Oil, Conflict and Everyday Security in Post-Amnesty Niger Delta, Nigeria

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own research. Published or unpublished materials from other sources used in this thesis have been duly acknowledged and credit given to the authors concerned.

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ABSTRACT

Over the last three decades, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has witnessed protracted oil-related conflict in the form of armed militancy against the Nigerian state and International Oil Companies (IOCs), with grave consequences for the security of the region and beyond. The state's offer of amnesty to militant groups in 2009 marked a major, but fragile peace deal with the armed groups in the region. Following the resurgence of conflict post-amnesty, and the continued militarization of the region, questions have been raised about the security practices of the state despite the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) touted as a peacebuilding measure. This study examines the state's securitization and militarization of the region and the effects on ordinary people of the Niger Delta. The thesis argues that the state's securitization without addressing the prevailing grievances of the people, constitutes a narrow and self-defeating approach for resolving insecurity and engendering peace; and has thus, created new security problems with the resurgence of oil militancy.

Drawing from the qualitative analysis of the field research data, I demonstrate how securitization theory and the concept of everyday security allows for a deeper understanding of the state security discourses and practices, how people perceive and experience security, how people respond or resist these security practices, and what security means to them. It finds that whilst restoring security is imperative, there is the need for the state to rethink its security approach, understand the social context in which conflict is created, and the everyday lived security experiences of the people in post-amnesty Niger Delta. The thesis contributes to a better understanding of everyday security from a critical security studies approach that emphasises an alternative way of exploring security beyond the traditional state-centric disposition to security and state survival, to that of people as the ideal security referent. This is useful for interrogating security dynamics for both policy and practice, and for engendering security and sustainable peace in the Niger Delta.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACF- Arewa Consultative Forum

CEND- Continuous Emancipation of the Niger Delta

CJN- Chief Justice of Nigeria

CSS- Critical Security Studies

EITI- Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

HRVIC- Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission

HYPREP- Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project

HRW- Human Rights Watch

INGO- International Governmental Organization

IGO- Intergovernmental Organisation

IYC- Ijaw Youth Council

IOCs- International Oil Companies

JTF- Joint Task Force [Military]

KD- Kaiama Declaration

LGA – Local Government Area

MNDA- Ministry of the Niger Delta Affairs

MOSSOP- Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People

NDDC- Niger Delta Development Commission

NDTCR- Niger Delta Technical Committee Report

NEITI- Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

NNPC- Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation

NGO- Non-Governmental Organisation

NPRC- National Political Reforms Conference

NDDB- Niger Delta Development Board

NDRBA- Niger Delta River Basin Authority

NDVG- Niger Delta Vigilante Group

NDPVF- Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force

NOSDRA- National Oil Spills Detection and Response Agency

OPEC- Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries

OBR- Ogoni Bill of Rights

PAP- Presidential Amnesty Programme

PAO- Presidential Amnesty Office

PAIC- Presidential Amnesty Implementation Committee

PIB- Petroleum Industry Bill

PIGB- Petroleum Industry Governance Bill

RA- Research Assistants

SPDC- Shell Petroleum Development Company

TNOCs- Transnational Oil Companies

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme

UNEP- United Nations Environment Programme

WC- Warrant Chiefs

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the oil-related conflict and insecurity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It explored the state's securitization and militarization of the region, and the everyday lived security experiences of people. It examines these within the scope of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), which is touted as a peacebuilding mechanism by the state. In recent times, there has been an effort "to reorient security analysis around the everyday experiences of people" (Jarvis and Lister 2012: 161). That is, how people perceive, experience and practice security, especially in conflict-affected areas. The thesis, thus, is the first to employ the everyday conceptual perspective to analyse the state security practices, the security experiences of the people, and their agency for resistance and survival in post-amnesty Niger Delta. The thesis demonstrates that Nigeria is a post-colonial state with rentier character of authoritarianism, weak institutions, insecurity, and a political system with ascriptive features of ethnicity and regionalism. The state securitizes and militarizes the Niger Delta whilst appropriating the oil resources from the region. Its inability to provide real development and security in the region from oil proceeds, evidences its resource curse dilemma – where the people suffer in the midst of oil wealth. The state's securitization (the construction of the region as a security issue and thus legitimising its military actions), without addressing the underlying grievances leads to resistance by the people, which creates a cycle of conflict that continues to affect the peace and security of the region.

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is the main source of oil[1] production in the country. Oil accounts for about 85 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings (Joab-Peterside et al. 2012: 2). The region is home to over "600 oilfields, 5,284 oil wells, 10 export terminals, 275 flow stations and is the take-off point of over 7,000 kilometres of pipelines across the country (Aghedo 2012: 267). The Niger Delta is adjudged as Africa's largest delta (Ibaba 2011: 44), and one of the ten major deltas of the world (Etekpe 2009: 1). This makes the Niger Delta, a "Scotland-sized region of tropical swamps and rivers" (ICG 2006a: 1) of immense importance to Nigeria's rentier political economy and its global profile as the largest oil producer in Africa,

[1] Oil as used in this thesis refers to crude oil and all other derivatives from petroleum resources like natural gas, refined petroleum and petrochemical products explored as part of the natural resources found in the Niger Delta.

and the seventh in the world (Meredith 2007). The estimated 31 million people of the Delta rely on the 75,000 square kilometres of predominantly wetland terrain for their livelihoods including farming, fishing, trading, and other subsistence based economic activities (Obi and Rustad 2011: 3). Since the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in 1956 in Oloibiri town in present day Bayelsa state, and the commencement of oil exports in 1958, the effects of oil production activities in the region have significantly disrupted not only the environment, but also the economic and social organization of its residents. The emerging dynamics has pitched the people in a web of protracted conflict against the Nigerian state and its joint-venture partners, the International Oil Companies (IOCs).

The link between natural resources and primary commodity exports, violent conflict and underdevelopment is well captured in academic literature (Collier and Hoeffler 2005; Ikelegbe 2005; Karl 1997; Le Billon 2010; Obi 2010a; Watts 2004). The inability of most natural resource-rich countries to engender economic development with a stable polity, providing security and peace, has been referred to as resource curse. This is the case for several African and other developing countries. From Angola to Equatorial Guinea, Cameroun to Democratic Republic of Congo, and to Venezuela, among others, a similar problematique seems to characterize oil rich countries. Despite Nigeria's oil production status, it can be used as an example for the resource curse phenomenon (Mähler 2010) where a 'paradox of plenty' leaves the majority of the citizens in squalor in the midst of enormous natural resource wealth (ICG 2006b; Karl 1997). A recent survey by the World Poverty Clock estimates that over 91 million Nigerians now live in extreme poverty (Akinkuotu 2019). According to a Niger Delta Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "oil wealth enriches Nigeria as a country, but it has not alleviated the grinding poverty, neglect and deprivation in the region that produces it" (UNDP 2006: 37). This scenario has raised the notion of oil being more of a curse than a blessing in the region.

Over the last three decades, the Niger Delta region has witnessed oil-related violence. As Okonta and Douglas (2001: 21) asserts, "Oil is the stuff of contemporary Nigerian politics, and the Niger Delta is the field on which the vicious battle to control this money spinner is waged". The exploitation of natural resources by multinational oil companies together with unjust politics of revenue allocation by the political actors of the Nigerian state, created social tension amongst the people of the oil-bearing communities with grave consequences for the security of the region, the state, and the operations of the IOCs. The dissatisfaction of many people in the region emanates from the unaddressed insecurities and threats to their everyday

life. Environmental pollution, infrastructural deficit, fiscal and political marginalization, exclusion, and severe socioeconomic deprivation (ICG 2015: 1) heightens the disaffection.

The responses of the people of the Niger Delta to these challenges have taken different dimensions over time. The initial non-violent approach to the crisis in the 1960s, where people expressed their grievances through the writing of petitions remained unaddressed by the state and IOCs (Isumonah 2005: 173). The perceived indifference of the federal government to the demands of the people initiated a twelve-day rebellion in 1967 led by Adaka Boro, an Ijaw[2] revolutionary. The Nigerian security forces crushed the revolt, which fueled further anger and frustration. This first military assault on the people of the Niger Delta in post-colonial Nigeria became the watershed for the militarization that was to follow afterwards. Increasing demands on the government for the development of the region continued with a wave of protests in the 1990s spearheaded by Ken Saro-Wiwa, an internationally acclaimed writer and environmental rights activist. His group, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), drew the attention of the federal government to the adverse impact of oil exploration activities on the livelihoods, and overall underdevelopment of the region. MOSOP's protests activities, which sometimes impeded oil production, also met with a brutal military response by the state. Eventually, the federal military government led by General Sani Abacha executed Saro-Wiwa and eight of his associates by hanging in 1995. Their death marked a new phase in the dynamics of the oil conflict in the Niger Delta, sparking local and international outcries that led to the suspension of Nigeria from *The Commonwealth* by the member states.

The execution of the 'Ogoni nine' led to a surge of militant groups claiming to fight on behalf of the people of the region. Locally rooted militia groups aligned themselves with the struggle for ethnic minority rights and environmental justice both advocated for since the colonial era (Obi and Oriola 2018). The militant groups used violence to reach out to the governing elites and the IOCs[3]. Especially, youth militia groups gained popularity, among them were the Niger Delta Vigilante Group (NDVG), the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Militancy now replaced the

[2] The Ijaws are the largest ethnic group in the region and have arguably been at the forefront of militant agitations in the Niger Delta.

[3] This is the sense in which the militia leaders portray themselves as freedom fighters. Some of the ex-militants I interviewed alluded to this notion being freedom fighters. Some scholars have questioned that notion and the interests they truly serve. From my observation, the initial agitators were relatively altruistic in the interest of their people. However, the recent militia groups seem to have bought into the 'cash-for peace' attitude of the government, which is fueling a rise of militia groups.

nonviolent approach to protest leaving several thousand people dead since the conflict intensified upward of 2005 (Schultze-Kraft 2013: 4). The kidnaping of four foreign staff of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in Rivers state by MEND militants on 11 January 2006 marked a watershed in the oil insurgency. It showed the capacity of the militants to attack oil platforms and workers offshore (Oriola 2012: 2) where most of the oil platforms are located. The insurgency created an economy of conflict and exacerbated violence in the region through a "forceful occupation of [oil] flow stations, pipeline vandalism, kidnapping of oil managers, bunkering (oil theft), shelling and exchange of artillery fire, clashes between heavily armed militias, and retaliation by armed forces" (Osumah 2013: 245). Militancy became a common form of everyday resistance against the state and IOCs with devastating consequences on Nigeria's economy, stability, and security (Ikelegbe 2010: 142).

In order to have "firm control over the oil space" (Julius 2014: 83), the state intervened by deploying a large number of military forces in the Niger Delta. The establishment of a hybrid military Joint Task Force (JTF), a combination of military and mobile police units (Katsouris and Sayne 2013: 5) emphasized the militarized approach of the state. However, the efforts by different Nigerian governments to mitigate the conflict through military interventions were largely unsuccessful. The militia groups proved more than able to exert their demands whilst damaging oil infrastructures and diminishing revenues accruing to the state. Eventually, the government of President Umaru Yar'Adua (2007-2010), announced an offer of Amnesty on 26 June 2009 to the Niger Delta militia groups, a move that was hailed as "one of the boldest demonstrations to peacebuilding" in the crisis torn region (Aghedo 2012: 267). As part of the deal, the militants had to lay down their arms, renounce militancy between 6 August 2009 and 4 October 2009, and in return, be freed from prosecution. They were also to receive ₦65, 000 naira (about $350) as monthly allowance and other promises including scholarship opportunities and vocational training in Nigeria and abroad. The militant leaders initially greeted the amnesty offer with skepticism. They feared it was an attempt to lure them from the creeks and to criminalize them for what they describe as struggle for the 'freedom' of the Niger Delta. The government's record of not matching words with action when it comes to issues concerning the region, and the fact that key militant leaders were not consulted in the preparation of the Amnesty offer was another factor (Eke 2014). Nevertheless, many of the militants embraced the amnesty offer, thereby setting the stage for the state's Disarmament,

Demobilisation and Reintegration[4] (DDR) agenda, which represented a shift from previous military-centered approach. Relative calm returned to the region with direct confrontations between the militants and the military reducing significantly following the peace deal of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) in 2009. The immediate consequence was an increase in the daily oil production for the state from a lowly 1.4 million barrels to 2.2 million barrels per day following the PAP (Eke 2014: 1).

Despite the promises as a homegrown peacebuilding measure (Obi 2014), the PAP failed to address the grievances and insecurities that underlie a general tendency to violence in the region (Osumah 2013:244). The military continues to quell any form of dissent or protest with great ferocity without respect for human rights. Local militant groups who shared the claim that the PAP has not addressed the root causes of the conflict continued to press home their demands using violent means. The explosion of two car bombs in the oil-rich city of Warri in Delta state at the wake of a post-amnesty conference on 15 March 2010, was a rude reawakening to the militia's ever presence despite the PAP (Obi and Rustad 2011: 1). The situation further demonstrates the inability of the PAP to accommodate the interests of all stakeholders in the region. The PAP makes a claim for peacebuilding, development, and security in the Niger Delta, but its dominant focus on ex-militant youths has led to contestation by other stakeholders including women, men, non-militant youths, and elders/local chiefs that were not included in the direct benefits of the policy. The exclusion of these groups of people has been problematic for the PAP and the tipping point for a raft of protests including some ex-militants who protested the "non-documentation of 315 militant camps in Delta state and non-inclusion in the third phase" of the PAP (CPED 2015: 5-11). Their exclusion creates a conveyor belt of deprived people with potential for exacerbating the insecurity in the region. Consequently, the perceived failures of PAP and the struggle for access to oil benefits created avenues for a resurgence of militancy and a backward slide into instability synonymous with the pre-amnesty era (Agbiboa 2014; Aghedo 2015:137). The upsurge in renewed militia attacks on oil infrastructure reached a new low with the emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) in 2016. The consequence for the state was a fall in oil production to about 1.2 million barrel

[4] DDR has proven popular as a political programme for managing former combatants in post-conflict societies in Africa, such as Sierra Leone and Liberia. See Kieran Mitton, 'Where Is the War? Explaining Peace in Sierra Leone', *International Peacekeeping,* 20/3 (2013), 321-37. Kathleen Jennings, 'Seeing Ddr from Below: Challenges and Dilemmas Raised by the Experiences of Ex-Combatants in Liberia', *Fafo Report,* 3 (2008).

per day by mid-2016 (Amaize et al. 2016). The resurgence of oil militancy gave room for the justification of the militarization of the region by the state.

1.1 Research Questions

The thesis addresses these security practises of the state and explores their implications for security and sustainable peace in post-amnesty Niger Delta. It, however, focuses on the everyday of people residing in the Niger Delta and how the state's securitization and militarization impacts on their daily lives. In this respect, the thesis examines four research questions:

1. What does security mean in the everyday life of the people living in the Niger Delta?
2. To what extent does the perception of security and the failings of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) influence the resurgence of conflict in post-amnesty Niger Delta?
3. How do the state security practices affect the everyday life of the people of the Niger Delta, and how do they cope with and respond to these security practices?
4. How can the conflict be resolved for a sustainable peacebuilding in post-amnesty Niger Delta?

The thesis situates its focus within the post-Amnesty era, which started in 2009 when the Presidential Amnesty was granted to repentant militants, with the commencement of their Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme, to 2019 when the bulk of the research for this thesis was conducted. This period allows me to evaluate and analyse the state's security practices and the everyday security perceptions, experiences and practices of the people living in the Niger Delta after a peace agreement was reached. It explores how perceptions of security in the context of the Presidential Amnesty programme (PAP) influenced the resurgence of conflict in post-amnesty Niger Delta. Overall, these explorations aim at contributing to the question of how peacebuilding can be sustained in the Niger Delta.

1.2 Thesis Argument

Most military-based conflict mitigation strategies have often been criticized as state-centric top-down approaches with less focus on the security of the individuals and their everyday livelihoods (den Boer and de Wilde 2008:9-18; Mac Ginty 2010:391-392). Such traditional approaches to security in conflict situations, defined from the narrow state-centered and militaristic perspective, often seek to achieve a cessation of conflict in other to protect State

interests. In the case of Nigeria for example, the unimpeded crude oil production and foreign exchange earnings has been the rationale for the securitization and militarization of the Niger Delta (C. Bassey 2012; Ukeje 2011). Such a notion of security cares less about the everyday security concerns and threats to the livelihoods of people in conflict spaces (C. Emuedo 2012). As Morgen (2017: 10) notes, "the number one thing that legitimizes a government is the ability of the government to protect the life of its citizens. The Nigerian state appears to be more interested in revenue than in human lives". This is interesting as it reflects what values the state places on the citizen's life and the notion of whose security does the state protect (Obi 1997: 4). Although, argument can be made for the place of state security forces in preventing break down of law and order, criminality, and for securing its interest, the inability of the state to meet the demands of the local people necessitates the resistance against it and the IOCs operating on its behalf in the oil-host communities. This situation creates the cycle of conflict in the region. However, there is no evidence that military intervention alone can resolve conflicts, producing sustainable peace and securing the interest of all groups. Rather, the use of force by the military as evidenced in the Niger Delta, merely confronts the symptoms and not the cause of the conflict (C. Bassey 2012: 83).

Previous studies (as shown in detail in the literature review chapter) have demonstrated the dynamics of understanding the oil-related conflict in the region from varying perspectives. Chiefly, the adverse effect of oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta that produced restiveness and violent conflict remain largely unaddressed and continue to act as major conflict triggers (Aghedo 2012:267; Schultze-Kraft 2013:2). The clamour for the control of the oil resources and its wealth poses as a major grievance of the Niger Delta people and the logic of resistance against the state (Ifeka 2001; Obi 2014b: 254; Tobor 2016). The excesses of the military campaigns in repressing dissent in the region, and the challenges of military interventions as a conflict extenuation strategy have also been examined (C. Emuedo 2012:12; Omotola 2009; Ukeje 2011:83). However, not much study has addressed the relevance of understanding the state's securitization of the Niger Delta, its security practices, the perception, and responses of the people from an everyday security perspective. The implications it portends for the post-amnesty conflict resurgence and the pathways towards sustainable peacebuilding in the region from the narratives of the local people. The research will address this gap. This understanding is useful for opening up new vistas for policy discussions around conflict mitigation and security in the oil-rich but restive Niger Delta region.

This study argues that the Nigerian state's securitization and the militarization of the Niger Delta alongside the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) constitutes a narrow and unsuccessful conflict mitigation and peacebuilding approach which has created increased insecurity with the resurgence of violence (oil militancy). Thus, there is the need to understand and rethink the social environment conflict is constructed, the effects of securitization and militarization, and what security means to the ordinary people in their everyday life.

The findings of the research elaborate the disconnect between what security means to the people of the Niger Delta, and what security means for the state's governing elites. Thus, the state's security practices in the Niger Delta engenders an everyday security reaction from the people both as a way of resistance and survival. These reactions reflect the logic for the state's framing of the region as an existential threat to its oil production interests through the IOCs and provides a justification for the extraordinary security measures it deploys in the region. Thus, the action of the state and its IOC partners, and the reactions of the people of the region, creates the unending cycle of conflict. Despite the state's effort to 'buy peace' through an amnesty deal, the insecurity in the region continues unabated and thus requires a sustainable pathway to peace. The protracted conflict proves that the militarization and (more recently) the PAP is limited as a strategy for peacebuilding. Therefore, there is the need for a rethinking of the security focus by the Nigerian state and a shift from a state-centric to a people-centred security approach. Everyday security concerns of the people in the region should be considered and factored into approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding beyond the PAP. Ultimately, people should be the reference object of security in the Niger Delta as against the state's focus on uninterrupted oil production.

To be able to fully engage my argument and answer my research questions, I utilized two analytical concepts, securitization theory and the everyday. The utility of securitization theory in this research (explored in detail in the next chapter) is important as it allows for an understanding of the rationale for the state's militarization of the Niger Delta. It draws from Buzan et al. (1998) articulation of the concept. Securitization is about the construction of threats and the justification of exceptional means used to deal with such existential threats. Buzan et al. (1998: 21) notes that:

> The special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them. The invocation of security has been the key to legitimizing the use of force, but more generally, it has opened the way for the state to mobilize, or to take special powers, to handle existential threats. Traditionally, by saying "security", a state representative declares an

> emergency condition thus claiming a right to use whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development.

In other words, it is about speaking 'security' and acting 'security'. It is a speech act. Thus, when an issue is presented as a 'security' concern, it allows a justification for the "use exceptional political measures" (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2015: 93-94) to deal with it. Buzan et al. (1998:23) contends that, securitization "is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics. Securitization can thus be seen as a more extreme version of politicization".

Securitization in the case study allows for the unpacking of state actions that frame the protests of the people of the Niger Delta and the ensuing militancy, as a security problem. A protest framed as a security threat to oil production irrespective of the economic and environmental consequences on the people of the region. Therefore, oil production becomes the referent object of security. This gives the state the 'high moral ground' to deploy the necessary means and resources beyond the ordinary to the perceived threats. The overt consequence of the securitization of the Niger Delta is the militarization of the region with the heavy presence of all the security agencies available in the country (Ukeje 2011:83). The implication of this state repression is the perpetuation of the conundrum of insecurity and a cycle of conflict.

However, the state's securitization of the Niger Delta glosses over the primacy of the human individual as the ideal referent of security. It does not explain what the state failed to do that necessitated the 'existential threat' to be tackled by 'extraordinary measures'. More so, securitization and its effect of militarization does not alone explain the security conundrum in the Niger Delta. Engaging the everyday security perspective unravels the lived security experiences of the people of the region. It helps to capture the routinized and quotidian responses of the people to the security practices of the state. The everyday as an analytical concept, recognises the inclusion of local agency beyond "the skewed analytics of power that focuses on elites or structural power" (Guillaume and Huysmans 2018: 1-19). It looks beyond the macro or grand theories and helps to capture the "micro-moves" of political phenomena (T. Solomon and Steele 2016: 1). The security practices of the state and the insecurities in the Niger Delta are not experienced in a vacuum or passively, but actively. The people are not just recipients of the state's militarization only. They have their own agencies. They do things that enable them to manage, navigate and resist the state security machinations at different levels with or without organised power. They reproduce everyday behaviours like protest and

resistance as a way of managing their lives, negotiating their security and survival against the state security practices. Thus, leading to the reproduction of insecurity in the region. In other words, they are recipients of (in)security and as well as producers of (in)security; a situation that reproduces the cycle of conflict and insecurity.

1.3 Operationalising the Research: Methodology

The methodology for this research (see details in chapter 3) was influenced by the conceptual focus of the 'everyday' and securitization theory in its operationalization. For instance, the engagement of securitization was operationalized to depict the security framing of the region and the state security practices. The use of the everyday provides a lever for agency both as a form of experiencing (in)security, survival, and resistance. It thus creates room for discourses and narratives of the security experiences as an interpretive epistemology. Hence, the research utilized qualitative methods of data gathering during the fieldwork. This includes the use of semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observation in the three-core oil-producing states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. Oil-related conflict and insecurity has been most ferocious in these three states with many ex-militants domiciled there. As Silverman (2000: 1) stated, "If you are concerned with exploring people's life histories or everyday behaviour, then qualitative methods may be favoured". According to (David and Sutton 2011a: 103), "qualitative research is about the collection of primarily non-numerical data for the purpose of linguistic analysis (the search of interpretive patterns rather than statistical patterns)". The choice of a research method should depend on what the researcher seeks to investigate.

Therefore, adopting a qualitative inquiry in this research was necessary for engaging the narratives of the research subjects- the people living and working in the Niger Delta in the light of the everyday security perspectives. This provided an avenue for the interrogation of the state's PAP measures for 'peace' and 'security' as it affects them, which reproduces or resists the official position of the state in the post-amnesty era. The research prioritised the voices of the local people over the policy actors of the state in order to evaluate the effect of state's policy on them. As (Donoghue 2016: 265), notes, "the relationship between policy (makers) and citizens involves complex power relations". The state is at the apex of the power relations. It is able to drive its framing and narratives of the (in)security situation in the many media broadcasts and press releases. After all, it owns the regulatory powers of the national media to do and to tell what it wants. However, it is "important to examine how policy comes to be transformed, challenged, resisted, neutralised or improved from below, through the

creative engagements of disadvantaged recipients" (Pero, 2011:244) cited in (Donoghue 2016: 265). The fieldwork was conducted over a three-month period. I started in April 2017 with the scoping and mapping of the study areas, and identifying and recruiting research assistants from the study areas. Next was the conduct of the empirical research at the main study areas between October and December 2017. The months of October–December were particularly important as it marks the onset of 'dry season'[5] period which eases movement in the predominantly riverine region of the Niger Delta.

1.4 The Significance and Contribution of the Study

The use of 'securitization' and the 'everyday' in this study draws richly from the works of Critical Security Studies (CSS). Scholars of CSS, a sub-field of (International) Security Studies proposes a variety of approaches to understanding security and security studies. The post-Cold War security epistemology has gone beyond the traditional focus of 'military threats to state survival' (Nyman 2018: 101). A broad range of issues now encapsulates the notion of security and its threat construction in contemporary international space. From global pandemics to cyber-attacks, and to climate change crisis, a wide range of issues now constitutes the gamut of security studies. Thus, beyond national (and international) security conceptions, food security, economic security, human security amongst others, now constitute significant debates in security studies. However, not all probable threats are treated as security issues nor do they all receive the same attention from security scholars and practitioners (Wiliams and McDonald 2018). It is what the political actors conceive as security that determines the security response.

This contemporary move is prominent amongst CSS and human security scholars who propagates the alternative scope of security with the individual human as referent (Jarvis 2018: 1). By adopting a critical approach to security, this research unpacks empirically, the knowledge about everyday security issues of the people of the Niger Delta. It shows how such understanding of security could contribute to effective conflict resolution strategies and peacebuilding in the region. Focusing on the 'everyday' as (Crawford and Hutchinson 2015:5) observes, 'provides a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of security, which demands more attention be given to how the less prominent and less powerful- in both institutional and

[5] Nigeria has two distinct weather seasons- the dry season and the raining season. On the average, the dry season starts in October to around March while the raining season commences from around April to September yearly in the Niger Delta region. The dry season is when the rains and river tides starts to reduce in the predominantly riverine region and makes moving around for fieldwork relatively easier than the raining season.

non-institutional settings- might "augment" or "resist security" in various ways'. It is important to understand what the people think about security and their everyday experiences and practices because it reveals what matters to them in their engagement with the security machinations of the state. Besides, this will engender a focus on the state in treating the everyday security concerns as a necessary bottom-up approach for engendering peace and security in contrast to the securitization approach in the region. The everyday security analysis examines what the people think is important to them in their daily life in actualizing the quality of life they desire. Different stakeholders hold different views about what security means to them in their everyday life, and how that understanding shapes the nature of conflict and insecurity in the region.

It is in the light of the foregoing, that the thesis contributes to further empirical and theoretical knowledge in Critical Security Studies. It helps in understanding the dynamics of (in)security practices in oil-resource conflict zones, and the challenge of 'alternative' approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding beyond the traditional militarized approach to security. Therefore, the study provides relevant references for security researchers and practitioners in the field of CSS interested in the regional conflict context of the Niger Delta in particular, and other countries characterized by violent conflicts around natural resources. In addition, it serves as a useful contribution to knowledge for policy makers within the local context of the study. The analysis of the security practices and the post-amnesty dynamics in the thesis reveals what has worked, what is not working and what needs to work in engaging the protracted oil-related conflict in the Niger Delta and beyond the Gulf of Guinea.

The use of securitization theory as a top-down approach and the everyday as a bottom-up lens for understanding security in conflict-affected areas, demonstrates an original contribution of the methodological utility of this thesis. The integration of both concepts is significant because it has not been used together before as a tool for analysis in the literature on the Niger Delta conflict for understanding the security actions of the state vis-a-viz the agency of the people and how they navigate the structures of power. The discursive performance of the state and how the state legitimises its security actions (and inactions) matters in the conflict dynamics of the Niger Delta region. However, it will be inadequate for exploring the issues of the conflict without positioning the everyday alongside as a bottom-up perspective for exploring the reality of the daily life of people. This method of both examining the security practices of the state and the lived security experiences of the people, provides one with the best way of understanding the conflict from the actions of the state and the locus of resistance and survival of the people in the region. The importance of knowledge produced by

those who actually feel the effect of the phenomenon studied cannot be overemphasised. The voices of the respondents in this research complements greatly the conceptual and theoretical values in the knowledge production.

As someone from the Niger Delta region, it will be interesting to see how the research with an intersection of security, peace, and conflict studies literature, would serve as a plank for promoting a policy shift towards an 'alternative' approach to security and development embraced by the state for a sustainable peace in the region. The critical security paradigm adopted for this research reflects the thinking of an alternative approach to security studies.

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured into nine chapters. The first three chapters sets out the concepts, a review of academic literature, and methodology for the research. Chapters four to eight consists of the empirical chapters while chapter nine concludes the thesis. Thus, chapter 1 provides an introductory background to the research and sets out the prelude for the empirical investigation of everyday security experiences of people in the Niger Delta. It outlines the nature of oil-related conflict and the conflict actors. It presents an overview for PAP mechanism and the evolving dynamics of the federal government's conflict mitigation strategies from a critical security perspective that provides an alternative for prioritising the security of the individuals over the state-centric military/security approaches to conflict in the region. Overall, the chapter outlines the purpose of the study and the contributions to knowledge. Chapter 2 reviews the academic literature on the conceptual and theoretical framework that underlies the study. It engages the debates of the overriding themes of conflict, security and peacebuilding that intersects the thesis and identifies the existing gaps. It shows that a focus on everyday security allows for an understanding of what security means for the people of the Niger Delta beyond the securitization and PAP measures of the state, as a prelude to security and development in the region. Thus, the chapter provides the categories for analysing Nigeria as a rentier state prone to conflict and with a tendency to marginalise resource-rich ethnic minority areas. Chapter 3 elaborates the research methodology used to answer the research questions. With the Niger Delta as the case study, the study utilizes qualitative methods of data gathering with in-depth, semi-structured, focus group discussions (FGD) participant observations and textual analysis. Chapter 4 presents the context chapter that details the factors and actors that contributes to the crisis in the region - the role of the state, IOCs, and the people of the region in the conflict conundrum. It outlines the political economy that underlies the resource conflict and explore how the Nigerian state has evolved as a rentier, weak and authoritarian state, which

exhibits all the attributes of one afflicted by the resource curse. It further examines the offer of amnesty to the militant groups. Chapter 5 undertakes an empirical analysis of people's experiences of the PAP. It builds on interviews and focus groups to analyse how people experienced the implementation of the PAP. It shows the prospects and challenges of the PAP, including the resurgence of conflict, which underscores the futility of the PAP as a peacebuilding mechanism. Chapter 6 investigates the state's military actions in the Niger Delta and the effects on the lived experiences of the people. It examines the everyday security practices of residents in the Niger Delta and discusses their response mechanisms. Chapter 7 analyses the everyday security perception of people, that is, what security means to them in their everyday life. It looks at the tensions and contradictions between the state's securitization and its rationale for military actions in the region, and the security perception of the people. Chapter 8 deals with the pathway towards mitigating the conflict and insecurity in the region. It examines local narratives of conflict resolution and sustainable peace. That is, what the people of the Niger Delta think would constitute a local peace process that would be effective in enhancing security rather than insecurity. Chapter 9 concludes the thesis. It discusses the key findings, outlines contribution to knowledge, and recommendation for future research directions.

CHAPTER 2

FRAMING THE OIL CONFLICT AND (IN)SECURITY IN THE NIGER DELTA: SCOPING THE LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of literature and concepts for understanding the dynamics of conflict and (in)security in the Niger Delta region in particular, and other related conflict environments. It explores the authoritarian and rentier character of the Nigerian state with which it securitizes and militarizes the Niger Delta without recourse to what security means for the ordinary people. The chapter utilizes the securitization theory for analysing how the state engaged in framing (in)security and constructing threats in the Niger Delta which were then used to justify 'emergency' security and conflict mitigation measures. It examines from a critical security perspective, the contending factors that shape the conflict situation- the state's militarized security approach that glosses over the underlying socioeconomic, environmental, and political factors which serves as drivers of violent conflict in the region.

In the next section, I examine the literature on conflict and how oil as a source of economic wealth structures the nature of violent conflict in the Niger Delta. I look at the dynamics of the rentier state and the resource curse that has defined the political and socioeconomic structure of the region. Both concepts are introduced here and applied fully in the context chapter. Section 2.3 examines the debates and conceptual perspectives of security from the traditional statist, and the contemporary 'alternative' critical approaches, that unpacks the security referent- whose interest security serves. It identifies the gap in literature and foregrounds the argument of the study. Section 2.4 discusses the theoretical exploration of securitization, and its discursive elements for 'speaking security' and justifying the security actions of states. Section 2.5 examines the logic for the security approach of the state in the Niger Delta, and the ramifications for the reproduction of conflict. Section 2.6 deals with the concept of the 'everyday' and 'everyday security', as a nuanced way of understanding security experiences from the bottom-up in relation to state security practices. Section 2.7 concludes the chapter.

The thesis draws on the notion of the 'everyday' in security discourse to capture the security perception and experiences of the people of the Niger Delta region. I use the everyday to analyse how the people navigate the power structures of the state's securitization and militarisation of the Niger Delta in their everyday life, their agency for resistance, what security

means to them and the ramifications for resolving the intractable conflict in the region. Thus, buttressing the thesis argument that without understanding what security means to the people in their everyday life, the state's PAP and the securitization/militarization of the region cannot resolve the insecurity and engender peace in the region.

2.1 Conflict and Violence: A Conceptual Analysis

Conflict between the Nigerian state and militant groups in oil-host communities of the Niger Delta provides the background of the study. Violence or violent conflict as used here refers to the use of force from the state's military or non-state militant groups. In extant literature, the use of force underlines the popular conception of the state by Max Webber (1991), cited in (Routley 2012: 6), as "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the use of physical force* within a given territory". Weber's idea of the state does not clearly define for instance, "where society stops and the state starts, attributing the monopoly of violence to 'a human community', but also acknowledging that there are groups within a state" (Routley 2012, ibid). It is, however, important in understanding the extent of the state's capacity to engage with the use of force within its jurisdiction, and how this reflects the nature of the state – as authoritarian, weak, fragile, developmental, patrimonial, and so on[6].

Conflict is inevitable in any society (Collier 2008: 276). Whatever social system exists there will often be differences in people's disposition to issues. As rational and objective as humans might be, there are always factors that would lead to a clash of interest. Like any other social phenomenon, there is no single canon for conceptualizing conflict because there are numerous intervening factors that trigger or generate conflict. Kriesberg (1998: 2) notes that conflict occurs when people share contradictory objectives. For Mitchell (1981:17) conflict can occur in 'any situation where two or more social entities or parties perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals'. Human-needs theorists like Burton (1990) have argued that the inability to meet people's needs could lead to intractable conflict. Such human needs prompting conflictive situations include the needs for security, (ethnic) identity, inclusion, self-actualization, and so on. Although the unmet human needs postulation serves as a basis for explaining some forms of conflict, it could be challenging because the measurement for the satisfaction of needs is not linear. The desires of humans are insatiable. Nonetheless, what is

[6] For further exploration on the state, especially in Africa, see Jaen-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (New York: Longman, 1993). William Graf, *The Nigerian State: Political Economy, State Class and Political Sysytem in the Post-Colonial Era* (London: James Currey Ltd., 1988).

evident from the foregoing notion of conflict is the struggle or tension between at least two or more interdependent entities who disagree over a goal, interest, or objectives.

However, there are factors that accentuate a conflict outcome. Mitchell (1981:16) contends that, critical to every conflict situation are 'conflict attitudes' and 'conflict behavior'. Conflict attitudes involves "common patterns of expectation, emotional orientation and perception that accompany involvement in a conflict situation" (Mitchell 1981:28). In this regard, anger, hatred, and the feeling of unmet expectations can reinforce conflict attitudes. Equally, Mitchell (1981:29) conceptualizes conflict behavior as "actions undertaken by one party in any situation of conflict aimed at the opposing party with the intention of making that party abandon or modify its goals". In this way, conflict actors seek to influence the actions of all parties through persuasion, coercion, or the threat of force. Conflict can lead to peaceful or violent outcomes. There are conflicts that engender peaceful protests whilst others can trigger 'murderous riots' and 'organized genocides' (Tolosky 2017). A conflict becomes violent when there is the use of force or arms in the resolution of the differences or contestations (C. Emuedo 2013: 3). The challenge with the notion of violence from the prism of 'force' is that it emphasizes physical violence and actions that results in injurious bodily harm (Jackman 2002: 391). As Luckham (2007: 102) notes, "the harm of violence is overwhelmingly physical: killing, maiming, bombing, eviscerating, beating, raping, torturing, displacement and so forth. It takes aim at bodies, identities and boundaries". However, not all forms of violence are unleashed on the body. Holmes (1990: 1) contends that some forms of violence are mental or psychological: "some forms of mental or psychological harm are so severe to warrant being called violence". In this sense, there are structural forms of violence that are somewhat silent where marginalized people have no recourse to means of violence (Luckham 2007: 101).

Evidently, violent conflicts do not happen in a vacuum. There are factors that aid the organization and mobilization of violence in societies as a form of socially rooted manifestation (Bakonyi and Bliesemann De Guevara 2009:401). Violent conflict can manifest in different forms of social existence with consequential effects on the society. Thus, to understand a conflict situation, it will be important to understand the social structures, agencies of individuals, groups and institutions of the conflict environment. These social factors determine largely the nature of the conflict whether passive or violent. According to Schmid (1968:226), conflict as a form of differing interests is built into the structure of the social system they exist. As Ratelle (2013: 77) notes, practices of violence become rooted in societal practices through processes of socialization. The Niger Delta region for instance, reveals a structure of

deprivation in which the gains of the state and IOCs do not translate to the gains of the people. Therefore, it throws up a need for understanding the nature and effects of the socioeconomic impediments within the conflict context (Rogers and Ramsbotham 1999:744), and the evolving climate of insecurity. As Coser (1956: 8) noted, conflict arises from the contention over values that includes privileges of power, status and insufficient resources in which the contending parties could go to the extreme to eliminate their opponents.

The conflict in the Niger Delta is a convoluted one. As Aghedo (2015: 150) notes, it has a "complex character- ethnic, regional, developmental, environmental, generational, communal and corporate". Although, (Mähler 2010) argues that oil does not explain all the ramifications of the violent conflicts in the Niger Delta region, it has nevertheless shaped the nature of the conflicts. In other words, whilst the causative factors of the conflicts in the region go beyond oil, the centrality of oil as a natural resource prevalent in the region induces and exacerbates the dynamics of the conflicts, including the intensity of such conflicts. The protracted nature of the oil conflict has drawn sustenance from the paradox of oil without wealth for the local people of the region who feel entitled to their God-given natural resources[7] (C. Emuedo 2013: 4). This is the manifestation of "the primary effect of living in a petro-state: a deep-seated feeling of entitlement to a slice of the oil rent" (Kaldor et al. 2007: 31), or the 'national cake' syndrome as it is referred to in local discourses in Nigeria.

2.2 Oil and The Nexus of Violent Conflict

A growing body of literature addresses the relation of oil and violent conflicts, debating amongst other things whether the availability of oil is a curse or blessing. Many scholars have framed oil as a causal factor of crisis, insecurity, underdevelopment, weak institutions, and state failure (Omeje 2006a; Owolabi and Okwechime 2007; Ross 2012; Shaxson 2007; Ukiwo 2011). The Middle East holds the world's largest oil production. Its volatility and regular violent conflicts in the region increase Africa's importance for global oil stability and the political economy of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). However, Africa has caught global attention also because of the security threats to the strategic interest of oil-dependent economies around the world (Obi 2014a: 148). The festering oil insurgency in Nigeria's Niger Delta and the conflicts in other petro-states in Africa such as South Sudan and Libya have raised security stakes. This was the sense during a testimony in

[7] Natural resources encapsulate materials or substances that occur without the making of man, such as forest resources, water resources, mineral resources, and so on. In the context of this chapter, it refers to fossil fuel-oil and its derivatives.

the US House of Representatives when the Director of the US office of Global Witness, Corinna Gilfillan, stated that, "the US government has a major role to play in combating the resource curse in Africa. Better governance of natural resources will contribute to stability and development in African countries, help protect US national and energy security interests and promote a stable environment for African companies"[8] (Obi 2014a: 147). Two main concepts, the 'resource curse' and 'rentier state' dominate the explanation of how countries manage (or mismanage) their oil resources and the nexus to violent conflicts and insecurity.

