpreting, thereby creating culture, therefore the world is confusing and that's why the prediction of the outcome of the Niger Delta crisis is almost impossible to predict and it's more confusing to understand.

## Conclusion

The introduction of amnesty<sup>96</sup> in 2009 by the federal government has expressed a beginning of a new chapter in the history of conflict troubled Niger Delta. This development has also triggered a possible re-definition of the governments' strategy and interest towards the region. Moreover, the amnesty program has sent a red signal to stake-holders, especially the major actors and players, including the militia groups, oil companies and representatives leaders from both the political class and opinion groups, those things cannot be done the old ways. Though, one of the possible reasons for the governments' amnesty program can be connected to the revelations of disintegration politics in the 2007 general election and owing to the fact that the then vice president was from the Niger Delta region, by supporting and strengthening of national unity<sup>97</sup> under the umbrella of 'Indivisible Nigeria' which has been a core text in all Nigerian constitutions since independence.

The political platform of the Niger Delta after 1999, coupled with the growing influence of political leaders from the region; such as, the voice of powerful Governors from the Niger Delta states, who loot state treasuries and form coalition's to fight against the federal government because they receive extra 13% derivation from the federal government as part of benefit from oil revenue from their states. The unresolved conflict which threatens national unity and, the continuous growth of organized crime by militia groups and criminal elements in the region, it was without doubt that the federal authorities needed to employ new approaches to address the Niger Delta crisis before it degenerate to total 'stand still' and possible civil war which would cost more than the few billions of Dollars to pay through the amnesty program to appease the militia groups.

Although, the amnesty initiative has introduced new strategies for cooperation and partnership between the government and the militia groups, especially in security and stability of the region, and even in the political sphere by states and local authorities. However, the geo-political and economic situation in the region dictates that the rivalry between the regional voices – their clamor for meaningful and sustainable development, and state governments' demand for more funds to be allocated to them, it is clear that, the government of Nigeria need no other choice than a necessity to address the conflict through the involvement of all stake-holders. Three years have passed since the

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<sup>96</sup> Agaptus Nwozor, A Delta of a minefield: oil resource conflict and the politics of amnesty in Nigeria, **Journal of Conflict Trends**, Article 1, 2010, pp. 31-32.

<sup>97</sup> Uwafiokun Idemudia and Uwem Ite, Demystifying the Niger Delta conflict: Towards an Integrated Explanation, **Journal of African Political Economy**, Vol. 33, Issue 109, 2006.

start of the amnesty program; however a stable security and developmental system<sup>98</sup> has not emerged in the region. There are still many complains and cases of disputes relating to insecurity, under-development, ecological and environmental issues, ethnic and political marginalization, that could trigger another ‘armed race’ which might disrupt the relative peace witnessed through the ongoing amnesty process.

The amnesty initiative is a welcomed development on the part of the government. Furthermore, while the amnesty program last to maintain peace and security, the government should re-examine the criticisms and concerns on its amnesty program and the many other ethnically based problems in the country. Above all, the socio-ethnic reflected not only in the Niger Delta but in other regions of Nigeria predating her independence, up to colonial periods. Though, for as long as Nigeria and the ethnic minorities within it are socially and economically structured in an unjust way, there will always be some groups who will feel that they have been exploited because the analysis of peace and conflicts are inter-connected to human justice.

While the amnesty program has not necessarily become a tool to resolve the conflict, it can be seen as a model in which new peace-building measures<sup>99</sup> can be developed upon, also an approach towards reducing escalations. Although, under-development, economic conditions and environmental issues in the region are unlikely to be resolved soon, the gains of the amnesty should be commended. There are number of issues that need to be address before the region can fully achieve its developmental challenges.

Whether the program will succeed is still an open ended concern, though that depends on the seriousness of the actors and players involved in the management of the process. Moreover, the issues of ethnic tensions and religious influenced conflict in Northern part of Nigeria could contribute to continuous instability and possible separatist movements, which can be seen as another conflicting interest of power struggle. These concerns can result in large scale armed conflict, could even possibly lead to another civil war. Though, this renewed approach through the amnesty has opened new horizons for better relations with the region hence policy makers need to also re-examine previous failed policies towards the region by eliminating the ineffective ones and,

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<sup>98</sup> Oluduro O. and Oluduro O. F., Nigeria: In search of Sustainable Peace in the Niger Delta through the Amnesty Program, **Journal of Sustainable Development**, Vol. 5, No. 7, 2012.

<sup>99</sup> Idumange John, Counting the gains of the Amnesty program, accessed from <http://www.thenigerianvoice.com/nvnews/82459/1/counting-the-gains-of-the-amnesty-programme.html>, [16-11-12].



propose<sup>100</sup> more people oriented and effective policies for the overall benefit of the whole country's peace and stability. Such policies, if proposed, should not undermine the interest of the genuine voices from the region. This thesis has find out that the benefits of the amnesty program, during the few years of its implementation have benefitted both the society and the government.

Leaders and representatives of each side have engaged in several contracting agreements that are likely to facilitate the establishment in more inclusive constructive relations. The involvement of some militia leaders and groups in monitoring the security of oil installations, the Niger Delta water ways, cannot be over emphasized. In fact, this is a new development between the government and the people of the region. The amnesty program, the way it is shaped currently, cannot achieve long lasting peace, when the people of the region are excluded from the process. A more comprehensive and people oriented program must be put in place. This approach must take into context, the developmental needs of the people. Political will for implementation must be strengthened as well; cause without it, not much can be achieved. The amnesty program is a good platform upon which to build more on and achieve sustainable peace, security and development, provided the Nigeria can look beyond the amnesty program and think of her collective future.

