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Ibaba Samuel Ibaba

Niger Delta University, eminoaiibaba@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This paper discusses the interface between violence in the Niger Delta, global energy security and amnesty granted to armed groups by the Nigerian government. The author notes the impact of the violence on energy infrastructure and brings to the fore how the violence endangers energy security. Thus far, a major concern is that the amnesty program will fail because it was not preceded by negotiations between the government and combatants. The author questions this view and points out that before the amnesty proclamation, several negotiations through committees and commissions involving stakeholders had been done. The paper thus argues that it cannot be entirely correct to conclude that there were no negotiations before the amnesty program was proclaimed. Further, it argues that the issue of negotiation cannot be as important as the failure of government to tackle the fundamental issues which triggered the conflict. The deepening of the country's democracy to ensure that votes count at elections is seen as the most likely option to guarantee the success of the amnesty program and secure the region and energy security.

Keywords: *amnesty program, energy security, frustration-aggression trap, militia violence, Nigeria's Niger Delta, oil-producing companies, peacebuilding*

Author Bio(s)

Ibaba Samuel Ibaba is affiliated with the Department of Political Science at Niger Delta University, where he lectures on Political Science and engages in research focused on conflict resolution, peacebuilding and development. He can be contacted at: eminoababa or at Department of Political Science, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, P.O. BOX 1529, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Nigeria's Niger Delta: Militia Violence, Amnesty and Energy Security

Ibaba Samuel Ibaba

Abstract

This paper discusses the interface between violence in the Niger Delta, global energy security and amnesty granted to armed groups by the Nigerian government. The author notes the impact of the violence on energy infrastructure and brings to the fore how the violence endangers energy security. Thus far, a major concern is that the amnesty program will fail because it was not preceded by negotiations between the government and combatants. The author questions this view and points out that before the amnesty proclamation, several negotiations through committees and commissions involving stakeholders had been done. The paper thus argues that it cannot be entirely correct to conclude that there were no negotiations before the amnesty program was proclaimed. Further, it argues that the issue of negotiation cannot be as important as the failure of government to tackle the fundamental issues which triggered the conflict. The deepening of the country's democracy to ensure that votes count at elections is seen as the most likely option to guarantee the success of the amnesty program and secure the region and energy security.

Introduction

The Niger Delta, Africa's largest delta (World Bank 1995) and home of Nigeria's oil industry, has in the past two decades been characterized by protracted oil-related

violent conflicts. The conflicts began as agitations against oil-producing companies by oil-producing communities in the 1970s, and centered on demands for development attention, environmental protection, and payment of adequate compensation for damages caused by oil company activities such as oil spills. The conflict witnessed several transformations, and this elevated the agitations to political demands (such as restructuring of the Nigerian federation, resource ownership and self-determination) and finally burst into full blown insurgency in 2005 (Osaghae, Ikelegbe, Olarinmoye, and Okhomina 2007; Watts 2007; Ibaba and Ikelegbe 2009). The literature on the Niger Delta has shown concern for the threat the conflicts pose to energy security. One such study concludes:

The oil based struggles for resource benefits and associated conflicts, illegal economy and violence has raised security concerns over world oil output, shipment and supply. Several times, the economy has led to shortfalls in national oil production, world oil supply and consequently sporadic increases in world oil prices. There is the fear of terrorists attackers, latching on to the social turmoil and illegal and underground economy to disrupt world oil supplies. There is also the fear that the economy may afflict the West African and Gulf of Guinea oil production and existing and potential supplies. To the United States which imports about 17 percent of its oil needs from Sub-Saharan Africa and mainly from Nigeria, and to whom a stable and diversified oil supply is vital to national security, the illegal economy is a serious security concern. (Ikelegbe 2006, 49)

Although the above reference highlights the impact of the conflict on United States energy security, just as some other studies have done (Lubeck, Watts, and Lipschutz 2007) probably because the United States is the largest consumer of Nigerian oil, the implications

are wider. The Niger Delta accounts for almost all of Nigeria's gas and oil production (Bassey 2010, 3) and this makes it strategic to global energy needs. It is clear that there is a convergence of interest between securing the Niger Delta and the stability of energy needs of several countries, including Nigeria. It is also noteworthy that energy and economic growth are inexorably linked, and this linkage interfaces with conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The energy and economic threats posed by the insurgency in the Niger Delta partly led to the Nigerian government's amnesty program, which granted pardon to members of militia groups (Niger Delta based non-state armed groups engaged in armed struggle against the Nigerian State) whose attacks on oil infrastructure and disruptions in oil production led to a drop in Nigeria's oil production from 2.6 million barrels per day in 2005 to 1.3 million barrels per day in June 2009 (Obi 2009). The acceptance of the amnesty program which ended on October 4, 2009, and the subsequent surrender of arms and cessation of attacks on oil infrastructure, have witnessed a rise in oil production to 2.02 million barrels per day in December 2009 and 2.20 in April 2010 (Central Bank of Nigeria 2010).