2.2.1 The Oil Resource Curse

Auty (1993) coined the term 'resource curse' for countries with poor economic performance despite the abundance of natural resource wealth. The resource curse is often described as a main cause of violent conflicts in natural resource endowed countries where 'natural resource wealth is an obstacle to economic and political development' (Cotet and Tsui 2013: 77). Karl (1997) refers to this situation as a "paradox of plenty". Several studies have shown that many countries characterized by an abundance of natural resource tends towards a slow path to economic growth and development. The literature explains how oil resource leads to weak state institutions, which exhibits corruption/patrimonialism and thus, maldistribution of the resources. Accordingly, resource rich states are prone to violent conflicts and civil wars and tend to be less democratic than countries with fewer natural resources. Natural resource abundance seems to provide economic incentives and finance opportunities for violence while it fuels the greed of rebels in their armed struggle against the state (Auty 1993; Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2004; Collier 2008; Ross 1999, 2001, 2012; Sachs and Warner 1995, 1999). Lujala (2010: 15) elucidated further that abundant natural resources provide the incentives and funds for rebellion, and that natural resource wealth engenders weak states and poor public policies. Greedy rebels can use violence to achieve their material goals whilst access to natural resource wealth may boost the chances of "rebel success and survival" (Lujala 2010: 15).

Although several natural resources like gold and diamonds can accentuate conflicts, oil takes the headline in the 'resource curse' narratives across the globe as it seems to be linked to more violent conflict. Oil is arguably the most important fossil fuel and more fluid for generating petro-dollars for state actors and belligerents alike. As Ross (2013:1) puts it, 'the

[8] The US establishment of an Africa Command (AFRICOM) signifies its desire to strengthen relationship with African states and enhance stability in the region in line with its national security interest. Carmel Davis, 'Africom's Relationship to Oil, Terrorism and China', *Orbis,* 53/1 (2009/01/01/ 2009), 122-36. However, with the rising profile of US energy independence from its own oil production than it currently imports from Africa, it would be interesting to see how much of those security values it continues to hold for African states.

resource curse is overwhelmingly an oil curse'. Although scholars like Ross and many others have argued for the 'curse' of oil and its corollary to violent conflict, there have been opposing views that oil is not necessarily a curse. For instance, Kaldor et al. (2007: 12) argues that, "oil in itself is neither a blessing nor a curse, but simply a black viscous material". That is, not oil itself, but the way its extraction and utilisation are socially and politically embedded explains whether oil abundance leads to violent conflicts or not. These factors include the rentier nature of petro-states (as we shall see in the next section), the competing geopolitical interests, and greed. These conditions arising from the oil economies precipitate the so-called 'curse'. Luong and Weinthal (2010: 2), while arguing that oil is not a curse from the structural and institutional analysis of Soviet successor states, contends that, "weak (or non-existent) institutions are the key intervening variable between mineral abundance and the negative economic and political outcomes associated with this wealth". Accordingly, the problem is not so much the oil than the prevalence of weak state institutions that provides the template for natural resource wealth to become a curse. The authors claim that weak state institutions are both the effects of mineral wealth the main reason why the wealth turn out to be a curse (Luong and Weinthal 2010: 2).

The foregoing postulation is evident in Nigeria that has shown state weakness arising from the resource curse (Mahler 2010). Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has fared poorly on measures of poverty and income distribution. The poverty rate increased significantly from 36 to 70 percent between 1970 and 2000 and it ranks amongst the 15 poorest countries in the world (Sala-i-Martin 2012:571). The economic situation has become even worse as the federal government recently announced that the country is broke and would rely on increased taxation to be able to develop infrastructure (Soniyi, 2016). As Jensen and Wantchekon (2004:819) observed, the political regime in the post-military era has been more centralized and repressive. The condition is even more frustrating for people in the Niger Delta whose land produces the oil for the country. According to Ibeanu and Luckham (2007:43), the revenues from oil has made the state less accountable to both the entire citizens of the country and in particular the Niger Delta that produces the oil wealth. The oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta face a lack of meaningful development which is coupled with large scale and rapid environmental degradation. It became a region where people are expressing their anger against the state and the IOCs and where a variety of armed groups engaged in militant activities against both. The frustration and aggression that heralded the 'motive for grievance' leading to the extreme case of militancy seem to have been laced with a 'motive for greed' (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). The conflict has become an opportunity for militant leaders to finance their group and

operations, engaging in ransom kidnapping, oil theft (bunkering) and other criminal acts (Osumah and Aghedo 2011). The region's insecurity has become characterized by a competing mix of grievance and greed-based agitations.

The resource curse framework is not without its drawbacks. For example, it creates a pessimistic picture of states depending on oil wealth and portrays underdevelopment as endemic to natural resource dependent states. Some natural resource endowed states, however, have performed very well economically like Norway, Botswana, and Chile. As Frankel (2012: 20) contends, "the natural resource curse should not be interpreted as a rule that countries are doomed to failure". In addition, it tends to ignore the capability of such states to break away from the conflict traps predominant with petro-states. There are unique cases where natural resource dependent states have been relatively peaceful, for example Malaysia (Tar 2008: 40). However, countries that managed their oil resources well, provide the exception rather than the rule on a global scale.

2.2.2 The 'Rentier State'

'Rents' and 'rentier state' are popular concepts when referring to problems of oil in dependent countries (Omeje 2008: 5). The concepts help in understanding the dynamics of the political economy of extractive economies[9]. Mahdavy's (1970) study of pre-revolutionary Iran heralded the theoretical illumination on the concept of the rentier state. He introduced the term rentier state for countries receiving substantial external rent[10] from "foreign individuals, concerns or governments" (Mahdavy 1970: 428). Rentier states rely rather on external rents than their domestic productive sector. According to Mahdavy (1970: 429), "the oil revenues received by the governments of the oil exporting countries have very little to do with the production processes of their domestic economies". Such rents are believed to be external to the domestic economy because they are proceeds emanating from international capital as royalties from the extractive multinational corporations and the equity stakes of such countries in the investments of such multinational corporations (Omeje 2008: 5). Mahdavy uses Kuwait and Qatar to exemplify extreme cases of the rentier phenomenon as both were depending exclusively on oil rents while multi-economies like Iran represented a mixture of a state

[9] Extractive economies involve countries whose economies are natural resource-extraction based and therefore reliant on resource rents.

[10] Rents are more generally defined as the income earned by a state from a natural resource like oil, diamond, copper, and so forth.

depending on rents as well as a non-oil domestic sector shaped by other forms of industrialization like the manufacturing sector.

Since the pioneering effort of Mahdavy, the rentier state concept has been developed further and adapted by several scholars (Collier and Hoeffler 2005; Luciani and Beblawi 1987; Omeje 2006c, 2008; Ross 2001), amongst others. For instance, Beblawi (1987: 51) recasts Mahdavy's definition to include that rentier state is one where the rents are paid by foreign actors directly to the state and one where "only a few are engaged in the generation of this rent [oil wealth] the majority being only involved in the distribution or utilization of it". Luciani and Beblawi (1987: 11) critiqued Mahdavy's exclusive focus on the state from a perspective independent of the economy as narrow. They instead advanced the concept of a 'rentier economy' to situate the dominant role of rent in a state and the external nature of that rent to the economy. They contend that the rentier state is a subset of the rentier economy. They further argued that Mahdavy's conceptualisation of the 'state' was presumed to be synonymous to that of 'society' in his context, "indicating an entire social structure which in the case of a rentier state is premised on the inflow of external rent" (Yates 1994: 18). Luciani and Beblawi (1987: 4) viewed the state as a political economy with dual notions: as an "overall social system subject to government or power" while it also represents "the apparatus or organization of government or power that exercises the monopoly of the legal use of violence".

Emanating from the rentier state model are two arguments: one, oil wealth breeds economic inefficiency that inhibits economic development, and two, that oil wealth 'makes states less democratic' (Ross 1999: 330). In this context, oil rents facilitate authoritarianism through established patronage networks. Such rents provide political leaders with resources to consolidate authoritarian hold onto power. Due to the wealth generated from the natural resources, rentier state rulers do not exert the burden of taxation on citizens and consequently, citizens are not expected to place demands on rulers for political inclusion and accountable leadership (Mähler 2010: 7). The wealth from natural resources makes it easier for political leaders to manipulate and repress citizens and followers. With the lavish oil wealth at their disposal, they are able to maintain rather large expenditures on security outfits aiding the political repression of their people.

The political economy of rentier states is affected by the rent-seeking behaviour of the ruling elites and non-state actors within the state and outside. The rapacious rent-seeking attitudes of natural resource rich states increases the tendency for corruption with adverse implications for long-term growth (Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian 2012: 574). According to

Kaldor et al. (2007: 25) "rent seeking by both public officials and private interests, domestic and international, weakens state institutions and makes it less likely that these institutions can counter the perverse effects of oil dependence". Oil-rich countries require prudent financial and budgetary protocols to be able to withstand the economic challenges that comes with oil price volatility. Interestingly, most rentier states fail to adopt healthy financial protocol. Instead, "they often exacerbate their problems by excessive borrowing, protection of domestic markets and profligate spending" (Kaldor et al. 2007: 25). These factors culminate in the policy failures which further fuel the rent-seeking cycle[11] fostering predation and likely leading to state failure.

Although the Rentier state model was developed to account for governance problems in oil-rich Middle Eastern countries, the central character of the rentier state model was confirmed in the behaviour of resource abundant (especially oil rich) states in developing countries in general. Countries like Nigeria, Angola, Sudan/South Sudan, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and others have faced resource conflicts at different points in time. Some have remained protracted like those of South Sudan and Nigeria's Niger Delta. However, this is different from what obtains in the developed countries with natural resource endowments like Canada, Norway, USA, and so forth. Tar (2008) adduces some reasons for the authoritarian behaviour of rentier states and their propensity for resource induced conflict in the developing countries. The first is the way the state system evolved. The process of state building of some developed countries was preceded by "revolution (for example France, USA) and/or evolution (for example Britain, Sweden)". The modern state system in developing countries, were a product of colonial/ imperial creation and therefore a newer phenomenon. Of note in this light, is the famed scramble for and partition of erstwhile autonomous African societies in the late nineteenth century by some European countries. It is the case for several Asian, Caribbean/Pacific, and Latin American countries. Their state-formation process therefore was a product of negotiated settlements from the colonial masters. This had implications for the political configurations of power that evolved afterwards in these countries. In addition, it is critical in understanding the dynamics of the power relations in both worlds - developed and developing (Tar 2008: 33). The second reason (and closely related to the first) adduced, is the nature of 'rent-seeking culture' in both worlds. In the developed countries, the 'rentier space'

[11] See Mary Kaldor, Terry Karl, and Yahia Said, *Oil Wars* (London: Pluto Press, 2007). . They provide a table in page 26 that captures the phase, actors, type of state revenue, form of politics and type of conflict that explains the oil rent-seeking cycle.

(Omeje 2008) is shaped by the complementary input of the domestic economy anchored on taxation and fiscal discipline. In that way, a robust bureaucratic and civil political class strengthens the capacity of the state. In contrast, in the developing states of the global south, the rentier space predominantly breeds a predatory political class that is coercive and one that thrives on patronage politics without "robust fiscal apparatus, efficient bureaucracy and/or benevolent elites to guarantee public welfare" (Tar 2008: 34). Resource rent therefore becomes a medium for accumulation of wealth by the governing elites, and where rents for societal development are appropriated along the fault lines of ethnicity, religion, and regional identity. Oil wealth engenders the hegemonic control and capacity of the political elites to determine the political economy of the state through the utilization of oil rent. In this context, the governing elites consolidate their hold on the state, as resources are expended along its line of interest. The people and development projects they support are for the sake of consolidating power and political patronage. The ruling elites determines who gets *what*, *when* and *how*[12]. Those that do not support the political hegemony of the governing elites are deprived of the 'rentier largesse' (Omeje 2006b: 11).

The rentier state model has been criticised for being state-centred. According to Tar (2008: 35) it does not factor the 'function of the state vis-á-vis (civil) society; and conflict vis-à-vis stability'. Its emphasis on the state and the ruling elite's hegemonic control underestimates the agency of social groups in the society. Civil and the not–so-civil society groups like ethnic militias are critical factors in resource contestations and conflicts, which the rentier state model belies. In addition, the emphasis on 'oil rent' undermines the role of the other equally crucial natural resource endowments in rent seeking behaviour. For example, gold, diamond, uranium, amongst other minerals, have been strategic to the rent-seeking mentality of states and in many cases, have been objects of resource wars just like oil. Although, the rentier state model was not created to explain conflicts, it aids the understanding of the political economy of oil rich states, the character of the ruling elites in the management of oil wealth, and why some have been enmeshed in the resource 'conflict trap'[13] (Collier 2008).

[12] A popular phrase that is commonly associated with Harrold D Lasswell's (1936) book titled, 'Politics: who gets what, when, how. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill). It examines the allocation of 'values' (resources, power, positions, influence, etc.) by the political elites who are the main holders and beneficiaries of power.

[13] The 'conflict trap' according to Collier (2008: x) reveals, "how certain economic conditions make a country prone to civil war, and how, once conflict has started, the cycle of violence becomes a trap from which it is difficult to escape". Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) at pg x.

However, it is simplistic to look at both phenomena from an internal dimension as constitutive of the violent conflict situation in resource-endowed states. There are external factors for instance, that shape the nature of Africa's resource curse. According to Obi (2014a: 149), there is the tendency to gloss over the "place of Africa in the global political economy, and how transnational actors and structures are deeply implicated in the corruption and armed conflicts in oil-rich states". Two important factors are worth noting: the petro-states do not "control the technology of production and transportation"; and that the oil multinationals leverage this technological advantage over the states whom they depend on to "shield them from, and also repress local protests and demands" (Obi 2014a: 149). Such mutual relationship compounds the feeling of oppression and the attendant conflict that arises. In the Niger Delta for instance, there is evidence of IOCs' complicity in the insecurity that pervades the region. They arm militia groups and engage in corrupt practices that aggravates the oil conflict dynamics in the region (Hirsch and Vidal 2012; Ukeje 2001: 23; Watts 2007: 653). Therefore, there is a mixture of the undercurrents of global political economy of oil, and internal political dynamics in resource rich states, which precipitates violent conflict and economic underdevelopment.

The foregoing analysis shows the utility of the resource curse and the rentier state concepts in explaining the causal linkage of natural resource endowments of states and violent conflict, and the political-economic inefficiencies that result in weak states and their propensity for insecurity. This is significant as it serves useful purpose for analyzing how rentier states emerge and their tendency to violence and authoritarianism towards resource-based grievances of people. The next section shows how security is framed and how it informs the securitized and militarized actions of state, and the debates for 'alternative' approach to security beyond the state.

2.3 Framing Security

Whether as a concept or practice, the notion of security remains contested. It means different things to different people (Rothschild 1995:61). According to (Wolfers 1952:486), security could cover a wide range of different interests that could be construed as security policies. Any issue can be securitized at the behest of the state and non-state security actors. As Booth (2013:xv) asserts, security is a notion that connotes power and can be politicized by the actors which could lead to disagreement. Although there is a lack of unanimity in the concept of security, a common consensus on security studies is that it has to do with the "threats to survival" (Collins 2007:2); or the "alleviation of threats to cherished values" (Williams 2008:

1). The understanding of security, and the threats to it, is neither 'benign or neutral', instead it is a product of powerful structures that determine what constitutes security, whose interest security might serve and how such security should be upheld (Murphy 2018: 24).

How we view security is a reflection of how we perceive our world, the interaction of the social and political environments we experience security (Williams 2008: 5). Interestingly, this understanding of security as a field of enquiry has engendered two prominent debates of the concept: the narrow versus wide approaches to security studies.

2.3.1 The 'Narrow' Versus 'Wide' Security Approach

The narrow view of security privileges the security of the state. Its academic version falls within the orthodoxy of 'political realism'[14] and 'military power' in the international system that is largely conceptualized as anarchic (Booth 1991: 317; 2005: 4). Security in this context finds expression in a state-centric/military approach where state survival is the norm (Šulović 2010:2). Thus, the state is the main security referent, that is, that which is to be secured from possible existential threats (Buzan et al. 1998:21). For instance, Walt (1991:212) assessment of security from the narrow view, contends that the central focus of security studies is on the 'phenomenon of war'. He argues that conflicts between states are inevitable, and therefore involve the engagement of the military with significant consequences on the state and its people. Security is about threats and the use of military force to counteract threats. Walt states that security deals with the factors that necessitate the possibility of the use of force, the impact the application of force will have on people, the state and societies, and what policy measures states could adopt to avoid conflict or engage in conflict (Walt 1991: 212). Here, security takes on the dynamics of interstate conflict with the military at the forefront of considerations. It mainstreams the state as security referent therefore making the state the center piece of security studies (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010:19).

The adherents of the traditional narrow view of security are political realists whose notion of 'international security is more firmly rooted in the traditions of power politics' (Buzan et al. 1998:21). They place a premium on the state as the central unit of analysis in the international system (Morgenthau 1978). Although the increasing role of non-state actors in global affairs has been well documented in literature (Guttormson and Wetering 2013:1-5; Waltz 1979:93-94), the state still plays dominant roles and enjoys the monopoly of sovereignty

[14] See Booth 2005:4-10 for the forms of realist ideas, and what constitutes their flaws to warrant a critical approach to security that challenges realism's conceptions.

and power amongst committee of nations. The state can deploy its powers at the international and local levels. A common notion of the traditional view of security is the framing of issues as national security issues in the defense of the state. Luciani (1988:1) conceives national security as "the ability to withstand aggression from abroad". This notion of security conjures the use of force in defending the territorial integrity of a state. In a wider sense, national security reflects an aggregated security structure that encompasses various facets of a state's security capability: political security, environmental security, economic security, energy security, cyber security, and so forth. There is a tendency for political elites to subsume and justify any issue under the notion of 'national security'. Hence, national security is perceived as one of the most 'misused and abused' word in the social sciences (Baldwin 1997:26), and thus, an 'ambiguous symbol' (Wolfers 1952).

However, this state-centric/military logic of security that gained prominence during the nuclear arms race of the cold war (Buzan et al. 1998:2) has been criticized for its narrow scope that lays emphasis on the military defense of states (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010:20). More recently, global health emergencies like Ebola and Coronavirus (Covid-19), have occupied the actions of states as a 'national security' issue. This underscores the danger and impact a non-military threat such as a virus can also have on states.

A second approach to the security debate is the contemporary perspective that is characterized by a 'widening' ('the expansion of relevant security issues') and/or "deepening" (the 'expansion of referent objects of (in)security') (Rowley and Weldes 2012:515). Rothschild (1995:55) refers to this perspective as 'extended security', which amongst its major forms of extension is the diffusion of security from the security of states to that of individuals. The wider and deeper approach to security studies has gained currency in the post-Cold War era. It was buoyed by the increase of economic, environmental and other issues like transnational crime in the agenda of state relations starting from the 1970s to the 1990s (Buzan et al. 1998:2). The widening debate in security studies underscores the prevailing consequences of non-military threats like environmental, economic, and epidemic outbreaks, amongst others, in the international system, and the need for attention in those areas outside of the traditional statist conception of security. In today's world, threats from non-traditional sources of insecurity portend greater danger to the quest for global peace and security than cross border conflict or interstate wars (Uzodike and Isike 2009:106). However, some scholars have argued against this contemporary approach to security that it runs the risk of widening security studies unnecessarily and thus could "destroy its intellectual coherence" and undermine solutions to

the important issues (Buzan et al. 1998: 2; Walt 1991: 213). This argument questions the inclusion of non-military issues as deserving of security status, and what effects that might have on the study of international relations generally. It is feared that the concept of 'security' might become too expansive (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010:76). This expansion raises the concern, for example, as to what point could a line be drawn on what constitute or does not constitute security since a host of issues could pass as security threat depending on the actors involved.

The effort at widening and/or deepening the scope of security has engendered a varied lens for analyzing security (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2015: 4). Critical Security Studies (CSS) for example, has emerged as an alternative approach to mainstream security studies beyond the state as sole security referent (Booth 1991; Jones 1999; Krause and Williams 1997). Barry Buzan's seminal book *People, States and Fear* (1991) made an argument for security's engagement beyond the 'narrow' scope. He expounded on the focus of security using five 'sectors' that includes military, economic, societal, environmental and political[15]. This new thinking of security has also led to the rise of different 'schools'[16] within CSS which argue that people are threatened by a plethora of issues as members of a society and not just a state. Consequently, individual, and human communities should become the ideal security referent. It is in this light that McSweeney (1996:16), contends that, "security must make sense at the basic level of the individual human being for it to make sense at the international level". The emphasis of CSS therefore places the individuals in a society as the referent object of security.

This focus on the human individual has grown as a popular form of analysis for understanding security beyond the state level. For instance, the UNDP Human Development Report (1994) signaled the emphasis on human security. It encouraged policy makers to rethink the notion of security with a greater focus on the security of people and sustainable human development. The report outlined seven areas of threats to human security. These include economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. This normative disposition to security relies on the solidarity of individuals and organizations for

[15] See also Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

[16] 'School' in this context reflects the geographical base where the Scholars spent time together developing their ideas on the subject. For instance, the 'Welsh' or 'Aberystwyth School' with key proponents like Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones, and the 'Copenhagen School' with its leading scholars like Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde. See Columba Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction* (2nd edn.; New York: Routledge, 2015) at pp 30.

the attainment of the 'freedom from fear and the freedom from want' (Beswick and Jackson 2011: 11; Spear and Williams 2012: 13-14). In this light, Booth (1991), stated that 'emancipation' should be at the core of security thinking- that is, privileging 'political and social justice' over traditional themes of 'power and order' in the reasoning of security.

However, the notion of widening/deepening the narrow/state-centric approach to security has been critiqued for its reductionism to a single level analysis, not least by those who are keen to seek an alternative categorization of the academic subject of security like Human Security, Strategic Studies, amongst other approaches. According to Krause and Williams (1997:35), "simply articulating a broad range of newly emerging or newly recognized threats to human survival or well-being will not in itself move security studies away from its traditional concerns". Krause and Williams argue that the security of the individual and his social identity cannot be examined in isolation of the state. As such, the state must be spoken for just like the individuals (McSweeney 1996; Shaw 1993; Smith 1991). Nonetheless, this research draws on the critical security approach that places individuals as the referent object of security as against the state. It is significant for understanding the rationale for a state's securitization which is a key contribution of the 'Aberystwyth school' of security studies.

2.3.2 Situating the Gap in Literature

The examination of literature thus far has shown the possibility of analysing the conflict in the Niger Delta as an oil (natural) resource induced conflict suffused in the trappings of its rentier political economy in a securitized and militarized environment. A situation that explains its challenge of oil wealth without significant development in the lives of the ordinary people that make up the oil-rich region. Thus, the nexus of oil and violent conflict between the state and non-state actors has shaped the history of the Niger Delta particularly in the last three decades. The literature highlights the development of concepts that aids the explanation of the state's instrument of force in entrenching state-centric and military styled 'security' in the region. This research adopts the securitization framework to analyse the framing of the region as an existential security threat to the state (especially its oil interest), and the rationale for the 'extraordinary' measures in the use of force. The manifest demonstration of this use of force by the state is the deployment of the military in the region. It is pertinent to note that the securitization framework for analysing the (in)security relations between the state and the people is not only embedded in the practices of power and the use of force but reflects the framing of the effects of securitization on the people. This framing embodies the narrative of oppression and the utility of local resistance. As Obi (2014b: 255) has noted, "the legacy of

repression and militarization, fuelled militancy and criminality among Niger Delta youths as a means of struggle, resistance, negotiation, survival and politics".

However, as Salter (2011: 45) notes, "we must examine both the context of securitization as well as the practices of everyday life that are implicated in and created by the securitization". There has been less analysis on the nuanced practices of the people to navigate their lives in a militarized environment both as a means of survival and resistance from the everyday security perspective. Research on the conflict in the Niger Delta has not yet engaged with the concept of the everyday. Thus, the conflict in the Niger Delta and the attempt of the PAP towards peacebuilding would be better understood when examined from the everyday security lenses of the people as against the elite political actors of the state. This helps to broaden our sphere of analysis and raises critical questions beyond state narrative. This is where this thesis is innovative as it contributes critically to the wider body of security studies with a focus on the everyday security experiences of people in conflict areas, especially the Niger Delta region.

As will be analyzed in subsequent chapters, the study recognizes beyond the militarized approach, the PAP as a policy framework for building peace borne out of the 'extraordinary measures' of the state actions to the oil conflict in the region. The PAP, like previous conflict resolution attempts in the Niger Delta, has failed largely to address the salient root causes of the conflict (Sayne 2013). The Amnesty does not appear to be part of any long-term sustainable peace plan for the region. Addressing the conflict drivers would seem to require deliberate political will and investment in what constitutes peace for the people of the region as the study shows in chapter 8. Efforts for peace following a natural resource conflict like oil, fails to achieve its objectives faster than other kinds of conflict because of the high stakes of such valuable resources that makes fighting over it attractive (Rustad and Binningsbø 2012). However, the study reveals the less scrutinized conflict cycle (see figure 1 below) that is reproduced from the amalgam of the state security practices and the resistance of the people.

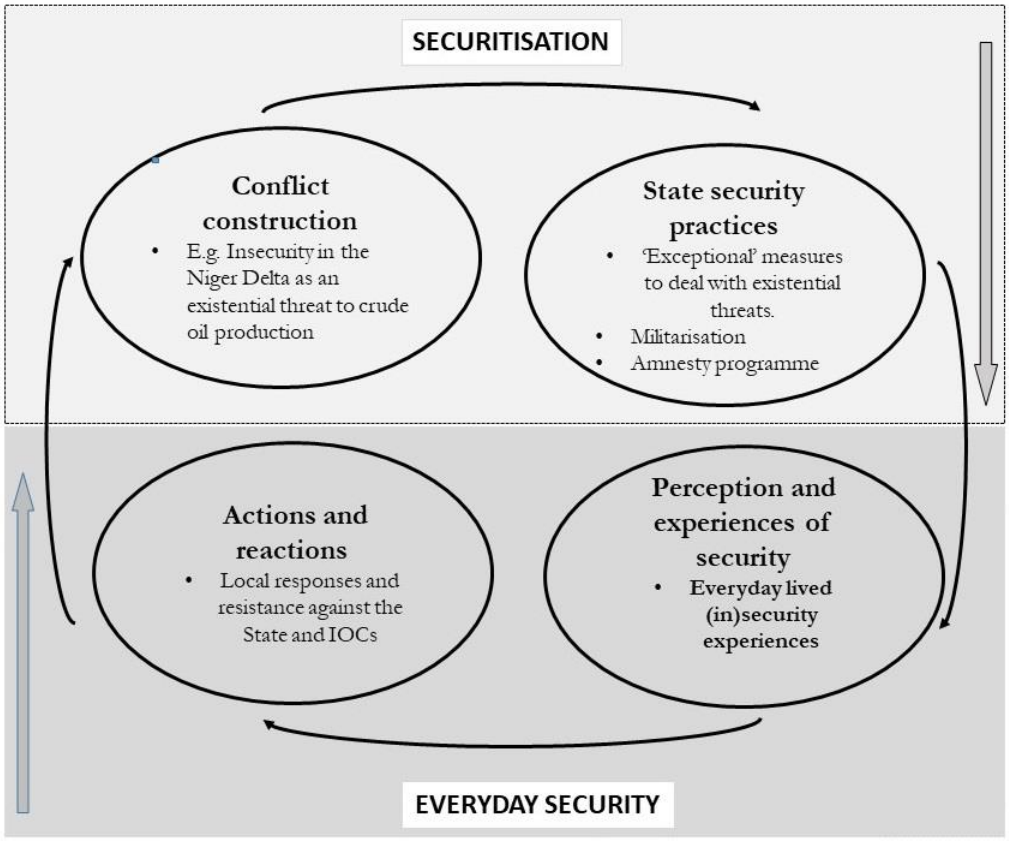

Figure 1: Niger Delta conflict cycle

I conceived the above diagram to reflect the nexus of the state securitization and everyday security in the Niger Delta. It reveals how the state constructs the insecurity in the region as an existential threat to state interest, chiefly oil production, and its exceptional measures of militarization ('stick') and amnesty programme ('carrot'). With the state being authoritarian, there is a tendency to interpret public demands as threats, and thus to securitize citizens' concerns. This is the sense in which the securitization theory is adopted in this thesis to analyze and understand the state security practices in the region. The diagram also shows the everyday security actions of the people and highlights their experiences of security, and their agency to resist the state institutions, a situation that leads to the cycle of conflict.

2.4 Securitization Theory

Securitization, a concept coined by Ole Waever, (Buzan et al. 1998: 21; Huysmans 1998: 569), is one of the most distinguishing contribution of the 'Copenhagen School'[17] (CS).

[17] McSweeny (1996:81), a critic of the leading proponents of securitization, first referred to their several body of work on the 'security theme' as the Copenhagen school. This is because their ideas on the subject developed at the Centre for Peace and conflict Research, later renamed Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) in the Danish capital of Copenhagen. Bill Mcsweeney, 'Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School', *Review of International studies,* 22/01 (1996), 81-93.

As Julius (2014: 85) notes, "securitization was developed as a theoretical tool for security analysis". Securitization theory creates an insight for examining the nature and processes of security issues (Balzacq 2011: 1). It has become a common part of the concepts for analysing issues in (Critical) Security Studies text (Balzacq 2011; Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010, 2015; Shepherd 2013; Wiliams and McDonald 2018) amongst others. As espoused in Buzan et al. (1998), securitization is about the construction of an issue as constituting an existential threat, and the justification of extraordinary measures to deal with such threats. It is about speaking security, engaging an audience, and taking action. With securitization, political actors succeed in raising a matter prominently as a security agenda above other issues. These issues are sometimes non-military in nature but often necessitates a military-like response. Whether (in reality) the extent of such threat matches the logic of its classification matters less than the way the threat has been presented by the political elites.

Buzan et al. (1998:23) contends that "security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics. Securitization can thus be seen as a more extreme version of politicization". However, the connection between securitization and politicization does not invariably mean that all acts of securitization are statist in nature. This is because politicization and securitization can also be non-statist. For instance, people in any social environment can raise an issue to a level of high proportion demanding a measure of quick resolution amongst themselves. This could be the need for increased security. Buzan et al. (1998:23-24), argues that in theory public issues can fall within the scope of three continuum- non-politicized, politicized, and securitized. When an issue is non-politicized, the state does not give public attention to the issue. When an issue is politicized, the state brings it up as a public policy agenda requiring action and the needed resources. When an issue is securitized, the issue is presented not just as a matter requiring attention but also as an 'existential threat' to the state for which actions are to be taken beyond the normal procedures or political routine. This gives the state the leeway to deploy the necessary means and resources beyond the ordinary to the perceived threats. In other words, securitization presents a security issue as an extant threat requiring attention beyond the regular logic of political practice. Balzacq (2011: 3) presents a conceptualization of securitization that draws on the intersubjective context of a philosophical, sociological and discursive element that helps to explicate security issues within a given time. Thus, he defines securitization as:

> An articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions), about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that occurs with the securitizing actor's reasons for choice and actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized policy must be undertaken immediately to block its development.

Scholars like Knudsen (2001:356) emphasize the need to 'focus on the state as a collective actor whose roles in security terms include, inter alia, the processing of threats'. Hence, it is the role of the state to determine what constitute threats to its existence. An issue is a security threat because the state actors say it is. Each state engages or reacts to security issues depending on the nature of the threats and how the security threat has been framed. This is what gives states the latitude to justify their use of force and the special measures to mobilize against such threats. However, there are concerns that these measures could lead to cases of 'irrational' and 'excessive' securitization (McSweeney 1996; Roe 2004:279). As (Buzan et al. 1998:22-23) argued, the existential threats manifest in the military, political, economic, societal and environmental sectors of the state with each sector having its distinct referent objects. The practice and engagement of securitization 'can either be ad hoc or institutionalized' which is determined largely by the persistent or recurring nature of such threats (Buzan et al. 1998:27). This manifests significantly in the military sector where states are prone to military attacks and as such standing institutions are set up to meet such threats.

Ultimately, "securitization studies aim to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results, and, not least, under what conditions (i.e., what explains when securitization is successful)" (Buzan et al. 1998:32). They contend that, for securitization to be successful, it must engender "three components (or steps): existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules" (Buzan et al. 1998:26).

2.4.1 Securitization as Performative Utterance

The Securitization theory leans significantly on speech act that engenders the framing of language and meaning in its Copenhagen School analysis. It is about 'saying security' in connection to a matter (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010:76). This invariably makes securitization theory reliant on discourse analysis and interpretation, which defines its key feature as "a specific security rhetoric which is marked by survival, priority of action and urgency" (Stritzel 2007:360). Securitization theory explains the way states conceives their

claim of (national) security issues and the actions they take. As McDonald (2008:581) observed, securitization enjoys great utility as 'discursive interventions' in the construction of issues as security threats. This is because an issue 'becomes a security problem through discursive politics' (Balzacq 2011:1). The mention of security invokes action. It sets tasks in motion and can achieve specific actions as an expression of a speech act. What that goal or action is, is determined by the actors involved in the speech act. In this vein, security becomes a performative utterance (Stritzel 2007:360). As argued by Wæver (1995:55), the word "security' 'is the act… by saying it something is done'. Guzzini (2011:330-331) contends that, "conceiving of security as a speech act is important, because it shows that the form/performance of security is its content".

Thus, securitization is a speech act as well as practice. The speech act (performative utterance) frames an issue as a security issue. The practice is the implementation of the necessary measure for curtailing such existential threat (Crawford and Hutchinson 2015: 3). This could include acts of coercion, inducement, and violence. However, whilst securitization labels certain issues as security concerns or threats, it does not focus much on the "measures or practices that result from such securitization" (Crawford and Hutchinson 2015: 3). The outcome of a prolonged state repression, for example, may create the circumstances where armed rebellion and civil wars eventually become more possible, as in the case of Syria and Libya (Luckham 2017: 101). It is the same way the state's use of violence by the security forces in the Niger Delta has accentuated the conflict and the resistance by the local people and militia groups (C. Emuedo 2012; Obi 2010b; Obi and Rustad 2011; Owolabi and Okwechime 2007).

Government officials often make pronouncements (speech acts) that depict the agitations of the people of the Niger Delta as an existential threat to the oil exploration in the region and consequently the revenue accruing to the state. In an interview with *The Guardian*, in 2009 President Yar'Adua whilst referring to the Niger Delta militants stated, "Those people are criminal elements. Don't look at all this propaganda of theirs" (Tonwe et al. 2011: 61). Another such statement was the threat by President Buhari to treat the Niger Delta militants like the Boko Haram Islamic sect that are terrorizing the North East of the country and have accounted for about 15,000 to 20,000 deaths since it commenced full scale terror acts against the state in 2009 (Abubakar and Daka 2016; Nwabughiogu 2016b). According to Fick (2016:11), "Buhari tends to see the Delta as a security issue… [for him] it's about handling the bad guys … You hear almost nothing about the underlying grievances". This framing by the government formed a part of the communiqué by the Niger Delta youths under the auspices of

Ijaw Youth Council who noted they were tired of "being labelled saboteurs and terrorists. It is a case of preparing the noose for our hanging. We reject this labelling[18]". Interestingly, many of these official utterances have been used to raise threats and justify the military involvement of the state in the region and beyond without meaningful engagement with the underlying problems. For instance, President Obasanjo (1999-2007) once justified the killing of hundreds of people in Benue state by the security forces following the killing of some security personnel. He showed no sign of alarm at the extra-judicial killings that followed. Instead, he maintained that the actions of the security forces exemplified "cause and effect". That "in human nature, reaction is always more than action" (Peel 2009: 8). In similar manner, the government justified the militarization and extrajudicial killings in the Niger Delta. For instance, a former presidential spokesperson, Chief Femi Fani-Kayode suggested in a speech that the massacre of Odi people in Bayelsa state by the military "was a successful model of intervention" (ICG 2006a: 6). According to him:

> When we need to be hard, we have been very hard. We were very tough when it came to a place called Odi town where our policemen and our people were killed by these ethnic militants. And the federal government went in and literally levelled the whole place. And the proof of the pudding is in the eating. It has never happened again since that time. So, I think that policy works (ibid, p.6-7).

This kind of speech act or discursive performances allows the state to legitimize its militarization of the Niger Delta. However, there are certain conditions that facilitate the speech act (Buzan et al. 1998:31-33; Nyman 2013:59).

2.4.2 Facilitating conditions for securitization

Certain conditions enable securitization. One of them is the grammar of security. This allows the security actors (often the state) the opportunity to appropriate the right lexicon to portray their acts in the security process. The use of the appropriate security narrative is crucial for shaping the seriousness of the problem. Understanding the 'dialects of the different sectors, such as talk identity in the societal sector, sustainability in the environmental sector, and so on' (Buzan et al. 1998:33), helps to relate the security issue with the audience. For instance, when the federal government of Nigeria or its allied interests refer to the Niger Delta militants as criminals or economic saboteurs, it paints the image of a dangerous group that suits the government's narrative for justifying the use of military force against them.

[18] See paragraph 4, page 3 of the Kaiama Declaration of 11 December 1998 by the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC). Kaiama-Declaration.pdf (ijawnation.org). Accessed 12 December 2020.

The second factor is the securitizing actor's position of power. Political actors occupy positions of power that give them the authority to define and speak 'security' as representatives of the state. This gives them the privileged position to construct issue(s) as threats. However, Buzan et al. (1998:31) contends that the power of political elites to securitize is not absolute: "no one is guaranteed the ability to make people accept a claim for necessary security action… nor is anyone excluded from attempts to articulate alternative interpretations of security". Whilst a securitizing actor is in a position of authority, which is a determinant for a successful securitization, it is not all the time that it is of "official authority" (Nyman 2018: 106). Thus, there are times people can make an argument about the urgency and importance of a securitizing move[19] without being in formal positions of authority.

Closely related to the securitizing actor's position of power is the notion of audience. This refers to the people or group that the securitizing actor tries to convince about the logic of a security issue that is deserving of exceptional measures (Buzan et al. 1998:41; Nyman 2018: 106). The audience acceptance of the speech act gives a certain kind of legitimacy to the securitizing actor. This is what Michael C. Williams (2003:523) refers to as "discursive legitimation" … and thereby holds out the potential for the transformation of security perceptions both within and between states". In other words, securitization as an 'intersubjective and socially constructed' phenomenon (Buzan et al. 1998:31), relies on the acceptance of the audience of the security speech act for its success. Thus, as Salter (2011: 46) notes, "every system of power and every attempt at securitization requires some degree of consent from the securitized". However, not all scholars of securitization share this view. Balzacq (2008) cited in (Salter 2011: 48) claims that securitization can occur "without the consent of a popular audience". Here, the audience fails to agree with the securitizing move of the political elites in the projection of an issue as a security problem. The securitization of the everyday life of the people of the Niger Delta could be regarded as a forced assent from the people. They do not agree with the notion of the state's framing of the region as an existential threat to the oil proceeds of the country, but that the state is the aggressor that fails to ensure fiscal and developmental justice in the region, especially where the state treats local agitations with a military response or denial of possible welfare or amenities.

Lastly, threats represent crucial facilitating conditions for securitization. The capacity to conjure a security threat on a shared value, where certain objects are perceived to be a threat

[19] Securitizing move refers to "an attempt by an actor to present something as an existential threat to a referent object. It has to follow the grammar and logic of security" (Nyman 2018:106).

to the collective interest of the security actors and the public. These objects of threat could include insurgent groups, crude oil pipeline, prevalence of small arms and ammunitions, amongst other things, that are used to project the necessity of security actions.

