

# Crisis Response and State Intervention in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region: A Post-implementation Analysis of the Amnesty Programme

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## Introduction

Since the mid-1970s, Nigeria's Niger Delta region has been mired in a complex environmental and human security crisis. Oil mineral exploitation has been at the root of the crisis. Over 60 years of oil exploitation in the region has occasioned environmental degradation and pollution, resulting in abject poverty, unemployment, health hazards and even death among people.<sup>1</sup> Oil spills destroy vast acres of arable farmlands and aquatic lives while toxic effects of gas flare threaten the very existence of the people. This has resulted in high level of socio-economic underdevelopment, absence of infra-structural facilities and poor standards of living in the region.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, there has been since the 1990s, the emergence of resistant ethnic militia<sup>3</sup> in the region confronting multinational oil corporations and the Nigerian state. By 1998, the region had become a "lawless zone, where youths disrupted oil production activities, engaged in kidnapping and hostage-taking activities, and communities frequently engaged with little provocation in violent and destructive strife."<sup>4</sup> Over time, this degenerated into a state of militancy, destruction of oil installations,

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disruption of socio-economic activities and armed violence. Severally, militant groups in the region carried out deadly and paralyzing attacks on oil and gas installations and facilities. On March 16, 2003, Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC) evacuated non-essential staff from its facility in Warri, Delta State and shut down oil production, following an attack by ethnic Ijaw militants along the Nigerian Navy on the Escravos River that left seven soldiers dead. Subsequent attacks killed one Chevron staff and five TotalElf personnel. On July 12, 2006, MEND killed four naval personnel and injured three others escorting a Chevron oil tanker along Chomoni creeks in Warri. On April 14, 2007, militants attacked the Mini-Okoro, Elelenwo Police Station and killed 10 officers. On January 1, 2008, NDVF attacked two Police Stations and a 5-Star hotel in Port Harcourt and on October 1, 2010, MEND detonated a bomb at the Eagles Square, Abuja.

On the other hand, figures released by the Niger Delta Development Monitoring and Corporate Watch (NIDDEMCOW) showed that between 1999 and 2008, 308 hostage-taking and kidnapping incidents occurred in the region. Bayelsa State recorded 131 incidents; Rivers State had 113 cases; Delta State 45 and Akwa Ibom State 15 incidents. According to the Report in 2003, 18 oil workers were taken hostage in Bayelsa State, in 2004, 5 hostages were recorded, 39 in 2006 while between January and June, 2007, 69 persons were taken hostage, out of which 50 were soldiers. Within the same period, River State recorded two incidents in 1991, one in 2005, 55 in 2006 and 60 as at June, 2007, with 26 soldiers, one woman and a three-year old child involved.<sup>5</sup>

By 2009, militancy in the region had assumed an alarming dimension with ethnic militia coming close to declaring full-scale war on the Nigerian state and operators of the oil and gas industry. As a crisis management strategy, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, the then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on June 25, 2009, unveiled a Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) for militant groups in the region. Those willing to take part were offered presidential pardon, participation

in a rehabilitation programme and training in exchange for turning in their weapons and voluntarily renouncing violence. Six years after its initiation, the success or otherwise of PAP in resolving the Niger Delta crisis has thrown up thorny debates amongst scholars and policy analysts. This paper is part of the debate. It is argued here that domestic and exogenous variables convalescing with institutional and policy inadequacies rendered PAP ineffective as a crisis resolution strategy.

### Principles and Objectives of PAP

The Amnesty Programme was a policy offshoot of the Yar'Adua administration's socio-economic development blueprint for Nigeria; the Seven-Point Agenda. In a press release on August 1, 2007, President Yar'Adua asserted that;

An unfriendly security climate precludes both external and internal investment into the nation. Thus, security will be seen not only as a constitutional requirement but also as a necessary infrastructure for the development of a modern Nigerian economy. With its particular needs, the Niger Delta security issue will be the primary focus, marshalled not with physical policing or military security, but through honest and accurate dialogue between the people and the Federal Government.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the central objective of PAP was the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant militants. It was provided that during the programme, which lasted between August and October 2009, Government would grant amnesty to militants willing to come out, turn in their weapons and accept a US\$13 daily stipend in exchange. The payment was to run for an open ended amount of time from about US\$63 million budget by the government. Apart from the daily payments, the militants were to undergo retraining and re-orientation programmes to prepare them for full integration into the larger society.<sup>7</sup>

Within the scope of this operational framework, 26358 militants who accepted the offer were demobilized. A breakdown of the figure shows that 20192 militants accepted the amnesty offer as at October 4 2009, which was the first phase and another batch of 6166 were added in the second and final batch. Of this number, 15434 passed through non-violence transformational training programmes at the demobilization camp in Obubra, Cross