The objective of this paper is to highlight the importance of the success of the amnesty program to global energy security. Concerns have been raised by scholars on the success of the amnesty program, and the major one thus far is the lack of negotiation between ex-combatants and the state, noted to be a deviation from conventional Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation (DDR) procedure (Ikelegbe 2010; Davidheiser and Kiale 2010; Adeyemo and Olu-Adeyemi 2010). But this article makes a case that it cannot be totally correct to conclude that the amnesty policy was not preceded

by negotiations, noting that the argument ignores the Niger Delta context. Furthermore, the issue of negotiation cannot be as important as the failure to address the fundamental factors which instigated the violence.

The remaining part of the paper is divided into 5 sections. The first, “locating the Niger Delta conflict,” examines theoretical explanations for the conflict and highlights the trend. The second section, “the conflict and energy security,” reflects on Nigeria’s potential and actual strategic role in global energy needs and the implications of the violence on energy security; while the third, “reflections on peacebuilding in the Niger Delta,” examines efforts by the Nigerian Government towards peace in the region. The fourth section, “interrogating the amnesty program,” examines the concerns and challenges of the amnesty program. The fifth section concludes the study by noting the centrality of democratization to the success of the amnesty program, security of the Niger Delta and energy security.

Locating the Niger Delta Conflict

The conflict in the Niger Delta has been linked to the oil and gas resource which is found in the region. Over the years, the conflict has been explained from the perspectives of greed, grievance, and frustration-aggression. The greed explanation follows the stand point of Collier and Hoeffler (2002) who blame conflict and violence on conflict entrepreneurs who are driven by economic gains, particularly in the face of the availability of capturable natural resources. The grievance perspective, however, blames violence on grievances resulting from deprivation. The three strands of the grievance theory, relative deprivation, polarization and horizontal inequality (Murshed

and Tadjoeeddin 2009, 96-99) are reinforced by the psychology-based frustration-aggression theory which sees conflict as the outcome of frustration caused by the gap between aspirations and achievements or what it refers to as “want-get-ratio,” “expected need satisfaction” and “actual need satisfaction”(Faleti 2006, 47).

It is clearly difficult to explain the conflict in the Niger Delta from one theoretical standpoint, given its multidimensional nature and transformations. Thus conflict analysis in the region has witnessed an interface of interpretations by scholars in respect to the different conflict settings or phases. Collier (2008, 31) has pointed out that the conflict in the delta has evolved from grievance to greed in the last decade, and attributes this to competition for the huge inflow of oil revenues by politicians and illegal payments made by oil companies to secure production and kidnapped personnel. Watts (2007 and 2008) agrees with this by noting the politically motivated struggles for access and control over oil wealth and the criminalization of the conflict through oil theft or bunkering. The commoditization of violence in the electoral process has encouraged the proliferation of arms and cult/militia groups (Joab-Peterside 2005), a viewpoint supported by available data which indicates the stealing of \$75.1 billion by oil theft syndicates between 2003-2008 (Gilbert 2010, 59). Ikelegbe (2006) isolates this from the conflict and blames it on what he describes as an “economy of conflict” created by conflict entrepreneurs who have taken advantage of the disorder created by the violence.

Ukiwo (2008) sees this as a diversion meant to acquit the Nigerian State from the violence, which he blames on horizontal inequalities and socio-political injustices. This view is widespread and hinges its position on Nigeria's centralized federalism and ethnicity-based political domination. The explanation is that in Nigeria, national

resources and revenue is placed under the control of the federal government, which is expected to direct it to the benefit of all the constituent units of the federation. But because the state is ethnicized, and the custodians of power use it to pursue their ethnic interests, the ethnic groups who are outside the control of political power are denied equitable share of national resources. It further argues that the Nigerian State is controlled by the major ethnic groups while oil and gas are produced in the homelands of the minority ethnic nationalities of the Niger Delta.

Thus, the oil wealth has been transferred for the benefit of the major groups, and this explains the development plight of the Niger Delta that has motivated the conflict. The transfer was facilitated by the reduction of the derivation component of revenue allocation from 50 percent in 1960 to 1.5 percent in 1984. National revenues in Nigeria are paid into a single pool called Federation Account, from where revenue is distributed to the three tiers of government (federal, state, and local government) based on prescribed criteria. One of these is derivation, which stipulates that a percentage of federally collected revenue from natural resources should be paid to the states of origin. At independence in 1960, derivation was 50 percent, but this was later reduced to 45, 20, 2 and later 1.5 percent. Protests in the Niger Delta made the government increase it; first to 3 percent, and later 13 percent (Jega 2007; Mbanefoh and Egwaikhide 1998).