Although securitization theory represents a unique framework in understanding security studies and the political ramifications of security policies (Knudsen 2001:358), as a 'new' paradigm in the study of security (Watson 2012: 281); it is not however without its critique (see Balzacq 2005; McDonald 2008; McSweeney 1996; Stritzel 2007). One such critique is that securitization theory of the CS privileges speech act and downplays the utility of 'non-verbal expression of security' (Wilkinson 2011:94), and neglects the place of 'those who cannot speak security' (Nyman 2013). The problematic of the speech act of political leaders is that language in security narratives as McDonald (2008:568-9) notes, is not the only medium through which security meaning and threats could be communicated. Images or visual media are equally important in conveying a security narrative and as a potential form of securitization. The images of the 9/11 terror attacks in the US come to mind on the potential of visuals in rallying an audience for the securitization options of the government in the war on terror (Nyman 2018: 108). The centrality of visual representation in constructing threats and securitizing the same has been well captured in literature (see Hansen 2011; Möller 2007; Michael C. Williams 2003). With increasing empirical research, securitization theory has been considerably advanced beyond its early attention on the speech act (Balzacq et al. 2015:494). Thus, there is a consensus that securitization theory is an 'outstanding distinctive feature' in security studies (Knudsen 2001:358; Roe 2004:279).

Consequently, applying its framework to the Niger Delta gives an understanding of the threat construction of the region as a product of its securitized discourse by the state and the consequent 'emergency measures' that have placed it above normal politics into the security domain. It is imperative to understand the states' logic of security that has led to the militarized region as a product of securitization.

2.5 The Logic of the State's Securitization of the Niger Delta

As has been shown in the preceding sections of this chapter, the oil-rich Niger Delta region is a critical natural resource asset to the state. The survival of the country is dependent on the oil produced in this region as the largest source of foreign exchange. The logic of the state's securitization of the region rests on its security perception by the political elites. Hence, security to the state is defined in terms of the uninhibited production of this natural resources (Ibeanu 2000:24; Uzodike and Isike 2009:109). Thus, the question of whose security becomes

that of the state where oil is the referent object of security. This gives the state the 'moral ground' to deploy the 'necessary' means and resources beyond the "normal realm of politics" to the perceived threats. This 'necessary means' is evidenced by the state's militarization and repression of the people who are agitating for greater attention in the development of the region (Ibeanu 2000:26; Ukeje 2011:83). The state has failed to meet demands which has led to the current situation of armed insurgency, but it has instead, opted for efforts at 'buying' peace in the form of an amnesty deal. The Amnesty programme was supposed to aid the peace and development of the oil-rich but impoverished region; instead, it has largely been an instrument of a purchased peace. Some people have portrayed the Amnesty as a cash inducement for peace to reign without attenuating the development needs of the region. The consequence has been the rise of more militant groups who continue to exploit grievances (Eke 2014; Fick 2016:11; Osumah 2013). Consequently, the state securitizes the Niger Delta as a high stakes 'object' that must be brought under control by any measure possible. Agitations for development in the Niger Delta are therefore constructed and interpreted as an existential threat to the survival of the state.

Securitization theory supports the understanding of the conflict dynamics in the region because the construction of the region as an existential threat to the state by the political actors leads to 'emergency' measures and policy choices in the region. Except for the Presidential Amnesty Programme, the most prominent of such measures has been the constant militarization of the region. This threat construction is perhaps compounded by what Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2010:79) refers to as "historical connotations of threat, danger, and harm, or where a history of hostile sentiments exists". Thus, the prolonged agitation by the Niger Delta people for development and inclusion has come to define the area as volatile and crisis ridden following the militant approach to the agitation. The outcome has created a fractured relationship where mutual suspicion is rife between the political actors of the state, the IOCs, and the local communities. The latter's engagement with the state is therefore perceived in terms of the neglect and marginalization, the suppression of their individual and collective will for socio-economic development, peace, and justice. However, the increasing inability of the state to provide basic socio-economic benefits in the region is unmatched by the expenditure in security and law and order sphere of government actions. Thus, security becomes an instrument for suppression and for preserving state assets with the security of the people as a relative concern. The security forces repress any form of opposition to state policies and actions, which has heightened the fractured relationships between the parties to the conflict.

The state's military actions have created a militarized mentality in the Niger Delta in a sense that social relations in the everyday life of the people are influenced by the regular use of force they have been predisposed to. This is because militarization as noted by Shepherd (2010: xxiii) embodies "the process by which beings or things become associated with the military or take on military characteristics". Therefore, the militarization of the Niger Delta conditions the social spheres of the everyday life of the people. As Detraz (2012: 27) argues, militarization manifests in different levels of everyday life and can become "naturalized over time". This is evident for instance, in the kind of language framing with which people communicate, and other areas of social engagement where violence and resistance has become a prevalent culture because of the regular exposure to a militarized environment. Thus, securitization allows for 'a particular militarized thinking' (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010:83) not just for the state security forces but the people; that is, how the effects of the state's securitization is perceived and experienced in the everyday life of the ordinary people, which the next section examines.

2.6 The Utility of 'Everyday' Security

The idea of the 'everyday' has been increasingly engaged by scholars in the analysis of 'micro-moves'[20] in IR (Adebanwi 2017; Botterill et al. 2019; Donoghue 2016; Seabrooke and Thomsen 2016; T. Solomon and Steele 2016; Stanley and Jackson 2016). Like most social phenomena, there are varying conceptual and analytical utility of the everyday in scholarly literature. The everyday is a realm of social agency and structures related to the notion of the ordinary and the local. As Randazzo (2016:1355) notes, the everyday can be used to symbolize the "mundane, the hidden, the marginalized, the local-local, the authentic, the hybrid". It is an idea that encapsulates a focus on the ordinary activities of a people, that is, 'their everyday actions and commonplace events' (Rigg 2007:17). The everyday examines the ways in which life is lived by people in their social environment (Guillaume 2011). As a social construct, the everyday embodies people's social experiences in their local environment "beyond the realm of 'high politics' and institutional set-ups" (Randazzo 2016: 1354-55).

Besides, the everyday is conceived as an arena of power and resistance (Eschle 2018) and how the subjects of power (individuals and groups) negotiate the structures and networks through which power is exercised in the society; that is, how people engage with the structures

[20] Solomon and Steel (2016:1) relates micro-moves to the non-elite theorization that examines issues at the "lower level of analysis where structures are enacted and contested". It looks beyond the grand or structural theories in IR.

of power in their society. For instance, the use of the everyday analyses in this research will show how the people of the Niger Delta experience and practice security in their daily lives in a militarized environment. According to Thompson (2013:6), De Certeau's (1984) engagement with everyday life portrays it as a 'sphere of resistance' against institutional pressures and agency. The everyday, for de Certeau, who leaned greatly on the works of Foucault, envisages the ability for people to take independent and collective action for their survival against constraining authorities. Thus, studying the everyday makes visible dimensions of power, which are invincible when one looks only at elites, formal structures, and policies.

However, reflecting on the nature of the everyday, Felski (1999:16) observed that "everyday life … does not only describe the lives of ordinary people but recognizes that every life contains an element of the ordinary". Irrespective of people's social status, there are quotidian activities and desires common to all: sleeping and waking up, the quest for individual and/or collective security, and so forth. Thus, everybody has an 'everyday'. This everydayness and its "routinized" or "habitualized character" (Gardiner 2004:228) differs with individuals and collectivities (groups) depending on their scale of vulnerabilities or strength. For instance, at the level of the individual, everyday vulnerabilities can manifest as unemployment. At the community level, it could manifest as environmental pollution like gas flaring or oil spillage, or from the absence of a vital infrastructural need like pipe borne water or electricity, which is common to everybody in the locality. However, there is the tendency for an overlap between the individuals and the community-wide everyday issues since the community is a conglomeration of the individuals as a unit. The unemployed person while enduring the most of their individual vulnerabilities could also become the foot soldier that leads protests when there is an oil spill in their community, or when proposed projects are abandoned, as is the case in many areas of the Niger Delta.

Scholars have invoked the concept of the everyday depending on the social issue in focus. Its adaptability in capturing the ordinary, power, structures and networks and agency of people in society, creates its multidisciplinary appeal for many academics. This includes analyses in disciplines like Art (Johnstone 2008), Geography (Rigg 2007), Social Anthropology (Walker 2010), Law and Criminology (C. Butler 2012; Crawford and Hutchinson 2015), Peace and Conflict (Higate and Henry 2010; Mac Ginty 2014), and Political Science (Ismail 2006), amongst others. Stanley and Jackson (2016:225), notes the heuristic and theoretical role a turn to the everyday plays in focusing and analyzing issues "beyond methodological elitism". According to Stanley and Jackson (ibid) who build on Foucault, the

predominance of the elite political paradigms and discourses in world politics without the agency of the individuals and groups in society amounts to a kind of "knowledge subjugation" (Stanley and Jackson 2016:228). The everyday analysis therefore serves as a 'de-subjugating, emancipatory potential' in political discourses and narratives (Stanley and Jackson 2016:228).

The idea of the everyday is in this thesis applied to the oil-rich but conflict-ridden Niger Delta and thus engenders a shift from the level of the state to individuals. As a qualitative research that engages with the narratives of ordinary people, the best way to know how people make sense of security in their engagement with the state security practices, and their lived experiences in a conflict environment, is to hear from them. The everyday thus helps to address 'meanings' as a normative framework which shape how experiences are perceived and responded to. As such, emphasizing the everyday in this research shows the security contrivances of the state and the militarized rentier environment under which the outcome of such security practices is borne and reproduced by the people of the Niger Delta.

Consequently, 'everyday security' is about how people engage with security practices and its associated threats and vulnerabilities in their daily life. The everyday security approach is a way of 'navigating security from the bottom-up' (Eschle 2018: 290), and points to the relevance of engaging the "ordinary people and the conditions of (in)security they experience, encounter or construct in everyday life" (Jarvis and Lister 2012: 158). In the context of this research, it is about how the people of the Niger Delta interact with and experience the Nigerian state security practices. I ask how people perceive and engage with the state security measures, taking into account peoples' lived experiences of security. It explores how threats to their lives shape security experiences and vulnerabilities in their socio-economic, political, and environmental milieu that necessitates resistance, conflict, or collective violence. Everyday security focuses on how people experience security on the one hand, and how they practice security on the other in their daily life, and in the environments in which they interact with each other. Thus, it signifies the actions of people, groups, and communities to, or 'about security' and the 'production of security from below' (Crawford and Hutchinson 2015: 7; Eschle 2018: 2). For instance, where the state security measures are oppressive, they are resisted in diverse ways which inform the everyday practices of security by the people, and how they (re)produce (in)security in their quotidian environment.

How people experience and respond to oppressive practices either by the state or organized groups has been captured by scholars like James C. Scott. In his seminal work, Scott (1985) underscored resistance as the agency of the everyday. He showed how individuals'

everyday practices constitute agency and the relationship with the structures of power. Drawing upon the social setting/experience of class struggle in the paddy sector in Malaysia, Scott's work highlighted the cautious and calculated forms of resistance by the peasant workers to the prevalent system of oppression. Even though open rebellion was not the norm in the coercive system that the elites created, the everyday actions of the peasant farmers showed unrelenting contest over what constitutes justice in defence of their peasant class. Despite the fear of repression and the obligation of their economic relations, they protected their interests through acts of 'symbolic' and 'ideological' resistance such as 'boycotts, quiet strikes, thefts and malicious gossips' (Scott 1985: 304). Scott's notion of resistance is significant to this research as it sets the conceptual understanding of resistance as constitutive of everyday security utilised here for analysing the security experiences of ordinary people and how they resist the oppression of the rentier authoritarian class for their survival.

In the end, everyday security is about safety as it is of survival. As has been shown earlier, the key issue of security's referent becomes pertinent. That is, whose security interest is protected - the state or the people. In any case, security is not static. Individuals engage with security in social spaces (Higate and Henry 2010). Security measures impinge on the social structures of people, which informs the perspective from which they view security. As Crawford and Hutchinson (2015:7) argues, how the ordinary people react to the security policies and measures in their social environment is informed by the way the policies resonate with them.

Whereas everyday security connects greatly with the social life of individuals, Higate and Henry (2010:34) contends that it is a good way of understanding the state of emotional wellbeing of people. The everyday security of a people invariably reflects an expressive or emotive nature regarding their state of security. Hence, Higate and Henry (2010:44), argues that, "everyday security is as much a matter of embodied affect, mood and feeling as it is about more traditional security concerns involving military forces, weapons, bullets, minefields, life, blood and death". As McSweeney (1996:87) notes, the feeling of whether we are secure or not begins with the way we perceive vulnerabilities and threats. This emotional and perceptive dimension of everyday security typifies the human dimension of security. Although perception of security is difficult to generalize because security might mean different things to different people depending on their circumstance (Ranasinghe 2012:91), it is helpful to know how a people who share common forms of perceived marginalization view security in their daily life. Peoples' experiences of everyday security are adjudged by their expectations of security as

executed by the agents of the state in the present or in the past. Thus, people's experiences of security are connected to their expectations of security. They not only want to be saved from direct danger, but to have the assurances that their security conditions can subsist for a long time. In other words, peoples lived experiences of security reinforces or challenges their notion of security. Where their experience falls short of their expectations, people engage in practices to counteract such forms of insecurity.

The everyday security approach aims at unravelling the security practices in the daily life of ordinary people. It is that sphere where different stakeholders engage with each other and jostle for 'public goods' in a way that is crucial for their survival (Crawford and Hutchinson 2015:3). It is not as dramatic as the speech acts of securitization that constructs an issue as a security matter or threat without clearly showing the practices that emanates from the securitization. In the same vein, it is in the everyday security sphere that "the security measures that result from securitization processes will themselves be received, experienced and interpreted in certain ways, often engendering struggle and resistance" (Crawford and Hutchinson 2015:3). Moreover, how people engage with the state politically, socially, economically, and even ecologically, matters to their wellbeing, which are shaped by, amongst other things, the political imperatives of the environment they engage in daily, comprising challenges of how to access daily needs like food, shelter, water, clothing, and security. These elements largely define the routinized character of their everydayness: practices, experiences, feelings, and perceptions. Thus, the everyday exemplifies the way the people experience things, hold beliefs and act daily within their social milieu. The security of life and related interests is a fundamental concern to every individual and where their security is threatened, they take measures to counteract the threats, either by exiting such an insecure environment in search of a better one or by engaging with the treats violently or non-violently.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with the literature on the concepts and theory for analysing and understanding the oil-related conflict in the Niger Delta and the everyday security ramifications for the people, the state, and IOCs. It showed the inevitability of conflict in any society where interests differ. The literature and analysis of the nexus of oil and violent conflict reveals that natural resources like oil affect the dynamics of conflict- its onset, duration, and severity. The material condition of the Niger Delta shows the curse of oil and the trappings of a rentier state with repressive tendencies that interpret public demands as threats and consequently securitizes and militarizes the region without recourse to the everyday security

concerns of the people. Thus, the focus on the everyday explores the effects of the security practices of the state on the security experiences of the people, how they engage with the state security structures for their safety and survival, and what security matters to them in their daily lives. This analysis of the ordinary people presents a new perspective for understanding the conflict in the Niger Delta.

This chapter showed the inadequacy of a mono-factor explanation of the oil-induced conflict and underscored the plethora of causative factors and triggers of the prevailing violence. Socioeconomic, security/safety, political and environmental issues present a broad array of the challenging factors that shape the everyday lived security experiences of the people of the Niger Delta beyond the PAP. Arising from the literature are the broad factors of insecurity, unemployment, inequality, discrimination, exclusion and deprivation, infrastructural deficit, environmental pollution like oil spill and gas flaring, amongst other challenges that shape the local resistance to the state and its oil interests (Idemudia and Ite 2006; Dudu and Odalonu 2016; Sayne 2003, Obi 2009; ICG 2015). They encapsulate the everyday security dynamics in the post amnesty Niger Delta that this study unravels.

Importantly, the chapter shows the traditional statist interpretation of security in the complex conflict. The state's securitized approach in the region and its recourse to military measures to quell the agitations of the people underlies in part the complications of the conflict. State violence through military intervention does not address the socioeconomic, political, and historical roots of the crisis in the region (Obi 2009). The resistance to the state's militarized approach by the people reproduces insecurity and the cycle of violent conflict in the region. As Bubandt (2005: 276) notes "security' as a political problem is neither unchanging nor semantically homogenous". Hence, there are complex processes of security, and the interface between state actors and non-state actors across the region needs rethinking. Thus, the thesis takes the critical turn of everyday security beyond the statist 'national security' approach in exploring the link between the security practices of the state and the everyday lived security experiences and practices of the people of the Niger Delta. Such a holistic security approach engages with the 'real' security problems and not just a military-focussed strategy that protects the power and economic interest of the political elites and subdues the underlying human vulnerabilities that plague the everyday life of the people. It brings to bear the rationale for understanding the everyday concerns of the ordinary people of the Niger Delta and knowing what security means to them. Without such understanding, the conflict cannot be resolved.

Hence, the resurgence of oil militancy despite the expectations of PAP as a peacebuilding measure.

In navigating the rest of the thesis, I deploy the analytical frameworks of securitization to show how the Nigerian state legitimises its militarisation of the Niger Delta. I will explore how the state utilizes its post-colonial authoritarian disposition for harnessing the oil rent in the Niger Delta, how it breeds weak institutions, which exhibits the attributes of oil 'curse' and the cycle of violence that it precipitates. Utilizing the everyday provides a conceptual understanding of the social structures of power and resistance in a militarized environment, the way people practice security and what security mean to them in their daily lives. This is important because the use of the analytical concepts will show how the thesis interprets the data on the state security practices on the one hand, and the perception and experiences of security by the people on the other hand. In the next chapter I will operationalise the methodology that shows an understanding of the way I position the securitization of the state as a top-down structure, and the agency of the people as a bottom-up structure in navigating the state security machinations in their everyday life. This is important for situating the research with respect to the data analysed and how the state security actions and those of the people are understood.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The process of gathering data is as important as the data itself. The usefulness and reliability of such data set rests on several factors- the epistemology of the subject researched, the research design, ethical considerations and methods employed in the knowledge production. The process of undertaking this research has been an arduous one mentally, physically, and emotionally. Doing fieldwork at 'home', in one's own country presented certain advantages: being around people of similar race, geopolitical region, common immigration policy, a chance to catch up on family members, and perhaps the opportunity to escape from the unpredictable UK weather for a few months, amongst others. However, it was not as straightforward. Although, I am from Edo (one of the nine states in the Niger Delta region), which makes me technically an insider, my core study areas of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states are relatively different culturally and linguistically from my home state, therefore making me relatively an outsider. Therefore, whilst I was home in the Niger Delta, I was away from 'home'.

This chapter explores my fieldwork experiences, the process of gathering the data for the study, and the analysis of the data. Conducting research in conflict-affected areas presents unique methodological and ethical challenges for the researchers (Wood 2006). Such was the challenge during my field research following the military offensive, 'Operation Crocodile Smile' in 2017 by the Nigerian Army in the Niger Delta. The military operations heightened the general state of insecurity in the Delta, initiated anger, distrust and (in some cases) apathy towards outsiders. This had ramifications for my fieldwork with respect to costs, logistics, ethical considerations, and the way my research evolved. The chapter explores the process of entering the field, outlines why I chose the area, discusses the recruitment of research assistants and engagement with gatekeepers, and gaining participant's consent. It examined the qualitative methods utilised in the collections of data, which includes semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and participant observations. It further outlines the method I used to analyse the data, and ends with reflections on positionality, identity, and power relations in the research field.

In order to effectively engage the explorative nature of the research questions and interpret the research data, I adopt a methodological approach that enables an operationalization of the state securitization and everyday security. This is in line with the critical approach to security which the thesis adopts that moves the focus of security away from the state towards the security perception and experiences of people as a more nuanced way of understanding the referent object of security- whose interest security serves. Therefore, using the securitization as an analytical tool allows me to look at data on how the state constructs threats and legitimises its military response to threats in the Niger Delta from a traditional approach to security that is state-centric. To then understand the implication of these state-security practices in the region, I examine the data on the everyday security experiences of the people: what does security mean to them (perception), how do they experience the state (in)security and how they resist/respond to the (in)security in their daily lives. This quotidian approach where I have to go to the subjects and get them to articulate their experiences and also their agency; hence, requiring interviews, focus groups and observations to generate the data beyond government discourses and security framing of the region. This type of data from the subjects offers an alternative perspective to the dominant state-centric securitization narrative and security practices of the state in the Niger Delta. Thus, the methodology for the research entails positioning the more conventional securitization of the state as a 'top-down' security approach against the everyday as a 'bottom-up' security approach. It is in putting these two narratives against each other that one can best identify and understand what is really going on in the social world of people in the Niger Delta.

3.1 Philosophical Approach

Philosophical assumptions underpin all research endeavors. The conceptual and theoretical use of the everyday and securitization in operationalizing the research questions influenced the data collection and analysis. The attempt to understand the complex social phenomena that this research deals with such as conflict, (in)security, militancy, resource (oil) dynamics, and peacebuilding, required an approach that would allow for an understanding of the conditions and social realities of people in their everyday life. Hence, this research adopts an interpretive epistemological approach. Interpretivism allows one to "grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (Bryman 2004: 13). Human beings are not static, and as such cannot be studied or understood mainly by scales of measurements (statistical data), without the social dynamics of human behavior, contexts, and culture as a way of deriving meanings. Guest et al. (2012: 14) notes that proponents of the interpretive approach like Clifford Geertz (1973), argue

that the positivist (scientific) method of social enquiry is "reductionist" and fails to grasp the dynamics of qualitative research. Rather, interpretivism is an approach that is "most interested in interpreting deeper meaning in discourse and understanding multiple realities (as opposed to one 'objective' reality) that are represented in a collection of personal narratives or observed behaviors and activities" (ibid 2012:14).

Interpretivists are concerned about the social interactions and experiences produced by people, and the effects of such experiences in the social world. According to Blaikie (2000: 115), "This everyday reality consists of the meanings and interpretations given by the social actors to their actions, other people's actions, social situations and natural and humanly created objects". The interpretivist approach is particularly relevant to this research as it allows me to explore the people's perception of security, and their lived security experiences in post-amnesty Niger Delta. It captures what security means to them and why such meaning of security matters most in their everyday life. This way of qualitative researching helps in the understanding of the everyday lived security experiences and how it influences the nature of conflict resurgence in post-amnesty Niger Delta. The way people see things, experience, and interpret them underlies the methodological utility of interpretive approach. Hence, it is particularly useful in qualitative researching and data analysis. As Guest et al. (2012: 14) asserts, it "tends to be less structured and typically unconcerned with measurement and quantification, highlighting instead the meaning- both personal and social- interpreted within the discourse". This common feature of the interpretive approach as Elliot and Timulak (2005: 147) asserts, relies on "linguistic rather numerical data and employ meaning–based rather than statistical forms of analysis".

I do not suggest by any means that positivists or other qualitative approach for conducting empirical research cannot generate data without engaging the everyday reality and verbal accounts of the people. However, to make sense of the reality of a phenomenon like (in)security, oil conflict, peacebuilding, etcetera, I adopted interpretivism to engage with the people affected by such phenomenon and make interpretations of their social realities on the basis of their narratives and experiences. Yet, I acknowledge that narratives and personal experiences people share are socially constructed and as such cannot be conceived as "the representation of the reality but as a representation of a reality" (da Silva 2017: 40). People's realities are relative, social, and contextual. Their experiences might overlap in the way they construct their reality. It is the role of the researcher to unpack the narratives and make interpretations.

3.2 Research Location

The Niger Delta region is a predominantly wet land area of about 70,000 Sq. Km in the southern part of Nigeria (Watts 2007: 639). Its population spans over 30 million people who constitute ethnic minorities in Nigeria. The Niger Delta comprises officially[21] of nine out of the thirty-six states that make up Nigeria's geo-polity (See figure 1 below). These nine states are Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers states respectively. The research took place in the three states Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. I selected two Local Governments Areas (LGA) in each state, making six LGA's in the three states. Local Government Areas (LGA) in Nigeria are the third tier of political authority with constitutional powers after the federal and state government's structure. It is dubbed the closest government to the people because of their smaller unit and access to the local people. In Bayelsa, the LGA's were Sagbama and Southern Ijaw. Warri South-West and Bomadi LGA's in Delta state, and Okrika and Gokana LGA of Rivers state respectively. In Bayelsa state, the selected site of the fieldwork was in the adjoining communities of Angalabiri, Agbere, Ebedebiri and Mile 3 in Sagbama LGA, and Amassoma, Ogobiri and Koroama communities in Southern Ijaw LGA. Communities are communal clans mainly of same ethnic groups within an LGA. In Delta states, the selected sites in Bomadi LGA were Akugbene, Kpakiama, and Ogodobiri while in Warri South-West LGA the communities were Oporoza and Okerenkoko. In Rivers state, Bomu, Bera, and Deken communities formed the selected site in Gokana LGA while the sites in Okrika LGA were Okochiri, Ogoloma, and Alakiri. In addition, I used snow-ball sampling (discussed in section 3.5) for expert interviews in Port Harcourt (Rivers state), Yenagoa (Bayelsa state) and Benin City.

Three states (Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers) constitute the core wetland 'Deltaic' states and are the three largest oil producing states in Nigeria. They produce over 70 percent of the oil and gas resources of the country and have been the hotspots of the violent conflicts characterized by a high concentration of militant activities (Ikelegbe 2005: 167). The states typify characteristics and conditions of the region with respect to topography and exposure of people to oil production challenges. They consist of various oil refineries, network of pipelines and wellheads across communities. Also, various levels of landlocked upland communities, and riverine/swamp communities (Koos 2018: 448). All three states have witnessed large-scale

[21] There have been debates about the political and geographical nomenclature of the Niger Delta. Here, the official classification of the nine Niger Delta states is based on the political definition of the Nigerian government that factors the oil-production status of these southern states. Geographically, Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers state constitutes the core Niger Delta states.

conflict resurgence in the post-amnesty era. Many youths in these states participated in the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP). The three states provide the ground for a comparison of the (in)security perception and experiences of the people.

Figure 1: Study Area.

Map Showing Study Area in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria- Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states

3.3 Research Partners/Research Assistants

The success of fieldwork rests on several factors, which includes the cooperation of research partners and research participants connected to the research. I conducted fieldwork from October to December 2017. Before the field research, I conducted two scoping visits where I also met with my research assistants through the Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)[22]. A meeting with a Senior Programme Officer, and

[22] CPED is a non-governmental Organisation with head office in Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria.

Acting Director of Research, was arranged to discuss the feasibility of conducting empirical research in the selected sites. They offered to support the logistics for the fieldwork. Considering the ongoing conflicts and the militarization of the Niger Delta, I required assistance with good knowledge of the region and in conducting field research. I wanted to be able to maximise fully the time spent in the field utilising existing structures and logistics with utmost concern for the health and safety of my team in view of the security conditions in the region. Carrying out field research in a conflict environment requires extra vigilance and care. It is a challenging exercise in complex environment where suspicion is common (Cohen and Arieli 2011: 423). CPED has extensive research experience in the Niger Delta, employees know the terrains and have established local research partnerships in the three states and LGA's they have worked in the region. Their structure, experience from working in the region, and their pool of personnel in the local areas eventually proved invaluable to my field research.

The next meeting was with my potential Research Assistants (RA) at CPED and fine-tuning the agreements for their involvement and the logistics. CPED gave me useful contacts of relevant people they have worked with in my study area of interest. They advised me to work with at least two RAs per LGA, who are indigenes of the community of interest, as they are necessary for safety reasons, and for gaining access and trust in the field. I got in touch with the potential RAs who were available and ready to work with me. Having mapped out my study area in the three states and two Local government Areas per state, making a total of six, I invited 12 RA's to CPED. I had a meeting with them on the nature of my research and the ethical requirements for their participation. We agreed on the logistics and terms of their participation. I also used the opportunity to do pilot interviews. As indigenes, the RAs know the language, history and culture of the respondents in my study area. Working with two RAs in each LGA, proved very useful as it reduced suspicion and established some level of trust. The RAs were helpful with advice on navigating the local nuances about cultural requirements, and above all, the safety regimes of the different communities. They had good sense of judgement. In some instances where some respondents were uncooperative or being cynical, they knew the right words/ local slangs to pacify them.

The RAs were great leads to key informants and some community leaders who are gatekeepers in their communities. Gatekeepers are vital to the success of a field research. As (McFadyen and Rankin 2016: 82) asserts, gatekeepers have "a key role to ensure researchers gain access to potential participants and sites for research". Before conducting interviews in any community, we sought permission from the community leader(s). I would present my

fieldwork introduction and ethical approval letter and explain to them the academic purpose of my research. I realised some of them were already used to people of varying background and interests like local and international NGO's, state committees, etcetera, coming to their communities for interviews, which presents research fatigue on the interviewees. There were instances when the community heads were not available. On one occasion in Bomadi, Delta state, we were for example, unable to meet the community head. We were referred to the palace secretary who was not available at home and we could not reach him on phone. My RA advised we should go to the shop belonging to the wife of the community head. After speaking with her, she gave us permission to proceed with the fieldwork in the community.

It is important for the researcher to ask questions when RAs attempt to lead you to certain part of the community to interview respondents; and/ or why they want you to talk to certain individuals. Granted that they know the environment, but these issues must be clearly addressed to check their own bias. For example, are they proposing you speak to certain persons because such persons belong to their ethnic group only or because the respondent is a member of their local association/political/cult groups (as common in the Niger Delta)? Such preference can build in bias, skew availability of interviewees and predetermine their responses. The research should not be 'hijacked' by RAs to 'build' their own profile in the community. I made sure my RAs were not taking a predetermined path of excluding certain people from your interviews in the site and when they refer certain people, I ensured to probe the rationale.

Figure 2: Research Assistants.

Research Assistants (9 males and 3 females wearing nametags are listed on the acknowledgment page) flanked by the Researcher's partner (in front) and some CPED staff, after my meeting with them at CPED head office in Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria. 1 April 2017.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Doing fieldwork involving humans require ethical approval. This spell out the regulations and code of conduct for the researcher in the field. I received ethics approval from Durham University for conducting research. The letter is the culmination of the committee's scrutiny of the research project and plausible research questions to be asked in the field. Lunn (2014: 2) notes that "at the core of ethics lie debates about human behaviour, specifically how people should act, or what is 'morality'. Put simply, when faced with a particular situation, the way in which a person reacts, responds, or performs involves ethics". I was always conscious of the ethical requirements of my research and the need to observe security protocol whilst on the field, how I manage my research instruments and the relationship with my research subjects.

The success of a fieldwork depends on how the researcher can manage the research subjects, which includes research assistants, the respondents, and other materials connected to your research in a way that does not predispose them to harm. According to Wood (2006: 373), "the ethical imperative of research ("do no harm") is intensified in conflict zones by polarization, the presence of armed actors, the precarious security of most residents, the general unpredictability of events, and the traumatization through violence of combatants and civilians alike". Field research in conflict–affected areas is challenging. Things do not always go as prearranged. Things can change very quickly, and you must make some judgement calls on the go, which presents ethical dilemmas. I prepared for eventualities including the possibility of evacuation from the field at short notice should situation warrant that. Also knowing how to manage the emotional and psychological disposition of the interviewees. For instance, where respondents become upset when asked certain sensitive questions. Interviewees could be emotional, if they have had previous traumatic experiences arising from such conflict like rape, kidnap, arson, or death of a loved one. I was mindful of the language/terminologies used during interviews. Mentioning certain names of local actors in the conflict could invoke emotions. I allow them to tell their stories while I made sense of it in the context of my research questions.

Apart from the human elements, I was conscious of the safety of my research data considering the sensitive nature of some of the interviews and narratives around security, especially when interviews were conducted with human and environmental rights activists

critical of the actions of government and the security forces. I had my digital recorder safely stored at all times and kept my field notes unobtrusively in my bag with other academic materials reminiscent of a student. This was necessary in ensuring the safety of interviewees, my research team and me. Despite the several military checkpoints and their regular intimidation, I was careful to hide my tiny Sony recorder sometimes in unorthodox places and to avoid attracting their ire. As much as I could, I travelled in public buses where drivers are used to 'settle' or 'roger'[23] military personnel at checkpoints. When the drivers refuse to settle, they are harassed or delayed for long hours. Although, there are no general ethical rules that fits all research, it will be immoral and unethical to engage in behaviours that will endanger interviewees (Lunn 2014: 2). One of such key ethical behaviour is the issue of informed consent discussed below. The manner a researcher extracts information from the interviewees is very important to the integrity of any research.

3.4.1 Gaining Informed Consent of the Respondents

Gaining the consent of the respondents is necessary to allow the participants understand the nature of their involvement in the research. Before each interview, I explained the ethical requirements guiding the conduct of the research in a manner that they understood (See appendix 1 for a sample of the consent form). Although English is the official language in Nigeria, some respondents were more comfortable with the vernacular 'Pidgeon' English[24] or their dialect. Languages are unique ways of appreciating other people's cultural realities and their worldview. The RAs translated to local dialects if respondents were unable or unwilling to speak English or Pidgin English. I observed that greeting and chatting with them in their local dialect proved a vital icebreaker for the interviews. I made sure to clarify the meaning of the conversations to avoid the danger of misrepresentation of facts that could compromise the data. I informed respondents about their rights not to answer questions, to withdraw from the interview at any time and to remain anonymous. I ensured all participants gave their informed consent before conducting and recording interviews. In those cases when the respondents

[23] 'Settle' or 'roger' are code words for bribery. It is a term commonly associated with the Nigerian Police. It is now a regular practise of all the security forces at checkpoints and beyond in Nigeria. I have personally observed countless incidents, and Nigerian daily newspapers are awash with their conducts as a reference point. For instance, see https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/302621-nigeria-security-forces-extort-n100-billion-in-southeast-in-three-years-report.html.

[24] Pidgeon English is a mixture of conventional English language and the local vernacular language. It is a modified syntax for communication especially in informal setting.

refused to be recorded, I took fieldnotes during the interview. I also took permission from the interviewees before taking photographs.

3.5 Research Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sample is important in the way we collect and process research data. Samples serves as an important factor that helps the researcher to capture the representativeness of the research population and creates a practical way of checking the problem of studying an entire population (Ruane 2005: 105). The sampling frame represent the participants in the research population. The participants for this study represent key actors and social groups in the conflict matrix of my study area. The respondents are indicative of the regular Niger Delta people who are indigenes of the region, and who live and work there. This is important as they have a first-hand grasp of the everyday security issues and experiences of the conflict and the post-amnesty dynamics. They included people from the private and public sector of the Niger Delta region. Those who have been perpetrators as well as those who have been victims of the crisis. The majority of my respondents were the local people, men, women, and youths in different age brackets who live in the Niger Delta with experiences of the conflict in the region. It also included in particular ex-militant youths who have been involved in violent insurgency in the past and who are recipients of the Presidential Amnesty programme (PAP), community heads/opinion leaders, security personnel, staff of Government agencies with statutory development responsibility in the region like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), and indigenous staff of oil companies in the region, Non-Governmental Organisations and local human and environmental rights activists, and expert informants such as academics and researchers on the Niger Delta conflict residing in the region. Interviewing them was important as it gives context to the research issues and created a diversity of actors and opinions. Local voices and narratives provide an opportunity for engaging with the participants lived experiences. This way, the researcher can better interrogate the thoughts and feelings the participants share experientially beyond the analysis of textual and archival materials.

The sampling technique used for the research were primarily the purposive sampling and the snowball sampling method. This was useful because of the need to reach enough people sufficiently representative of the selected study site of the research. The purposive sampling technique involves the subjective selection of respondents by the researcher. It “demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are interested in and choose our sample case carefully on this basis” (Silverman 2000: 104). The purposive sampling technique

allowed me to choose respondents that met the key criteria for my research population. This entailed being an indigene and/or having lived in the region for a long time in the course of the conflict preceding the amnesty and afterwards. It also allowed me to select people who functioned as key informants for my research based on their expert knowledge, their status and the roles played in the community, participation in past and present agitations, and involvement in the Amnesty Programme. Purposive sampling was particularly useful given the nature of the conflict environment where many people are skeptical of relating with strangers, and the diversity of culture in the region. I had to utilize purposive sampling to ensure I made the right judgment in getting required respondents in the field in view of these factors in addition to time and resources. Many qualitative researchers, as Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 202) observed, "seek out groups, settings and individuals where… the processes being studied are most likely to occur".

In addition, I used snowball sampling to expand the pool of interviewees (Bryman 2004: 100; Cohen and Arieli 2011: 424). The referral from my local contacts and other research participants proved useful in reaching people who were not easily identifiable and therefore hard to reach by an outsider. For instance, it is difficult to seek out an ex-militant in the midst of other people without someone giving a clue. Many of them are reticent and suspicious of strangers. As indigenes and/or members of the same community, research participants know themselves. One of such cases was when my RA in Sagbama LGA called in the morning of 11 November 2017 saying that the Central Zone Chairman of Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), the foremost youth body in the Niger Delta, was having a Radio show in Rhythm FM station, Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. Knowing that I was in Yenagoa, he asked if I would want to interview him, which I affirmed. He sent me the contact details, we met at the radio station and moved to his house after the show where I conducted the interview.

Notwithstanding, the utility of this approach has been criticised for its sampling convenience since it relies on first contacts leading on to other contacts, and as such could lead to selection bias (Cohen and Arieli 2011: 427). Accordingly, people are likely to refer those within their particular social groups or reach, likely excluding individuals outside their own social networks, especially if they disagree with or have conflict with other networks. To manage this possibility, I ensured to get people with divergent views. However, in a conflict environment, the snowballing sampling method is useful for building trust, creating opportunity for access to social circles or networks of respondents that would have been difficult to reach. Asking important questions and knowing the social characteristics of your

respondents beyond the social circle of the initial (snowballing) respondents helps to reduce such bias.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

I utilised a variety of qualitative research methods in generating the empirical data for this research. These includes semi-structured interviews, focussed group discussion (FGD), as well as participant observation of the everyday experiences of security practices in the region. Applying these qualitative forms of interviewing is useful for eliciting the nuances of the interviews. It is an opportunity to ask people questions and listening cautiously to responses provided. As David and Sutton (2011b: 119) notes, "the thing that makes an interview qualitative lies in the formatting of the questions and the scope made available for the interviewee to answer". Thus, qualitative interviewing requires flexible question format and elicits open-ended answers (David and Sutton, Ibid). Using an amalgam of the forms of qualitative interviews gives credibility to the research findings.

According to Gray (2009: 370) "well conducted interview is a powerful tool for eliciting rich data on people's views, attitudes and the meanings that underpin their lives and behaviours". Semi-structured interviews as a form of qualitative interviewing, allow participants to provide expounded accounts of their experiences in an open-ended and flexible way that is adapted to the participant's unique experiences (Elliot and Timulak 2005: 150). The semi-structured interview creates the flexibility to explore in-depth a range of topics. This method of interviewing gave respondents the opportunity to talk freely without the limitation of a rigid structured format while having a purposeful conversation. Semi-structured interviewing allows the interviewee latitude to engage the issues raised and tell their stories, but the researcher must be careful to know when the issues have been exhausted. Otherwise, you run the risk of time management listening to too many 'stories' that may be outside the scope of your research question. Some respondents used the opportunity to let out their pent-up anger about other issues of their life beyond the focus of the everyday security experiences in the post-amnesty Niger Delta. It was interesting to listen to them and I always tried hard to bring them back to the locus of the topic at hand. This was essential for me to keep track of the topics around the interview and know when they have reached saturation point. Knowing when to nudge the respondents on proved helpful in encouraging the conversation. In other to focus the interview properly, I developed my interview guide (see appendix 2) that helped me to engage my respondents and focus the direction of the interview without imposing a rigid sequence.

However, I noticed in the first interviews a tendency to drag to different topics. As I continued further, I became more familiarised with the questions, and the interviewing got more organised. At some point, I did not have to look too much into my interview guide again. My questions also evolved following the first set of interviews after looking at the emerging patterns and narratives. For instance, where I asked about the effect of the state security practices on the people of the Niger Delta, I noticed increasingly how people talked about their response to these security practices. This brings to fore the importance of pilot-testing interview questions before administering them in the field (Crang and Cook 1995). In total, we conducted 80 semi-structured interviews. These interviews occurred in different locations from personal homes, offices, shops, and open fields, side of buildings, eateries and hotel amongst others in the study area.