River State between May and June 2010. Another 5000 have been placed in formal education and vocational training centres in Ghana, South Africa, the Philippines, Russia, Ukraine, India amongst other countries around the world. They are being prepared for expertise in pipeline and under-water weltering, piloting, boat building, seafaring, marine engineering and ICT.<sup>8</sup>

### A Review of the Amnesty Programme

The increasing frequency of hostage taking and destruction of oil facilities by militants in the region had by January 2009 significantly dwindled investment inflow to the upstream sub-sector of the oil industry. Foreign investors relocated to other countries and SPDC's production output dropped from 1000000 bpd (barrel per day) to about 700 000 bpd. As the crisis intensified, Nigeria's oil production capacity further reduced to as low as 250 000 bpd. This negatively affected Nigeria's economy. It is estimated that in 2008 alone, Nigeria lost over N3trillion in foreign exchange earnings to militancy in the Niger Delta.<sup>9</sup> However, there has been a reversal in the trend since 2011. This is evident by the fact that as at 2011, Nigeria was producing between 2.4 and 2.6 million bpd of crude oil as against the abysmally low 250 000 bpd produced as at January 2009. This increase in crude oil production enabled Nigeria to make production savings of 1.9million bpd. It is specifically estimated that in 2011, PAP saved a total of N6trillion for Nigeria and its Joint Venture (JV) partners.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, some analysts have attributed this reversal to the success of PAP. Alike, for instance, has argued that the outcome of PAP has been a relative peace in the Niger Delta, which has translated into improved inflow of foreign investments and increased production capacities of the oil multinationals in the recent years.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Francis, Lapin and Rossiasco have observed that "the post-Amnesty period since October 2009 has been relatively while Chidi-Unabia agreed that "the implementation of PAP brought a relative peace to the troubled region for the first time with the seeming compliance of the militants."<sup>13</sup>

However, others have argued that the Amnesty Programme has fundamental flaws and has thus failed to address the major causes of the crisis in the region. In

an editorial entitled; "Amnesty: Is this the end of Militancy?" the Vanguard Newspapers of Tuesday, October 13, 2009 asserted;

Government has refused to address the root cause of the militancy. Why did Isaac Boro rebel? Why was Ken Saro-Wiwa hung? Except these questions are answered and fundamental issues addressed, amnesty will be a mere ruse, an exercise in futility.<sup>14</sup>

In his assessment, Amaraegbu noted that facts on ground do not show that the Federal Government is seriously concerned about the appalling state of affairs in the region. Lack of substantial amount of planning and political engagement in order to address the Niger Delta question despite the amnesty, remain further flash points of frustration and may well explain why there have been bomb blasts in the region after the amnesty.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Francis, et.al have noted that though the post-Amnesty period since October 2009 has been relatively calm, the underlying causes of conflict remain largely unaddressed. Inaction on the part of the government and its partners perpetuates conditions that could spark renewed violence,<sup>16</sup> while Chidi-Unabia has noted that "the policy has no feasibility of ensuring a genuine and lasting peace in the long troubled region because its focus is not on the root cause of the crisis".<sup>17</sup>

### Point of Departure

The foregoing points to a somewhat unanimity among analysts that PAP has fundamental flaws that well explain its inability to address the crisis in the Niger Delta. However, that is the extent to which these analysts can go. While they agree that, the programme has fundamental shortcomings that have impeded the achievements of its primary objectives; they however failed to explain the causes of or reasons for these shortcomings.

Thus, a proper understanding of these shortcomings must begin with the understanding of the principles and fundamental objectives of the programme, which are rooted in symbiotic relationship between the Nigerian state and the oil multinationals on the one hand and the antagonism between the Nigerian masses and the elite class, on the other. This relationship is founded on a lopsided ideological underpinning that sees Nigeria as the junior partner in which the oil multinationals dictate and determine the terms of the relationship. This is due

to certain factors. First is the overwhelming control of the oil MNCs over technology and means of production. Second is Nigeria's over dependence on crude petroleum as a major source of foreign exchange earnings. Third is Nigeria's reliance on foreign monopoly capital for investments especially in the oil sector. This state of affairs dates back to colonial regimes that saw the integration of Nigeria's economy into the global capitalist market, which is defined in the context of "core-periphery-relationship" in a global system of division of labour.<sup>18</sup> Given the intricate linkage between the Nigerian economy and the oil industry in particular and this global capitalist structure and power relationship in general, government policies and programmes are systematically designed in such a way that the economic interests of the oil multinationals, their foreign owners and host countries are not radically altered. Thus, a careful review of PAP shows that in the first place, the programme was initiated at a time when militancy in the Niger Delta region significantly threatened oil production and the economic interests of Nigeria's ruling class and their foreign partners. Given this premise, it can be inferred logically that PAP was not initiated in the interest of the people of the region but those of the Nigerian state, its ruling class and their foreign partners. This may well explain why despite the programme, the environmental and ecological devastation of the Niger Delta region by the activities of the oil multinationals remain unabated and unresolved. The deliberate refusal of the Nigerian state to implement the 2012 UNEP Report on environmental pollution in Ogoniland by the SPDC is a clear pointer to the fact raised here.