The reductions which began in 1970 coincided with the ascendance of oil as the mainstay of the Nigerian economy (Mbanefoh and Egwaikhide 1998), which until then relied on agricultural products based in the homelands of the majority ethnic groups. This deprivation is linked to the grievance which is central to the conflict (Naanen 1995; Okoko, Nna, and Ibaba 2006; Adeoye 2010). This is further linked to the paradox where

the Niger Delta which accounts for 80 percent of government revenue and 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings (Bassey 2010, 3) lacks development. For example, Akinola (2010, 56) has noted that:

In spite of its strategic economic importance, the demographic picture of the region as shown by the Human Development Index¹ (HDI) is deplorable. The HDI of the region is as low as 0.564... Average life expectancy in the Niger Delta is 46.8 years. There is also a high mortality of young children – of every 1000 newborn, 200 die by the age of 5. Access to health was estimated to be available to only 56.5% of the population and population per one hospital bed was as high as 1,277 people.... there is one doctor for every 150,000 inhabitants of the oil rich states of Bayelsa and Delta. Similarly, educational attainment at primary and secondary levels suffers from a high teacher-pupil ratio – 1:42, compared with the national average of 1:36. This, invariably, resulted in a large number of drop-outs. At the same time, unemployment is about 30% of the available labor force in the region.

The point is that the huge oil revenues have barely benefited the population living in poverty (United Nations Development Program 2006), thus leading to anger and protests. The frustration-aggression theory reinforces this position. Ibaba (2007) explains from this standpoint that dashed hopes of improved living conditions have resulted in despair, disillusionment and pent up anger which have motivated the conflicts. But this ethnicity-based political domination or horizontal inequality grievance perspective fails to explain the different conflict settings adequately. For example, it does not explain the use of violence to contest for political power among the political elites in the Niger Delta; neither does it explain inter-community and intra-community conflicts. Also, it cannot be a useful explanation for inter-ethnic conflicts, intra-cult/militia group and inter-cult/militia

group conflict over contests for oil theft/bunkering space and pervasive corruption in the region and the interface with development inadequacies and conflict. This suggests that grievance cannot explain the totality of the conflicts in the Niger Delta, but it can be argued that greed underlies the exclusion of the minority groups from the oil wealth by the majority groups, as the oil wealth has not impacted the poverty of the northern region whose political leaders have dominated governance in Nigeria. Available data shows that despite the rule by the majority Hausa-Fulani ethnic group of northern Nigeria, and the perception that they have used the oil wealth for the benefit of their people, the Northern States are the poorest in the country. The 2004 poverty profile in the country listed the 6 Northern states of Jigawa, Kebbi, Kogi, Bauchi, and Kwara as the poorest. Similarly, no Northern state was listed among the states that had the lowest incidence of poverty (Ibaba 2010, 51).

One fundamental reason advanced by Akinola (2010, 57) for deprivation of citizens, is the domination of the public sphere by a few elites with “particularistic” concerns that results in exclusion of the people. I agree, and note that one consequence of this is corruption, which is possibly driven by greed. But corruption which also results in deprivation (Ibaba and Ebiede 2008) can be a source of grievance, frustration and aggression. Significantly, corruption is pervasive at all levels of governance in Nigeria, a federation of 36 states and 774 local government councils. From the above, it is discernible that the causes of conflict in the Niger Delta are multidimensional. Table 1 provides some insight into conflict trends and conflict drivers in the region.

Table 1: Conflict Trends in the Niger Delta Indicating the Motivating Factors and Actors

Type of Conflict	Motivating/Causal Factors	Actors of Conflict
Intra-Community Conflict	Triggered by disagreement community factions over ownership of land, and equitable distribution of oil industry benefits such as scholarships, employment, contract awards, and monies paid as compensation for damages	Community factions such as youths, chiefs, urban and local elites, engaged in a struggle for access and equitable share of oil benefits
Inter-Community Conflict	Caused by inter-community struggle over benefits of the oil industry such as award of contracts, employment and payment of compensation for damage done to property.	Community youths and chiefs engaged in a struggle for access and equitable share of oil benefits
Inter-Ethnic Conflict	This caused by inter-struggle for over benefits of the oil industry such as employment, contract awards and payment of compensation for damages, ownership of land, title of traditional rulers and political appointments	Community youths and chiefs engaged in a struggle for access and equitable share of oil benefits and political leaders who manipulate the situation to score political gains
Oil-Company/Community Conflict	This is motivated by factors such as delay in the payment of compensation for damage to property, breach of Memorandum of Understanding by the oil companies and the patronage of community factions by the oil companies	Community youths and chiefs engaged in a struggle for access and equitable share of oil benefits and Security personnel who are invited by the oil companies to maintain order but get involved due to their excesses
State-Community Conflict	This is caused by perceived deprivation, neglect and exclusion from the oil wealth	Youths, chiefs, political leaders civil society organizations and militia groups engaged in a struggle for access and equitable share of oil benefits
Intra-cult/Militia Group Conflict	Struggle for supremacy over oil theft/bunkering space, and leadership succession	Youth groups engaged in illegal oil bunkering