In addition to these interviews, I also conducted focus group discussion (FGD). FGDs enables detailed interview within a selected group of people, allows for active interactions and discussions of a topic. FGDs provides a means for gaining meanings from "intra and inter-personal debates" (Crang and Cook 1995: 56). Individuals could spark ideas from different members of the group who share common experiences on an issue thereby enriching the interaction (Bryman 2004: 348). Using FGD helped me in identifying common trends, assumptions and differences in opinion or narratives among the members of the group on the topic of discussion. It broadened my understanding of the issues raised. For instance, I found out during a focus group session with some ex-militant youths that they do not want to be perceived as living off "easy money" from the PAP as many people thought. They expressed their desires to be out of the programme so long as they can find work, and the federal government fulfils its promise to them. Most texts on doing focus group recommends having a social group that are relatively identical with shared experiences (Crang and Cook 1995: 57). I was conscious of the power relations in the group and the tensions their narratives generated amongst the group. They would banter, argue and sometimes with a loud voice, make their points. Sometimes it was challenging moderating the groups, especially the male groups as people tended to interrupt each other, to speaking without notice or aiming to (re)empahsise a point. Although it made for an interesting group dynamic, however, I ensured no one used his or her position to undermine another respondent's views thereby promoting free exchange of ideas.

However, an important factor for organising FGDs is the selection of a location that eases organisation, transport, and logistics. We chose meeting places that were easily accessible

to all participants and accepted by them. We often used local eateries (known as 'buka'); shop premises of a participant who agreed to host us, and community halls. This created a sense of openness without anyone thinking we were a sinister group in view of the feeling of insecurity and violence in the region. However, such open places were prone to interruptions from people coming to see what we were up to, and others who would stop by to greet their friends. More so, it was easier to organise refreshment for participants from such eateries. It proved to be important and made them more relaxed. The respondents were comfortable in these venues, and it reduced the anxiety of meeting in the homes of the respondents as a group. Although, on one occasion, we met in the home of the community woman leader who insisted it was better for her to mobilise the women respondents to her house. We always started the sessions with formal introduction. I provided a paper sticker for them to write their names and fix on their shirts for easy recognition during the sessions. I would let them know what the ethics of the research are and request their consent to proceed with the sessions including the choice to audio record and in some cases take photographs.

In total, we conducted 15 FGD sessions with 126 participants amongst the various male, female, and youth groups. The number of the participants varied from 6 to 10. We conducted one FGD session for each group and three in each of the LGA except Warri South-West LGA where we only managed one FGD due to safety concerns. Warri South-West LGA is home to a prominent ex-militant commander, Government Ekpemupolo (alias "TomPolo") who is on the federal government's wanted list over alleged fraudulent activities. The rumour that the military was planning to invade Gbaramatu was hard to ignore as it could portend danger. I did not want to risk anything. From the fear of being framed as a militant to the worst. It was not hard to believe such rumours as the military already had a history of attack on the communities in the past. Besides, the JTF deployment were conspicuous already in many roadblocks and waterways in the area.

Figure 3: Newspaper headlines on the Niger Delta Security situation

Snap short of Daily Newspapers depicting the security situation in the Niger Delta at the time of this fieldwork (left) and Nigeria in general (right). Source: Left, Saturday Telegraph, 11 November 2017. Right, A cartoon by Mike Asukwo, @Asuk

Finally, I also used non-participant observation. In non-participant observation, the researcher refrains from interference in the field (Flick 2009). It is a way of watching, recording, and taking notes of events in the study area. Although some people might be agitated when they know that you are gathering information in/about their community (Howard 1997: 33). This fieldwork afforded me the proximity to observe everyday life experiences of people beyond verbal communication. I witnessed and experienced some of the state's security practices and documented them in my field diary. These experiences expanded my perspective on the impact of conflict on the people and the challenges that they face as well. Interrogations at checkpoints, raising my hands before approaching checkpoints, body searches, physical profiling of one's appearance and unwarranted questions. Even before one is searched, the security agents would make you feel like a suspected criminal based on the regular assumption that all young male in the region are militants. I remember a security personnel asking me, "I hope there is no gun in your bag?" It was embarrassing to me, but I could not even show my embarrassment facially to avoid being punished unduly, which could range from doing a 'frog jump', to the absurd like rolling in a muddy puddle.

For instance, on 22 November 2017, I observed a military show of force in Bomadi LGA. It was a long convoy of military vehicles blaring sirens and driving fiercely. Someone

told me that the military do it often to intimidate the locals in the community and neighbouring ones. Whilst I did not witness any acts of brutality in the short period they drove pass, it formed a part of my experience of the everyday security experiences of ordinary people, the prevalence of the security forces in public spaces and the intimidation the display of military force causes. Another striking incident I observed was on 30 December 2017 when I went to the head office of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in Port Harcourt, Rivers state, to interview a staff. I witnessed hundreds of people outside the vicinity. Youths and elderly people were all crowding and struggling to gain entrance to the building in search of jobs, or contracts. I waited for over 40 minutes amid shoving and pushing before I could get clearance through the help of the staff I went to interview. He later told me that some of the youths come to seek out enlistment opportunity for empowerment programmes and skill acquisition training that they carry out quarterly. It was a spectacular demonstration of the unemployment situation in the region and the pressure the youths assert on the development agencies in search of jobs. Such observation added to my understanding of the interviews and aided their triangulation.

3.7 Data Analysis

Analysing primary materials from the field is a crucial element of the study. In qualitative researching, this process involves an initial and in-depth immersion into the texts to code and find common topics, but it then also requires 'distancing' that allows for interpreting and to make meanings of the findings (Gray 2009: 493). The analysis of the interviews started in the field with the less stressful part by replaying the audio interviews and rereading my field notes to make sense of the data. In fact, this proved useful during the initial stages of the interviewing as it would allow me to identify which part of the questions were stressed more than others, the duration of the interview and to think about points that may have been omitted. Based on this reading, I adjusted subsequent interviews. This practice of going through my work for the day helped as I constantly moved between field sites and my place of accommodation. Only on one occasion (in Bomadi) did I stay in the local guesthouse in my study site. Most times, I stayed in the capital city or the next major town because of security reasons and the fact that the study sites were mainly rural areas with no decent facilities. Therefore, with the time left when I got to my room, I would read the notes taken and listen to the recordings again. I would take note of the common patterns in the convergent and divergent narratives raised on the topics discussed. Both ways helped to see the themes emerging from the interviews.

However, the main step of the analysis commenced with transcribing the data. Two research assistants supported transcribing the interviews. It offered the opportunity to have extra eyes on inputs on the data and reduce a single individual bias. In view of likely possibilities of multiple interpretations that may arise in team translation, especially in the context of the language power of the respondent, I ensured a transparent coordination of the process. the recordings were done in mainly English language but there was the infusion of local pidgin English by some respondents. We took care to note the nuances of the recordings. Where there was a long pause, where slangs were used, where recordings were faint maybe because of noise from rain or phones ringing, and the meanings the narratives conveyed. It was a complex and tiring process.

The next phase was to determine the system to use in interpreting the transcripts and deriving meanings from the narratives. How do I make sense of the pile of transcripts? There are many ways of analysing qualitative interviews depending on the skills of the researcher, the volume of data available and time to spend on the project. I utilised the NVivo 11 software package to analyse the data. NVivo is a software package for qualitative analysis. It is useful for analysing a wide variety of data irrespective of the methodology adopted to explore the research questions (Wiltshier 2011: 1). As Phillips and Lu (2018: 104) notes, "the software provides a workspace for researchers to store, manage, query and analyse unstructured data, including text, images, audio, video and other data types". I learnt how to use it from three different DCAD trainings in Durham University. Using NVivo allows "a researcher to rapidly and accurately analyse research items…" (Durham University 2016: 1). I imported the translated transcripts into the NVivo software. This was useful for generating nodes or categories from the large pool of qualitative data set, which I then coded to find the emerging themes and patterns within the data in relation to the research questions. Analysing qualitative data entails an iterative process that involves adding, merging, and categorizing the themes in the data. Thus, NVivo helped to visualize findings using word cloud and word frequency features. Words that do not fit the concepts in the research can be identified and filtered. The emerging themes are a useful "framework for organizing and reporting the researcher's analytic observations" (Clarke and Braun 2017: 297). The thematic analysis provides a categorization of the issues and for generating meanings from participants lived experiences, views, and social disposition (ibid). For instance, from my research question one: what does security mean in the everyday life of the people of Niger Delta region of Nigeria? I generated six initial themes,

which I categorized as environmental security, food security, economic security, physical security, infrastructure concerns, and social welfare.

In addition, I complemented the use of Nvivo with manual methods using paper, pen, sticky notes, and colored markers to highlight ideas generated from the coding process. This traditional way also allowed me to examine the similarities, divergent issues and tensions in the respondent's narratives and noting how they fit in the data for knowledge production. I spent a lot of time reading and re-reading the transcripts thoroughly to be able to interpret the meanings expressed in the interviews. As expected, not all the interview narratives had the same depth and meanings, and not all the conversations were useful in line with the research questions.

Writing up the thesis therefore draws on the understanding of the various interpretations made from the thematic patterns and their links to the conceptual and theoretical frames of the research questions, which focuses on the perception, experiences, and practices of security in the everyday lives of the people in post-amnesty Niger Delta. To determine the validity and reliability of the data, I used a combination of archival materials, extant literature, field notes and participant observations. I examined the interviewee's narratives against reports from independent sources on the Niger Delta. Reports from Human Rights watch, Amnesty International, International Crisis Group, Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), amongst others. It is important that the quality of the data rest on a factual account of the social phenomena examined and presents a degree of consistency when examined by other researchers (Silverman 2000: 175). Thus, the validity and reliability of the data is a reflection of the quality of the fieldwork process, and triangulation of data.

3.7.1 Positionality/Power Relations in the field

Positionality reflects how researchers situate themselves in the field vis-a-vis their research subjects and the impact that would have on the data gathering. Positionality affects all facets of the research in dealing with people. The identity of the researcher, race, language, social status, class nationality, etcetera, can give the researcher certain elements of power over the people being researched (Howard 1997: 20). Positionality could have negative effects for the fieldwork if there are unequal power relationships between the researcher and the researched. There are two common scenarios: interviewees could resort to telling the interviewer what they believe he or she wants to hear, and tendency to generate a plethora of respondent's expectations on the researcher (ibid p.21). I experienced both possibilities during

the field research. On the first part, my relative knowledge of the issues was handy in probing the interviewees farther than the common surface discussions about the challenges in the region. For instance, why some respondents are quick to mention the role of the federal government in the underdevelopment of the region in a vertical analysis. Yes, there is poverty. Yes, there is marginalization. However, I am able to ask them what contributory role the local elites are playing in the situation as well from a horizontal dimension. This helps create discussions that are more robust beyond the surface of what they think the researcher wants to hear. Secondly, respondents could assume you are in a position to help them because of how they perceive your social status. Conducting research in predominantly rural areas with high level of poverty exposes the researcher more to requests for help. I had an interesting experience on 21 November 2017. When I arrived the venue of a focus group discussion for women in Bomadi, Delta state, I heard one of the women urging the other women outside to come in that someone has come to solve their problem from Abuja[25]. The women looked at me excitedly. Although astonished, I quickly told them that I was not a government official but a researcher. She was upbeat all the same. I am not sure if she did it to rouse the women's interest, but the woman's comment signified her perception about me representing an 'elite' social class that could help them, and the desperations of a people who genuinely desire help. In another interview session, one respondent gave me his number that I should help him with a job if I have the opportunity. a reflection of the jobless situation in the region, and the thinking that I am in a privileged position to help. More so, it shows the ethical dilemma of a researcher-subject relationship.

I was also conscious of how my identity and the power relations between the interviewees and me could affect the research especially for someone coming from abroad (Durham University). There is a buzz around people from abroad. There were times I had the dilemma of revealing my UK student identity for security reasons. Other times I exploited my position as a Nigerian university teacher to reduce expectations that often go hand in hand with researchers from abroad. In addition, I noticed the welcoming expression in the faces of some of the respondents, when I told them I am also a Niger Deltan from Edo state, or with female interviewees who had young kids, when I told them that I am also a parent. These gestures created a sense of acceptance and the willingness to engage with interviewees in more cordial ways. These experiences were important for my reflexivity on the research in determining

[25] Abuja is Nigeria's federal capital city and the symbol of political power.

possible biases that could arise, and how they could affect the credibility of the interviews. For instance, where a respondent starts to speak to a personal issue because the person knows such issue might resonate with you or saying things they think you want to hear.

No doubt, a large body of literature abound on the role of the positionality of the researcher (Bourke 2014; Corlett and Mavin 2018; Merriam et al. 2001; Muhammad et al. 2015), amongst others. However, there is a growing focus on the positionality of Research Assistants as an important factor on the impact of the research process (Berman and Tyyskä 2011; Ozano and Khatri 2018). Equally significant is the gender make-up, and other cultural markers like language, ethnicity, amongst others, on the impact of the positionality of the RAs. Of the 12 RAs for this research, 9 were male and 3 females. They were mainly young people in their 30s with a mixture of college and university education. RAs are not passive. They are active members in the knowledge creation during field research. Like the researcher or lead investigator, the RA's who often double as interpreters, "bring their own assumptions and concerns to the interview and research process" (Temple and Edwards 2002: 6). As 'cultural navigators' in the field, my RAs played key roles during my interviews and focus group sessions. Their involvement in the research process gave them a small but significant influence in the local community in relation to the other participants because not everyone gets the opportunity to work as RAs. Working with both genders had useful impact for mobilising the participants. The female RAs for example, were more easily able to mobilise the women in the communities than the men would do, due to their gender similarity as females, and in some cases, the cultural peculiarity that could prevent the male RAs from entering the home of a female participant. On many occasions, the RAs offered me useful information on how best to address or manage the respondents during the interviews, and which respondent was potentially heady. With a one-day training workshop prior to the fieldwork and the experience of working with me, they could easily help to interpret my interview checklist to respondents in their local dialect and feedback what the interviewees have said in their dialect or local slang. Thus, the positionality of the RA's as indigenes, had an impact in the interviewing process. Their presence created a sense of ease for the interviewees who felt relatively comfortable communicating in their midst, knowing they could trust them as one of their own - a case of we-are-in-this-together. It limited the participants worries about the confidentiality of what they were telling me and reduced the suspicion that is often rife with a researcher who is an outsider. Being an outsider made them feel I am neutral and would not likely take sides with

the local ethnic dynamics in the communities. Sometimes, as an outsider, people would tell you things they may not tell an insider.

I recognise that relationships could develop in the field between the researcher and the interviewees. I accepted the fact that the interviewee has agency to command the narratives they tell. The interviewer and the interviewee are thus in a 'relationship' in constructing meanings from such narratives and experiences. Positionality is an important dynamic for building social and professional relationships both in the field and beyond. Although the fieldwork has since ended, I am still in touch with some of my participants through phone calls and social media. I still get update on current events in their communities including the recent killing of protesters by Policemen on Tuesday 22 May 2018, in Amassoma community, in Southern Ijaw LGA of Bayelsa state. I conducted interviews and focus group discussion there. While the police did not release the official casualty figure, my contact confirmed nine persons died in that attack. The killings later became a subject of accusations by the ruling and opposition parties in the state (Nwachukwu 2018).

Reflecting more generally on the fieldwork, I would like to emphasize some further difficulties of the field research. Respondent's scepticism was one of such. There were instances where some people failed to turn up for interview. Some others tossed me back and forth before eventually showing up. These were not only some rural people but also key informant interviewees with expert knowledge like academics and active researchers on the Niger Delta conflict. Others refused, arguing that other people have interviewed them in the past yet without meaningful improvement in the material condition of their lives and community. Hence, they are not willing to talk anymore and asked me not to disturb them. Some people were convinced that I am a government staff or an agent of an IOC who has been paid for the fieldwork. According to one of the local youths who retorted in vernacular 'Pidgeon' English, saying, "guy dem don pay you. Wey our share?" Meaning, where is their share from the money I have been paid. They were not willing to talk without financial incentives.

Health and safety was another major issue from the field. The Niger Delta region is rife with huge military presence. The 2017 military exercise codenamed 'Operation Crocodile Smile II' by the Nigerian Army involved heavy patrol on major roads and the deployment of gunboats in the waterways by the amphibious unit. The exercise created a tense atmosphere in the region. The military's quest to root out criminal elements did not spare the intimidation and harassment of civilians at checkpoints that dot everywhere. For instance, between Yenagoa

(Bayelsa state) and Port Harcourt (Rivers state) about a 2-hour drive, I counted 14 checkpoints on 30 November 2017. Whatever sense of safety the presence of the military portends was blurred by the reality of insecurity in the region. I was always conscious of my safety and those of my team. The possibility of been robbed or kidnapped is plausible in the field and even in the guesthouses I stayed. I tried to look as ordinary as possible with the way I dressed and behaved, but one can never be too certain of what can give one away especially the idea of a researcher coming from a school abroad. On December 1, 2017, I had a security scare in Port Harcourt, Rivers state. The person driving me from the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) headquarters to the hotel I lodged noticed a car had been following us suspiciously through the various route we took. I did not notice until the sudden pace of his car jolted me. He made a quick diversion through another route until we lost sight of the suspicious car. Kidnapping is commonplace in the region especially when it is an expensive looking car, and the suspicion that the occupants might be NDDC staff.

Beyond the field, I have also been ruminating on the best possible way to give back to the people of my study area who made the knowledge production possible. There has been a debate about the social relations of fieldwork in recent times, where researchers should not only 'exploit' knowledge of research subjects but give back to them (Gupta and Kelly 2014). Whilst I decide how best to go about it, I am also hoping the publication of articles from the thesis, and as a book can be read by all and interface with their everyday security realities. Thus, giving a voice to their social reality in the region. I would try to collaborate with local NGOs in the communities and make a presentation of my findings. That way, literate members of the communities can take part alongside my research assistants, gatekeepers and the entire people that facilitated the fieldwork as a way of giving back. In addition, as an academic and researcher, I would continue to interface with the people of the region for further research and collaborations.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined in detail the methodology for this research. It began by exploring the interpretivist philosophical approach to the research. It explored the structuring of the research from the process of selecting fieldwork location, research partners and participants, the ethical considerations for the fieldwork process including gaining informed consents. The chapter also underscored the qualitative methods of enquiry that entailed semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and the researcher's observations. This allowed

me to explore the everyday perceptions of security, the lived experience of security practices, and the local narratives of sustainable peacebuilding in post-amnesty Niger Delta.

The method of enquiry has implications for the data and the way the study evolved. With the open-ended nature of the qualitative methods, the fieldwork provided a good opportunity for me to engage deeply with the actors and social groups in the region who have been either victims or agents of militancy and/or victims of the state security practices in the militarized environment. It provided firsthand opportunity to hear and directly share the experiences of the local people in post-amnesty Niger Delta, and to gain knowledge about the dynamics of security in their everyday life. Lastly, the chapter highlighted the process of interpreting the data and making meaning of them, including the researcher's position and identity in the field. The outcome of this field research is the culmination of the four empirical chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 that arose from the methods of enquiry utilized in the research.

The next chapter explores the context of the conflict in the Niger Delta, the evolution of the rentier character of the Nigerian state and the resource curse dynamics for the political economy and insecurity of the region.

CHAPTER 4

OIL AND THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT IN THE NIGER DELTA

Several factors and actors have contributed to the crises in the Niger Delta region over the last three decades with debilitating consequences for Nigeria's rentier political economy, the region and beyond. This chapter explores how the Nigerian state has evolved as a rentier state which exhibits all the attributes of a resource curse. It examines the context and the intersecting dynamics of key issues that have shaped the nature and extent of the conflict that necessitated the amnesty programme. It analyses the fundamental issues that precipitated the conflict, such as the political, socioeconomic, environmental, and (in)security related concerns which serve as grievances and conflict triggers in the Niger Delta. Embedded in these concerns are the underlying roles of the State, the oil companies, and the oil-host communities. The actions (and inactions) of these key actors led to the youth[26] restiveness and militant onslaught against oil production activities, and shaped insecurity in the region.

The first part examines the nature of Nigeria's political and economic development, and how the state appropriates the oil resources. It looks at the discovery and exploitation of oil by the Nigerian state and its joint venture partners- the IOCs. This part also analyses the impact of the state and IOCs actions on the Niger Delta economic (under)development, the traditional social structures, and the environment. The nature and structures of the state are important in understanding why and how it has securitised the Niger Delta and the oil resources. The second part explores the response of the oil-host communities to the perceived grievances against the state and IOCs. It analyses the actions of local groups and their claim of underdevelopment of the region by the government and IOCs in the region. It also looks at the roles which interest groups have played in undermining the peace, security, and underdevelopment of the region and ultimately, the recourse to armed resistance. The last part presents the concluding synthesis of the chapter.

[26] For this research, youth(s) will include those within 18 and 35 years, which reflects the definition of youth by the African Youth Charter of the African Union. Although, the notion of 'youths' is a lot more fluid as some able-bodied adults could also 'masquerade' as youths depending on the issues and value at stake.

Understanding the nature and dynamics of the conflict in the Niger Delta, and how interlinked the causal factors of the conflict are in relation to oil resources, is crucial for whatever peacebuilding measures that are put in place, including the current Presidential Amnesty programme (PAP). It also reveals why local communities took to active resistance and how armed youth militancy became synonymous with the resistance. However, to get a grasp of the operational structure of Nigeria's rentier politics, it is important to look at the nature of the Nigerian state and the dynamics of its formation. This helps to show the way Nigerian political elites utilise the state, their ethnic identity, and the rent-seeking culture it breeds in the appropriation of oil wealth. All of these draws the ire of the marginalised people who 'own' the natural resources, and their struggle for equitable distribution of wealth and development. Thus, it is important to understand the nature of the Nigerian state, to contextualise conflict causes and state actions, and to assess its consequences.

4.1 The Political Nature of the Nigerian State

Nigeria, like most African states, is a colonial creation which emerged from the Berlin conference of 1884/85 which heralded the scramble for Africa by European powers. Nigeria was colonised by Britain. The British imperial regime "forcibly lumped together in a single political entity hitherto autonomous empires and kingdoms with diverse political histories (Oarhe 2013: 112). In 1914[27] the colonial Governor-General, Lord Frederick Lugard brought the Northern and Southern Protectorates under the joint political control of colonial Nigeria. The British colonial epoch in Nigeria witnessed the rule of force in its local administration of the indigenous ethnic nationalities. Britain adopted the indirect rule system which operated using existing local traditional rulers in the three dominant regions of the East, West and North that made up Nigeria's geopolitical institutions in the colonial era. The Hausa/Fulani ethnic nationality dominated the Northern region; the Ibos the Eastern region while the Yorubas were foremost in the old Western region. Geographically, the Eastern and Western regions constituted the Southern part of Nigeria. The people of the South are predominantly Christians while the North is largely Muslim (Omeje 2006b: 25).

The indirect rule system was successful in the North which was used to the rule of Emirs. It was claimed that the colonial administration emphasised to the Northerners that the system of indirect rule upheld the practices of their forebears from ancient times (Maduegbuna 2015: 85). This close relationship between the North and Britain was to play a part in the

[27] Many Nigerians believe this fusion of two culturally and religiously diverse parts of Nigeria marked a 'forced marriage' that has continued to define the post-colonial political challenges in Nigeria.

handover of power to a Northerner at independence in 1960. The West had a partial success with indirect rule as it had a system of 'checks and balances' on their Obas (kings) that predated the colonial epoch. The Obas did not have absolute authority like the Northern Emirs. The West also had more educated people who were opposed to the indirect rule system of British imperialism. In the Eastern part of Nigeria, the indirect rule system was a disaster. The Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria had a decentralised pre-colonial political and cultural system - they were not used to been governed by any absolute leader. Instead, they had a system of leadership by family heads. However, the colonial masters employed Warrant Chiefs[28] (WCs) to administer the region including the collection of taxes. The high handedness of the WCs in local administration especially with taxation regime culminated in events which led to their attack by some women's groups. This led to the now famous Aba women's riot of 1929[29].

The consequence of the colonial administration was that it fostered a structure of 'divide and rule', and created inter regional rivalry, mutual suspicion, and a weak sense of nationalism between the peoples of the regions of Nigeria, especially between the North and the South. In the seminal work of Okwudiba Nnoli on *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, he contended that:

> The British colonial administration encouraged communal sentiments amongst Nigerians. It seized every available opportunity to spread the myth and propaganda that they were separated from one another by great distance, by differences of history and tradition, and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers" (Nnoli 1978: 112).

The often quoted words of the former Premier of Western Nigeria, Chief Obafemi Awolowo capture the disunity, distrust and divisiveness which the colonial merger of ethnic nationalities had created. According to him:

> Nigeria is not a nation: it is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English' or 'Welsh' or 'French'; the word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria and those who do not (Awolowo 1947: 47-48).

This is significant as it raises the question of the artificiality of Nigeria's political unit. The dynamism of Nigeria's multi-ethnic nature with over 250 ethnic nationalities is exemplified by the allegiance of many Nigerians first to their ethnic nationalities rather than the country. The

[28] The Warrant Chiefs replaced the autonomous (self-governing) leadership system by family heads in the Eastern Nigeria because the Igbos did not have a centralised leadership structure like the North and Western parts of the country.

[29] See Adiele Eberechukwu Afigbo, *The Warrant Chief: Indirect Rule in Southeatern Nigeria, 1891-1929* (London: Longman, 1972).

reality of the political conundrum is the existence of centrifugal forces which pull people apart without a negotiated political system that accommodated ethnic diversity and interests. The amalgamation also birthed the basis of ethnic-centred politics and neopatrimonialism which cascaded from the colonial era into the post-colonial politics of Nigeria. The system of indirect rule created seeds of division between the peoples of the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria (Maduegbuna 2015: 85). Political leadership became an opportunity to front an ethnic/regional centred development mind-set and an opportunity for state capture of resources- oil wealth. As Abrahamsen (2013: 4) argued, "Political competition can increase the temptation towards ethnic mobilization". In most cases, this has been the case in Nigeria. The "regional and ethnic competitions for oil revenues have contributed to Nigeria's political system of institutionalized patronage" (Jensen and Wantchekon 2004: 819)**.** The effect is the successive cries of marginalization and neglect from those regions or ethnic nationalities who have not had a chance at political power in Nigeria (see table 1 below) the way the three major ethnic groups have had. Therein lies the dilemma of the Niger Delta in this instance, and other smaller ethnic minority groups.

Table 1: Profile of Political Leadership in Nigeria.

Period of rule	**Head of State / Government**	**Type of Government**	**Ethnic Origin**	**How the rule Ended**
1960-1966	Tafawa Balewa	Civilian	Hausa (North)	Attempted Coup/Assassination
1966	Aguiyi Ironsi	Military	Ibo (East)	Coup/ Assassination
1966-1975	Yakubu Gowon	Military	Angas/Middle Belt (North)	Coup
1975-1976	Murtala Muhammad	Military	Hausa (North)	Attempted Coup/Assassination
1976-1979	Olusegun Obasanjo	Military	Yoruba (West)	Elections
1979-1983	Shehu Shagari	Civilian	Fulani (Norh)	Coup
1984-1985	Muhammad Buhari	Military	Fulani (North)	Coup
1985-1993	Ibrahim Babangida	Military	Nupe (North)	Election, results nullified in June1993, stepped down in August 1993.
1993 (August-November)	Ernest Shonekan	Civilian	Yoruba (West)	Head of interim govt. Coup.
1993-1998	Sanni Abacha	Military	Kanuri (North)	Presumed heart attack (death).

1998- 1999	Abdulsalami Abubakar	Military	Gwari (Norh)	Elections
1999-2007	Olusegun Obasanjo	Civilian	Yoruba (West)	Elections
2007-2010	Umaru Yar'Adua	Civilian	Fulani (North)	Illness (death).
2010- 2015	Goodluck Jonathan	Civilian	Ijaw (South-South)	Election
2015-	Muhammadu Buhari	Civilian	Fulani (North)	

Source: Adapted from Idemudia and Ite (2006: 396).

The table above shows that Nigeria has had more heads of state/government from the Northern region of the country than elsewhere. Military regimes more than civilian ones have governed it. Also significant is that the predominance of the political leaders from the Northern part of the country, gave the North an enormous edge in terms of numbers and positions in the military. This dominance of the Northerners in the military was to play a significant part in the annulment of the 12 June 1993 presidential election. The victory of the 'winner', Chief Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba businessman from the South West "was not acceptable to the Northern-dominated military establishment" (Omeje 2006b: 27). To placate the South-West Yoruba ethnic group and pro-democracy activists following the furore that met with the annulment, Gen Babangida stepped aside as president and inaugurated an Interim National Government (ING) headed by a Yoruba man, Ernest Shonekan in August 1993. Another Fulani man from the North, Gen Abacha quickly removed Shonekan in a palace coup on November 17, 1993.

In addition, embedded in the North-South divide in Nigeria is the role of religion, as Islam dominates the former while the latter is predominantly Christian, although data on religion and ethnicity is sketchy and subject to conjecture. This is because the last Nigeria official Census exercise in 2006 did not include religion and ethnicity. Some critics argued that it was a deliberate ploy by the state to deprive Nigerians from knowing the largest ethnic and religious group in Nigeria. Other thought it was a good idea not to give any of the dominant religions the psychological edge of superiority, considering that the twin factors of ethnicity and religion have often been a causal factor for many violent conflicts in Nigeria[30].

[30] For some literature on the Religious and ethnic violence in Nigeria, see Richard Burgess and Danny Mccain, 'Christianity and the Challenge of Religious Violence in Northern Nigeria', in Allen D. Hertze and Timothy Samuel Shah (eds.), *Christianity and Freedom. Volume Ii: Contemporary Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 306-37. Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies* (Rochester, N.Y: University of Rochester Press, 2001). Jude Okafor, Vincent Okeke, and Ernest Aniche, 'Power

The foregoing narrative is interesting in the context of the Niger Delta conflict, as the dominance of Nigeria's political leadership by people from the major ethnic tribes especially from the North, is perceived to skew development and public policy against the region that produces oil, the life blood of the country. Considering the ethicised and patron-client based governance, not been in control at the centre means not only losing-out on development projects and possible neglect, but also losing-out on political appointments. Knowing this trend, the framers of the post-1966 Nigeria constitutions (following the harrowing experience of the Nigerian civil war), and the 1999 constitution (as amended) implanted the 'federal character principle'. According to section14 (3) of the 1999 Nigerian constitution, the federal character principle spells out explicitly that:

> The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 Constitution).

The political 'operators' have often circumvented this principle to their advantage. The current government at the centre since 2015 has been criticised for its open partiality to the South. A recent editorial by The Guardian (2019) captioned "a federation nurtured by partiality", highlighted the lopsided appointments of the government that "portrays the president as only a president of a section of the country". This is because of the government's neopatrimonialism which evolved from the way the state has been governed. The Guardian (2019) further observed that "the President has carried on in a cavalier manner with consistence petulance previously displayed by yet again, swamping the federal bureaucracy and the presidency with family members and cronies without regards for competence, public opinion and sense of justice". Ozekhome (2018) noted that "about 16 out of the 17 key security appointees" are from the President's part of the country". This creates the fear of marginalization by other ethnic groups and gives the government the latitude to use the security agencies to suppress other ethnic groups with dissenting opinions from that of the federal government. It also means that such key security apparatus of the country could hold a meeting and decide to speak only one language, Hausa in a country with "over 250 ethnic and language groups" (Omeje 2006b: 25).

Struggle, Political Contest and Ethno-Religious Violence in Nigeria', *Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Political Science (NAJOPS),* 3/1 (2012), 74-87.

Such pro-North security appointments not only lacks diversity, it gives critics room to suspect a 'northern agenda' instead of a pan-Nigerian agenda (Oketola et al. 2016). It is what leads to the cry of marginalization by other regions and ethnic groups in the country, not least the Niger Delta.

The Niger Delta region rued such marginalization when Mr Yusuf Magaji Bichi, a Northerner, replaced Mr Matthew Seiyefa, a minority Niger Deltan, as the Director-General of the Department of State Services (DSS) while in acting service. While the region had not yet come to terms with the removal of Seiyefa from office, the Chief Justice of the Nigeria, Justice Walter Onoghen who is from the Niger Delta was sacked following allegations bordering on 'corrupt practices'. Many critics from the South, and expectedly so, believe it was a move to pave way for a malleable Chief Justice in favour of the incumbent government in view of the 2019 general elections. Interestingly, Justice Onoghen was replaced by another Chief Justice from Northern Nigeria, a situation that exacerbates the feeling of marginalization of the Niger Delta.

Conversely, the incursion of the military in Nigerian politics as opposed to civilian regimes under which many of the draconian policies against the Niger Delta, including the 1978 Land Use Decree (later, an Act of parliament) was passed, marked a steady period of devastation for the region in particular and the country at large. The Land Use Act took away the right of ownership of ancestral lands from families and community heads passing it to the state government with the guise of preventing impediments to development by the state. However, the policy was viewed by the people of the Niger Delta as a way of denying them access to their lands and the resources therein. The act changed the practice of land tenure system and deprived family heads and community chiefs of the custodial and adjudicatory roles in land related matters (Ako 2009: 297). According to Omeje (2006b: 27), the military era was characterised by:

> human rights repression, militarization of society and political landscape, abuse of the rule of law, gross indiscipline, arbitrary proliferation of subnational states and local government areas, aggravation of ethnic politics, destruction of the productive sectors of the economy and monumental corruption.

Interestingly, many of the above attributes continue to plague the Niger Delta despite the return to civilian rule since 1999. Whilst the nascent civilian rule was expected to yield the dividends of democracy including respect for fundamental human rights, it is proving difficult to dispense with the military mentality in Nigeria's leadership and as such, injustice, abuse and violence continues (Amnesty International 2005). As Jensen and Wantchekon (2004: 819) observed, the

political regime in the post military era "has become increasingly centralized and oppressive". Their actions and policies continue to aggravate the material conditions of the people of the oil-rich region and serves as a trigger for the oil-induced violence the region has witnessed in post-military regimes (Ako 2009; Ikporukpo 2004; Owolabi and Okwechime 2007).

The importance of the above dynamics shows the interface between politics and oil wealth structures governance and resource (re)distribution in the country. The grievance over the perceived injustice, marginalization and neglect from the oil wealth distribution is at the heart of the conflict in the Niger Delta.

4.2 Oil and the Nigerian Rentier Economy

Oil is undoubtedly the biggest contributor to Nigeria's wealth and development (Owolabi and Okwechime 2007: 2). The path to Nigeria's oil stardom dates back to 1908 when the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation started exploration activities for oil in the Araromi area of Western Nigeria. Their maiden efforts to search for crude ended swiftly following the start of World War 1 (Ebegbulem et al. 2013: 280). After the war, the Royal Dutch/Shell Group founded Shell D'Arcy[31] in 1936 and by 1938, was granted an exploration license by the colonial government covering the whole of Nigeria. In 1956, Shell successfully discovered oil in Oloibiri, Bayelsa state in the heart of the Niger Delta (the same year it changed its name to Shell BP), started production of crude oil in 1957 and made its first oil exports in 1958. This became the springboard for many other discoveries of oil in the Niger Delta in the 1960s (Omeje 2006b: 73). As the foremost oil multinational in Nigeria, Shell has gained a large share of the oil sector. For instance, as of April 1997, Shell production capacity was estimated at over 42 percent of the Nigerian oil production (J. G. Frynas 1998: 457), demonstrating Shell's dominant role in the Nigerian oil sector. Apart from Shell, the Niger Delta hosts several other IOCs with Nigerian subsidiaries including Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL), Exxon Mobil, Total, Eni-Agip, and Texaco, and Pan Ocean, as well as other Local Oil Companies (LOCs). The production technology and the huge capital investment required in the oil industry gives the IOCs leverage over the LOCs (Ojakorotu 2006: 4). This underlies the state's huge reliance on the IOCs through joint ventures with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) for the oil wealth needed to run the country, an alliance perceived by some critics as "a strategic means of denying the people and the Niger Delta states the dividends of the resource that belongs to them" (ibid). The oil production process creates a network of oil infrastructure and pipelines that criss-cross

[31] Shell D'Arcy later became Shell BP and thereafter, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC). See The History of Shell in Nigeria | Shell Nigeria.

the landscape of the Niger Delta, farmlands, swamps, and creeks, and reduces the arable space available for agricultural purposes which has been impacted by the pollution associated with oil production.

Nigeria's reliance on oil proceeds hinges its political economy within the rentier state system (Adibe et al. 2018: 345) discussed in chapter two. Nigeria's oil wealth has risen steadily, and oil has become the main source of revenues. Over 90 percent of Nigeria's overall export and 80 percent of the federal government income comes from the petroleum sector (Moffat and Lindén 1995: 531). Oil revenues, therefore, determines the state's ability to deliver public goods. Disruptions to the oil production process impairs the financial capacity of the state. The state has stopped at nothing to ensure its grip on the oil assets in the Niger Delta. It fought a bitter civil war with the secessionist Biafra Republic from 1967-1970, which was about the control of the oil-rich Niger Delta that was part of the Biafra acclaimed territory (Ross 2012: 171) as much as it was for keeping Nigeria one united country. It is in that sense that the conflict in the Niger Delta could be referred to as a 'rentier conflict'. The actors in rentier conflicts, irrespective of the ethnic or religious dynamics are often motivated by the prospect of controlling the 'exceptional gains' from oil proceeds (Kaldor et al. 2007: 3). According to some industry valuations,

> In 2004 alone the country scooped a whopping $25 billion in direct revenue and a windfall of $816 million from the sale of oil and gas. Revenue for 2005 was estimated to be around $50 billion by the last quarter. It is estimated that between 1965 and 2000 the federal government earned US$ 350 billion in oil revenue from the Niger Delta … In 2001, total revenue from on-shore oil production was equivalent to nearly US$2 billion in current exchange values. In the same year, the 13% revenue allocation to the oil-producing states was US$800 million up from the 2000 allocation amount of US$ 500 million (Nwonwu 2010: 103).

The Nigerian exchequer now takes in over $1.5 billion in oil revenues every week" (Watts and Ibaba 2011: 2). Likewise, a recent report by Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) revealed that Africa's highest crude oil exporter, "Nigeria earned $206bn from oil in five years". It earned $41.1, $27.2, $37.9, $54.5, and $45.1 billion in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively. The OPEC's 2020 Annual Statistical Bulletin noted that Nigeria's revenue for 2019 in particular makes it the fifth highest oil-revenue earner in the world after Saudi Arabia ($202.37bn), Iraq ($80.03bn), Kuwait ($52.43bn), and United Arab Emirates ($49.64bn) respectively (Asu 2020). However, such revenue estimates are subject to prevailing international and local dynamics such as global oil glut, conflict in the Middle East or armed militancy in the Niger Delta which disrupts oil production. For instance, the revenue posted for Nigeria in 2016 is interesting. Nigeria's lowest figure of $27.2 billion in 2016 rightly reflects

the armed attacks by the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) militant groups on major oil infrastructure that crippled oil production and caused oil companies to declare force majeure[32]. The year marked the biggest resurgence of oil militancy post-amnesty[33]. Interestingly too, of all the top-five countries mentioned, apart from war-torn Iraq, Nigeria is the least developed and poorly governed.

However, despite Nigeria's global oil profile, the proceeds from oil rent so far have done little for the development of the of Niger Delta where the oil comes from. The oil proceeds create the jostle for competition for the control of the federal government by the political elites of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, whilst minorities like the Niger Delta have to fight for a greater share of the oil proceeds from their soil through acts of protests and violent resistance to the state. This situation has fuelled the protracted conflict in the region. The Niger Delta reflects a paradox of plenty where the proceeds from its extractive economy have failed to engender development and a stable polity for the benefit of the local people. According to a UNDP Niger Delta Development Report, "oil wealth enriches Nigeria as a country, but it has not alleviated the grinding poverty, neglect and deprivation in the region that produces it" (UNDP 2006: 37). Today, a mention of the Niger Delta brings to mind the preponderance of oil as well as its multiple effects on the conflict in the region.