In chapters following the amnesty analysis, 20<sup>th</sup> century theoretical analysis of postmodernism was employed to explain the Niger Delta conflict. The reason for introducing this approach is based on the fact that, when analyzing complex conflicts like the Niger Delta one, which has multi-dimensional causes, it's important to employ different conflict analysis in trying to understand the actions and reactions, otherwise using one approach alone might limit the options of identifying the remote causes. Without proper identification of the remote cause, an analyst might not be able to assert the effects, hence making it difficult to recommend solutions. The point to make here is that, it is important and interesting to introduce contemporary international relations theories to analyze conflict of this nature. While it may be difficult to understand this approach as a result of its many critics, the main objective is to achieve comparative analysis.

From the discussions so far, it is obvious that the Nigerian government has failed to adequately manage the Niger Delta crisis. For the militia groups, the failure of subsequence governments to effectively manage the conflict could not be excuse for their criminal activities. It is true that the

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<sup>100</sup> Oluwaniyi O., Post-amnesty programme in the Niger Delta: Challenges and prospects, **Journal of Conflict Trends**, Vol. 4, 2011, pp. 46-54; Ogege S., Amnesty initiative and the dilemma of sustainable development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, **Journal of sustainable development**, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2011, pp. 249-258.

actions of the militia groups are intended to drawing governments' attention towards the critical issues affecting the region but some of their actions and activities - sabotage of oil installations and illegal refineries had caused serious environmental damages to the region.

This thesis has so far been primarily concerned with the long term socio-economic, political and environmental conditions that lie below the Niger Delta conflict. Though, there are significant, useful and emerging reports on the causes of the conflict. The conclusions in this paper may be limited but are important to direct attention towards the issues of environmental, economic and ethnic identities in the region. While the ethnic, economic and environmental conditions lack serious political opening, it is also warning on the part of the Nigerian government to regard citizens' concerns with sense of urgency.

The primary concern of this academic research work is focused on the short term conditions – economic, political, security and environmental concerns which has negative effects that lie behind the conflict today. The study can be used as a contributing research work to further analyze the Niger Delta conflict and other related conflicts, but in doing so, one has to connect the short term benefits to the long term gains, and a complementary consideration for such case study. The conflict, which is regarded by many as 'resource control' is indeed an armed conflict influenced by different factors because the deployment of weaponry was largely influenced by socio-ethnic, environmental, economic, and political issues, though the escalation of violence was triggered by behavior of governments' security institutions and various militia groups. A lasting solution must therefore address illegal arms in the region, the effective distribution of oil resources to oil producing communities which faces the full brunt of the many negative effects from oil exploration activities.

This research has revealed that, there is also a tendency of political leaders to blame the conflict on criminal elements involved in oil theft and illegal oil refining without acknowledging an underlying factor that, some of these illegal activities are been operated by political figures within Nigeria through militia groups in the region. This is a generally acknowledge fact, though there is no official recognition that corruption breeds mismanagement of public funds; and competition for political offices during elections leads to the use of violent means to attain 'lucrative and juicy' government positions which undermines some of the genuine efforts of government to effectively manage the Niger Delta conflict.

The situation in the Niger Delta however is a possible warning of what other parts of Nigeria could experience, if similar valuable resources are discovered and explored because communities in such parts could face similar crisis like the Niger Delta, except the underlying causes of the region are addressed. Stake-holders must seek unifying efforts towards analyzing the many sources of conflict in the region, and actors involved must play more prominent role in eliminating every possible element of conflict in the Niger Delta and other parts of the country. Such actors should include civil society groups and the international community in finding lasting solution. In fact, with general elections approaching in 2014 and the sudden up rise in Boko Harm attacks in the northern part of Nigeria, indications are pointing to a common conclusion that all is not well, even with the amnesty program. In final note, this research paper also consider some of the below recommendations<sup>101</sup> from November 2003 Human Right Watch (Human Right Watch, Vol. 15, No. 18a, pp. 28-29).

In order to ensure, among other things, that competition for government resources does not contribute to violence among ethnic groups, especially at election time, put in place proper controls over federal and state government spending, in consultation with the World Bank; International Monetary Fund; and other relevant international agencies, to ensure that budgets are properly audited, off-budget spending eliminated, and government manages its resources in a non-discriminatory manner.

The federal government of Nigeria should strengthen controls over government-held weapons to ensure they cannot be diverted into private hands. Prevent arms inflows to the Niger Delta, including by improving border security. Learning from the experience of other African countries, develop a program for the disarmament of the armed militias still operating in the region that does not depend on indiscriminate raids into the communities where they are believed to be living. Press for the strengthening of the ECOWAS small arms moratorium and its implementation, which should be expanded to encompass all weapons categories, developed into an information-exchange mechanism, and be made binding.

The international community should urge the Nigerian government at state and federal level to seek a peaceful resolution to the political issues raised by the various parties to the conflict, and to ensure that all Nigerians receive equal protection of the law. Also, urge Nigerian government and security officials to ensure that members of the security forces deployed to quell violence in any future incidents of unrest refrain from excessive use of force, extrajudicial executions, and other human

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<sup>101</sup> Bronwen Manby, **Human Right Watch**, Vol. 15, No. 18a, pp. 28-29.

rights violations. Support appropriate national and local dispute resolution initiatives aimed at defusing inter-communal and ethnic tensions in the region and elsewhere, and urge both federal and state government institutions to do likewise. Explore, as part of other initiatives to increase transparency in the exploitation of primary resources, the possibilities of oil certification as a means of reducing the role of illegal oil bunkering in fueling violence.

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