Inter-Cult/Militia Group Conflict	Struggle for supremacy over oil theft/bunkering space	Youth groups engaged in illegal oil bunkering
Political Conflict	Struggle for access and control of political power	Armed political thugs, mainly youths and politicians who engage in a desperate struggle for political power due to the personalization of the state which encourages corruption and accumulation of wealth

Source: Ibaba 2009, 565-566; Joab-Peteside 2005; Ibaba and Ikelegbe 2009, 7

The Niger Delta conflict has experienced several phases and turned towards insurgency from 2005; resulting in the formation of numerous militia groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDVF), Niger Delta Volunteers (NDV), among many others (Okonta 2006; Ibaba and Ikelegbe 2009, 9). The operational strategy of these groups, which had the capacity to directly confront the Nigerian Military (Watts 2007), include attacks on oil infrastructure, disruption of oil production, kidnapping/hostage taking of oil company personnel and oil theft/bunkering (Ikelegbe 2006; Watts 2007; Ibaba and Ikelegbe 2009). These actions led to a decline in oil production and disruptions/delays in the development of oil and gas infrastructure, thus undermining energy security.

The Conflict and Energy Security

The security of energy sources in terms of production and supply is not only important to production, but also to national security. This explains the concerns for energy security threats, which include high oil prices, instability in exporting countries and threat of terrorism (Yergin 2006). Thus Nigeria's actual and potential prominent role in global

energy needs and supplies, and the concentration of oil and gas production in the Niger Delta, draws attention to the implications of the conflict on energy security.

Nigeria is ranked the largest oil producer in Africa (Akinola 2010, 1) and is also noted as the 15th world oil producer, and 7th top oil exporter in the world (USEIA 2008). Again, Nigeria exports oil to 21 countries in Africa, Europe, Asia and America as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentage Export of Nigerian Oil

Country	Percentage Exported
United States of America	42
Canada	3
South Africa	3
Cote-d'Ivoire	3
Italy	4
Spain	5
France	6
Brazil	6
India	13
Others(Netherlands, American Virgin Islands, Japan, Ghana, Chile, China, Germany, Cameroon, South Korea, Portugal)	16

Source: Nigeria, Country Briefs, 2009, p.5

Significantly, 10 of these countries, the United States, China, Japan, India, Germany, Brazil, Canada, South Korea, France, and Italy, are among the top oil consumers in the world (USEIA 2008). Related to this is that fact that whereas the depleted oil and gas reserves in the North Sea of Europe stand at 15 billion barrels and 155.6 trillion cubic feet, the reserves of Nigeria are 35 billion barrels and 185 trillion cubic feet respectively. Further, the country's light sweet crude is easier to refine into petrol than the crude

produced in the Persian Gulf, Russia and Venezuela (Africa's Oil Giant Enters Global League [www. entrepreneur.com/tradejournals](http://www.entrepreneur.com/tradejournals)).

Further, the country is ranked the 10th producer of natural gas, and the “estimated 17.2 billion cubic meter of gas it flares every year is noted to be one quarter of the power consumption of Africa and 45 percent of the energy requirement of France, the world's fourth largest economy” (Onyekonwu 2008, 17). Similarly, it is estimated that the gas flares in the Niger Delta “can provide 75 percent of the energy requirements in Sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa” (Tell 2008, 84). The proposed West Africa pipeline project is expected to convey gas from the Niger Delta to Ghana, Togo and Benin Republic, and is expected to have a full capacity of 450 cubic meters of natural gas per annum, on completion (Nigeria, Country Briefs, 2009, p.7).

Similarly, the Trans-Sahara gas pipeline project is designed to supply 20 billion cubic meters of gas per annum to Europe by 2016 (Afrik-News 2010). Significantly, Europe imports 57 percent of its gas requirements, making it the largest importer of gas. Significantly, it is also estimated that gas consumption “would increase by 1.7 percent annually from about 104 trillion cubic feet in 2005 to nearly 158 trillion cubic feet in 2030” (Niger Delta Standard 2009, 9). Nigeria also supplies electricity to neighbouring African countries such as Niger, and is also involved in electricity integration projects in the West African sub-region. One such project is the proposed 330-KV transmission line from Lagos (Nigeria) to Togo and the Republic of Benin (Madamombe 2005). Significantly, gas piped from the Niger Delta is a major source of electricity generation in Nigeria. Indeed, Nigeria's energy sources depend on the Niger Delta, as natural gas

contributes 34 percent, and oil 58 percent. Hydro contributes a meager 8 percent (Nigeria, Country Briefs 2009, p.2).