As Uexkull and Pettersson (2018: 954) observed, "one factor commonly acknowledged to shape the causes, dynamics and consequences of armed conflict is the issue over which the involved parties fight". At the heart of the conflict in the Niger Delta is the presence of oil (C. G. Emuedo 2015: 172; Obi 2009: 105; Omeje 2006b: 54). Whether it is the communities in battle with the IOCs over 'land rights or compensations for environmental damage', communities confronting the government over 'access to oil wealth or resource control', or the communities at war with themselves over 'claims to ownership of areas where oil facilities and accompanied benefits are sited' (Idemudia and Ite 2006: 391). Other issues like chieftaincy tussles over who heads a community in the Niger Delta, have been violently fought over in recent years because of the enormous benefits that comes with such positions due to oil proceeds (HRW 2005: 7). Although countries might have different trajectories of oil resource

[32] Force majeure are legal protection on oil companies who for circumstances beyond their control (such as oil pipeline vandalism) are unable to meet up with their production quota. It frees them from liabilities to their joint venture partners (in the case of the Niger Delta, the Nigerian state).

[33] See Appendix 2 for the researcher's compilation of the major attacks on oil infrastructure by Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) since 2016.

conflicts, there seem to be a common thread that runs across the causative factors. In his book, *Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa: The tragedy of Endowment*, Abiodun Alao catalogued some of the factors linking oil as the cause of conflict in Africa. These includes 'controversies over ownership of oil-bearing sites', 'Disagreements over management of proceeds', 'complications arising from the process of exploration', 'Insensitivity to indigenous practices of culture and religion', 'secessionist desires by oil rich provinces', and 'crisis emanating from domestic petroleum needs' (Alao 2007: 169-80). These factors are attributable to Nigeria and the conflict conundrum in the Niger Delta.

4.3 Oil Revenue Allocation and Grievance in the Niger Delta

The worst challenges to the resource conflict, according to (Alao 2007: 169) are "all connected to the governing of the structures managing the resource". The management of the oil proceeds for the development of the Niger Delta is often a key factor in the conflict between the federal government and the oil host-communities of the region. Whether or not there will be conflict is often dependent on how the proceed is perceived to have been rightly shared within agreed terms. The dominance of the federal government by the ethnic-centred political leaders from the major ethnic groups is believed to have deprived the Niger Delta of the needed resources for development, a situation that has motivated the conflict in the region. Prior to Nigeria's independence in 1960 and shortly after, the principle of derivation guided the sharing formula for oil mineral resources. This principle of derivation was a key component of Nigeria's fiscal federalism. It gave certain privileges to the existing regions based on their contribution to the revenue of the country from the natural resources exploited there, and determined the percentages from the revenue collected by the federal government that should accrue to the state of origin. Nigeria's national revenue is warehoused in a single pool referred to as the Federation Account from where disbursements are made to the federal, state and local governments that make up the Nigerian federation (Ibaba 2017: 14). The three regions post-independence, the Western, Eastern and Northern regions enjoyed a fifty percent derivation from agricultural produce that was the mainstay of the economy. Section 140 of the 1963 Constitution included the sharing formula where fifty percent of royalties and mining rents from the regions (now states) were accruable to them (Briggs 2014: 17).

The overthrow of the first-republic civilian government by the military in 1966 created a wave of resource allocation reviews. The successive military administrations abandoned the fifty percent revenue derivation principle in a time when Nigeria was globally positioning itself as a 'petro-state'. The 20,000 barrels per day production at independence in 1960 "peaked at

two million barrels in the mid-1970s" (Nwajiaku-Dahou 2012: 297). In the guise of a post-war reconstruction after the civil war (1967-1970), the military regime under Decree No.13 (1970) allocated most of the revenue collected to itself. As Ahmad and Singh (2003: 10) noted, the derivation principle was put aside and regional allocation was based on need, measured by population and a lump sum transfer to cover the fixed costs of running an administration". It has been argued that the coincidence with which the first reduction of the derivation principle was carried out when oil had become the lifeblood of Nigerian economy in 1970, reflects a clear example of "the deliberate steps to transfer wealth out of the Niger Delta" (Ibaba 2017: 14). The action creates the perception amongst the people of being marginalised and dispossessed of their natural resources whilst privileging the economic interest of the dominant ethnic groups in power (Owolabi and Okwechime 2007: 28). Similarly, Nwajiaku-Dahou (2012: 297-98) contends that the coalition of military and bureaucratic elites which administered the country post-civil war, "wanted a centralising state to use revenue from oil producing states to propel development, notably in non-oil producing states, fuelled by massive expansion in public spending". Deliberately starving the Niger Delta of its share of oil wealth whilst developing other parts of the country was a recipe for conflict. The military led federal government continued with a series of fiscal decrees that angered the oil-producing Niger Delta. The federal government under Decree No. 9 of 1971 allocated to itself "all offshore rents and royalties" (Ahmad and Singh 2003: 10). Decree No. 6 (1975) sustained the federal government's stranglehold on the derivation principle with the exception of 20 percent 'onshore mining rents and royalties' allotted to the states.

Consequently, the derivation principle suffered successive downward cuts from the staggering 50 percent at independence to 45 percent in 1969, 20 percent in 1975, 1.5 percent in 1982 and a lowly 1 percent in 1990. It took several protests from the Niger Delta region before it was increased to 3 percent in 1992. The 1995 Constitutional Conference recommended an increment that was ratified in the 1999 Nigerian constitution to, not less than 13 percent, which is the current rate (Akinola and Adesopo 2011: 252; Etekpe 2007b: 6; Ibaba 2017: 14). Table 2 below shows the proceeds from oil revenue and the subsequent cuts by the successive federal government.

Table 2: Federal and State shares of Petroleum Proceeds (Derivation Principle)

Years	Producing state (percent)	Distributable Pool amount or Federation Account (percent)
1960-67	50	50
1967-69	50	50
1969-71	45	55
1971-75	45 minus offshore proceeds	55 plus offshore proceeds
1975-79	20 minus offshore proceeds	80 plus offshore proceeds
1979-81	-	100
1982-92-	1.5	98.5
1992-99	3	97
1999-	13	87

Source: UNDP 2006:15

It is interesting to note that all the cuts in the derivation principle happened under the political leadership of presidents from the Northern part of Nigeria. This fuel the suspicion of a deliberate effort to deny the Niger Delta the oil wealth it needs for development as a minority ethnic region in favour of the politically dominant Northern region that contributes nothing to Nigeria's oil wealth (see table 3 and 4). Further agitations for an upward review of the revenue formula have been met with stiff resistance by other parts of the country, especially the North. During the 2005 National Political Reforms Conference (NPRC), the Niger Delta delegates clamoured for an upward review to at least 25 percent of the total oil revenue (Etekpe 2007a: 47). The delegates from other regions spearheaded by those from Northern Nigeria under the aegis of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) rejected the request. Instead, they favoured what the Southern delegates perceived as a derisive unofficial offer of 17 percent that the government did not acquiesce to (Osumah 2013: 257).

The 17 percent was never entertained in the Northern majority led national Assembly for it to become an act of parliament- a law. Many Niger Deltans are of the view that the derivation principle is inadequate for the development of the region considering the disruption that oil production has had on the traditional agricultural practices, and the devastation on the environment. The livelihoods of many families have been impacted by the oil industry. It is perceived as an injustice for the people of the Niger Delta whose region is the 'golden goose' that lays the 'golden egg' for the economic survival of Nigeria. Even more embarrassing to the region, is the way it has been viewed as a mere tokenism or as an act of benevolence by the

ruling elites of the Nigerian state to the Niger Delta people. This explains the sense of relative deprivation experienced by the people of the region, which created the sentiments for militancy against the state's interest in the region. This was particularly so, as the national revenue sharing formula (besides the derivation principle), already favours the federal government who gets 52.68 percent, the states 26.72 percent while the local government areas receive a paltry 20.60 percent (Salako 2017). Accruals from the derivation principle are therefore supposed to cushion the effect of the oil exploration challenges and aid the development of the region. However, the manner in which the successive cuts were done was a recipe for conflict.

Consequently, the existing revenue sharing formula in Nigeria creates a "large vertical imbalance in favour of the centre which then redistributes to lower levels of government" (Ahmad and Singh 2003: 14). It is common to find such imbalances in large federations that handle resource redistribution functions for their constituent units. In countries like Australia, "roughly 80 percent of total revenues initially go to the centre. The surplus accumulated endow the centre with a stabilization function, as well as an equalization role" (Ahmad and Singh 2003: 14). Although this system of federalism allows the centre more latitude to administer resources on behalf of the federating units, a lot rests on the nature of political leadership and commitments to development of the country. In Nigeria, the character of political leadership in the distribution of oil wealth continues to fuel crisis in the oil-producing region who question the skewed revenue distribution.

Table 3: Contributions of Zones to Federation Account (April 2005).

North	**Percentage (%)**
North-East	0.00%
North-West	0.00%
North-Central	0.00%
Total	0.00%
South-East	
Abia state	1.31%
Imo state	1.44 %
Total	2.75%
South-West	
Ondo state	3.97%
Total	3.97%
South-South	
Akwa Ibom state	16.93%
Bayelsa state	23.42%
Cross Rivers state	1.53%

Delta state	20.1%
Edo state	0.084%
Rivers state	29.58%
Total	91.64%

Source: Briggs (2014:6)

Table 4: Federal Allocation to Local Government Areas (LGAs) per Zone (April 2013).

Zones	**Allocation**
North-West	34,269,9818.8
North-East	21,387,387.1
North-Central	23,250,88.3
Total (North)	**78,908,252.6 (54.9%)**
South-South	21,684502.2
South-East	16,404,741.38
South-West	26,856,234.4
Total (South)	**64,945,477.98 (45.1%)**

Table 3 above shows the contribution of the geopolitical zones to the federation account from oil resource proceeds. The three Northern zones have zero percent contribution from oil to the national revenue pool. Table 4 shows the percentage of federal revenue that accrues to the local government areas in the six geopolitical zones of the country. Whereas the North has no oil wealth to contribute to the national purse, they get a larger share of the revenue allocation from oil proceeds. This leads to a perception of predation by a part of the country that contributes nothing yet receives a greater percentage of the oil wealth for their development has fuelled violent sentiments in the Niger Delta.

However, it is important to stress that the grievances arising from "the ethnicity-based domination or horizontal inequality" (Ibaba 2017: 18) that characterizes the political space in Nigeria, does not adequately explain all the different conflict situation in the Niger Delta. It does not for example explain the internal contradictions like local elite capture of the region's

resources, corruption within state governments in the region, inter and intra-community clashes, political violence within the region, amongst others[34].

4.4 The role of Socioeconomic Deprivation in the Niger Delta conflict

Although the Niger Delta is the resource richest part of Nigeria with abundant oil and gas resources, it remains one of the poorest and underdeveloped regions of the country. Oil industry activities have undermined other economic endeavours especially agricultural production that provided the dominant source of livelihoods for the people. Many people in the Delta engage in fishing as a means of livelihood mostly at a subsistence level which is an important part of their everyday life both as a source of revenue and as a key source of animal protein in their local diets. Despite the economic activities from fishing and other forms of agricultural production, many of the local people of the region remain poor. The high cost of everyday commodities such as foodstuff, clothing, amongst others, erodes the purchasing power of the local people thereby making the poverty situation endemic in the region than in other parts of the country (UNDP 2006: 35). The inability to meet basic economic need is further compounded by the lack of quality infrastructures for water, transport, housing, electricity, and education. These services are neglected by the government and most times where provided, are insufficient and poorly maintained. During my field trip in the region, I saw people bathing, washing their clothes and kitchen utensils in a river close to where they also defecate in a wooden/zinc platform because there is no portable water running in their homes (see figure 2). Scenes like that constantly remind the people of their poverty, the sense of neglect, and a cause of frustration in their daily life. Such experience of neglect and mistreatment by the state and the IOCs, served as a precursor for violent resistance against them. According to Obi (2009: 111), "where there is a sense of inequality in access to power and resources, the disadvantaged groups are likely to be mobilized to challenge an unsatisfactory status quo".

The inability of the Nigerian state to manage its oil rent has further weakened state institutions and governance at all levels. The capacity to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the citizens remain bleak and the incidence of poverty continues to increase. As Watts (2009: 17) asserted, "the country has become a perfect storm of waste, corruption, venality and missed opportunity". A projection by the Brookings Institution in June 2018 indicated that Nigeria has

[34] For a reference on the types of violent conflicts in the Niger Delta, see page 6 of Tarila Marclint Ebiede, 'Beyond the Rebellion: Alternative Narratives of Violent Conflicts and the Implications for Peacebuilding in the Niger Delta', *African PeaceBuilding Network,* APN Working Papers/No. 5 (2016), 1-22.

overtaken India as the ‘poverty capital of the world’ with 86.9 million living in extreme poverty. On 13 February 2019, the World Poverty Clock, a Vienna-based World data laboratory declared that 91.16 million Nigerians are poor and living on less than 1 US dollar a day (Okogba 2019). Although the modalities for the projections were not indicated, it attests to the global profile of the challenge of poverty in Nigeria despite being an oil rich country.

The situation of poverty is worse in the Niger Delta. According to a report from “a government survey in 1996, the Delta’s poverty rate was 58.2 percent, the highest in the country; literacy rates, access to health services, and access to safe water were exceptionally low” (Ross 2012: 171). As Watts (2009: 18) notes, “by almost any measure of social achievement, the core producing oil states are a calamity”. The report above reflects the paradox of suffering amid plenty, a situation that has contributed to the level of poverty in the region. With many poor and unemployed people, it became a rallying motif for protests against the state and a prime factor in the ensuing criminal violence and insecurity in the region. In other words, the huge proceeds from oil have scarcely benefited the local people, thereby leading to a feeling of frustration and protests. Perhaps, the poster child of such poverty and deprivation that oil exploration has brought upon the people of the region is Oloibiri, the town where the first oil well was drilled in the Niger Delta region.

Figure 4: Oloibiri - first oil production site in the Niger Delta region

Researcher's visit to the first oil production site in the Niger Delta region- Oloibiri, Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa state. 2 December 2017. In petroleum industry parlance, this wellhead is also referred to as 'Christmas Tree'.

Ironically, the site above was renovated by the Nigerian Army 16 Brigade Battalion, during its 'Operation Crocodile Smile' II military exercise in 2017. Previous attempts to develop the site and preserve its history had failed. The government's plan to set up the 'Oloibiri Oil and Gas Research Institute', which will house a museum as tribute to Oloibiri and the memory of oil there, ended at the foundation stone laying ceremony in 2001 (Watts and Ibaba 2011: 3). It paints a depressing picture of neglect. Watts and Ibaba (2011: 3) vividly depict their material condition despite the over 20 years of oil exploration there:

> In the 1960s, the town had a population of 10,000; it is now a wretched backwater, a sort of rural slum home to barely one thousand souls who might as well live in another country. It has no running water, no electricity, no roads, and no functioning primary school. The creeks have been heavily dredged, canalized, and polluted that traditional rural livelihoods have been eviscerated.

However, whatever hope of a good life sought from their peasant economic activity, is hampered increasingly by the damaging effect of pollution from oil exploration activities such as oil spillage and gas flaring. The neglect of the IOCs in meeting their corporate social responsibility also created the frustration and anger that stirred the crisis (Ibaba 2017: 18). The consequence of several factors including poor governance, exclusion of social groups like women and youths from participating in key aspects of decision making that affects their interests, environmental pollution, and unemployment precipitates the poverty situation in the Niger Delta (UNDP 2006: 37). Since the publication of the UNDP report, not much has changed. Between then and now, there have been sporadic outbreaks of violence owing to the same factors and with new dynamics such as greed-fuelled violence (Collier 2008: 31).

Figure 5: Scenes depicting poverty of infrastructure.

Paradox of oil wealth. A cross section of scenes of everyday poverty witnessed by the Researcher. A river in Mile 3 community, Sagbama LGA, Bayelsa state (10 November 2017).

The above pictures depict the poverty of the ordinary people who carry out domestic shores in the river (washing of clothes, plates, and bathing) because of the lack of pipe borne water facilities in their homes. The left picture on the last row (with zinc sheets) is striking as the people I spoke to in the rural community said it is where the adults (who do not want to use the open river) bathe and defecate directly into the river. The people also drink from the same river and use for it other domestic purposes. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) noted the use of this open toilet in its Niger Delta Human Development Report (UNDP 2006: 39). The last picture on the second row is a local cassava-processing mill for producing 'garri', a popular food staple in the region.

However, beyond the narratives of the role of the state and the IOCs as causative agents and explanatory variables in the Niger Delta conflict, it is equally important to examine the internal role of the local elites (especially the political and traditional elites) in the systemic underdevelopment of the region. This is what I refer to as the internal contradictions of the conflict. Many of the elites from the region have engaged in corrupt practices and anti-poor programmes that have not helped improving the socio-economic situation in the Delta. The actions of these elites have contributed to the frustration that fuelled- and continue to fuel- the conflict in the region. Generally, the Nigerian political system is rife with corruption and patrimonialism. The Niger Delta elites are also not immune from the phenomenon of corruption that makes resource allocation ineffective for development purposes in the region. Therefore, beyond environmental degradation, poverty and marginalization, corruption has been a bane of the Niger Delta crisis (Ebiede 2011: 139). Despite the many years of alleged skewed revenue formula against the Niger Delta region by the federal government, questions remain about the efficient utilization of revenues accruing to the region by the local leaders especially the state

governors. Notwithstanding the over ₦10 trillion naira [about $21 billion] received from 13 percent derivation principle by Niger Delta states between 2000 and 2018, the living conditions of people in the oil-producing communities remain deplorable with many in abject poverty (Ebiri 2019b). A few factors could explain the reason why the resources that were supposed to serve as catalyst for development in the oil-producing communities are not doing so. According to Ibaba (2017: 24), they engage in "public expenditure pattern that neglects the concern of the poor". State budgetary allocations often prioritise the welfare of the of the "political office holders as allocations to government house and state legislatures". Ibaba further contends that:

> preference is largely given to elitist and white elephant projects, such as the construction of monorail, air ports, international standard stadiums, new government houses, etc., rather than investments on in projects such as feeder roads, rural-urban communication, potable water, primary health care, education, agriculture, etc., that help to lift people out of poverty

It could be argued that some of the supposed 'elitist' projects Ibaba referred to above would be needed in the states at some point considering that these are oil rich states. They should hold world-class infrastructure for the good of the people, and for income generation through tourism, as exemplified by the Gulf states of the Middle East. The worry, however, is not so much the nature or utility of the projects but the often outrageous and over inflated amount budgeted for such projects. Such is the case of the recently commissioned Bayelsa international cargo airport built at a cost that has progressed from the original N40 billion to N80 billion, and if the interest on the loan is added, it would cost up to N112 billion in total [about $292 million]. Some critics who accuse the state governor of lacking financial prudence think it is a waste of public funds and a "cesspit of fraud" (Sahara Reporters 2018).

Political corruption has robbed the people of the Niger Delta of the benefits which accrues from oil wealth. There is no state in the Niger Delta where the governor has not been accused of corrupt practices. Many of the governors are facing prosecutions or have served their jail terms for corruption charges. For instance, the former Governor of Bayelsa, Chief Diepreye Alamieseigha, was arrested in London for money laundering charges on 15 September 2006. He jumped bail in London and returned to Bayelsa state in December of same year. The Bayelsa state House of Assembly impeached him from office shortly after, and he was arraigned by Nigeria's anti-graft agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). However, he negotiated a plea bargain after two years of prosecution that earned him two years prison sentence starting from the first day of his initial arrest (Ebiede 2011: 148). These set of elites not only loot the commonwealth of their people but are also able to

manipulate the justice system to get lenient sentences when prosecuted, a reflection of the weak institutions of the state. Chief Lucky Igbinedion, former governor of Edo state, was sentenced to a six-month jail term for laundering N25 billion but got a plea bargain to pay a paltry fine of N3.5 million despite his state resources that could have improved the lives of the people. Perhaps more embarrassing is the case of Peter Odili, former Governor of Rivers state from 1999 to 2007. Under him, Rivers state had an annual budget above $1billion, yet many of the estimated 5 million population had "no power, clean water or access to functional schools and clinics" (Ekeinde 2008). Despite misappropriating, what EFCC says was 'billions of naira'; he secured a court injunction in 2008 stopping him from any kind of arrest by the EFCC. The ability of the political elites to get away with their stolen wealth to the detriment of the local people has implications for the development of the region, for the perception of corruption by would be leaders and for the justice system seemingly in 'favour' of the corrupt elites. This feeds into the narrative of local resistance groups for mobilising against the corrupt leaders.

Apart from the political elites, the local traditional leaders have also been entangled in the web of corrupt enrichment. Their chieftaincy positions often means they interface with IOCs who sometimes route community assistance through them. Some of the chiefs end up misappropriating the funds. For instance, Oloibiri, the town that hosted the first oil well and production site in the Niger Delta, experienced violence by youth groups who accused the local traditional institution of financial misappropriation. According to Watts and Ibaba (2011: 3), "the Aso Rock armed 'cult group' dethroned the traditional ruler amid allegations of corruption and half-finished community development projects". Some of the local chiefs also use violent means to attain power. Human Rights Watch (2005:7) further captures the trajectory of this trend:

> "As traditional leadership positions became more lucrative and the tribal elders more powerful, the competition to occupy them intensified. Beginning in the mid 1990's, prominent local leaders competing to assume top chieftaincy positions in an area recruited youth leaders and provided them with money and weapons to assist in their often-violent struggles to control villages. Such violent clashes occurred in several villages about twenty to forty kilometres from Port Harcourt, including Buguma, Tombia and Okrika.

This kind of violent chieftaincy tussle in Rivers state reflects the multiple contexts of the conflicts in the region and why no single factor can serve as an explanatory means for understanding the volatility of the region. The next section looks at the relationship of the state and IOCs in the conflict matrix in the region.

4.5 The State and Oil Companies nexus in the Militarization of the Niger Delta conflict

The role of IOCs in the Niger Delta conflict has been well documented (C. G. Emuedo 2015; Ibeanu 2000; ICG 2006a; Okonta and Douglas 2001; Turner and Brownhill 2004) and many others. The view of a 'strong hegemonic alliance' between the state and the IOCs to the detriment of the people of the Niger Delta has received scholarly attention (Anugwom 2011: 5; J. Frynas 2001: 52; Omeje 2005: 328-29). The oil multinationals and the Nigerian state share a common interest in the oil exploration- making profits from the joint venture partnerships that are shared on a 60/40 percent pro rata basis. Whilst the federal government own the crude oil reserves, and makes considerable investment in its production, the oil multinationals provide the "capital, technology and industrial equipment needed to extract and process oil (Ifeka 2001: 100). The members of the Nigerian government agencies working in oil regulation or in joint venture organisations like the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), constitute a rentier class whose interest by and large align with their international partners. Many of the top executives of IOCs have later been appointed into top leadership positions in Nigeria, a reflection of the shared interest between the rentier class that dominates the state and IOCs (Omeje 2006b: 48). This becomes manifest in the transfer of state personnel to IOCs and vice versa. For example, Funsho Kupolokun, the former Group Managing Director (GMD) of NNPC and Special adviser to President Obasanjo (1999-2007), has previously worked for Shell even if only for the short period from 1971-1972. It was from there that he joined NNPC before retiring (Omeje 2006b: 48). Ernest Shonekan, a former SPDC director became Nigeria's interim president in 1993; Edmund Daukoru, whilst in the employ of Shell, was appointed as Group Managing Director of NNPC in 1992. Other government functionaries who worked for Shell at some point in this alliance between state and the IOCs includes Rufus Ada George, former governor of Rivers state, and Onueze C.J Okocha, former Attorney General of Rivers state (J. Frynas 2001: 52). More recently, Ibe Kachukwu, the former GMD of NNPC (2015-2016) and Minister of state for Petroleum (2016-2019) had worked for IOCs for over 30 years including being a former Executive Vice Chairman ExxonMobil (Africa Operations). The former Nigerian Minister for Transportation (2007-2008), Minister for Mines and Steel Development (2008-2010), and Minister for Petroleum Resources (2010-2015), Deziani Alison-Madueke, was a former Executive Director of Shell in Nigeria.

The job rotation between the IOCs and the state has ramifications for the way they can utilise state institutions, especially the military apparatus to quell any anti-oil protests. More importantly, it explains the seeming indifference and failure of the Nigerian government to

protect the people in the oil-bearing communities from human rights abuses perpetuated by the oil companies. Thus, it would seem the IOCs have a closer partnership with the state than they do with oil-host communities, which makes it easier for an IOC manager to summon state security personnel than meet the demands of the people (J. Frynas 2001: 52).

Shell, the Anglo-Dutch company has gained a notorious reputation as being responsible for many of the ills in the Niger Delta. It is used in discussions in the Delta as proxy for IOCs and people from oil-host communities often describe Shell as the "number one culprit in the economic and ecological war currently being waged against them" (Okonta and Douglas 2001: 2). Shell is also most often used as example of an IOC by scholars and institutions researching the oil-related violence in the Niger Delta (Amnesty International 2017, 2018; J. G. Frynas 1998; Okonta and Douglas 2001). Shell is the oldest oil company in Nigeria operating in the Niger Delta and has an unenviable share in the history and dynamic of the conflict. Its collusion with, and support of the Nigerian state contributes to repression of dissent and is aiding armed youths in intra and inter-community clashes (a 'divide-and-rule' tactic). Above all, however, Shell was involved in the execution of Niger Delta's foremost environmentalist activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others by the Gen. Abacaha-led military junta in 1995. Many of Shell's operations are also onshore which brings its operatives into closer contacts with locals. According to Nnimmo Bassey, an Environmental Rights activist, and former Chairman of Friends of the Earth International, the Royal Dutch/Shell "goes for crude oil in the most *crude* manner possible" (Okonta and Douglas 2001: xi).

The collusion between the state and IOCs deprives the people of the Niger Delta of their rights. A Human Rights Watch (HRW) report released in February 1999, rebuked the oil companies in the Niger Delta for their complicity in human rights abuses and failure to respond adequately to abuses, a failure that the HRW attributes to the benefits IOCs achieve from the suppression of dissent.

The state and IOCs collaborative reactions to oil host communities constitute a "regularized pattern of coercion to secure oil-based accumulation" (Ukeje 2001: 23)**.** The earliest occurrence of such practices were in Umuechem village in 1990. At the request of Shell, armed mobile Policemen invaded the village to quell communal protest, and left in their wake about 80 dead people and a substantial part of the village was razed down including 495 houses according to Justice Opubo Tariah report, a panel set up by the government to investigate the incident. Six years later, Shell agreed that it invited the policemen, therefore ending their denial and confirming the allegations held by civil society groups about the

incident. According to Brian Anderson, the Managing Director of Shell, "we once called in the police to assist us on a case where things got out of hand completely and I must say that taught us a lesson… some people died because of that" (Ukeje 2001: 23). In retrospect, no lesson was learnt as Shell (and other IOCs) continued to engage in more brazen actions against the people of the Niger Delta. The killings by the armed Policemen in Umuechem community set a precedent that later had dire consequences for the security of oil-host communities and the counter reactions to IOCs activities, and those of the state security agents. In another serious incident on 4 January 1999, soldiers using a "Chevron helicopter and Chevron boats" attacked two communities in Delta state, Opia and Ikenyan. Four people were killed in the incident and most of the villages razed down, and 50 people declared missing in what Chevron alleged was a "counterattack" over a confrontation between the village youths and the soldiers guarding a Chevron facility (Human Rights Watch 1999). Irrespective of the allegation from Chevron and the denial of any such confrontation, the attack reflects a pattern of excessive force deployed against any kind of dissent in the region. Since then, countless incidents of oil-induced (in)security practices have characterised the everyday life of the local people in the Niger Delta.

Allegations of IOCs aiding the Nigerian security agencies in attacks against the people of the Niger Delta with technical and financial assistance have been rife. For instance, Shell has been accused of a huge involvement in the military crackdowns of the federal government in the Niger Delta through its support. According to Amunwa (2011: 12). "Government forces depend heavily on Shell for support. Shell provides [government forces] with such logistics as patrol vans, boats, and helicopters on a regular basis". The security forces also known as Joint Task Force (JTF), a combination of military and Police forces, are often deployed to guard strategic oil platforms and bases of expatriate staff in the Niger Delta, a plausible reason for the oil companies to explain their role as corporate support for the ease of the military's activities.

Oil infrastructures such as pipelines or wellheads are often established near farmlands and water sources from rivers and streams. The protection of infrastructure by government security forces creates constant contact between them and ordinary people. In confrontations with the IOCs because of, for example, oil spills or during protests demanding corporate social responsibility of the IOCs, the military usually resorts to brutality which has, on countless occasions, resulted in the death of many civilians. A leaked report in 2012 revealed that Shell was paying Nigerian security services tens of millions of dollars a year. It states that Shell

"maintains a 1,200- strong internal Police force in Nigeria, plus a network of plain-clothes informants" (Hirsch and Vidal 2012). The document further shows that:

> Nearly 40% of Shell's total security expenditure over the three-year period [1997-1999] - $383m (£244m) - was spent on protecting its staff in Nigeria's volatile Niger Delta region. In 2009, $65m was spent on Nigerian security forces and $75m on "other" security costs- believed to be a mixture of private security firms and other payments to individuals (Hirsch and Vidal 2012).

These huge payments by Shell for security activities are believed to be intensifying the destabilisation of the region fuelling insecurity, corruption, and armed violence. Spending $65m on the Nigerian security forces with a poor human rights record and corrupt practices, highlights the role of IOCs in the security involvement in the Niger Delta, which fuels the anger of many people in the region of Shell's complicity in their predicaments. While the oil giant denies the extent of its involvement, a US cables revealed by Wiki Leaks in 2010 alleges that Shell "paid hundreds of thousands of pounds towards the deployment of 350 soldiers in the delta in 2003" (Hirsch and Vidal 2012).

Beyond aiding security forces, the IOCs are also accused of funding militant gangs, cult groups and armed militia groups. According to Amunwa (2011: 6) "in one case from 2010, Shell is alleged to have transferred over $159,000 to a group credibly linked to militia violence". These payments are often in the guise of security contracts for the protection of oil infrastructures to the armed groups, as payments are often used for weapons. The payments contribute to the flow of small arms and light weapons which are then used in clashes with rival armed groups. The practice of buying the support of youth gangs by IOCs has continued unabated. Recently, Nyesome Wike, the Governor of Rivers state (one of the core Niger Delta states), accused oil multinationals of fuelling insecurity in Rivers by providing surveillance jobs to cultists. Again, Wike mentioned Shell as a major culprit in the act (Ebiri 2019a).

4.5.1 Oil and Environmental Pollution

Globally, the environment plays a crucial part as a factor in resource-based wars (Malamud 2018). Similarly, evidence abounds on the role of the environment as a conflict trigger in the Niger Delta region (Ebiede 2011; Ibeanu 2000; Obi 2009; Tonwe et al. 2012). Usually, the nature of the Niger Delta predisposes it to certain environmental challenges that may not be related to the oil industry operations. According to the (UNDP 2006: 74), the natural terrain and hydrology of the Niger Delta have always caused certain environmental problems, especially flooding, siltation, occlusion, and the shortage of land for development". The region's vulnerability to these natural environmental problems such as coastal erosion is

threatened increasingly by rising sea levels, which implicates the effect of global warming (Ibaba 2017: 83).

However, a critical factor in the environment-conflict nexus in the Niger Delta has been the pollution caused by the oil production process. The oil multinationals treat the people and their environment with contempt and resentment (Okonta and Douglas 2001). Local elites have used the widespread environmental pollution to rally communities and achieve grass-roots support in their negotiations with IOCs. Pollution is also used to rally violent support for confronting the Nigerian state. Interestingly, not only the IOCs or their local subsidiaries contribute to this environmental menace. Oil theft (often referred to as oil bunkering) also contributes to environmental damage and fuel conflict. The responsibility to ensure regulation and compliance with global best practices in oil production rests mainly on the Nigerian government. Two agencies assigned to remediate the oil-polluted environment (especially in Ogoni land) and to manage the numerous oil spills, the Hydrocarbon Pollution Restoration Project (HYPREP) and the National Oil Spills Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), have failed to live up to their billing (ICG 2015: 1). The government's inability to exercise that responsibility exacerbates the pollution in the region, which affects the environment they depend on for their livelihood. It is often this threat to the people's means of sustenance and the vulnerability of the ecology to pollution that explains the dynamics of the environment as a proximate cause of the oil-related conflict. Equally worrisome to the people of the Niger Delta is the fact that these IOCs do not pollute the environment of their home countries the way they do in Nigeria neither do they give prompt attention to spills as they do elsewhere.

For instance, the pollution from the "176 gas flare sites in the Niger Delta" (N. Bassey 2019), causes environmental hazards, which are injurious to human and animal health. Gas flares creates "large amounts of soot and black carbon (black smoke highly enriched in polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) that are deposited on nearby lands, buildings and properties and inhaled by local residents" (Nriagu et al. 2016: 13). In recent times, residents of Port Harcourt, Rivers state, have lamented the increasing effect of soot arising from petrochemical activities in the city and environ, which threatens their health and safety. Besides, the release of greenhouse gasses such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxides, and others from oil and gas flares affects the ecosystem (Libiszewski 1991: 3). The danger of environmental pollution has become a global issue galvanising climate change movement around the world. In the Niger Delta, gas flare deprives people who live in the neighbourhood of oil flow stations of the

'beauty' of sleep. The glow from the flares robs them of the serenity of night. Research has shown that such chronic exposure to fires from petroleum refinery causes substantial psychosocial distress (Luginaah et al. 2002: 188). Since the 1960's, the people of the Niger Delta have raised concerns over the pollution of their environment. The government's first response with a deadline for IOCs to end gas flare on 1 January 1984 was not achieved. Since then, different deadlines have been set, including a 2020 date. In 2018, the government issued another Gas flare regulation. However, the IOCs continue to flare the gas, as they would rather prefer to pay the associated fine of $2.00 per 1000 cubic feet of gas flared. Considering the lax regulatory mechanism from the government, critics argue that the IOCs often do not give the right data of the amount of gas they flare. After all, giving inaccurate data attracts only a penalty of 6 months imprisonment or a paltry ₦50, 000, which is about $139 (N. Bassey 2019). Recent industry data shows that Nigeria's promise to end gas flaring is still a mirage. It is estimated that Nigeria flares an estimated 218.9 billion standard cubic feet (scf) of natural gas, which translates to a market value loss of ₦ 243.23 billion about $671 million (Jeremiah 2019).

Figure 6: Fire disasters from oil spill in the Niger Delta.

Left: Toxic fire from an oil spill at Ondewari/Okpotuwari area, along Agip's Tebidaba/Ogboinbiri pipeline, Southern Ijaw LGA, Bayelsa state, 2010. Right: Huge flames offshore from KS Endeavour Rig working at Chevron's North Apoi facility, 16 January 2012. Source: Mr Morris Alagoa, Project Officer, Environmental Rights Action (ERA), Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, Nigeria.

Relatedly, oil spills have caused enormous destruction to the ecosystem: arable lands and water bodies of the Niger Delta environment, thereby damaging the flora and fauna in the

region[35]. Many communities have lost their farmlands and water source to oil spills. It puts their means of livelihood at risk and leads to struggles between community members for scarce farmlands. Between 1976 and 1996, a "total of 4,835 incidences of oil spill of at least 2,446,322 barrels (102.7 million US gallons) of which an estimated 77 percent were lost to the environment" (Idemudia and Ite 2006: 399). Table 5 below shows figures from the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) on the amount of oil spilled into the Niger Delta environment between 1976 -2005. During these periods, about 3,121,909.80 barrels of oil were spilled in about 9,107 cases. The challenge with the data on oil spills is that many go unreported, thus making it difficult to estimate the exact number of spills in the region, as industry watchers contend that the figures are much higher (C. Emuedo 2013: 7). IOCs also under report the extent of oil spilled onto the environment. For instance, Amnesty International (2018: 26) notes that, "for years, Shell defended its lower figure but in November 2014, during a court case in the UK, Shell admitted that the amount was indeed larger than it had previously stated". Equally problematic is the guidelines of DPR on reporting oil spills, as they are categorised into small, medium, and large. The oil firms are only mandated to report, the medium and large spills based on their valuations of the incident (C. Emuedo 2013: 7).

In recent times, Shell has recorded 1,010 spills since 2011 while Eni since 2014 recorded 820 spills (Amnesty International 2018: 15). Although the accuracy of the IOCs figures could be doubtful, more devastating is the volume of the oil products spilled into the environment and not just the figures showing the number of occurrences. As Amnesty International (2018: 15) noted**,** "the number of spills only tells part of the problem. A more accurate guide is the reported volume of oil spilled into the environment". Many of the oil spills have been attributed to corroded pipelines, which have been laid for many years and are poorly maintained by the oil companies. As Amunwa (2011: 37) notes, several of Shell's pipelines have not been changed since the 1970s. Its 18-inch Adibawa pipeline is "highly corroded and notorious for oil spills". Amnesty International through its *Decode oil spill* project identified 89 spills that occurred due to corrosion (Amnesty International 2018).

The devastating impact of oil spills in Ogoni land led to the frustration that galvanised their uprising against the Nigerian state and changed the dynamics of ethnic minority agitation in the early 1990s (Osaghae 1995). Oil spills are common in the region. For instance, communities in Joinkrama such as JK4 clustered around Shell's Adibawa oil field in Rivers

[35] See Appendix 3 for a table of oil spill in the Niger Delta.

state have been contaminated by numerous oil spills. Between 2006 and 2009, JK4 experienced 16 oil spills that polluted their rivers and devastated their farmlands (Amunwa 2011: 37). In 2011, an independent report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) published at the request of the Nigerian government, revealed that the devastation caused by oil spills in Ogoni land in the Niger Delta, would take about 25-30 years to remedy at a cost of about $1billion. The UNEP report revealed hydrocarbon contamination in water at 1,000 times over the Nigerian drinking water standard of 3ug/l. At Nisisioken Ogale, in Eleme LGA of Rivers state near the Nigerian National Petroleum company (NNPC), the team found 8cm of refined oil floating on ground water that feeds the community wells (UNEP 2011: 10-11). Furthermore, the UNEP field assessment of locations of previous oil spill allegedly cleaned by SPDC was poorly executed. They observed that, "the difference between a cleaned- up site and a site awaiting clean-up was not always obvious" (ibid p.150). Interestingly, many of the local communities are aware of this pollution of their water and the consequence for their health, but they would still use it for their daily needs, as there are no better alternatives in most cases within rural communities. However, since the UNEP report, not much has been done despite the huge promise of remediation work flagged in Ogoni town by the federal government in 2016 as part of efforts to placate the region. A combination of "red tape and conflicting interests' are hindering the Ogoni clean-up (Ebiri and Essen 2016). The local communities perceive government delays with the remediation work as lackadaisical and perhaps the usual form of neglect that occasions development project in the region.

Figure 7: Oil spill (environmental pollution)

Left: Oil spill from an Agip facility floating on farmlands at Olugboboro (Olugbobiri Kingdom) in Southern Ijaw LGA, Bayelsa state, March 2016. Right: Agip wellhead 5 at Egbebiri in Biseni Clan, Yenagoa LGA,

Bayelsa state, 2012. Source: Mr Morris Alagoa, Project Officer, Environmental Rights Action (ERA), Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, Nigeria.