Secondly, PAP's failure to address fundamental issues of environmental degradation, socio-economic crisis and poverty in the region is deliberate. Addressing these issues will amount to compelling oil multinationals to abide by international standard practices and the adoption of environmental friendly practices in their operations. The economic implications of this will be an increase in the cost of production and a decline in the profit margin of the oil companies. Again, given the character of the relationship between government and the oil companies as explained above, government policies are carefully formulated with a view to sustaining this relationship rather than

ensuring the protection and the economic wellbeing of the citizens.

Thirdly, a careful look at the Amnesty Programme reveals that it did not seek for economic equality between the people of the region, Nigerian ruling class and the operators of the oil and gas industry. This is buttressed by the fact that conditions and terms of PAP were articulated without the input of the people of the region.<sup>19</sup> Yet, Federal Government proposed that "the Niger Delta security issue will be ... marshalled ... through honest and accurate dialogue between the people and the Federal Government."<sup>20</sup> Again, this is deliberate and ideological. In any agrarian economy such as Nigeria, land remains a key factor of production. The crisis in the Niger Delta revolves around the issue of land ownership and land tenure system. Incorporating the people would have addressed these issues and other issues of royalties to host communities, making them stakeholders in the oil industry and reversing the established and entrenched economic interests of the Nigerian ruling class and the oil industry operators.

Furthermore, the failure of PAP may also be located within the recurrent decimal inherent in Nigeria's political system; corruption. A major challenge with the implementation of PAP was the issue of diversion of the money meant to fund the programme.<sup>21</sup> At inception, the Presidency announced an initial grant of N50 billion for the programme. From here, each former militant was meant to receive a total of N65 000 per month beginning from October 2009. However, as at 2012, the militants had only been paid for five months forcing government to make extra-budgetary provision of N74.2 billion for the programme in 2012.<sup>22</sup>

Against the background of these obvious shortcomings of the Amnesty Programme, there has been a resurgence of violent crimes and kidnapping in the Niger Delta region since 2011. In February 2011, there were three attacks on international stakeholders in the Niger Delta and four in December 2011. In January 2012 one attack was recorded and three in February, 2012. Also in February, 2012, there were eight attacks on vessels of Nigeria, twice the number in January, 2012. Between December 17 and 20, 2012, five Indian sailors and 4 South Korean oil workers were kidnapped at different places by members of MEND. On June 6, 2014, 3 Dutch nationals were kidnapped in

Letugbene, Bayelsa State. The consequence of these renewed attacks on oil production by militants has been a reduction on quantity of oil produced. Since February 2012, oil production has declined to 2.08 million bpd as against 2.6 million bpd January 2012 and 2.5 million bpd in July, 2013.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion: Alternative Approach

The foregoing highlights the socio-economic and political ideology that underpinned and conditioned the formulation and implementation of PAP, which fundamentally undermined the roots causes of the crisis in the Niger Delta that reside in the double antimony of class and function bearing on Nigeria's position in the international division of labour that has been in operation since colonialism.

Thus, an alternative approach to the resolution of the crisis in the Niger Delta must of necessity address a set of interrelated issues such as the problems of minority rights, environmental rehabilitation, land ownership and tenure system, poverty alleviation, resources control and allocation. To make meaning, crisis management strategies in the region must occasion a fundamental shift from the local and exogenous context, which condition internal structure of economic ownership in Nigeria.

## Notes

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## Political Economy of Post-apartheid South Africa

Vusi Gumede

The book, made up of three parts, covers a wide spectrum of political economy issues on post-apartheid South Africa. Although the text is mainly descriptive, to explain various areas of the political economy of post-apartheid South Africa; the first and the last parts provide illuminating insights on the kind of society that is emerging during the twenty-one years of democracy in the country. The book discusses important aspects of the political history of



apartheid South Africa and the evolution of post-apartheid society, including an important recap of the history of southern Africa before colonialism. The text is a comprehensive description of numerous political economy phenomena since South Africa gained its political independence and covers some important themes that have not been discussed in detail in other publications on post-apartheid South Africa. The book also updates earlier work of the author on policy and law making, land and agriculture, education and training as well as on poverty and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa thereby providing a wide-ranging overview of the socio-economic development approaches followed by the successive post-apartheid administrations. Interestingly, three chapters focus on various aspects of the post-apartheid South African economy: economic policies, economic empowerment and industrial development. Through the lens of the notion of democratic developmental state and taking apartheid colonialism as a point of departure, the book suggests that, so far, post-apartheid South Africa has mixed socio-economic progress. The author's extensive experience in the South African government ensures that the book has policy relevance while it is also theoretically sound. The text is useful for anyone who wants to understand the totality of the policies and legislation as well as the political economy interventions pursued since 1994 by the South African Government.