Attacks on gas pipelines, including six incidents between May and August 2009 alone (Daily Champion 2009, 1; Nigerian News World 2009, 16), disrupted gas supply to the country's electricity power plants, and the West African Pipeline Project (Adeoye 2010, 9-10). The violence also led to drastic cuts in crude oil production and export. Available data shows that attacks on oil pipelines increased from 497 in 1999 to 895 in 2004, leading to an increase in product loss from 179,000 metric tons in 2004 to 396,000 metric tons in 2004 (Watts 2007, 639). Also the year 2006 recorded 14 militia attacks on oil infrastructure, as well as oil company and security personnel. This increased to 23 in 2007 and 29 in 2008. These attacks led to an estimated loss of 25,200,000 barrels of crude oil valued at \$56,646,424,000 (Niger Delta Technical Committee 2008, 120-121). Also the country's oil exports dropped from 1.84 million barrels per day in December 2006 to 1.45 million barrels per day in October 2009, when the amnesty offer ended. The export volume has since risen to 1.51 million and 1.57 million barrels per day in November and December 2009 respectively, and 1.76 million barrels per day in June 2010 (Central Bank of Nigeria 2010). The disruptions in oil supplies and the development of oil and gas production infrastructure vindicate the concern shown for the threat the violence poses to energy security. One of the intentions of the amnesty program is to address this concern.

Reflections on Peacebuilding in the Niger Delta

Before the 2009 amnesty declaration by the Nigerian government, several attempts located at three broad levels had been made to restore peace in the Niger Delta.

First, is development intervention by the government through the establishment of ministerial and extra-ministerial agencies. One such attempt was the 1.5 percent presidential committee which was established in 1982 to manage the 1.5 percent Mineral Producing Areas Development Fund. This was succeeded by the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), created in 1992, and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) established in the year 2000. The creation of the Ministry for Niger Delta Affairs is also part of this intervention. The mandate of these agencies included the provision of social infrastructure and services for environmental management, particularly in the remediation of oil spill and gas flare impacted areas (OMPADEC 1993; Okoko, Nna, and Ibaba 2006). The neglect of the oil-producing areas of the Niger Delta resulted in the absence of basic social infrastructure and amenities such as health facilities, schools, electricity, and potable water. This condition was exacerbated by oil spills and gas flare which undermined the local economies largely based on farming and fishing. These agencies, however, had little success in addressing these problems, and this meant that the objective conditions which motivate conflict were sustained. The failure has been blamed on factors which include poor management of funds, poor development planning, corruption, political interference, and inadequate funding (Ibaba 2005; Adeyemo 2008).

At another level of analysis, the failure of these establishments to promote peace and development is attributed to their inability to address crucial issues such as centralized federalism, political restructuring, and reforms in revenue allocation which are fundamental requirements for the resolution of the conflict (Tamuno 2000). Ibaba (2009) agrees with this view but insists that they are not as important as the lack of

democratization, which appears to have hindered the success of other aspects of the federal government's response to the conflict. As part of this response, the federal government increased the derivation component of revenue allocation from 1.5 percent to 3 percent in 1992, and from 3 percent to 13 percent in 2000. These increases, which partially met demands for increase in the derivation formula to 50 percent, improved on the finances of the Niger Delta states. Available data shows for instance that revenue received by the Niger Delta state from the Federation Account rose from \$866.2 million in 2000 to \$7.1 billion in 2008. The data further indicates that the Niger states received \$7.1 billion out of \$16.5 billion allocated to the 36 states of the federation (Ibaba 2009).

However, the increase in revenue inflow brought with it manifestations of elements of "resource curse" such as short-sightedness of policy makers, the weakening of state institutions through corruption, and the inhibition of democratization through political patronage, which discourages demands for democracy and political repression (Center for Strategic and International Studies 2008; Ross 1999). Budgetary allocations neglect social infrastructure and social services such as education, health facilities and potable water, whereas projects such as stadia, airports, and new lodges for political office holders are given priority. Travel allowances are inflated, and thus consume a substantial part of budgetary allocations. Enweremadu (2008, 448) cited the case of Rivers State where legislators received \$5.4 million as travel allowances alone in a year. Ibaba (2009, 562) has also cited the case of Bayelsa State where over \$92.8 million was budgeted for miscellaneous expenses while \$5 million was set aside for Governor's tours and travels in 2008. In the same year, health was allocated \$84.2 million, water \$3.6 million and education \$78.4 million.