However, the IOCs often blame oil spills on the activities of oil thieves and vandals (Amnesty International 2018: 49) to avoid paying compensation. No doubt, the IOCs have been faced with oil theft popularly known as oil 'bunkering' in Nigeria. The element of greed that has interspersed the Niger Delta oil insurgency means that many people, especially the youths are now drawn into the illegal oil business in the creeks. Oil Industry experts estimate that Nigeria loses anywhere between 70,000 to 300,000 barrels of crude oil per day to theft. In an August 2006 report released by Shell Nigeria, it estimated "illegal bunkering losses at 20,000 to 40,000 barrels per day in 2005, down from 40,000 to 60,000 in 2004" (Ross 2012: 173). On a related note, a recent report by the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), the Nigerian arm of the global Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), indicates that Nigeria lost about $41.9 billion to crude oil and refined petroleum products theft in nine years between 2009 and 2018 (Udo 2019). The stolen crude is often loaded onto water vessels like tugboats and barges from where it is transported to local and international buyers with ships on the high sea from different parts of the world. Interestingly, the oil bunkering is often with the tacit knowledge and connivance of the state security agencies who sometimes provide escort for the movement of the products (Amunwa 2011: 35; Ross 2012: 173). This threat to the economic means of the country, explains in part the reason the government securitizes the oil and militarises the region as it is the main source of foreign exchange for Nigeria. Whilst many people have a sense of entitlement to oil as their God-given resources which the state has failed to utilise for their common good, they do not show much remorse about the economic consequence of oil bunkering to the state and IOCs who sometimes declare force majeure when there is a serious oil pipeline breach.

4.6 Oil-host communities and the trajectory of conflict

The responses of the oil-bearing communities in the Niger Delta have played a key role in the conflict trajectory of the region. Local community movements have come to see the IOCs and the state (the federal government) as 'external' forces in the affairs of the Niger Delta (Ukeje 2001: 24). They are perceived as a sort of meddlesome interloper in the control of their natural resources. As a result, they have engaged in various means to vent their frustration and curtail related threats. The Niger Delta, according to Okonta and Douglas (2001: 197), is no longer Shell's [and other IOCs] docile 'cow' to be milked at its pleasure and convenience and then discarded. The 'cow' is insisting that it be milked properly and that it also receives adequate recompense for what it gives". Oil-producing communities have mobilized and made

demands on the state and IOCs. They demanded a greater stake in the oil production process, revenues, stoppage of oil pollution and environmental remediation of the already polluted lands, and some measure of political and financial autonomy. One of the implications of the mobilization by the local people have been the formation of grassroots movements. Among the notable bodies in the oil-producing minority states of the Niger Delta which have demanded "more equitable and privileged treatment' (Osaghae 1995: 325) from the Nigerian federation controlled by the majority ethnic groups and the IOCs in the region include the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), and the Ijaw Youth Movement (IYC). According to Ukeje (2001: 24) the formation of these grassroots movements, "relied heavily on deep-rooted cultural repertoire, images and resources; explaining the patterns and rigours that have characterized the Ogoni and Ijaw ethnic movements respectively". Both groups appealed greatly to the 'socio-cultural identity and space' in building 'ethno-social networks', which they leveraged for managing real or perceived external threats. In that way, they gave the people a cultural sense of unity of purpose in a manner that complements their communal objectives (Ukeje 2001: 24). The trajectory of the Niger Delta conflict has been shaped by community mobilizations along ethno-cultural lines. The conflict can be mapped into three phases. The first phase covered the period between 1950s-1980s (the era of need); the second phase consists of the period between 1990s-2000 (the era of creed) and the third phase covering 2000-2009 (the era of grievance and greed) prior to the Presidential Amnesty Programme (Aghedo 2015: 141-42). Also, see Ibaba's periodization of the conflict phases in table 4.

The first phase of demands by the people of the Niger Delta followed the initial non-violent approach to the oil-related crisis which included the writing of "petitions in the early 1960s" that went unheeded (Isumonah *(*2005*:*173). The perceived marginalization by the federal government to the demands of the people of the Niger Delta culminated into a twelve-day rebellion in 1967 led by Adaka Boro. He and his associates, Sam Owonaro and Nottingham Dick, declared an independent Niger Delta Republic and wanted the right to self-determination (Osaghae 1995: 321). However, their dream was short-lived as the Nigerian security forces quickly crushed the revolt which nonetheless continues to serve as a source of inspiration from which grassroots community mobilization draw strength.

The 1990s witnessed a new wave of mass mobilization against the state. In the favorable climate of "post-cold war discourse on environment and minority rights", local groups started to phrase "demands in political and environmental terms" (Obi 2009: 107). The resistance movement was spearheaded by MOSOP led by Ken Saro-Wiwa, an internationally acclaimed

writer and environmental rights activist. In 1990, MOSOP and other Ogoni leaders drew the attention of the federal government to the adverse impact of oil exploration activities on the livelihoods and overall underdevelopment of the region. They presented the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) to the federal government in which they requested "political autonomy to participate in the affairs of the Republic as a distinct and separate unit". The OBR further proclaimed 'political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people, the right to the control and use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development, the right to protect the Ogoni environment and ecology from further degradation" amongst others (MOSOP 1992: 6; Osaghae 1995: 321). Although OBR demanded political autonomy, it was to be a part of a Nigeria with a restructured political system as the leaders denied any rumors of secession (Osaghae 1995: 326). The OBR and the activities of MOSOP galvanized huge protests, which affected oil production activities and drew the ire of the federal military Government. For instance, MOSOP in November 1992 issued a thirty-day ultimatum to the three oil companies operating in their region to pay compensation, royalties and rents for the devastation on their land caused by oil exploration or they would be expelled from their land (Okonta and Douglas 2001: 117). Some overzealous MOSOP supporters were also reported to have destroyed the houses of local elites who did not share in their efforts against the state (Osaghae 1995: 334). The Nigerian government counteracted MOSOP actions with a series of military raids and arrests in a turn of events that eventually led to the hanging of its leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his associates in 1995 by a special Tribunal of the Nigerian government.

Their death marked a new low in the relations between the state, the IOCs, and the people of the Niger Delta. The sense of perceived injustice by the state and IOCs fueled more protests. Although (Ukeje 2001: 25) argues that, "it would be erroneous to conceive every single case of mass mobilization as inspired solely by the Ogoni experiment", it no doubt energized other groups who had copied the communal mobilization approach of MOSOP. For example, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), a melting pot of many sociocultural and political organizations of Ijaw ethnic nationality, was born out of a mass-based mobilization. On 11 December 1998, over "5000 youths drawn from five hundred communities and forty clans" of the Ijaw ethnic nationality, gathered in Kaiama, a community in Kolokuma/Opukuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa state. They formed the IYC and adopted the now famous Kaiama Declaration (Okonta and Douglas 2001: 145). Interestingly, some of the brains behind the formation of IYC had worked closely with MOSOP campaigns, people like Oronto Douglas, Von Kemedi and Robert Azibola (Nwajiaku 2005: 458). Much like the OBR, the Kaiama

Declaration (KD) demanded "self-determination, resource control, environmental sustainability, and safeguard of the Ijaw culture" (Ukeje 2001: 27). Furthermore, the IYC demanded that all oil companies leave 'Ijaw land' by 30 December 1998 through its proclaimed 'Operation Climate Change' until the federal government resolves the issues relating to their resource ownership and control, and the political autonomy sought by the Ijaws. Their declaration followed protests marches in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states, which were swiftly crushed by the Nigerian military. Rather than seek for a means of resolving the crisis through dialogue with the IYC, the federal military government sent "up to 15, 000 soldiers and two warships" to Bayelsa and declared a state of emergency". At the end of the crisis of late 1998 and 1999, estimated 200 people died, whilst many more were injured, tortured, and raped (Nwajiaku 2005: 457).

The military crackdown that followed the Kaiama Declaration and the IYC pitched a new phase of violent agitations that changed the dynamics of the oil conflict in the region in the 2000s. With the opening up of the political space and Nigeria's return to democracy, a combination of local political interests, a nascent democracy awash with oil wealth, and the clamour for development from the state and IOCs saw to the emergence of different youth militia and cult groups. Equally suffused in the potpourri of the grievances was the role of greed. As with most oil rich but conflict-ridden countries, violence is often underpinned by the economies of war- the prospect of profiteering from such oil-induced violence (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Obi 2009: 108; Ross 2012: 170).

Consequently, several militia groups emerged and engaged in armed violence against the state and IOCs with devastating consequences on Nigeria's economy, stability, and overall security[36] (Ikelegbe 2010: 142). Amongst them were the two main militant groups, the Niger Delta Vigilante Group (NDVG), and the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Ateke Tom and Asari Dokubo, respectively. With an army of unemployed youths at their behest bombing oil industry pipelines, kidnapping, and oil theft, it apparently seemed appealing to some youths to join the militant groups in the 'struggle'[37] against the state. The armed militancy jeopardised the security of the region. Everyday life was disrupted constantly by violence or the threat of it which was compounded by the 'turf war' of supremacy between

[36] See Appendix 4 for a table showing the phases of the conflict in the Niger Delta

[37] Many of the youths I spoke to (including some ex-militants) often use the word "Niger Delta struggle" as a reference to their agitation and resistance against the state and oil multinationals irrespective of whether their course of action is violent or not.

both camps. In the end, many lives were lost to the renewed onslaught of the militants, several communities sacked with over 20,000 people internally displaced especially by the Ateke led group (Aghedo 2012: 272). The enmity between the two groups as Watts (2007: 654) argues, draws on one hand from their use as political thugs and the funding thereof by the local political elites during the 2003 elections, and the control "over oil bunkering territory". The rentier elites in order to hold on to power used the militants against their rival political opponents. The Rivers state government's "arms for cash" offer in July 2004 and the then President Obasanjo's invitation of both leaders to the state house on October 1, 2004 (Watts 2007: 645) failed to rein in both groups as violence in the region continued.

The emergence of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) by January 2006 (ICG 2006a: i) compounded the insurgency on the state and IOCs oil assets in the region. With militancy at its peak, MEND gained notoriety as the organising coalition of several militant groups in the region despite the heavy deployment of the military Joint Task Force (JTF) to crack down on the militants and their camps[38]. At some point in late August 2006, "60 militants were reported killed and another 100 arrested in two days of fighting in Bayelsa state" (Watts 2008: 30). MEND, for example, set a target of cutting Nigeria's oil output by 30% and was succeeding in its attacks. As Watts (2008: 30) noted:

> Within the first six months of 2006, there were nineteen attacks on foreign oil operations and over $2.187 billion lost in oil revenues; the Department of Petroleum Resources [DPR] claims this figure represents 32% of the revenue the country generated [that] year. The Nigerian government claims that between 1999 and 2005 oil loses amounted to $6.8 billion but in November 2006 the managing Director of Shell Nigeria reported that the loss of revenue due to the 'unrest and violence' was $61 million per day (a short-in of about 800,000 barrels per day) amounting to a staggering $9 billion since January 2006.

With international crude oil prices selling as high as $145 per barrel (Golden-Timsar 2018: ii), the disruption to oil production process at such a time was particularly devastating for Nigeria's oil rent and economic survival. In addition`, the insecurity and loss of human lives was massive. An estimated 1000 lives were lost yearly in the Niger Delta at the peak of the oil insurgency in 2009, and the security operation in the region "was costing the government close to four billion naira (nearly $19million) per day in counter insurgency operations" (ICG 2015: ii) Nigeria's former Minister of Defence Maj. Gen. Godwin Abe (Rtd.) whilst noting the

[38] See Appendix 5 for an overview of the militant camps and their commanders in the Niger Delta

rationale for the resistance against the state and IOCs, deplored the tactics of the groups. According to him:

> There is no question about that, that these agitations are reasonable. They are not unusual of a people, but it is the style of demanding their rights that has been unacceptable to the government. They have a right to express their views, but they do not have a right to kill or to kidnap because they want to express their views. That is barbaric. That is not acceptable (SBS Australia, 2010).

Nevertheless, the crisis that started as local protests, moved to violent resistance with both national and global implications. With the the continuing violence and deterioration of security in the region, the federal government granted the militant groups amnesty. This reflects the two-pronged approach of the state's securitization of the region: the construction of the region as an existential security threat and the justification of "extraordinary measures" (Buzan et al. 1998: 21) to deal with such threats which they have done with militarization ("stick"). The amnesty represents the second prong ("carrot") 'extraordinary measure' of dealing with the existential threat to the state, hence it is a policy framed as part of the securitization of the state and its mobilization against the grievances of the people of the Niger Delta.

4.7 The Presidential Amnesty Offer

Amnesty connotes a political and legal prerogative of mercy by a government or institution to pardon offenders with the hope of engendering political reconciliation. It serves as an incentive to former agitators to embrace peace measures (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2014: 21). In most cases, amnesties relate to transitional justice and post conflict peacebuilding. For instance, the conditions offenders such as insurgent groups are obligated to, includes the "surrendering weapons, providing information on former comrades, admitting the truth about their actions[39] or showing remorse in order to benefit from the amnesty" (Ukiwo and Ebiede 2012: 110). There are also cases where amnesties are given unconditionally as was the case in Mozambique in 1992. Some amnesties apply to state agents, (France 1962), others to non-state actors, (Colombia 2003) and in some cases for both state and non-state actors (El Salvador 1992) (Freeman 2009: 13). Thus, amnesty could be applied in different situations; including ways through which legal impasse that could arise from the consequences of an offence are removed to create room for peace. In this light Freeman (2009: 13) defines amnesty as,

> an extraordinary legal measure, whose primary function is to remove the prospect and consequences of criminal liability for designated individuals or classes of persons in

[39] The case of offenders admitting to the culpability of their actions was classically demonstrated with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission legislation in 1995 which provided for full amnesty for offenders on the condition that they disclose their liability in the crimes committed (Freeman 2009:15-16)

> respect of designated types of offences irrespective of whether the persons concerned have been tried for such offences in a court of law.

However, it is instructive to note that amnesty does not obliterate the reality of the crimes committed during a conflict for instance, but it shields the offenders from the legal implication of such crimes. This gives rise to criticisms of its use in post-conflict peacebuilding processes, as some people believe it allows perpetrators of heinous crimes against humanity such as rape, murder, and so forth, to go unpunished, thus undermining the role of criminal justice prosecution for offenders who embrace amnesty and offending the "dignity of victims" (Freeman 2009: 22). Like with every 'business' there are risks. There are possibilities where "leaders and governments" could change who may not be view the conditions of an amnesty the way their successors would view them (ibid P.29). In other words, offenders may not always get away with their crimes with utmost certainty for the future.

The inauguration of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in 2007 offered another opportunity for charting a new policy path for resolving the conflict in the region. President Yar'Adua made security one component of his government's seven-point policy agenda and set up the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND) on 8th September 2008 to find solutions to the crisis. The committee composed of 44- members with "a sound knowledge of the terrain and each with a history of advocacy for the Niger delta struggles spanning many years" (TCND 2008). They were tasked with reviewing past reports on the conflict in the region and make suggestions and recommendations to the government. The committee noted that because of "the absence of trust and the need to see marked improvement in the quantity and quality of implementation", they adopted the compact with the stakeholders in the Niger Delta approach, as a way of measuring the political will of the parties to the conflict in the region (ibid p.3). The NDTC made far-reaching recommendations to the federal government that include

> Increased revenue allocation of 25% in the interim but with a graduation towards 50%, leveraging extra funds from other sources, establishment of a Disarmament, Decommission and Reintegration (DDR) Commission which will explore negotiated approaches to address the challenge of arms and militancy, open trial and unconditional bail for Henry Okah. Negotiate amnesty for all Niger Delta militants, end to gas flaring by December 2008, achievement of 5,000 MW of power for the region by 2010, completion of the dualisation of the East-West road including spurs to each of the coastal states and endure significant improvement in education, health, and youth employment in the region (ibid p.3).

Interestingly, of all the recommendations, the federal government only acquiesced to two - the offer of amnesty and the setting up of a DDR commission. This was in contrast to the speech of the Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan, who stated during the inauguration of the TCND that, "We identified the crisis in the Niger delta as a major issue that we must urgently resolve… on behalf of the government, I want to assure you that your recommendations will not be treated with levity" (TCND 2008: iv-v). Revenue allocation still stands at 13%, the East-West road is uncompleted and worse than it was in 2008, gas flaring by the IOCs continues unabated and the socio-economic indicators for the region remain poor. This reflects the government's penchant for neglecting the core issues of development in the region but its haste to accept a recommendation that directly affects oil production in the region.

Thus, after several years of the federal government's securitization of the Niger Delta conflict (Ikelegbe 2010: 2) and the associated militarization of the whole region, the government surprisingly made an amnesty offer to the militia groups on 26 June 2009. It signalled a new policy path towards conflict cessation having failed to halt the increasing militancy and to protect the oil industry and its vital national assets through military offensives. Many conflict observers hailed the state pardon of the militants as audacious and the most wide-ranging peacebuilding efforts in the region thus far. It was a realization that a 'political' solution was required to achieve lasting peace in the region. In a national broadcast, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua stated:

> The offer of amnesty is predicated on the willingness and readiness of the militants to give up all illegal arms in their possession, completely renounce militancy in all its ramifications unconditionally, and depose to an undertaking to this effect. It is my fervent hope that all militants in the Niger Delta will take advantage of this amnesty and come out to join in the quest for the transformation of our dear nation (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2009).

As part of the amnesty deal designed to guarantee peace and security in the region, the repentant militants were to lay down their arms and renounce their militant acts within a 60-day window of 6 August and 4 October 2009 deadline. They would, thereafter, receive an unconditional pardon for all their previous offences against the state prior to the deadline. The ex-militants would receive training in educational and vocational skills in both Nigeria and abroad in countries like Sri Lanka, India, Russia, Poland, Malaysia and South Africa, amongst others, that provides advanced facilities in fields like aviation training, under water welding, boat building, and so forth (Ehigiator 2011). Subsequently, they would be reintegrated back to the society in line with the amnesty's DDR programme. The ex-militants are to receive a monthly stipend of ₦65, 000 naira **(**about $350**)** and receive financial aid to start businesses.

The federal government dropped the prosecution of Henry Okah, a prominent leader of MEND incarcerated for gun running activities. To some Nigerians, these gestures symbolised the government's commitment to the amnesty offer with the aim of pursuing a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the region. Nevertheless, as Ubhenin (2013: 179) notes, that of all the reasons justifying the offer of amnesty by the federal government, "threats to economic survival and national security catalysed the programme". This observation underscores the impact of incessant attacks on oil facilities by the militants and the dwindling national revenue prior to the amnesty. A situation that makes the amnesty offer seem more like a 'Greek gift' (something with an ulterior motive) than an altruistic quest for peacebuilding by the federal government.

To kick-start the PAP, a Presidential Amnesty Implementation Committee (PAIC) chaired by retired Major General Godwin Abe was constituted. The PAIC was charged with coordinating the implementation of the PAP across the Niger Delta region. In addition, four sub-committees were set-up to assist the PAIC in the implementation of the PAP. They are the disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration sub-committee, the oil and gas assets protection sub-committee (headed by the Minister of Environment), the environmental clean-up and remediation sub-committee (headed by the minister of Niger Delta Affairs) (Aghedo 2012: 273). As expected, in the context of Nigeria's history of ethicised politics and perhaps the fear of further stoking the pent-up anger against the state, all the PAP coordinators are from the Niger Delta region[40]. However, only the first coordinator did not belong to the Ijaw ethnic nationality. This is significant as it reflects the political dominance of the Ijaw ethnic nationality in the region (Ibaba 2017: 7-8). Besides, the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015), himself from the Ijaw ethnic group, further elevated their place in the region, a situation that has led to criticism of people from Ijaw being the major beneficiaries of the PAP and a reflection of the horizontal ethnic tensions that springs up in the region in between the agitations against the state.

Whilst the PAP symbolised an opportunity for peace and security, it was also perceived to be momentous by many people for its promise of development for the region. It was an opportunity for the "government to launch a road map for massive infrastructural and human capital development" in the Niger Delta (Etekpe 2012: 94). The government hinged the development of the region on the need to have a peaceful environment to operate which was

[40] Since inception, the PAP has had six coordinators who report directly to the president. The first was Maj. Gen. Godwin Abe (Rtd.), followed by Timi Alaibe, Kingsley Kuku, Brig. Gen. P.T. Boroh (Rtd.), Prof. Charles Quaker Dokubo, and Col. Milland Diko (Rtd.) who is the current interim coordinator

one of the reasons the militants agreed to the amnesty peace deal (James 2020). This promise of infrastructural development alongside its peace initiative, made the PAP appealing to many people in the region considering the many years of underdevelopment. It meant that beyond the engagement with the ex-militants, other people in the region could benefit from the focus of the policy. Therefore, the PAP elicited much hope amongst the Niger Delta people. Capitalizing on the wave of interest in the PAP by the people, President Goodluck Jonathan who succeeded Yar'Adua in 2010 following his death in office, proposed projects expenditure of about ₦200 billion naira to aid post-amnesty development in the region. These projects include:

1. Establishment of a Federal Polytechnic of oil and Gas in Ekowe, Bayelsa state
2. Upgrading of the petroleum Training Institute (PTI), Efurrun in Delta state to the status of University of Petroleum and Gas
3. Dualization of the East-West highway
4. Construction of an Atlantic Coastal Highway
5. Construction of East-West rail line running from Calabar through Uyo, Port Harcourt, Yenagoa, Warri, Benin to Lagos
6. Development of the inland Water way
7. Clean up of oil spillages from the environment
8. Commencement of massive land reclamation; and
9. Development of new towns while retaining the history and culture of the people (Etekpe 2012: 100).

Some critics argue that the projects pronouncement not only looked vague with an unspecified duration, but also lacked a concrete and well-articulated master plan for the development of the Niger Delta (Ikelegbe 2010: 76). This is not surprising as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Ministry of the Niger Delta Affairs (MNDA), two federal government agencies tasked with driving development in the region have been largely inefficient. In any case, since the PAP started, some of the above listed projects have not been executed or they are still ongoing with slow progress like the Ogoni oil spill clean-up.

The militant leaders were initially skeptical of the amnesty offer. They feared it was a ploy by the state to lure them from their various camps in the creeks (see figure 1) and prosecute them for their resistance to the state. The government's poor record of matching words with action in the development issues of the region previously also fuelled the scepticism, even more so, given the fact that the consultation process leading up to the PAP implementation was not broad based and inclusive of key national, NGOS and international actors created the initial

snag (Ikelegbe 2010: 71). Notwithstanding the suspicions, many of the militants embraced the amnesty offer, a move Godwin Abe, the Defense Minister, and chairman of the PAIC described as "the beginning of the development of the Niger Delta" (France 24 2009). The stage was therefore set for the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR[41]) process for the militants.

During the DDR process the ex-militants surrendered their weapons at designated disarmament centres across the Niger Delta, where inventory, storage and proper disposal of the weapons were carried out (Nicole Ball and Luc Van de Goor 2006: 2). An estimated number of about 2,700 arms and 300,000 rounds of ammunition were submitted by 15, 000 militants to the Presidential Amnesty Committee in 2009 (Ushie 2013: 34). This surrender of large cache of arms and ammunitions was unprecedented. However, there were allegations of the exclusion of some militants groups arising from the infighting within the militia groups, the deliberate withholding of arms by some ex-militants because of their propensity for crime and a trust deficit on the part of the federal government (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011; Eke 2014; Ushie 2013). The demobilisation of the ex-militants happened in batches at Obubra Camp in Cross River state. They were given non-violent transformational training in the camp. In the first batch, 20,192 ex-militants were enrolled for demobilisation exercise while 6,166 ex-militias were demobilised in the second batch and completed their training in December 2011 (Ushie 2013: 33). In 2012 an additional list of 3,642 ex-militants was approved by the government for a third phase of demobilisation. In all, 30,000 ex-militants enrolled for the exercise under the Amnesty programme (Odunsi 2012; Osumah 2013: 254). However, the reintegration phase that marks the exit stage of the DDR programme into normal civilian life, has been more challenging because of the unavailability of job opportunities for thousands of the beneficiaries of PAP that have been trained in different academic and vocational endeavours in Nigeria and abroad. The situation as we shall see in the next chapter, predisposes the youths as ready 'materials' for conflict mobilisation by political elites and militia groups.

4.8 Conclusion

This context chapter has shown that the conflict in the Niger Delta is embedded in a complex web of causative factors, actions, and reactions. The chapter revealed the prominence of the oil sector in the Nigerian economy and the centrality of the Niger Delta in the emergent rentier space of the Nigeria state. It showed how the intersection of political, socio-economic,

[41] DDR is common in post-conflict environments for ensuring peace and security. It is a transition period for managing ex-combatants through conflict to a process of recovery and stability.

and environmental variables drives local resistance against the state and oil multinationals. The complaints over the level of poverty, unemployment, environmental pollution, and the socio-economic and political marginalization of the people of the Niger Delta have caused a feeling of neglect amongst them. The resistance of protesting communities and the armed militia groups in the region against the IOCs and their oil infrastructure is viewed as sabotage against the economic live-wire of the state and an affront against its powers. The actions of the militia groups are also considered criminal and constitutive of the complex web of insecurity in the Niger Delta. However, none of these variables alone can present a clear picture of the causes and dynamics of the conflict. Hence, it might be tricky to assert which phenomenon is more remotely causative than the other is. The Niger delta conflict is a web of multiple contributory factors. It is therefore important to see these conflict variables - the political, socio-economic, and environmental from an integrated perspective, as it is believed they serve as the foundation of the nagging issues in the region. In which case, if tackled, could change the conflict profile of the region.

In any case, what is clear today, are the consequences of poor governance in the region from the key actors - the state (across levels- federal, state and local government) and the oil multinationals. The state's poor performance in both policy regulatory responsibilities and the 'social-contract' with the people (provision of public goods) responsibilities, have left structural deficiencies that serves as the basis for protests and armed resistance in the region. The business models of the IOCs that are anti-people, that does not meet global best practices on pollution for example, remains an albatross. The militarized response by the state has not helped the growing army of youth restiveness from the various oil-producing communities. The oil-host communities owe a duty of civic responsibility to public property. Many community leaders have not been accountable with the resources that accrue to them as corporate social responsibility. At other times, they are often privy to the activities of their youths who sabotage public infrastructure and contribute to the everyday insecurity in their domain.

Lastly, the chapter detailed the state securitization's 'extraordinary measure' to address the violence through the offer of a presidential amnesty to the militia groups in the region. Although, touted as a peacebuilding mechanism, the amnesty reflects the state's tendency to cherry-pick a convenient measure whilst neglecting other recommendations that would address the underlying grievances and the cause of conflict in the region, and hence, its limited utility as a post-conflict peacebuilding measure.

CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS: LOCAL PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF THE PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY PROGRAMME (PAP)

The following chapter presents the empirical analysis of the interviews focussing on the everyday reactions of the people to PAP. As part of the state's securitization of the Niger Delta, PAP represents the state's top-down approach. The chapter allows for an understanding of security from the people's point of view rather than the discursive securitization that the regime has initiated through the PAP as a panacea to insecurity and peace. This exploration of the everyday response of the people corresponds to the methodological approach of this research, which contests the top-down focus of the state by positioning against it, the voice of the subjects. It shows the inadequacy of the state-centric response to the insecurity of the region and the logic for rethinking such security approach in line with the everyday security concerns of the people.

Thus, the next sections contrasts the top-down approach of the state with the perception of the subjects. It explores how people in the Niger Delta understood the PAP, their experiences with the PAP, and its effects on the socioeconomic development and security of the region. It reveals the resurgence of violence and demonstrates the futility of the PAP as a peacebuilding measure in the region.

5.1 Everyday reactions by people of the Niger Delta to the PAP

A common finding amongst some of the respondents was their agreement that PAP created a reduction in the level of insecurity compared to the situation before its commencement due to the accompanying military mobilisation in the region. One adult male respondent, for example explained that the implementation of the amnesty programme restored some level of security in the region:

> To be frank the amnesty programme has helped to restore some degree of security in the Niger Delta region. Before now, there used to be wars between gangs, between militant groups, cultists. That has reduced drastically since the implementation of amnesty. And to us, that is good enough. Before the implementation of the amnesty programme, there also used to be a very high level of kidnapping and abduction. So, again, that has reduced a little bit as well. So, to some extent the amnesty programme

> has brought about relative peace in the Niger Delta (Interview. Benin City. 26 November 2017).

A young male focus group respondent in Bomadi, related the reduction of armed robbery to the PAP, and the way some of the ex-militants were able to utilise their monthly stipend meaningfully:

> A major achievement of the amnesty programme is that it has helped to reduce armed robbery in the region. This is because at the end of the month, these boys get money and because of that, most of them have stopped the life of armed robbery. Another thing is that some persons are wise such that they were able to set up something for themselves with the money they are getting through the amnesty programme (FGD- 21 November 2017).

During the same focus group, another male respondent observed that the presence of the security personnel in the area aided the reduction of killings:

> The security measures of the government which involved police and army, helped in bringing peace. Because, if not for them, every day people would be killed; but because they are here some persons would run to the police and report. So, they really tried for us (FGD- Bomadi, 21 November 2017).

An executive secretary in the youth wing of one of the local ethnic organisations narrated his experience during a focus group about the death of his colleague by sea pirates. Although he frowns at what he calls the 'absolute militarization' of the region, he argued the presence of the military was helping curtail insecurity in the waterways for the everyday commute of the people:

> We all are aware that as of last year [2016] and very lately [2017], series of killings occurred in the Nembe-Brass waterways, and the killings were not done by the military. I was among those who went to bury a colleague at Nembe who was killed by sea pirates. So, I want to say that though the government security has done some wrongs, there are a few positive things on the presence of the government security but not absolute militarization. Some of the water ways that we know have recorded high number of killings and it was the presence of the security forces that helped calm it down; people can travel through the waterways knowing fully well that the government security officers has been combating the pirates (FGD- Amasomma, Bayelsa state. 29 November 2017).

The PAP has shown an improvement of security according to these interviewees. However, it seems that some of the security effects were due to the large-scale deployment of security forces alongside the implementation of the PAP. Many respondents complained about the effects the militarization had on their daily lives. A young man, for example, described the unpleasant actions of the security personnel:

> In my own view, the government tried to bring in security men- the armies, police and so on. But the thing is that the security instead of protecting us, they do otherwise. They molest innocent people, harm the people and so on. So to me, the security

> measure is not good enough. I don't know if the government told them to oppress us, beat us innocently or do some other things to us. Also, we are all citizens of Nigeria, there should be freedom and honesty in whatever we are doing, so the security measures are very bad, they don't have good plans for us (Interview, Bomadi, Male. 21 November 2017).

The respondents were rather ambivalent about the security measures of the state. While some acknowledged an increase of security or rather reduction of crime due to the deployment of the military forces, others clearly identified how these security forces can create security risks and threats to their lives. The respondents' comments above also reflect the perception of some people of the difference in security practices by the security personnel in the Niger Delta, compared to their actions in other parts of the country such as in the North. Some people doubt that security personnel are indeed in the region to protect them. In other parts of the country like the North-East and North-West, where the Nigerian military is combating Boko Haram and armed banditry respectively, the focus is on preventing attacks on the civilian population and keeping them safe. Some critics believe this is not the case in the Niger Delta. Reflecting on the actions of the military in the Niger Delta, a male academic during an expert interview noted the actions of the military:

> The military in all their behaviour, they show the antics of soldiers of occupation. I think that is actually the opinion sold to them by the state… when you want an army to occupy somewhere, you send people who have no affiliation whatsoever with the people. That way they can obey the command to kill at will without feeling any emotion (Interview, Oghara, Delta state. 5 December 2017)

The state's history of militarized approach to resistance in the Niger Delta influences the negative perceptions of the military, which makes security engagements with the local people difficult to reconcile in their everyday life despite the ongoing PAP. The military is often seen as protective more of oil infrastructure and oil production rather than life and property of the locals (Omeje 2004: 425).

Another area where some respondents identified a positive effect of the PAP is the provision of educational and vocational training. Many youths benefitted from the scheme and acquired graduate qualifications. Some respondents asserted that if not for the PAP, many of the youths who are now graduates would not have been educated and would have added to the pool of uneducated youths that could exacerbate the conflict. This view includes an acknowledgement of opportunities that education provides and its capacity to reform hearts and minds. An Ijaw youth in Sagbama, Bayelsa state, scored the programme highly with respect to educational provision, mentioning in particular the positive benefit for people from the Ijaw ethnic group:

> I would say 70 percent just in the area of education. If not for the PAP, I doubt if today the Ijaw nation can boast of the number of graduates we have. Today we can boast of thousands of graduates from this region, and most of them got the best of education even better than those of us that schooled here in Nigeria. That is a plus. Most Ijaw families today have graduates because of the programme. Go to Southern-Ijaw, a community can give you 80-100 graduates courtesy of the programme. Go to Arigbo-Ijaw, we are now beginning to compete with the Yoruba's [a major ethnic group reputed to be the most educated in Nigeria] because of the programme. On that, I give the programme credit. (FGD- Male. 10 November 2017).

While other interviewees and also other people supported in informal chats the young man's assessment of PAP's educational achievement above, some respondents from other ethnic groups are more critical as they believe the PAP favoured predominantly Ijaws. Indeed, key government functionaries implementing the programme have been from this ethnic group, a view which shows that tension between the ethnic groups remain high in the region. As one Niger Delta scholar who is of the Urhobo ethnicity argued:

> The Niger Delta is a combination of so many minorities. The only major ethnic group that appeared to have gained tangentially from the amnesty programme happens to be the Ijaws. We have the Urhobos, we have the Isokos, we have the Binis… Those who were close to corridors of power were given the opportunity to bring boys, to nominate boys who will benefit.

Nevertheless, some respondents argue that the inability of many young people to find employment after their training is a challenge for the programme. The two narratives below question the impact of training in a context where jobs are rare:

> Of what use is it for you to acquire a skill without finding a place to apply them? Yes, because you can acquire some degree and you do not find a way where you can actually express yourself, then, as far as I am concerned, such degrees mean nothing. If you are a trained welder and you do not find a place to actually apply the skill, of what use is the skill? It means you still remain unemployed. You are still as idle as somebody who has not acquired the skill. You merely have the skills but there is no expression for them. So in the first place, to some extent one could say that you have been empowered. But if you cannot not apply it to earn a living for yourself, I think you still don't have a source of bread (Interview. Male. Benin City. 26 November 2017).

> No, it is not about sending people for training. That programme also created a policy for reabsorbing them after training. That has not been done. That is why you see that somebody who has gone to Canada and he is back. A full-fledged graduate, maybe in engineering, he does not have work after five years, what do you expect that man to do? What do you expect a hungry man to do? (Interview: Female. Gokana, River state. 12 November 2017)

A community elder in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, whilst disparaging the PAP measures as superficial, lamented the psychological trauma the inability to find jobs or the underutilisation of their training could be having on the youths. To him:

> All the measures that the government have put in place are cosmetic. They are not there to meet the yearnings and aspirations of the people. Well of course, it has given some youth opportunity to go to school. Some youths have gained. Now even if they come back from the institutions where will they work? People are even dying with their knowledge. Some people are even frustrated. Because some will return, they are not engaged meaningfully. Somebody who read petroleum engineering will go and teach Chemistry in the classroom in a secondary school. That is misplacement of manpower and underutilisation of manpower. All those things are what is in vogue. Because if somebody is educated, you want the person to be productive, that is why the person is educated. And when the person is educated and is misplaced or is not placed properly, that could turn into psychological problem and psychological trauma. So, most of the people that have returned with their degrees are undergoing psychological problems. Serious psychological torture. Because they come back, they think their living standard will improve but their living standard has not improved (Interview. Male. 09 November 2017).

The inability of the PAP to address the underlying grievances culminating in the Niger Delta conflict is a huge worry for many interviewees. They claim that the PAP has not led to the much-needed development of the region especially with respect to infrastructure. This, they state, provides the basis for continuing agitations. An adult male respondent had this to say:

> Well, those who would have argued that the people of the Niger Delta have benefited from the Amnesty programme may have been correct to some extent. But I will say the benefit is just mere tokenism. It's just mere droplets. Because if you look at the benefits we are talking about, it does not affect the generality of the people in that area, and this provide basis for continue agitation or resurgence of militancy in the area. What about the state of infrastructure in that area which would have been to the benefit of everybody? What about the serenity of the environment that has been destroyed over time because of oil exploration? To what extent has it been addressed? How are the farmers and the fishermen or women in that area coping in terms of earning livelihood? The sea or the ocean around the Niger Delta, the rivers and rivulets around the Niger Delta, are still not fit for any livelihood. The soil is still not fertile for the people to embark on agriculture (Interview. Benin City. 26 November 2017).

Here, a Niger Delta scholar familiar with the workings of the PAP assesses the rationale for the programme and argues that the government has achieved its aims of maximising oil production. However, he laments its failure to address the core issues that precipitated the conflict.

> By my assessment, I will score the amnesty programme 30% for success and 70% for the weaknesses. The reason is this: you do not window-dress issues. The amnesty programme is a short-term programme initiated to actually enable the boys to drop their arms and also for the government to derive maximum oil production. The interest of the government was centred on having maximum oil production and they do not want a situation where the boys would disturb their process of oil production such that they would have maximum output from oil production in the Niger Delta. And this was the sole of implementing the amnesty programme. The government has sure achieved their aims, but it has not solved the problems in the Niger Delta. The reason that led the youths of the region into carrying arms, have not been addressed (Interview, Male. Amassoma, Southern Ijaw LGA, Bayelsa state. 29 November 2017).

A young woman from Bomadi in Delta state shared these views. She reckons that the situation worsened due to the inability of the government to address some agreements reached at the start of the programme.

> It seems that the programme the federal government brought to make peace is actually making things worse. This is because there were so many agreements reached for the programme to be a success. The programme was set up as a result of the suffering of the people. We make others rich, but we are suffering. We do not have schools and other things. So, the federal government has to reach out to other things that were agreed on (FGD- 21 November 2017).

Some respondents questioned the rationality of paying the ex-militants a monthly stipend. They think that some of the ex-militants are being paid for doing nothing especially when there is no social welfare scheme that guarantees any form of payment for other youths or even the elderly in the region. The respondent below shares the thought of the stipend becoming a means of blackmail if withheld. According to him:

> As a Niger Deltan who literally is a concerned observer of the whole thing, I will say it is not a huge success. I would not want to dismiss it totally, but I will say it is not a huge success. Yes, a few persons have been trained though some may even turn out to be, will I say paying people for doing nothing? So, to that extent it was a failure because there is no end to the payment. And once you stop paying, they go back. It even becomes a blackmail weapon. A blackmail tools. "If you no wan pay us we dey go back oh" [meaning the ex-militants would go back to the creeks if they were not paid]. They can use it (Interview, Male. Port Harcourt, Rivers state. 01 December 2017).

A young woman who is an undergraduate student in the Niger Delta University in Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa state shares her concern about the ex-militants' payment. She states:

> So, they [militants] are the strongmen, we fear them and even the government too fears them that is why they pleaded with them to pay them stipends for them to be calm. How about you and me who have worked hard to be educated, then you wake up one morning and get the news that some persons will be paid some amounts for nothing." (Interview, Female. Amassoma, Southern Ijaw LGA, Bayelsa state. 29 November 2017).

The ICG (2015: 3) report supports the claims of the respondents that the monthly stipend of 65,000 naira paid to ex-militants, which is far more than the national minimum wage of 18,000 naira in the civil service serves as an incentive for many ex-militants not to work. This assertion is challenging in some ways; stopping the stipends creates an excuse for the ex-militants to engage in further violent protests. They have done that several times when their payments were delayed by a few weeks or months. They would take to the major motorways and barricade it with burn fires thereby causing total chaos for commuters and for businesses. An ex-militant

in Okrika, Rivers state, lamented about their frustrations when a stipend is delayed. According to him:

> I have a boss who is a 'general' and he does empower me. But from January till date, there has been no payment and even the general is also complaining to me about finances. Right now, we are planning to do worse things. We are still begging the government to do something (interview, 18 November 2017).

Secondly, the government would rather have that the ex-militants are paid their stipend, which is a lesser burden compared to the huge disruptions they can bring on the oil production activities. Hence, the programme is still in place whilst drawing the ire of those people in the Niger Delta who think the former militants are now paid for doing nothing. The focus of PAP only on the ex-militant youths who carried arms has been a source of worry by many people. There is the argument that focussing on the ex-militants alone cannot and has not guaranteed peace. It therefore raises the concern that not having a sort of programme that caters for many other members of the region has the capacity to heighten violence. One community elder in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, captured the PAP's focus on the ex-militants who enlisted with the programme. According to him:

> I think one success that was recorded in the amnesty is the training of most youths that volunteered to drop their arms. It is worthy of note that the amnesty scheme did not cover the development of Niger Delta but rather, it was focused on those that were believed to have submitted their arms. The scheme did not look at those who did not go and identify with the government. That is, those that did not register with the scheme. It only looked at those who registered, and a reasonable number of such people have benefited from it (Interview, Male 13 November 2017)

Similarly, the two respondents below decried the PAP's neglect of other dimensions of the development of the Niger Delta. They contended that the focus on ex-militants creates the impetus for other people to resort to armed violence tactics.