Corruption and political patronage are also pervasive in the region. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nigeria's anti-graft agency, has accused 4 of the 6 governors who served from 1999-2007 of financial impropriety. Chief D.S.P. Alamiyeseigha, the first executive governor of Bayelsa State, was arrested in London in September 2005 on money laundering charges to the tune of 1.8 million pounds (Watts 2007). He was later convicted by a Nigerian high court in 2007, after his dramatic return from London in November 2005. The effect of corruption in the region is that only a small proportion of the huge oil revenues have trickled down to the poor population. Despite this, the population can hardly demand democracy and good governance, partly because of the patron-client politics, the commoditization of violence in the electoral process and the associated repression and electoral fraud (Joab-Peterside 2005). Election fraud which is perpetrated through patron-client politics and violence has hijacked the power of the people to vote out corrupt and inefficient governments. Thus the region is denied the development and peace benefits of democracy such as the enhancement of development and reduction of structural violence, open and fair competition for power, provision of avenues for rational political discourse and settlement of conflicting social interests, checks and balances of governmental powers which reduce discontent, political participation, income re-distribution, production and funding of public goods, rule of law, and accountability and transparency in governance (Ake 1996a and 1996b; McGuire and Olson 1996; Brown and Hunter 2004; Diamond 2004; Samuels 2005; Ross 2006).

Another approach to peace which preceded the amnesty program was the 2004 cash for arms policy of the Rivers State government (one of the six state governments in the Niger Delta), meant to retrieve arms from cults/gangs and militias. In the build up to

the 2003 general elections, several groups were mobilized and armed by politicians to secure election victory (Human Rights Watch [HRW] 2005; Joab-Peterside 2005). But the events which followed created deep-seated insecurity as inter and intra cult/gang, intra-community and inter-community conflict became frequent. The waterways became unsafe and attacks on oil infrastructure increased. Having linked the violence to the availability of arms, the government decided to retrieve arms from circulation. Those who had arms were motivated with compensatory payments in cash, rehabilitation, training, and forgiveness. The response was shocking, as a total of 1,675 assorted firearms were submitted. These included assault rifles, AK-47 rifles, Czech SA Vz 58, HK C3, shotguns, light machine guns, Baretta 125, revolvers, craft weapons, pistols and Czech model 26 (Osaghae, Ikelegbe, Olarinmoye, and Okhomina 2007, 20). Although the number of submitted arms was huge, the general feeling then was that only an infinitesimal proportion of available arms were surrendered, just as other reports indicated that old arms were returned to claim the monies paid, while the new arms in the possession of the violent groups remained intact (Human Rights Watch 2005, 20).

Events which followed later tend to vindicate these claims, although it can be argued that new arms were bought. The sources of arms in the Niger Delta, identified by Osaghae, Ikelegbe, Olarinmoye, and Okhomina (2007, 20-21), include weapons brought in from war-ravaged countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone by Nigerian soldiers who had gone to those countries for peace keeping, and who then sold the arms to willing buyers such as chiefs, politicians, and criminal gangs/cult groups; weapons exchanged for oil by oil bunkering syndicates; weapons seized from or bought from security operatives; and weapons brought into the country illegally by smugglers.

This suggests that the accessibility to arms and their availability are central to the conflict. Although information on payments for arms under the program is sketchy, one report indicates that \$2,000 was paid for each AK-47 rifle that was surrendered (Africa News 2009). Human Rights Watch (HRW) also reported in 2005 that the Rivers State government offered \$1,800 for each assault rifle that was turned in. However, it is estimated that arms were purchased for between \$570 and \$2,150, (Osaghae, Ikelegbe, Olarinmoye, and Okhomina 2007, 19), suggesting that firearms can easily be acquired with monies received from government in return for surrendering arms. It can be argued from this standpoint that the arms for cash program ended up in mobilization rather than demobilization, and this partly accounts for the high intensity of resurgence in the later years. Further, the fundamental factors which led to the emergence of the armed groups, such as the manipulation of youth groups by politicians, desperate struggle for traditional political authority induced by payments to communities by oil companies, the use of youths by oil theft/ bunkering syndicates, arms leakages, and the culture of impunity which undermined the punishment of perpetrators of violence (HRW 2005, 4-10), were not addressed.

It is deducible from all of the above that the failure of the government to tackle the fundamental issues which triggered the conflict, sustained it until it was shaped by arms to a dangerous point. Whereas the Chief Olusegun Obasanjo government was more militaristic in its approach to the conflict, the Alhaji Musa Yari' Adua government, after seeing the futility of that approach decided on the amnesty program after several consultations. The amnesty proclamation which was made on June 25, 2009, came into effect on August 6, 2009, and ended October 4, 2009, offered forgiveness to militants in

return for withdrawal from the creeks, arms surrender, re-integration and provision of source of livelihood (Adeyemi-Suenu and Inokoba 2010, 8). Unlike the cash for arms program of the Rivers State government, the amnesty program made provisions for those who accepted the pardon to be registered and camped for training, rehabilitation and reintegration. In addition, they were paid allowances to provide for their feeding and other needs. The government budgeted \$63 million for this (Africa News 2009). At the end of the amnesty period, the amnesty implementation committee reported the surrender of about 15,000 militants, 2,760 assorted arms and 287, 445 variety of ammunitions (The Nation 2009). Since the end of the amnesty, attacks on oil infrastructure and oil company personnel are almost non-existent while oil production in the region has become reasonably stable.

Interrogating the Amnesty Program

The amnesty program has been criticized on a number of grounds. The most prominent is the contention that it did not follow disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) procedures. One such critique has noted:

DDR is typically adopted in post conflict societies, where peace agreements have been forged among ex-combatants who have signified a willingness to return to civil life. Interestingly, Nigeria offers an exception from the standard approach. ... The conceptualization of amnesty underlies the structure of pre-amnesty peace negotiations, and ultimately defines the strategy of disarmament and the design of post-amnesty demobilization. It shows that the conception of amnesty as a “gift handed down to militants perceived primarily as criminals” is the major challenge to the amnesty initiative. This is evident in the non-inclusion of a specific strategy for addressing the roots of militancy in the amnesty program. This

suggests that the amnesty initiative does not differ markedly from the state's preferred peace strategy of win/lose, which has underscored constant agitations, and the evolving dynamics of complex insurgency in the region. (Davidheiser and Kiale 2010, 1)

The above reference emphasizes the absence of pre-amnesty negotiations and the signing of a peace agreement with the ex-militants as a major flaw that may truncate the program. The contention is that negotiations with the ex-combatants were necessary to define a comprehensive peace agreement which would serve as a framework for the implementation of the amnesty program. Adeyemo and Olu-Adeyemi (2010) and Ikelegbe (2010) agree with this, and note that the absence of negotiation has created a vacuum described as "the lack of participation and sense of ownership of the program by ex-combatants" (Davidheiser and Kiale 2010, 13). This is seen as a major threat to the program. However, it cannot be completely correct to conclude that there were no negotiations before the amnesty was proclaimed. Whereas negotiation is conventional in DDR, it would be wrong to ignore context when insisting on its application.

Although the insurgency in the Niger Delta has been championed by several groups, their demands have been congruent as evidenced in the petitions made to the federal government by the different ethnic nationalities. The Ogoni Bill of Rights (1990), the Aklaka Declaration (1999), Bill of Rights of the Oron People (1999), Resolutions of the First Urhobo Economic Summit (1998) the Warri Accord (1999), and The Kaima Declaration (1998) are all unanimous on the demands for resource control, self-determination, increase in derivation, and environmental protection as remedies and strategies for the development of the region. Essentially, the lack of development is the prime motive for the agitations which turned violent. Further, numerous commissions of

inquiry and committees have been established to investigate the issues and recommend policy options. The work of these commissions and committees has been done by stakeholders and in consultation with stakeholders, and in many cases, decisions were reached by consensus.

In September 2008, the federal government constituted the Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC) to review all past reports on the region, including the report of the Willinks Commission established by the colonial government in 1957. The NDTC was given the mandate to determine policy options that can “help the government to achieve sustainable development, peace, human and environmental security in the Niger Delta.” The NDTC submitted its report in November 2008, and made recommendations which center on governance and rule of law (disarmament, decommission, reintegration, reforms in governance and institutions), regional development (transportation, water and power, economic development, reclamation, environment and sustainable development), and compact with stakeholders. Two things are noteworthy here. First, amnesty was a key recommendation of the NDTC. Second, the recommendations of the NDTC were based on the reports of previous committees and commissions (such as the Belgore Report 1992; the Etiebet Report 1994; the Poopola Report 1998; the Ogomudia Report 2001; the Presidential Panel on National Security 2003; the National Political Reform Conference Report 2005; and the Report of the Presidential Council on the Social and Economic Development of the Coastal States of the Niger Delta 2006) and the different petitions of the various ethnic nationalities of the region, and thus, it was unanimously accepted in the Niger Delta as the road map to peace and development in the region.

Given this, I argue that the issue of negotiation is not as important as the failure to address the fundamental issue of development neglect which triggered and sustained the conflict. Importantly, the promise by the federal government to address the development of the region and related issues ensured the acceptance of the amnesty by the armed groups. Thus the government has only implemented one aspect of the Committee's recommendations which emerged by consensus. The implementation of the other policy recommendations will most likely prevent the resurgence of violence in the region and thus secure energy needs and supply.

This view is predicated on addressing the challenges posed by the lack of democratization and capacity on the part of the political leadership to pursue the common good. Corruption, the lack of transparency and accountability in governance, the desperate struggle for political power, commoditization of violence in the electoral process, political repression and the neglect of development, which have contributed to the conflict, are consequences of the lack of democracy and good governance. This is also true of ethnicity-based political domination and irresponsive governance. The Willinks Commission Report (1958, 30) made this point when it noted that "the best protection for a remote territory against governmental neglect or discrimination is the voting power of its inhabitants...the development of democratic institutions... can strengthen this safeguard." Election rigging, which makes votes not to count, has robbed the country and the Niger Delta of these benefits. Significantly, election rigging has become an integral part of the Nigerian electoral process (Alapiki 1995; Ibrahim 2006; Bratton 2008).