> If you develop youths that are vocal what happens to those ones that are not vocal. You are actually sending the wrong message that everybody needs to pick up arms to be able to get something. Now what of the adults in the community? Has the environment been bettered? Has infrastructure been bettered? When you train people, they are now big men. Where will they work when they come back? There are no industries. When they buy cars, which road will they pass? These are issues the government needs to look at (Interview, Oghara, Delta state. 05 December 2017).

> Now, the ND is made up of millions of youths. You have given amnesty not to millions of youths. You have given amnesty to 30,000 youths who carried guns. You have not discussed with the millions who have potential to still carry guns in the future. You did not discuss with them. Those ones did not promise you anything (Interview, Female. Port Harcourt, Rivers state. 01 December 2017).

A young male respondent also emphasised the neglect of the local people like peasant farmers who would deserve to benefit from social interventions from the government. He identified

farmers as those who suffered most from the conflict as they lost their source of livelihood by the environmental pollution of oil production activities and the economic sabotage of oil theft.

> The only issue I have is the mode of operation. We still need some level of sincerity so that those that actually bear the brunt of oil exploration, those that cannot farm any more, those that cannot fish anymore, should be the primary beneficiary. Because they are the primary stakeholders (Interview, Sagbama, Bayelsa state. 10 November 2017).

Not everyone, however, would accept to be part of PAP as currently constituted. One respondent, a trader, was indifferent about the programme as it was not inclusive enough. Besides, he believes he has the capacity to be industrious and financially independent without it. He noted the negative influence free money from PAP might have on people's character and make them irresponsible. According to him:

> I do not want to be part of it [PAP]. When my father gave birth to me, he did not feed me with amnesty. He was a trader and trained me with it. It was the death of my mother that did not allow me to complete my education. Because of that, I want to train my children to university level. Apart from that, that amnesty of a thing is spoiling our boys. Although it did not include many boys, but some are using the proceeds to chase other people's wives. Because of that, I do not like it. But if you use the proceeds to build a house there is no problem. But if you flirt with other people's wives because of free money I don't like it. Because they do not know money value. It does not allow you to take up a proper job. It is because of the oil that there is amnesty. So, if they want a proper amnesty, they should include everybody (Interview, Male. Bomadi. 22 November 2017).

Thus far, this section has examined people's perception and experiences of the PAP in the Niger Delta. Whilst some of the responses from the interviewees have been corroborated in academic literature, it is pertinent to stress that so far, by the federal government's economic calculation, PAP has been successful because it has created the avenue for improved oil production compared to what obtained during the peak of the conflict pre amnesty. It has no doubt been beneficial to the Nigerian state, as it has increased the foreign exchange earnings of Nigeria. The paltry "700,000 barrels per day (bpd) in mid-2009 has increased to between 2.2 and 2.4 million (bpd) since 2011" (ICG 2015: 2). However, the resurgence of conflict by some militant groups in 2016 (as we will explore next) caused a further dent to government's revenue, and an upscale in military activities in the region. The promulgation of PAP has helped to check the outbreak of a full-blown resource war like there have been in other African countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. The amnesty has also spared the country "the estimated 3.74 billion naira (about US $18.7 million)" spent daily prosecuting the war on oil insurgency in the region (*Ibid*, 2015:2). PAP reveals an attempt at convoking a 'home grown' peacebuilding strategy despite its frailties and shortcomings vis-a-vis global best practices (Obi

2014b: 252). It signalled a departure from the usual militarized approach of the federal government to the Niger Delta agitation, towards a relatively civil approach to peacebuilding. Educationally, it has created opportunities for the ex-militants to receive formal education and vocational training within and outside the country. Ordinarily, many of the ex-militants would not have been able to afford this training or have the agency to undertake them on their own without the opportunity of PAP. For example, four of the ex-militants enrolled in Benson Idahosa University, in Benin City, Edo state, finished with a first-class degree which earned them employment as lecturers at the institution (Nwokolo and Aghedo 2018: 331).

However, the implementation of PAP has been fraught with challenges, one of which is the paucity of proper planning and implementation (Oluwaniyi 2011: 51). According to Ikelegbe (2010: 84), "the amnesty programme has faltered on the altar of poor planning and organization, weak and non-inclusive implementation structure and institutionalization, poor implementation and poor results". He argues that the peace prevalent in the region currently is "more or less the cessation of hostilities". This kind of peace of the graveyard predicated on a slapdash political settlement or a purchased peace is not sustainable. The PAP did not evolve from an all-inclusive participation of critical stakeholders including "the militias, the TNOCs, ethnic and regional leaders, civil society leaders and communities". It seemed more like a "dictated and imposed rather than negotiated" arrangement (Ikelegbe 2010: 71-72). Davidheiser and Nyiayaana (2011: 60) contends that the PAP did not emerge as a "product of a comprehensive, well-elaborated, or multilateral peace agreement". It is more of an imposed 'top-bottom' project that is not borne out of dialogue and consultation with the critical stakeholders like the militants, which accounts for their initial lukewarm embrace of the initiative. The consequence of this kind of 'imposed' amnesty programme, is a lack of ownership of the process by the key interest groups in the Niger Delta. The suspicion, resentment, and lack of attachment to the ideals of the PAP by the people of the region proved inimical to the overall success of the amnesty programme.

Allied to the above is the unclear definition of who constitutes a militia. The notion of a militia being anybody or any group surrendering arms at approved centres highlights the flaws in the planning process. It is important to distinguish clearly between ex-militants who were propelled by genuine grievances, from other bands of hoodlums. There was and still is an unclear demarcation between resistance and criminality as some of the groups that led grievance protests quickly metamorphosed into militant criminality (Ikelegbe 2010; Obi 2014b: 255; Oriola 2012: 534-35). All manner of persons took advantage of the amnesty

programme, including those with criminal records unrelated to militant agitations (rapists, armed robbers, cultists, amongst others), who hid under the amnesty to evade justice. Davidheiser and Nyiayaana (2011) observed that the monthly stipend of ₦65, 000 was an attractive monetary incentive for many jobless youths to register as militants. In that manner, the PAP seemed to have glossed over the atrocities of human rights violations committed by some of the ex-militants and as such encouraged impunity. Such violations include the deaths of innocent non-combatants and denies the victims the reprieve of justice for the dastardly acts committed by the militants and forecloses greatly the hope of compensations or closure for the death of their loved ones. PAP tends to have clustered the militants as one irrespective of crimes committed by the individual militants in the community. It did not engage any way of identifying specific crimes in the course of the militancy (Ubhenin 2013).

The programme has also been criticized for its focus on ex-militias to the detriment of other non-combatant groups in the Niger Delta. Non-militant but traumatized groups in the society like women and orphaned children who bore the brunt of the violent conflicts were not included in the scheme. It creates the impression that criminality and the taking-up of arms against the state presents opportunities for recognition and reward (Aghedo 2012; Osumah 2013). For instance, Oluwaniyi (2011: 52) observed that the "Ogoni people, especially the youth who never participated in the armed struggle" were alienated from the amnesty deal. There is the probability that such marginalized and alienated youths can lay hold on such grievance of a skewed PAP in favour of the conflict actors rather than the victims as a plank for a prospective attack against the state. Such exclusion constitutes a grave danger to the peace and security of the region as the resurgence of armed violence in 2016 showed that PAP is not a silver bullet.

Another observable lapse was the lack of involvement of the international oil companies in the amnesty template considering that the IOCs are not only the primary beneficiary of the oil insurgency, but part of the crisis. As Ubhenin (2013: 193) notes, "the amnesty did not make provision for the role of multinational oil corporations who have been accused by environmental activists of fuelling human rights violations and resource depletion in the region". It did not incorporate the specific obligations of IOCs in their responsibility for the recurrent oil spillage arising from oil exploration, which is a threat to the source of livelihood of the people (who are predominantly fish farmers) and consequently a source of grievance fuelling conflict in the region. This is in contrast, for example, to the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 where about US$20 billion was spent

on compensation, and in a commitment to clean up the spillage in that singular incident. This situation creates the sense of frustration by the people of the Niger Delta as to why the IOCs are able to act differently in the Niger Delta compared to their home countries or in other developed countries. This contrasting mode of operation has generated a lack of trust by the locals regarding the government's ability to regulate the activities of the IOCs in protecting the environment and the oil multinationals' genuine willingness to work towards the development of the region (Harrington 2005).

Although PAP is hailed as a homegrown peacebuilding mechanism, that itself inherently carries the trappings of Nigeria's patronage politics. Politicians usurped the programme for their political ends, engaging the ex-militants for electoral malpractices like ballot box snatching and stuffing, intimidating their political opponents and for killings (Aghedo 2012). As Obi (2014b: 253) argues, "PAP provides a case with which to demonstrate that, far from being a neutral process, certain actors, in this case the Nigerian state and elites can use the notion and practice of peacebuilding to pursue dominant political and economic interest". Local political elites and conflict entrepreneurs manipulated the conflict economy of the Niger Delta to strengthen their socioeconomic and political base using the instrumentality of the amnesty programme. There have been cases of ex-militants siding with certain political elites against their political rivals with grave consequences of insecurity for the everyday life of the people in such areas caught in the crossfire. The politicisation of the amnesty was evident in the rift between Mr. Timi Alaibe, (the special adviser to the president on amnesty), and Chief Timipre Sylva (Bayela state Governor) during the disarmament process on 22 August 2009 at the Peace Park in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. The event for the surrendering of weapons by the ex-militants organised by the Governor carefully excluded Mr Alaibe who was believed to be nursing gubernatorial ambitions that could threaten the position of Chief Sylva. Mr Alaibe, just like the Governor, had ex-militants loyal to him. During the event, the ex-militant group led by Selky Torghedi, alias 'Young Shall Grow' reputed to be loyal to Mr. Alaibe was absent. According to Ukiwo and Ebiede (2012: 15), "the Sylva administration acted in this way to prevent a potential rival from breaking into his network of client militants". The militants were often useful mercenaries for their patrons during elections where violence and electoral fraud define the political contests in the region (ibid).

The implementation of PAP has been fraught with allegations of lack of accountability and misappropriation of funds. The estimated cost of the programme is over US $500 million per year (ICG 2015: i). The expensive nature of PAP puts a huge hole in government resources

available for other social services. It is thought to have swallowed ₦72 billion and ₦88 billion in 2012 and 2013 respectively from the federal government budget (Eke 2014: 7), therefore making it a "political liability" (Ubhenin 2013: 197). Officials of the Presidential Amnesty Office (PAO) have been fingered for these misappropriations. According to Schultze-Kraft (2013: 29), a review of the reintegration operations of the Amnesty's DDR by a panel revealed that "about 80 per cent of the budget had gone on payments to consultants and contractors, leaving just 20 per cent for the rehabilitation of ex-militants". The ex-militant commanders were also involved in the embezzlement of funds. Some of them underpaid their 'foot soldiers', which did not go down well with the 'boys' who felt short-changed. One such incident arising from the incorrect payment to the 'boys' allegedly led to the killing of Soboma George, a former MEND commander (Aghedo 2012). Some of the ex-militant commanders are also believed to have over padded the names submitted to the PAO as their foot soldiers. One of such is 'General' Tom Ateke who submitted a list of 10, 000 ex-combatants under his control whereas sources allied to him puts the right figure at about 1000. The ₦65,000 monthly allowance paid to him for onward transmission to his boys leaves him with a huge amount of ₦650, 000,000 while he enjoys a lavish lifestyle (Eke 2014: 8). With the enormous money paid to the array of government officials, contractors and consultants amongst others, PAP has become a 'lucrative business' instead of a 'transformational strategy' for peace and development in the Niger Delta (Oluwaniyi 2011: 52). This pervasiveness and accountability deficit underscores the complaints and criticism of corruption that have characterized the handling of the amnesty programme. The PAP has become a victim of the pervasive political economy of corruption in Nigeria, where public offices and institutions are seen as conduit pipes for primitive accumulation of wealth and political patronage. It is a symptom of the nature and character of the Nigerian state where funds for development projects is apparently considered as state largess- a 'national cake' worthy of easy fleece. PAP is therefore not executed in isolation of this reality.

Perhaps the most debilitating challenge of the PAP is its failure to address the root causes of the Niger Delta conflict. PAP, as Agbiboa (2015: 387) argues, is a "gilded pacification" of the militants, a smokescreen for the enablement of oil and gas production without genuine attempt at addressing the convoluted problems of the Niger Delta. There were no solid foundations laid for addressing the grievances of the people in the first place and engaging them constructively afterwards. Oil resource control has been one of the unaddressed age-long grievances of the Niger Delta people against the Nigerian state where the majority

ethnic groups have largely run the federal government. The only exception has been the period between May 2010 and May 2015 when Dr Goodluck Jonathan, was president following the death of his predecessor in office. The people of the Niger Delta want the control of oil resources in their region, and to be involved in the management of the oil industry. Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2014: 77) notes that PAP is faltering owing to its "excessive exclusion and inequitable benefits". Its narrow-minded conception without a broad-based plan for resolving the grievances of the people and the overall development of the Niger Delta belies its potential for a sustainable mitigation of the conflict in the region, which serves as a reason for the resurgence of militancy despite the expectations of PAP.

5.2 Conflict Resurgence and the Futility of PAP

The inability of PAP to address the key socioeconomic, oil governance and environmental challenges in the Niger Delta has led to a resurgence of militancy and insecurity in the region. The promise of the former National Coordinator of the Amnesty Programme, Ndutimi Alaibe, that the amnesty "was meant to stabilize, consolidate and sustain the security conditions in the Niger Delta region, as a requisite for promoting economic development in the area" (Agbiboa 2015: 400), have not materialised. Even President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007) who ordered soldiers to Odi where hundreds of people were killed and the community sacked, noted whilst criticizing the lack of development in the Niger Delta that "the obvious assessment so far is that not much impact has been made on the lives and living standards of most ordinary people of the Niger Delta" (Peel 2009: 19).

The increasing spate of insecurity in the region reflects the inadequacy and failure of the PAP to curb insurgency and a return to the instability synonymous with the pre-Amnesty era. Whereas the Amnesty and its DDR package have succeeded in reducing the "direct confrontation" hitherto, between the ex-militants and state forces, it has "indirectly" created avenues for additional violence (Aghedo 2015: 137). This renewed sphere of violent conflict and criminality in the region includes "sea piracy, oil bunkering, armed robbery, political assassinations, and ransom kidnapping" (Aghedo 2015: 150). The initial practice of ex-militant commanders paying their ex-soldiers stipends directly from the money received from the amnesty office is believed to have "reinforced bonds that in some cases remain unbroken, giving the former commanders the ability to rally their fighters to any new cause" (ICG 2015: 3). In this way, the militia men continue to owe allegiance to the ex-commanders rather than the government. Of significance is the fact that some ex-militants like John Togo, Tamunontonye Kuna and Keiti Sesse, prominent MEND commanders who had embraced the

amnesty and surrendered their arms, were reported to have returned to the creeks and resumed hostilities against the state (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011). New camps are being set up while new militant leaders have occupied positions exited by former warlords (Godwin 2014). The implication for this replication or replacement of militant leaders is that the peace of the region will remain perpetually fragile with youths and militant commanders who are ready and able to unleash mayhem in the Niger Delta.

Kidnappings and criminal violence have again increased post-amnesty. Whereas the victim of kidnappings at the peak of the militancy prior to the amnesty in 2009 were mostly foreign oil workers, recent abductions include Nigerians alike across all the spectrum of society- politicians, religious leaders, business executives, journalists, lecturers, and traditional leaders, amongst others[42]. Sometimes, some of the abducted persons are killed even after ransom have been paid. There is the fear that many of the youths who were excluded from the Amnesty programme are compounding the insecurity of the region (Ajayi and Adesote 2013; Godwin 2014). It is instructive to state that ex-militants are not responsible for all acts of criminal violence in the region. However, a growing number of them have been arrested by security officials for crimes like kidnapping, piracy, oil theft, amongst others. Even in the early days of the PAP, the police in 2010 arrested four ex-militants who have been demobilised under the Amnesty programme in Akwa Ibom state for kidnapping activities (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011). This reflects the propensity of some of the ex-militants to indulge in crime no matter what prospects the PAP presented for them.

There is an increased rate of bunkering (oil theft) in the Niger Delta with an estimated monthly loss of about US$1 billion (Obi 2014b). In December 2018, the JTF reported it destroyed 436 illegal refineries operated by criminals in the Niger Delta region (Premium Times 2018). A recent report by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) showed that the vandalism of oil and gas pipeline rose by 77 percent in June 2019. NNPC's Monthly Financial and Operations Report (MFOR) indicated, "106 pipeline points were breached as against the 60 points vandalised the previous month" thereby leaving the refineries at a loss of ₦17billion (Femi Adekoya and Kingsley Jeremiah 2019). This festering crime of oil theft spills oil on the environment, which further compounds the already devastating effects of environmental pollution arising from the operations of IOCs in the region. Since 2012, there

[42] For an exploration of the kidnap for ransom menace in the Niger Delta, See Oarhe Osumah and Iro Aghedo, 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Nigerian Youths and the Commodification of Kidnapping', *Review of African Political Economy,* 38/128 (2011), 277-87.

have also been a rise in sea piracy on the waterways of the Niger Delta and the surrounding waters of Gulf of Guinea attributed to the resurgence of militancy in the post-Amnesty era. According to (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2014: 66), "there were 29 piracy incidents on Nigerian waters with two hijackings, boarding of 11 ships and attacks on 13 vessels and attempted attacks on three others in 2013". A situation that makes shipping and transport activities on the waterways perilous due to the increasing level of sea piracy and criminality in the region.

In a renewed act of militancy, MEND declared a resumption of hostilities against the state, targeting oil installations under the sobriquet 'Hurricane Exodus' with the aim of completely grounding oil production in the region by 2015. Their renewed hostility amongst other things is in apparent anger over the imprisonment of its key leaders, Henry Okah and Charles Okah for militancy and gunrunning related activities (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2014: 62). New militia movements have also emerged in the post-amnesty era. They include the 'Coastal Revolutionary Forces', and the 'Idiot Family' in Bayelsa state (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2014: 62-63). The first sign of a crack in the PAP's path to peacebuilding emerged on 1 October 2010 when MEND allegedly detonated two cars laden with bombs, killing two persons and injuring 36 others during Nigeria's 50th Independence Day Anniversary. The government's amnesty offer had split MEND into two factions- its leaders who accepted the idea of amnesty like General Boyloaf and those against it like Henry Okah. It is believed the disgruntled faction continued in militancy even though it is difficult to determine who did not continue until they are caught by the JTF. One such ex-militant leader who returned to the creeks after accepting the federal government amnesty was 'General' John Togo, leader of the Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF). He was killed in May 2011 by federal troops in a raid on his militant camp but not before his hometown, the Ayakoromor community had been razed down in search of him. On 25 January 2014, MEND fighters were suspected to have attacked the Police gunboats and escorts of an ex-militant leader in Bayelsa state who had accepted amnesty. About 13 recorded militia attacks signalled a resurgence of violence and the hiccups of the PAP (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2014).

Following the inauguration of the new administration of President Muhammadu Buhari on 29 May 2015, there was a reduction in militant activities on oil infrastructure. The militant groups apparently wanted to gauge the government and see what it would do differently. The relative peace was shattered with the formation of a new militia group, the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) on February 3, 2016 (Amaize and perez 2016). The NDA, an amalgam of militants across ethnic groups in the region demanded that a greater share of the oil wealth go

to the Niger Delta. The NDA made a 10-point demand list that the government should meet if there were to be peace in the region. The demands included the allocation of oil blocs that reflected a 60% ownership by oil producing people and 40% for non-oil producing people; the immediate resumption of academic activities in the Nigeria Maritime University in Okerenkoko, Delta state; the clean-up of Ogoni land and all oil- polluted lands in the region; the implementation of the report of the 2014 National Conference constituted by President Jonathan; and improved funding and continuous implementation of the PAP, amongst others (The News 2016). Since their formation, they have proved to be far more ferocious post-amnesty. The NDA bombed oil pipelines in an operation under the codename 'Operation Red Economy'. They successfully bombed several oil facilities in the region (see appendix 2). One of the attacks was the bombing of a major gas pipeline that takes gas from Escravos to Warri, Lagos, and Abuja. Although the Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Ibok Ibas labelled the attacks as an act of sabotage, it shows the dangerous retreat to the pre-amnesty era of oil insurgency (Vanguard 2015). Militants purportedly loyal to Chief Government Ekpemupolo alias Tompolo, described as "one of the shrewdest and wealthiest militant leaders in the Niger Delta" (Africa Confidential 2015), were reported to have attacked oil and gas facilities in Gbaramatu and Ugborodo areas of Delta state using general purpose machine guns (GPMG). The attack is believed to be a reaction to the order of arrest by a Federal High Court on Tompolo who is alleged to be involved in a ₦34billion naira fraud (O'Neil 2016). Besides the NDA, other militants group quickly joined the fray. On 30 May 2016, the New Delta Suicide Squad (NDSS) announced its formation and entry into the economy of violence in the Niger Delta. Their stated target is the destruction of equipment and installations of private oil firms in the Niger Delta (Okereh 2016). Similarly, on 2 June 2016, the Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF), a militant group that claims affiliation to the Niger Delta Avengers, threatened to start launching missiles from June 7, 2016 against oil and gas targets in the region (Ugwuanyi 2016).

In response to the insecurity, the federal government deployed warships, gunboats, and fighter jets to the region to combat the militants (Amaize et al. 2016), in a familiar scene that typified the pre-amnesty era. However, the federal government has recently commenced the clean-up of Ogoni land and academic activities have begun in the Nigeria Maritime University in Okerenkoko, Delta state. While some critics have been less assuaged by the clean-up taking place in Ogoni land only without including other oil polluted communities, the measure is nonetheless significant as it portrays a carrot and stick method of the federal government in

meeting some demands of the militia groups whilst also carrying out massive military bombardment through the JTF.

Although militant attacks on oil infrastructure occurred under the regime of President Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015), they were sporadic with some months of non-engagement by the militants. They often justified their attacks as a show of their grievance against the government for not developing the region, but more importantly, it helped to keep them relevant and visible in the media space. In that way, they got more attention. However, the frequency with which the NDA carried out its attacks under the new President Buhari's regime cannot be ascribed to their demands on the federal government alone. Close watchers of affairs in the Niger Delta could attribute the wave of attacks on oil infrastructure in part to the loss of President Jonathan (an Ijaw man from the Niger Delta) in the 2015 general elections. His loss meant a psychological disconnect with the 'son-of-the-soil' effect Jonathan's presidency had on the militia groups, and the fears of the discontinuation of the PAP. Besides, it played into the narrative in the region of a gang-up of the major ethnic tribe (especially the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group to which the new president belongs) against Jonathan's presidency, the first ever by an ethnic minority and a Niger Deltan. More telling was president Buhari's stoppage of the oil-pipeline security contracts given to the ex-militant leaders by his predecessor and the investigation of the militant leaders like 'General' Tompolo for alleged corruption. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that former militant leaders, 'General'. Ebikabowei "Boyloaf" Victor-Ben and 'General' Ateke Tom, were paid $3.8 million a year each for their men to protect the pipelines in the Niger Delta. 'General' Ekpemupolo ("Tompolo") got a $22.9 million-a-year contract as well, while in 2011 Nigeria's state oil company began paying Asari Dokubo $9 million a year for him to pay his 4,000 former fighters, ironically for the protection of the pipelines they used to attack (Hinshaw 2012). Despite the huge amount spent by the government, the resurgence of militancy and its associated criminality like bunkering and kidnappings could be traced in part to the failure of the warlords to pay their foot soldiers. A security expert in the Niger Delta region noted that:

> The real problem is that the militant leaders whose companies were used in getting the lucrative contracts have not taken care of their supporters, a situation that has led to anger and muscle-flexing currently brewing in the Niger Delta. Apart from that, the award of the jobs to the persons who understand the creeks more than anyone else is like paying armed robbers to protect your house. That is why these people who claim to have renounced militancy are picking and choosing where to steal oil and who to abduct because they now have a license directly from the government (S. Daniel 2013).

The above statement reflects the underlying interplay of greed in the perceived grievance of the Niger Delta agitators. Many of them exhibits primordial motivations in their supposed struggle for the liberation of the region. According to (S. Daniel 2013), one of the former militant leaders and a top politician fled Nigeria after withdrawing over ₦2 billion from an account for the execution of the security contract given to one of them from Bayelsa state. They are certainly not alone in the narratives of corruption that have greeted developments efforts in the region.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the reactions of the people of the Niger Delta to the state's implementation of PAP. It interrogated the narratives, perceptions, and experiences of the people about the PAP, revealing their feelings and the existential reality of the programme as it affects them, and the prevailing challenges of PAP that have engendered the resurgence of conflict. PAP has shown that, as with many other peace deals in post-conflict environments, the conditions of such societies following 'peace' negotiations or conflict mitigations accords often results in a "no war, no peace" conditions, a forced or imposed peace that leaves much to be desired. This is likely so as these peace deals often attend to symptoms of the conflict rather than the causative factors (Ginty 2010: 145). This chapter showed that the PAP is not the 'silver bullet' for peacebuilding in the Niger Delta as it had only limited gains which the respondents claim showed in educational opportunities for the ex-militants, and security because of the accompanying deployment of the military forces alongside PAP in the region. It revealed that if the government is truly interested in the security and peace of the region, the way the PAP is implemented is both limited and flawed for engendering peace and security. The PAP created 'new' security problems and ultimately failed in addressing the causative factors of the grievance in the region.

The chapter also showed that the PAP has not improved the everyday security concerns of the people of the Niger Delta region. The different narratives and experiences of the people (interviewees) reflects a PAP whose outcome falls short of the socio-economic conditions they envisaged for it. The government's inability to tackle the wider socio-economic developments, environmental pollution, and the exclusion of the oil-host communities from the management of oil production, casts PAP largely as a failure in the region. The PAP has not benefited the generality of the people in the region. The reality is that the persistent unaddressed issues that define the conflict continue to provide a basis for agitation by the people of the region. Whilst PAP 'buys' relative peace temporarily by placating militant youths with monetary and training

incentives, it has proved to be an unsustainable peacebuilding measure. It nevertheless suits the narratives of critics who feel that it helps the cause of the government and oil multinationals so long as there are unhindered oil production activities. The critics think that not to have PAP, would be a collapse of Nigeria's rentier economy. Nevertheless, this chapter concludes that the PAP has not guaranteed and cannot guarantee a peaceful Niger Delta because of its limited agenda and the structural factors that have plagued the implementation of the programme thus far. The fact that the PAP is finite is constitutive of a future problem. It is hard to imagine what would become of the everyday security of the people of the region, and the state and IOC's assets when the programme is stopped having floundered thus far. A return to anarchy as of the 'old order' would be most likely inevitable.

The PAP's inability to address the core grievances and developmental issues that precipitated the conflict remains a continuous rationale by militia groups for the resurgence of militancy. It is therefore imperative for the state, its IOC partners, and the local Political and traditional elites to have an inclusive peacebuilding strategy that would engage the issues that precipitated and continues to fuel the conflict and threat to peace in the Niger Delta. Meeting the key needs of the region that caused the crises would remove the justification for militancy and the psychological and moral support for such militancy by the people. The implication of not creating a sustainable peace mechanism in the Niger Delta will be the perpetuation of insecurity and criminal violence with consequences for the daily life of the people. What the resurgence of conflict has shown post-amnesty is that the militant youths' capability for attacks on oil and non-oil related targets remains despite the state's military actions in the region.

CHAPTER 6

STATE (IN)SECURITY PRACTICES IN POST-AMNESTY NIGER DELTA, NIGERIA

The (in)security practices of the Nigerian military deployed in the Niger Delta have been a common factor that has shaped the dynamics of the oil-related conflict in the region for many years. Attempts by the state at quelling the armed resistance has involved military violence targeting not only the militia groups, but civilians as well. This chapter explores effects of the state militarization on the people of the Niger Delta and the multiple ways in which people engage with security measures. It looks at the top-down conventional approach of the state with deployment of the military, and the actions they undertake in providing security. The state's securitization is not only reflected in the framing of the agitating groups in the region as a security risk to the state's oil interest. It is also expressed in action by the militarization of the region (Ukeje 2011: 83).

The chapter further considers the ways people experience and cope with these operations of the state security agents in their everyday life within a militarized environment that highlights the post-colonial authoritarian and repressive character of the Nigerian state. The analysis focusses on the state's security activities mainly in the post-amnesty era since 2009 when the federal government granted militants amnesty as part of the state's peacebuilding campaign. This understanding is important for evaluating and analysing everyday security experiences and perceptions of people living in the Niger Delta, and the implications these has for peace and security in the region under the PAP and beyond.

6.1 Governing (in)security in Post-Amnesty Niger Delta

One of the cardinal roles of the state is the provision of security- protecting the lives and properties of its citizen. In seeking to organise society and to creating a sense of order, the state is construed as both "security providers and producers of insecurity" (Crawford and Hutchinson 2015: 1187). No doubt, the insecurity created by such crime and violence like secret cult clashes, elections violence, ethnic clashes, and other forms of crisis makes the presence of the state security forces inevitable in the region. However, the security forces continue to operate in a manner that seems to go beyond their constitutional role of ensuring security and a peaceful environment in post-amnesty Niger Delta. As shown from the analytical

framework introduced in chapter 2, because of state rentierism, the post-colonial governance structures, and weak institutions synonymous with the resource curse, grievances which occur within the Niger Delta are responded to with a securitization by the government elites and the transnational corporations, the outcome of which is militarization. This underscores how the government understands and frames its response to the grievances of the people.

The framing of the resistance in the Niger Delta as an existential threat to state interests has been a key factor in the state's securitization and subsequent security actions in the region. This is often highlighted by the speech acts of the political and military leaders through press briefings and policy statements. The state uses such discursive acts in the invocation of the use of force, which is instrumental for legitimising the state military actions. One of the federal government's claims was that the "seemingly unending violence in the Niger Delta area was being championed by a dangerous band of psychopathic, merciless mercenaries who exploit their sophistry to kill, rape, kidnap, destroy and extort money from anybody available" (C. Bassey 2012: 81). Addressing the militants as criminals and economic saboteurs allows the state to unleash the security apparatus on them for their apparent acts of subversion whilst shying away from the root cause of the grievance. This was the case with the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), when President Buhari ordered the military to "crush the new militant group" (Sorewei et al. 2016). Consequently, the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) vowed that "the military will employ all available means and measures within its Rule of Engagement to crush any individual or group that engages in the destruction of strategic assets and facilities of the government in the Niger Delta…" (Defence Headquarters Nigeria 2016). The same line of threat was earlier shared by the Chief of Army staff under President Yar'Adua, during the attack on Bonga oil facility, when he declared that, "anyone who thought that it lacked the capacity to root out militancy in the Niger Delta or insurgency in any part of the country not to dare" (C. Bassey 2012: 79). This way of speaking security and the framing of the Niger Delta using statements of threats is significant because it shows the way the state actors define the resistance as a sort of a violent militant behaviour. They do not define it as protests based on grievance embedded in a social context that should be understood to inform valuable policy responses rather than the brute force of militarization to induce silence. As the Chief of Army Staff

Protests by different groups, including armed militant groups and other non-militant social groups are often constructed as existential threats to the state's oil interest, therefore warranting the 'emergency' measures of the military in the region. The narrative of such threat

construction is compounded by what Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2010: 79) refers to as "historical connotations of threat, danger, and harm, or where a history of hostile sentiments exists". Thus, the prolonged agitation of the people of the Niger Delta for the development of their region has come to define the area as volatile and crisis ridden. The outcome of such (in)security framing is the militarization of the region that has meant a fractured relationship where mutual suspicion is rife between the state agents, IOCs, and the local communities.

The focus of the state has revolved around oil extraction and its proceeds in the region. President Buhari's speech at a meeting with a top executive of the Royal Dutch Shell Group, highlights the government's view about the region and whose interests are to be protected. According to him, "we have to be very serious with the situation in the Niger Delta because it threatens the national economy. I assure you that everything possible will be done to protect personnel and oil assets in the region" (Ameh 2016). The president's speech act underscores the state's securitization of the region that privileges the uninterrupted production (security) of oil and gas (Ukiwo and Ebiede 2012: 110) to the detriment of the everyday needs of the people.

The practices of the security forces, as many interviewees noted, challenges the state's legitimacy, and erodes trust in the capacity of the state to protect its citizens. One male respondent in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, who gave an expert interview, having taught, and researched the oil-related violence in the Niger Delta, stated thus:

> The security apparatus is paid by the Nigerian state and so they would also detail out what they are supposed to do. And you don't expect them to do anything less. The state is a rentier one and so every force available to the state to use to repress those who want to make an attack on the source of wealth must be utilised, must be deployed. So, when these personnel are deployed, the only message is ensuring that oil production proceeds unhindered. That is it. (Interview, 01 December 2017).

The presence of the security forces in the Niger Delta is ubiquitous. The security operations are coordinated under the military Joint Task Force (JTF). The JTF, deployed in the region since 2003, has been operating under different operational codenames including, Operation 'Restore Hope' (renamed 'Pulo Shield'), 'Delta Safe', 'Tsare Teku', 'River Sweep', 'Hakuri 1 and 2', 'Eagle Eyes', "Flush', 'Crocodile Smile 1, 2, 3 and 4', amongst others (C. Emuedo 2012; Julius 2014). These operations are carried out depending on the specific security mandate. For example, "Operation Pulo Shield" was deployed to protect oil installations from militant attacks and oil thieves, and to combat sea piracy in the Niger Delta (Babalola 2015). 'Pulo' is an Ijaw word that means oil (Oyadongha 2012). Why an Ijaw word was used for the security operation is not clear, but the Ijaws are the most populous ethnic group in the region.

The proliferation of these military operations reflects the dynamics of the securitization of the Niger Delta, and a pointer to the everyday lived experiences of security of people in the region. Furthermore, these security operations codenames portray a performative utterance of the state's capacity to crush conflicts and to instil fear. For instance, 'fire-for-fire' became a common parlance amongst people in the region to show an ability to match the other person with equal strength. The state security forces project the people as the aggressors and as such, deserving of the consequences of their actions. This kind of narrative masks the root causes of the agitations of the people and the consequent reproduction of violence evident in the region. As this thesis shows, the resistance of the people is fueled by the inactions of the state to their grievances and its security actions, especially through the instrument of force by JTF.

The security forces have bases in all the states in the region. The number of military formations is particularly higher in the three core states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers because of their centrality to oil production and the heart of local resistance. For instance, in Rivers state some of the military formation includes the 6 Amphibious Division - Nigerian Army HQ, Port Harcourt, Adaka Boro Barracks, Eleme, and Nigerian Army Camp, Bori, amongst others. In Delta state, the military formation includes the 3 Battalion Army Barracks, Effurun; Nigerian Navy Air station, Effurun, Uvwie LGA; Nigerian Navy Forward Operating Bases (FOB), Escravos; and Nigerian Navy Logistics Command, Oghara, amongst others. In Bayelsa, there is the Nigeria Army Base, Kolo Creek, Ogbia LGA; JTF Base, Nembe Waterfront, Nembe LGA, and Nigerian Army Forward Operating Base, Agge, Ekeremor LGA, amongst others. In addition to the military formations are numerous Police stations and other gun-carrying paramilitary outfits in the region like the Nigerian Civil Defence Corps (NCDC), the Nigerian Customs Service, amongst others.

Allied to these military formations in the region, are allegations of land sequestration by the security forces. For instance, the Oghara community in Delta state has been in a long-drawn protest against the Nigerian Navy Logistics command in Oghara to vacate their land. The protests arose after the Navy extended the development of the land beyond the 500 feet x 500 feet (about 30 hectares) approved to it by the state government to 243 hectares of land (Vanguard 2016c). Etekpe (2007a: 235) also noted the issue of land sequestration in Port Harcourt, Rivers state. He wondered why Port Harcourt with its paucity of land could afford to allocate so many stretches of land to the Police, Navy, and Army, whereas Rivers people are barely able to access land in the reserved areas of the state. A resident of the area described the proliferation of military formations and land sequestration, and the impact this has for farming.

> If you go to Koko, 30 minutes' drive from here [Oghara], there is another one [military base]. If you go to Sapele, the court has been converted to a naval base. The erstwhile Port has been converted to naval base. Lands are sequestered for oil activities. Military activities first, to protect the oil. In Warri there is a naval base. You go to Burutu there is a naval base. Of course, you know in Warri, there is a military barrack there and other ones dotting all over the place. In a place where the land is already small because of the topography and such expanse of land are now sequestered for military operations, then add the ones sequested for oil operations. Now, tell me how much land is left for the people to farm? (Interview, Male- Oghara, Delta state. 5 December 2017).

The militarization of the region is a reaction to security threats to oil production, and the military is deployed to counter possible threats. Ekine (2008: 67) describes the feature of militarization to entail:

> The use of threats of violence to settle political conflicts, the legitimisation of state violence, the curtailment of freedom of opinion, the domination of military values over civilian life, the violation of human rights, extra judicial killings, and the gross repression of the people.

The implication of the military presence creates and exacerbates insecurity as described by many interviewees.

The numerous roadblocks, the raiding of communities (and sometimes sacking of the entire community) harassment, intimidation, detentions and torture of civilians, social and sexual exploitation of women, are some of the state security practices that define the everyday lived experiences of the people in the Niger Delta. For example, I counted fourteen military checkpoints along the Yenagoa-Port Harcourt road- a distance of less than two hours by bus. Eight checkpoints were established between Sagbama and Yenagoa, a one hour bus (see figure1 below for a checkpoint in the Niger Delta). Some of these checkpoints are in close proximity of less than two minutes that it is possible to see two checkpoints at the same time, such as the ones along the Yenagoa-Amassoma road in Bayelsa state. Security checkpoints have a function in increasing safety, but they also serve as points for extortion and torture. This might not be unconnected also with the fact that many of the state security personnel stationed there are poorly paid and with low morale (Amnesty International 2009; ICG 2006a: 7). People can be tortured for even the slightest of offence. For example, to make a phone call or receive one in a vehicle around a military checkpoint is considered a serious offence. While the military may adopt the operational protocol to ban calls at checkpoints (if it is necessary), due diligence is often not done to ascertain whether such person making a call pose a security threat or not. Besides, there is nothing to warn a first-time traveller to the region that phone calls, for example, are prohibited at checkpoints. Therefore, many people fall victim, and they are subjected to 'frog jump' punishment or told to lie down and face the hot sun, or by any other

crude means of punishment. These practices of the state security agents have left untold hardship on the everyday lives of the people who are themselves victims of the crisis in the region.

There are concerns about the large number of soldiers from the North deployed in the Niger Delta. Some residents contend that the fact that they come from outside the region, and are so numerous, exacerbates their tendencies towards brutality. The perception is that, apparently, since the military share no affiliation with the people, they can kill at will and without emotion as an occupying force. This notion is rife in the region and reflects a normative assumption held like folklore, of the mutual suspicion and distrust of the predominantly Northern region-led federal government against the Niger Delta region and its development interests.

Conflict zones always present opportunities for different actors to profit. As Ratelle (2013: 76) notes, "civil wars and insurgencies often make illegal business opportunities possible for both insurgents and soldiers. Checkpoints become an opportunity for security actors to impose their definition of threat and establish a lucrative shadow economy". This has been the case in many security checkpoints in the Niger Delta where people are harassed. They are profiled, interrogated, and intimidated. Worthy of note too is the disposition of the military. By the nature of their training, the military is not the primary agent of internal security. "Most armies have comparatively little experience of working with civilians" (Micheal C. Williams 1998: 34). Sadly, the Nigerian military permeates the everyday life of the people of the Niger Delta.