One concern for the amnesty program is speculation that militia groups withheld some of their firearms, thus making the region prone to the resurgence of violence. But even if this speculation is true (as the assassination of Soboma George, former militant commander in Rivers State, on August 24, 2010 and the October 1, 2010 Abuja bomb blasts suggest), the use of the arms can only be encouraged by undemocratic conditions. The crisis plaguing the national economy is also a major challenge to the success of the amnesty program. Corruption and the associated poor management of funds and resources, the energy and infrastructure crisis, and the global economic recession have knocked down the Nigerian economy. The country generates only 3.7 megawatts of about 20,000 megawatts of its electricity needs, imports refined petroleum products even though it is OPEC's 6th largest producer, the poverty rate is over 70 percent, and youth unemployment is about 49 percent (Channels Television 2010).

This condition threatens the success of the education, training and rehabilitation components of the amnesty. The question is, Will the educated, trained and rehabilitated militants operate in a different economy? The answer is obviously no, and herein lies the problem. The lack of employment for these repentant militants may incite them to violence. Further, the high youth unemployment put at 49 percent (Channels Television 2010) indicates that there are several other youths who may be prone to violence. Significantly, present policies are not addressing this effectively, just as the education, training, and rehabilitation components of the amnesty program have thus far neglected the youths who did not carry arms against the state. This tends to create a perception that it pays to be violent, and may instigate further violence if not attended to. It is proper to argue here that the economic crisis may have created a "frustration-aggression trap" that

tends towards a cycle of violence. Escaping this trap is therefore essential for the success of the amnesty program.

In an earlier section, the paper noted the application of the greed and grievance explanation of violence to the Niger Delta conflict. The discussion here underscores the relevance of these theories in the analysis of the Niger Delta conflict, and draws attention to the fact that the resolution of greed and grievance is central to peace building in the region.

Conclusion

This paper examined the interface between militia violence in Nigeria's Niger Delta, the amnesty granted the armed groups by the Nigerian government, and energy security. The objective of the paper was to highlight the importance of the success of the amnesty program to global energy security. The study reviewed the theoretical explanations of the conflict and noted that a single theory can hardly explain the different settings of conflicts in the region. Thus the paper emphasized the integration of the greed, grievance and frustration-aggression theories that have dominated conflict analysis in the Delta. Thus the variations of conflict such as oil company-community conflict, intra-community conflict, inter-community conflict, community-state conflict, intra-cult/gangs and militia conflict and inter-cults/gangs and militia conflicts were located in these contexts, and the analysis highlighted the resolution of greed and grievances as a major requirement for peacebuilding in the area.

Nigeria's strategic role in global energy needs was discussed, and Nigeria's potential and actual importance to gas needs in Europe and Africa, the countries supply of

crude oil to 21 countries in Europe, America, Asia and Africa, and electricity supplies to some African countries were emphasized. The paper reflected the impact of the violence on energy infrastructure and brought to the fore how the violence endangers energy security. The disruptions of gas supplies to energy plants in Nigeria and the West African gas pipeline and the drastic cuts in oil production and exports were cited as examples of the implications of the violence for energy security.

The amnesty program was initiated to restore peace and ensure unfettered oil and gas production in the region. It set out to retrieve arms from the creeks of the region, provide means of livelihood and forgiveness to individuals who took up arms against the state and attacked and destroyed energy infrastructure such as oil and gas pipelines. The 60 day amnesty which ended on October 4, 2009, has brought relative peace to the region as evidenced by the near absence of attacks on oil and gas production infrastructure and kidnapping/hostage taking of oil company personnel, and increase in oil production and export. But the program has been criticized for not adhering to the principles of DDR, particularly for not being preceded by a negotiation framework. This is seen as a vacuum that can undermine its success. While I agree with this, I make a case that the argument ignores the Niger Delta context. My contention is that it cannot be entirely correct to conclude that there were no negotiations before the amnesty program was proclaimed by the federal government.

The point is that before the amnesty was proclaimed, several negotiations through committees and commissions involving stakeholders had been done. Further, the different nationalities had documented petitions to the federal government. Meanwhile, the recommendations of the Niger Delta Technical Committee, which included the amnesty

program and which was widely accepted as a road map to conflict resolution and peace-building in the region, consulted and reflected issues raised in the committees and commissions which preceded it, in addition to the petitions of the ethnic nationalities. Given this, the issue of negotiation cannot be as important as the failure of the government to tackle the fundamental issues which triggered the conflict. The lack of democratization, lack of capacity of political leaders to pursue public good, and the crisis plaguing the national economy are challenges to the success of the amnesty program. To enhance the success of the amnesty program and secure the region and energy security, the deepening of democratic practice to ensure that votes count in Nigerian elections is the most likely way out of the conflict.

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