Figure 8: Military checkpoints.

Left: A military checkpoint on Elebele road, Ogbia LGA, Bayelsa state. 2 December 2017. Right: A military checkpoint along the East-West Road (Delta state axis), 30 November 2017.

The trend of extortion, brutality and extrajudicial killings by the Nigerian security services abound in several reports by local and international organizations. A report by the Premium Times revealed that the Nigerian security forces extorted ₦100 billion (Naira) over a three-year period between 2015 and 2018 in the South-East of the country (Ogundipe 2018). An Amnesty International report also noted the problem of extrajudicial killings by the security agents. The report captures particularly multiple cases of unlawful killings, disappearances, and torture by the Nigerian Police Force. The report noted that many of the killings take place at checkpoints where they charge motorists illegal fees depending on the class of the vehicle. The report notes: "the Police often shoot drivers who refuse to pay. They also shoot when there is a disagreement about the price or when it is unclear a bribe has been paid" (Amnesty International 2009: 9). The Human Rights Watch has documented a number of rights violations in the Niger Delta. They include the setting up of a special security task forces in response to protests from groups like the Movement for the survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). These security units have "a well-earned reputation for brutality" (HRW 1999: 109). In 1999, Human Rights Watch accused the Nigerian Army of extreme force and rape in the Niger Delta following their attacks on the Odi and Choba communities of Rivers state (Human Rights Watch 1999). According to the report by Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of the Earth International, the massacre of Odi community by the military led to "2483 casualties". It was a complete destruction where "every house in the entire community with the exception of the First Bank, a Community Health Centre and the Anglican Church, were burnt down" (Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria 2002: 2). These experiences of killings by the security forces in the region exacerbates a feeling of oppression by the state and heightens the resolve for resistance by the local people.

However, the security authorities tend to deny such reports, even in the face of glaring evidence. They sometimes claim that such victims were "armed robbers", "hoodlums", "cultists" amongst others, killed in a shoot-out even when there is evidence that they were extra-judicial executions (Amnesty International 2009: 10). The unlawful use of firearms is a widespread phenomenon not only in the Niger Delta, but also in other parts of the country. The recent shootings and killings of unarmed citizens in Lekki, Lagos state, during the #ENDSARS protest over police brutality in Nigeria is a prime example of the military's propensity to deny

their illegal actions despite evidence from CNN[43] and Premium Times[44]. Yet, the soldiers that carried out the killings continue to change their narratives - from not being at the protest venue, to being there but not shooting anyone, to going with live ammunition but firing only blanks, etcetera (Adediran 2020).

Lenning and Brightman (2009: 35) noted the impact of state crime in the oil-rich Delta. They argued that the acts of violence by the security forces 'constitute a state crime' and are in violation of international law. However, these criminal acts of the state on the people have not been subjected to trial at the International Criminal Court, even though Nigeria is a signatory to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. More so, the 'decentralized nature of the Nigerian legal system' makes the application of the available laws on rape and torture (for example) functionally otiose. These grave security practices of the military personnel during their deployment in the region has led to poor-civil military relations, which some have hinged on the nature of the military institution. Referring to armies, Micheal C. Williams (1998:33), stated that most of them "have comparatively little experience of working with civilians". They are trained in the acts of warfare with regimental confinements in barracks and cantonments during peacetime. Described as "an institution which looks forward technologically, but backwards socially" (Joyce 1997:7), it makes their relationship with the civil populace rather remote. This difference in training and orientation creates a clash of culture that becomes evident in their practices when deployed in times of conflict. They treat civilians without respect, and the constant harassments occasioned by the military presence in the region is believed to be spurring renewed attacks (Aljazeera 2016). The Nigerian situation is interesting as the military roundly engages in internal security operations thereby 'hijacking' regular policing duties in many states of the country. There are plausible explanations why that is the case.

Firstly, the many years of military dictatorship in Nigeria has entrenched the military in public space, and the everyday life of the people. This security posture has refused to go away, not least with past military rulers metamorphosing from soldiers to civilian rulers[45]. A

[43] See https://edition.cnn.com/2020/11/18/africa/lagos-nigeria-lekki-toll-gate-feature-intl/index.html

[44] See https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/423823-investigation-bullets-blood-death-untold-story-of-what-happened-at-lekki-toll-gate.html

[45] For example, President Obasanjo (1999-2007) was formerly the military head of state from 1976-1979 and president Buhari (2015- 2023, barring any unforeseen occurrence) was formerly military head of state from 1983 to 1985.

second reason is the prevalence of insecurity and violent conflict in almost all parts of the country in recent years[46] (Aghedo 2017). The ubiquitous nature of violence in the country has spiraled the involvement of the military in low intensity conflict as well as counter insurgency operations. According to Morgen (2016: 4), the military is involved in 30 out of the 36 states of the Nigerian federation. The implications are that the capacity of the military to manage security on many fronts has been stretched thin, particularly as it is drawn into protracted internal battles. This also reflects the poor state of policing in the country, a 'poverty' of policing that is reinforced and undermined by the overarching role of the military in conventional policing duties, thus weakening the capacity of the police to manage security at the community level without military force.

6.2 Everyday Lived Experiences of Security

Some narratives below highlight the impact of state security practices experienced by interviewees. They represent the thematic analysis of the empirical data from my interviews. These includes oppression and intimidation, sexual violence, emotional and psychological impact, and collective punishment.

Many respondents talked about the oppressive and dehumanising practices that typify the actions of the security forces. One respondent argued that the perception of the military about the people in the region could account for the infringements of the rights of the people there. She argues that there is persistent "thinking that everyone is a militant by the military… the military [is] always looking for scapegoats for crimes committed. They do whatever they like because there is nothing we can do to them about it". (FGD- female, Amassoma, Bayelsa state, 29 November 2017). An environmental and human rights activist in Port Harcourt, Rivers state, similarly outlines dehumanizing practices of security forces:

> The first impact is the impact that the people feel of being oppressed. Of being dehumanised. That is already an injustice and, then the people react. The people get angry, the people get bitter and so the impact becomes vengeance and a level of "I-no-go-gree"[47] sets in. 'This-is-not-fair' sets in. The feeling of being an underdog sets in. And so maybe one, maybe two, maybe three, maybe four, five, six people begin to nurture the idea that this is unfair, and they need to do something about it now. A

[46] There has been Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, Niger Delta Militancy in the South-South, Armed bandits in the North-West, farmers-herders clashes in the North-Central, and Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) secessionist agitation in the South-East. The South-West of the country seem less affected with a structured form of armed violence or sectarian crisis, but youth cult clashes and oil pipeline bunkering are common in Lagos and Ondo states.

[47] "*I-no-go-gree*" is a vernacular term (Nigerian "Pidgeon English") meaning, "I won't accept". "Gree" is the vernacular word for agree. In plural terms, (used for a group), it becomes "*we-no-go-gree*".

> place like Odi is not a story. I saw it physically. Gbaramatu, Tompolo's[48] community and other neighbouring communities, the killings, the destruction is not a story. I have seen it. I went there" (Interview, Female, 1 December 2017).

Meeting security agents creates feelings of uneasiness or tensions as civilians must subject to their orders and harassments. A young male respondent in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, reckons:

> When the security forces were on the ground and we had to walk with our hands in the air everywhere. Even in the waterways when you are going towards Brass and you see the army, you have to raise up your hands when you are moving" (Interview, 9 November 2017).

Another adult male respondent from Benin City commented on the violation of rights occasioned by the actions of the security forces thus:

> There are cases where the military harassed even innocent citizens, extort some innocent citizens, and even curtail the movement of persons. If you go to a place like Sapele [in Delta state] by around 11 pm, you are even restricted from entering into the main town because there is a military blockade. So, if you are shut out before the hours of that 11pm you are not in, you rather remain where you are (Interview, 26 November 2017).

This militarization of the Niger Delta was confirmed by another adult male respondent who compared the region with a war zone.

> I think the militarization of the region has its own implication… It has led to the people even imbibing some military mentality in terms of their reaction and their conducts. Sometimes when you see roadblocks that are being mounted by the security, it creates an impression, [a] wrong impression sometimes that the zone is a war zone (Interview, 26 November 2017).

Similarly, another young male respondent makes the point about the intimidation of the state security forces in Bomadi, Delta state:

> Military personnel are intimidating us of our rights because of the power given to them. Sometimes they abuse the power… They are depriving us of our rights. Security is about freedom. We are expected to have a joyful life where our lives and properties are safe. But we are intimidated by the military. **(**FGD-Youth, 21 November 2017**).**

During the fieldwork for this research, I witnessed the practices of the security officials when travelling to Rivers state. JTF personnel stopped our bus at a checkpoint in 'Efeku' area along Yenagoa-Port Harcourt road. They ordered all the male[49] occupants of our bus to come

[48] Tompolo is the alias of one the biggest warlord in the region whose real name is Government Ekpemupolo. He is the main leader/commander of the militant group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

[49] Males, especially if they are young, are often the prime target of the JTF security forces at their checkpoints because of the suspicion that they are more likely to be militants or cultists than other gender or class of people in the region.

out. Whilst we were being searched, five young men were taken aside. One of them was slapped. He was told to do 'frog jump' because he had a tattoo on his body. According to the JTF officer, he said the man resembled a cultist or a militant. He pointed to the young man and spoke in Pidgeon English, "you, if you no be cultist you go be militant". The young man's denial was ignored. Joined by his colleagues, they dragged him away to their parked vehicle by the bush side adjacent the road where we could not see what was happening to him. The rest of us were scared. We clustered by the side of the bus speaking in hushed tones and hoping we too would not be subjected to arbitrary punishment. This is because any of us could be brutalized for trying to pry into their activity, or for our looks/clothing. When they brought the young man and asked us to enter the bus to continue our journey, the young man claimed that they had taken his money. One female passenger in the bus mentioned that it was a common tactic amongst military men and the police personnel in the region to extort money from people, especially young men.

The recent statement credited to the Lagos state police spokesperson, DSP Bala Elkana, that "tattoo and dreadlock 'dey' [are] strange to our culture" (Akinwale 2019; Oyeleke 2019), revealed his poor knowledge of Nigerian culture. These kinds of comments emboldens Nigerian security personnel who already have poor records of human rights and often commit extrajudicial killings in the country, not least the Niger Delta. There is even a popular adage amongst the Yoruba tribe that says, "*mi ó lé wá omo tí ó ko ila*", meaning "I cannot search for a person without tribal marks" (Akindele 2017). Marks and tattoos are symbols of identity in some tribes and groups in Nigeria. I remember that my late grandmother had a small tattoo on her arm, which she said signified the 'coming of age' rites in her village age-group system. Tattoos are both tribal and fashion statements, but certain groups connected to Niger Delta militancy also have distinctive tattoos, such as the 'Egbesu Boys' (Ukeje 2011: 29). This could explain the suspicion of the JTF personnel in the case above but nonetheless also points to the daily harassment people have to endure, be it for where they live, or for their particular looks. The prevailing groupthink of the state security personnel seems to be that an average youth is a militant or cultist.

The oppression and intimidation of people at checkpoints and beyond has emotional and psychological consequencies. As Luckham (2017: 102) argued, the damage that goes with violence is largely physical: killing, arson, rape, torture, forced displacement, and so on, yet the ordeals are "psychological, cultural and symbolic". The impact that the chilling psychological and social harm of state security-induced violence has on people is as difficult

to manage as physical injuries. The former is personal to the individuals, and not as visible as bodily maiming, which makes the extent of such harm inestimable (Omotola 2009: 141). For instance, whilst you could say JTF killed ten people in a community raid, it is not very easy to put a number to the people who might be traumatised by such incidents. This creates emotional and mental health issues that are least considered in the conflict environment. Some respondents speak of the traumatic experiences of the military's security practices in the region on the psyche of the people. One young female focus group respondent in Amassoma, Bayelsa state, described the military practices as "the reign of fear". As she recounts, "they cause constant torment. Everyone is scared of military actions" (FGD- 29 November 2017). According to another adult male participant in Port Harcourt in Rivers state, the impact of the security experiences are:

> Traumatic. Psychological. One, women are raped. You know that is a trauma that lives there forever. It lives in you forever. This is a very emotional and psychological impact. In fact, like they say, sorrows like wound may last for some time. But sad memories like scars linger forever. That is a very sad memory... They destroy. Houses burnt down. They maim people. And once you are deformed, you are deformed… The impact does not stop there. In a country like ours with a high dependency ratio, it means that all of those persons who depend on you- extended family relations which you know is what we run in this country, we don't run nuclear family, will also suffer. So, it reproduces itself in series of inequalities that will last more than one or two generations (Interview, 1 December 2017**).**

According to a young female focus group participant in Sagbama, Bayelsa state,

> People are beaten for no just cause ... And the truth is that the same set of people they are always going after [militant], they are always not there.... At the end of the day, it is actually the innocent people that suffers. So after suffering, what is the need for not joining them [the militants/militancy]? (FGD-Sagbama, 10 November 2017)

Insecurity is, however, not only caused by the state security forces. A young female focus group respondent in Amassoma, Bayelsa State, explained the multiple layers of harassment from both the state security personnel and the local vigilantes.

> The security agents of the state are supposed to ensure that there is security in our community. Unfortunately, these are the ones projecting an insecure environment. You hardly find people walking freely now. Not only in the night. Even during the daytime, you get harassed by the police. The military personnel and then the vigilantes harass you. Well, some people feel they [Vigilante] are more effective than the military personnel. But unfortunately, they do most of these things for just the money. They do not really care if there is security. And most at times, while they harass people is because of material stuff. The money they can get, what they can gain from those they harass". (FGD- 29 November 2017)

A male respondent from Oghara community in Delta state observed that the continuous presence of the state security forces in the Niger Delta creates "Popular fear. Palpable fear.

Everyday fear. Anxiety. With no respite because you have the military on the ground on daily basis". In addition, he contended that:

> It leaves us on the edge on daily basis to the extent that some of our community persons are no longer willing to go to the farm because of the fear of harassment from the military personnel. You can only be safe in an atmosphere devoid of military presence … So our people are no longer comfortable in a militarized zone. We are not in a war situation. Militarizing the environment is actually a threat to our internal peace (Interview, 6 November 2017).

The everyday security threats prevalent in many communities in the Niger Delta region predisposes the people in such communities to living in constant fear.

Whilst gender-based violence especially sexual assault against women and girls is reportedly rife in the Niger Delta, it is a practice that has also been associated with state security forces deployed in the region. A National Crime Victimization and Safety Survey conducted by the Centre for Law Enforcement Education Nigeria (CLEEN Foundation) in 2013 shows that "one in ten women surveyed in the Niger Delta were either raped or survived a rape attempt". It also showed that "the incidence of rape was higher than the national average of 5 percent by 100 percent" (Mohammed 2013). Although the survey does not mention the level of involvement of the security agents, it shows how prevalent the issue of sexual violence is in the region. The female interviewees noted they have not been victims of rape or sexual violence by security personnel. However, I observed they seem uncomfortable talking about it. Such reluctance to speak up about personal experiences (assuming they were even victims) might not be unrelated to the nature of stigma that is often associated with victims of sexual violence. To avoid the shame, most women often do not speak up which makes most cases under reported or not reported at all. However, they admitted that it is widespread and occurs especially when there is a major crisis in a community that warrants the deployment of the military.

Sexual violence by the security forces in the Niger Delta has been well documented by non-governmental organizations. An Amnesty International report captioned "Nigeria: Rape-the silent weapon", notes the endemic problem of rape against women and girls by Nigerian security agents deployed in the Niger Delta. The report indicates, "Amnesty International has met some of the women and girls who have been raped, some of whom have been abducted by security forces" (Amnesty International 2006: 1) It gave varied graphic accounts of their experiences. Some were gang raped. Others raped and their husbands killed. Some of them were minors (10 and 11-year-olds) raped and kept in sexual slavery for five and seven days respectively. The report notes that the "security forces have used rape to dehumanize women and their communities; to coerce them into divulging information about the whereabouts of

certain individuals; to intimidate the community into submission, or as a collective punishment" (ibid, 2006:10). Although rape is a crime in the Nigerian law, the report notes the failure of government to "prevent, investigate and prosecute" rape cases by security personnel (ibid 2006:10). Thus, the state security forces employ sexual violence as a tactic or weapon of intimidation, or as part of the 'spoils of war'. According to one adult male respondent in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, they do so "by invading communities, raping women, even the elderly ones are not left behind. Sometimes you will see that the whole community will be displaced" (Interview, 10 November 2017). Another respondent in Amassoma, Bayelsa state describes the scenario of the military practices in a conflict situation. He posits that there are "people being beaten, gun displayed everywhere, people injured, invading homes… sometime raping women, sometimes impregnating young girls, and when the soldier leaves, that child becomes fatherless. That has its own consequences for the future" (Interview, 29 November 2017).

Another respondent, an adult male resident in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, said of the security agents: "They abuse our sisters and our wives. They debase our marital institution. Now going into serious social problems… They entice our wives; they entice our children, [and] abuse them" (Interview, 10 November 2017). His notion of enticement refers to the capacity of the military to use their position and resources to woo the women. A man told me during an interview (14 November 2017) in Bomadi, Delta state, that a soldier "took" his wife. That the wife was lured away from him because the military man had more money and influence. Such claims show that it is not in all cases that state security agents forcefully abuse the women sexually during operation in the communities. Such women could be enticed also by the seeming material wealth of the military men, considering that these are poor and rural areas. Dating such military men could provide a respite from poverty. However, the presence of the military in the region creates the contact point in the first instance for such sexual 'interactions' to happen.

Also culpable in the sexual violence prevalent in the region are the expatriate and local staff of the oil multinational companies. Although their effects are not rated in the same way as the security personnel are, they are however seen as a corrupting influence in the oil-host communities. This is because of the financial power of the oil workers that makes it possible for them to woo women and girls, which angers the men who lack the financial capacity to present themselves as an attractive proposition to the opposite sex. According to one male interviewee in Yenagoa, Bayelsa, "there is the general feeling that "Shell go pay" because a Shell man has more money than other workers" (Interview, 10 November 2017). I had personal

experience of this in March 2006 when I visited Egbema flow station in the Ohaji-Egema Local Government Area of Imo state when I was working as a Census supervisor. I saw some 'underage' girls who were sitting on the laps of the non-Nigerian (expatriate) workers in an 'exclusive' bar in the area frequented mainly by oil industry workers. Many of the girls do not have the agency to resist when pressured for sex. With the prevalent poverty in the region, it is also possible some girls actively chose prostitution as a way out of poverty.

No doubt, sex crimes occur in some cases where the military are deployed in active conflict or post-conflict environments. While it may be argued that some "out-of-control agents" (C. K. Butler et al. 2007) carry out some of the sexual violence, the inability of the state most times to prosecute such security forces for their actions in the case of Niger Delta brings the complicity of the state actors to question. As one young female respondent stated, "They rape our girls. Kill our youths, and there is nothing we can do. There have been cases where people tried to speak out. But nothing was done" (FGD- 29 November 2017). The perpetrators often go unpunished or are at best declared as 'unknown soldier', a popular term used in Nigeria when the military establishment shields an officer who commits a crime as 'unknown' to it.

Collective punishments were also prominently referred to by the interviewees. The military punishes an entire community for the crime(s) committed by an individual or group, especially when there is an attack on oil platforms or staff of oil companies operating in the communities. A young male respondent in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, explained that when "the locals vent their anger on the multinationals… when that happens, the next thing, the soldiers will come and raze down the community" **(**Interview, 01 December 2017). Another adult male respondent in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, observed that:

> If the military comes to any locality maybe in search of a common criminal and when they don't get the criminal. What they do? They level the community. I give you for instance, Odioma in Bayelsa state in Nembe Brass Local government. The military got to that place and levelled the community. The military got to Odi in search of a common criminal and levelled Odi community. They have done that in Ayankoromo community. They have done that in Atekeramor of recently in Edo state. And all these actions are not in line with the military's professionalism and neutrality. (Interview, 10 November 2017).

Similarly, a young male respondent in Bomadi, Delta state, reacted to the military's approach of collective punishment on communities and the impact on their mobility and businesses:

> The major challenge we are facing is that whenever an incident happen, instead of the military to take proper intelligence report to track down those that commit such crime, but at the end of the day, they will affect the whole community. Collective

> punishment instead of the main culprit. There will be no movement. We cannot go about. Especially the business aspect. It really affects our businesses (FGD-Youth, 21 November 2017).

The above comment reflects the thinking of some of the interviewees who question the military's excessive show of force that goes beyond the rules of engagement and global best practices with civilians as a professional organisation. Whilst the local people are not averse to the punishment of criminals by the security forces, they are however, peeved by the collective punishment of a community instead of the real culprits. The practices of the security forces when they besiege a community in the event of violence, not only reminds the people of the crisis but the destruction of the place the crisis occurred. Some of these places includes not only residential buildings, but also sacred or revered traditional shrines. It was in one of such raids in the Gbaramatu kingdom in Delta state, that the military seized the 'golden sword', a symbol of authority in the 'Egbesu shrine' (Okpare 2016). After an outcry, the President did however order the Army to return the golden sword (S. Daniel 2017). Such destructions leaves untold hardship and displacement on the people. Some of these places take a long time to recover. Sometimes**,** they never recover. A case in point is the massacre of Odi community in 1999 after a gang of armed youths killed twelve policemen. The soldiers made no apparent efforts to arrest the suspects and bring them to justice. Instead they systematically levelled the community over a period of two weeks, killing many innocent people, mostly women, children and the elderly, "leaving only three buildings undamaged" (Human Rights Watch 1999). The neglect that follows in the weeks, months, and years after, exacerbates the trauma of such neglect by those who ought to protect them in their everyday life.

However, despite these insecurity practices of the state security forces in the region, their continuous presence and their impact on the people generates mixed reactions. As one young man, who is also a former militant puts it during a focus group interview in Bomadi, Delta state, "The military as a two-sided coin is for the good and for the bad. Their presence in the community has reduced armed robbery" (Interview, 21 November 2017). Such responses represent the arguments of about 30 percent of the respondents who claim that the military presence has had positive impact, especially on the rising wave of criminal violence. They contend that the nature of the violence in the Niger Delta creates a justification for the prevalence of the military in the region. According to one adult male respondent in Amassoma, Bayelsa state:

> I feel safe if I am driving on the road and I see Soldiers, Policemen on the road securing the area. If you ask those who have had the ugly experience of either being

> hijacked in the bus or the rest of it […] they will applaud the federal government for this massive deployment of security. If you go to communities that have intra community crisis or inter community crisis where the military for example has restored some peace, they will prefer that the military remain there. Okay. So in terms of promoting relative security of peace in communities, there is a plus on what the government is doing. But when you move beyond that into the socioeconomic impacts on the communities, then that is when it now becomes a completely different issue (Interview, 29 November 2017.

Responding to the presence of the security forces, a young male participant in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state asserted, "okay, maybe them being around might prevent some miscreants from taking advantage. But do I really feel secure? 'Ehmm'... [he takes a long pause] not really. I look out for myself and my family" (Interview, 9 November 2017). As one male respondent from Delta state who resides in Benin City, explains:

> If you talk about impact, [it is] sometimes positive, sometimes negative. Positive, in the sense that if you travel along any of the Niger Delta roads and you arrive your destination safely that means there is a positive impact. But when you are psychologically disturbed about the possible safety of you getting to your destination, it is negative. Now, if you look at the environment, people have lost the possibility of sustaining themselves as a result of different types of pollution, including noise pollution. That creates an insecurity for people too. Their means of livelihood is threatened. And you cannot even have a good sleep because anything can happen. You can hear the sound of a blast; you don't know whether it is dynamite, you don't know whether it is a bomb, you don't even know where it is coming from. So the impact of the security challenges in the Niger Delta is quite huge. It depends on where you want to assess it from as an individual *(Interview, 02 November 2017)*.

A young female respondent in Gokana, Rivers state, contends that the actions of the state security forces have had a negative impact on her community. According to her, "there is no impact so far, the only thing we have seen is negative impact. All those military they are sending is not of help to the Niger Delta. First, know the problem then you look for solutions not sending troops" (Interview, 12 November 2017). The above comment reflects the nature of the securitization of issues in the Niger Delta where a lack of understanding of some of the salient issues are met with military centred solutions that accentuate the prevailing insecurity in the region.

In a similar manner, an interviewee captures the negative impact of the militarization that has led to lose of lives and fear in the region. He further explains:

> When I think of Daddy Ken [a militant] and innocent people that lost their lives due to this agitation, the impact is much. Odi was reduced to the ground for nothing. Going by that account, I do not really think we have positive impact in terms of federal government security network in the Niger Delta because it is clear. Think of Ayakurumor [a Niger Delta community devastated by the Military]. Even in this our community, when some soldiers were sent to Sagbama, we experienced what has been happening in some other places. The military personnel were intimidating

> people, young boys like us. So, the impact is too much. They cause fear. (FGD- Male, Sagbama, Bayelsa state. 10 November 2017)

During a focus group interview in Amassoma, Bayelsa state, a female respondent contends the military has had no positive impact in the region. She accuses the security personnel of alleged collusion in the crude oil theft (also referred t0 as oil bunkering) that is common in the region, and the endangering of human health arising from the pollution. She explains further:

> I do not think they really have any positive impact on us. Let us take for instance, in Rivers state, some areas where they carry out oil bunkering and all that… these military troops, they have actually made it worse… I have seen cases where they actually encourage these guys to carry out these bunkering acts. Because they collect bribes from them. Instead of them to stop them from looting our oil which is our major resource, they collect bribes and make sure they carry out the oil looting effectively. And it is really affecting our air quality. There is serious pollution going on right now, which is causing some poor health condition. You do not clean your house and meet it the way you cleaned it. Our children, our loved ones are no longer safe in the environment. So they really have not made any good impact on us. Instead, they are making things worse for us (FGD- 29 November 2017)

Likewise, a male respondent in the above focus group in Amassoma concurs that, "When it comes to oil bunkering business, the military are very much involved, more than the outsiders think. They collect bribe. They act as protection to the bunkering dealers. They protect them for money and all that".

These narratives corroborate the complicity of the state security agencies in the crude oil theft in the Niger Delta that is well documented in some academic literature. Many serving and retired military officers are reported to be involved in collaboration with a network of local and external actors (Boris 2015; Emordi 2015; Ingwe 2015; Katsouris and Sayne 2013; Ugor 2013).

Another impact of the (in)security practices of the state security personnel is the disruption of the socioeconomic life of the people. The Niger Delta is predominantly an agrarian society with many engaging in agro-business of farming and fishing. Therefore, any military action that disrupts communities also disrupts their economic life for many people. As one respondent explained during a focus group discussion:

> Once the military comes, the first thing is displacement of families, and bringing economic activities down to zero. That is even worse than oppression. The economic activities are actually stopped for a period of one week, two weeks and all that. People cannot go to their farm, people cannot labour. (FGD- Male, Sagbama, Bayelsa state. 10 November 2017).

Here, the views of this interviewee corroborate the inability of the locals to engage in productive economic activities in the face of military invasions. She further explains, "there will be no

movement. We cannot go about. Especially the business aspect. It really affects our businesses" (Interview- female, Bomadi, Delta state. 21 November 2017).

This male respondent from Amassoma in Bayelsa state outlined practices of extortion by the military. Even where the people are able to engage in some economic activity, they have to pay if they want to get passage.

> […] So, it does affect freedom, even economic life. People try to live with it. You know, maybe you sell water, sachet water for example, you need to set aside some that you will give to them so that you can pass freely. If you are selling fish, the same thing. Those who sell alcohol will give them alcohol so you can pass. All those kinds of things.

Although the idea of forced bribery is common at checkpoints, I have also witnessed instances where some people give 'tips' without coercion from the security personnel. It could be an attempt to curry favour and to get into the good books of the security personnel. They figure that, after all, they have nothing to lose; they either give willingly or by force. These practices are symptomatic of the prevalence of corrupt practices in the region and in the country.

Thus far, this section has examined people's experiences of insecurity by the security agents of the state in the region. The next section will consider some of the ways people cope in the face of these insecurity practices.

6.3 Coping measures against the State (In)security Practices in the Niger Delta

The response to insecurity by the local people, whether instigated by the state security agencies, oil multinationals or by local dynamics like ethnic/chieftaincy/land tussle, to mention a few, tend to take different forms. In response to the security machinations of the military in the Niger Delta, some people have also proved their capacity for defiance. They often engage with methods to counteract the constant repression of the security forces in their communities. For instance, by avoiding passing through areas with a high military presence and conflict hotspots, by running into the bush and swampy forest at the sight of military invasion, and in extreme cases, by engaging in outright resistance, including attacks on oil installations in the region. As Kirmani (2017:41) notes, 'the acts of resistance in the form of protest are constrained, determined by, and productive of a particular configuration of power'. The struggle for power (as a voice to be heard, for social provisioning, identity, and etcetera) has become a regular site of activity in the everyday life of the local people.

Some interviewees noted that one of the ways they cope with the (in)security practices of the security personnel is to avoid conflict flashpoints. This point was, for example, made by

a male respondent in Mile 3 in Sagbama Local Government area of Bayelsa state. According to him, "there are some places because of the security situation there… you don't need to go there. If you go, they will not [have] mercy [on] you. So, you keep yourself far away from there" *(Interview, 10 November 2017*)**.** This might seem a rather common-sense approach to avoiding violence. However, this approach to conflict evasion has implications for mobility. People who ordinarily reside in conflict areas are forced to move from their locality in the event of a crisis. In addition, mobility might be challenging, depending on the age, gender or the stakes the persons involved have in such locality. There are some people, especially the old and physically challenged who are not able to move, no matter the extent of the crisis. For instance, when "29 social action groups" visited Odi after the massacre, "only a few thoroughly traumatized old women, old men and children" were found around (Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria 2002: 8). Some traditional rulers are unwilling to run away from their kingdom as it amounts to a cultural taboo. They would not want to live with the stigma of a 'run-away king' who buckled in the face of opposition in a region where kings have fought wars against powerful establishments[50]. A young male focus group respondent in Amassoma, Southern Ijaw LGA of Bayelsa state, further explained:

> To me, another aspect of coping with the military is avoidance. Most of the Niger Deltans, like me, I am from Omoku [Rivers state]. But due to the military and the fighting there, I had to avoid the whole problem to come to Bayelsa. So avoidance is also a coping mechanism" *(FGD- 29 November 2017)*.

Similarly, one male interviewee in Sagbama, Bayelsa state, reflected on the relocation of relatives by local elites who are politically exposed. According to him:

> One other mechanism we use is that those persons, when they get into power, foreseeing that this is what has been happening, they most times take their persons out of the place. There was a time, when the former local government chairman, he was my uncle, had to take his father out of the village. There was a time they [kidnappers] came after a lady in this town; the guy had to take his mother out. So those are the little measures some persons are using to save their head from the mess of kidnapping (FGD- 10 November 2017)

The above statement suggests that migration seems to be a common strategy to cope with different forms of threats and violence including the danger of kidnapping.

A male respondent in Amassoma, Bayelsa state, asserts that one of the ways they cope is to stay off certain roads and choose their clothing carefully. According to him, "You avoid some routes where you know the military personnel are. Young men would not want to put on

[50] Notable Kings like Jaja of Opobo, Nana of Itsekiri, and the highly revered Oba of Benin Kingdom, are key examples of traditional rulers in the Niger Delta that fought wars against invading local and foreign powers.

some kind of dresses, some kind of hairstyles because they easily label you 'Tobuwame' - to be a miscreant" (Interview, 29 November 2017). This kind of situation curtails the freedom and right to personal choices without possible harassment. Similarly, another young man in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state reiterates the need certain areas for safety reasons. He further explains:

> I think Personal safety would require you changing your routine or adjusting to a particular routine to prevent you from getting those kinds of encounters that make you feel insecure. Like working when it is day and avoiding going out at night because you are faced with every group that might be looking for an opportunity that will be of harm to you (Interview, 09 November 2017).

Closely linked to the above measure is the reaction to run, especially into the bush or the swamps/creeks that are prevalent in the Niger Delta. A young female respondent during a focus group interview in Amassoma, Bayelsa state notes, "you fight by not fighting". According to her, one of the ways people cope with the insecurity is by "running into the house and shutting the door. Hiding under the bed. Silence and escape mechanism. There is no liberty or freedom of expression, and there is no justice" (FGD- 29 November 2017). She further narrated an ordeal where their house was shot at by the military during and invasion of her community - Azuzuama in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa state. Such attacks by the security forces on communities are often prompted by the search for militant groups by the security forces. Azuzuama community for example was a theatre of such military invasion in 2013 following the ambush and killing of 12 police officers by armed groups. The community is also home to an ex-militant leader of MEND, Mr Kile Torughedi, who accepted the Federal Government's amnesty deal (Sahara Reporters 2013).

The invasion of communities by the security personnel predisposes the people of such communities to sufferings and social dislocations. Here, a youth President of one of the foremost Ijaw ethnic organisations, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) explains:

> Whenever there are military operations, most of our community people lives in the bush, in the forest for days. No food. I am telling you of what is happening. Part of the problem is the military people" (Interview, Male, Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. 11 November 2017).

In a similar manner, a young man in Sagbama, Bayelsa state explained that one of the ways to cope is to "run away to your closest relation in the closest city. While some others, they just wait. Like the case of Warri-North area during the Niger Delta Avengers, I received a call from my friend's mother. She slept in the bush" (Interview, 10 November 2017).

The following two examples captures the narratives of two interviewees on the instinctive reactions to run for safety in the face of insecurity and the risks such a person might encounter:

> In a war zone that has seemingly been created by the roadblocks that have been mounted everywhere, you will react impulsively. You will hardly react in an organised form. Because if one hears of gunshot maybe on one's way home, one cannot be looking for his own home. One would rather look for how to escape, and the quickest one will be the bushes around. And even the bushes, one cannot be safe because of reptiles. Because you are now exposed to even the dangerous reptiles that are in the bushes. It is challenging to cope (Interview, Male, Benin City, Edo state. 26 November 2017).

A female respondent who is a human and environmental rights activist in Port Harcourt, Rivers state, elaborates on the propensity to run in the face of danger.

> It is a natural instinctive thing to do that if you feel threatened, you want to keep yourself safe. When the people in the communities like in Gbaramatu or in Abonema where I come from, if there is gunfire or they say the soldiers are coming, they run into the bush because they feel first and foremost, the swamps in the creeks are havens. Because we know these places. I have described the creeks of the Niger Delta as my playground. I have introduced myself as a creek girl. I grew up in the creeks… So, if you feel threatened and you want to feel secured, that's the first place you run to. You know where to hide. You know where the water is deep. You know where the sand is quick. The people who are coming after you do not. But you know where to be safe. So, people run into their forest when they want to be safe. They leave their homes because you know that they can come to your home. But if you are not there, the next safest place will be in the bushes that you know as well as you know your home. So, yes, people would do that. Instinctively, people will run away, and people are able to stay in those bushes and forest, and mangroves and swamps for days and for weeks. (*Interview, 01 December 2017).*

She further explained the implications of such instinctive flight to safety on the health and wellbeing of the people.

> Of course, mosquitoes can bite them. They could be bitten my snakes; [caught by] traps, they could get drowned. All sorts of things. Of course. Even though they seem to be running away from the approaching danger, which they know, maybe soldiers, gunfire and stuffs like that, there are also very serious dangers in the creeks and in the swamps that they could also be harmed from. But like I said, it is instinctive to run from immediate and apparent danger and to run towards what at that time may seem like safety for you. But depending on how the environment is and how long you stay in that environment, it may end up not being as safe as anticipated. And so, people instinctively will always want to be safe *(Interview, 01 December 2017*).

Some interviewees stated that they rely on the invocation of the supernatural for safety in times of crises. Christianity and Islam dominate the orthodox religious space in Nigeria with the former prevalent in the Niger Delta. Many also believe in the worship of traditional deities-animism. Some of the local people deploy both these orthodox religions and local fetishes (Ifeka 2006: 722). Together, they all rely on God or gods as the case may be for protection. 'Faith' therefore becomes a strong force that people identity with, in the face of insecurity. According to a young female focus group respondent in Amassoma, Bayelsa state, "We pray to God for safety" (Interview, 29 November 2017). A respondent in Port Harcourt, Rivers state

alluded to the trust in religious beliefs and traditional divinities that guides the actions of some local people as a response to insecurity. He further commented:

> Yes, the religious dimension. The faith type. There are those too who go... the "odeshi"[51] kind of thing. The traditional one. Yes, they go and get it inserted in their body, come back, and say nothing, no knife, will penetrate. No gun and all of them. We see it happen (Interview, Male. 1 December 2017).

The insertion of fetish objects in the body, the invocation of deities, spiritism and other "occult imaginations" (Anugwom 2011: 3) have been commonplace amongst militant youth groups especially in the Niger Delta crisis. According to Ifeka (2006: 725), "fetishes are products of human thought, and are maintained for the pragmatic purpose of getting spiritual power over events". Some people believe in "spirit beings and their protective powers against attacks" (Ifeka 2006: 721). This kind of fetishization as a supernatural means of security and protection in the face of crisis have been well symbolised by the worship of 'Egbesu' god common amongst Ijaw people, the largest tribe in the Niger Delta. This fetish practice was particularly utilised by the Ijaw militia groups. "The 'Egbesu' is seen by the Ijaw as the deity of war and justice" and was part of the historical opposition to the British colonial agenda in the pre-colonial era" (Anugwom 2011: 6). This long tradition of resistance has been deployed in the pre-and post-amnesty Niger Delta against the state and oil multinationals for perceived injustices and socioeconomic neglect. Thus, it is often invoked as a measure of resistance and a way to cope against the insecurity practices of the state. A male interviewee, who is a community leader and resident in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, reiterated the reliance of some people on God as their source of help in times of crisis. He says, "you see, they have no option than to just say God help. Poor man prayer is "God dey" [there is God!]. But we just take solace in the common prayer" (Interview, 10 November 2017). This kind of reliance on God is not surprising in the southern part of Nigeria with a huge Christian population. It is also reflects the helplessness of some people who have resigned to fate and trusting God for help.

Secret cultism is rife in the Niger Delta region. Secret cults provide a social space for many young people who find some sense of 'security' in it. Since the 1970s, secret cultism has gained ascendancy, especially amongst young people in the region. Their activities have spread from school campuses to residential communities. As at 2004, there were at least 100 of such cult groups in Rivers state (Owonikoko and Ifukor 2016: 84-85). It serves as a rallying factor

[51] "Odeshi" is a vernacular term popular amongst the Igbo ethic group but used by generally across the Niger Delta, meaning, 'impenetrable'. It is used commonly to refer to the inability of bullets or machetes to penetrate the human body as part of a fetish/occult act.

for confrontations against the state security agents. According to one young man during a focus group interview in Sagbama, Bayelsa State:

> One of the means we have succeeded in doing this is the platform of cultism. In every society in Bayelsa state, in Rivers state to a large extent, you will find pockets of cultists. And that is where they get their unifying strength. Let us sit down here and this [*action*] is what we do tomorrow, and it happens. (FGD- 10 November 2017)

Cultism therefore creates an opportunity for young people as both a platform for resistance against the state and for organised crimes. One interviewee emphasised their trust in God's help while criticizing the security agents for the oppressive way they treat people in the region.

> […] But I have told you "na" [already]. It is a terrible situation but God is helping us. Nobody should live under this kind of condition. No human being should be subjected to live under this kind of conditions (Interview, male, Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. 11 November 2017).

However, what is interesting from the somewhat reliance on the supernatural is that the people continue to act in those beliefs in order to mitigate the insecurity challenges faced in their everyday life. Their experiences and the narratives therefrom reflects their lack of trust in the state institutions to meet their security needs. More so, where those needs are not met, there might be the tendency to continue to recourse to God and supernatural deities for their security and other needs.

Another way some people cope with the state security practices is by confrontation. The tendency to fight back has often followed the military invasions in the region as a form of resistance to the power structures of the state (Kirmani 2017:41). A female human rights activist highlighted the logic of resistance, and her thoughts on the impropriety of the state stopping such people from reacting the way they do. According to her:

> "The fact that people will react should not surprise anybody. If you don't react, you are not a human being. People will react. Now, what is the system surprised about? The system is pretending to be surprised that people will react, and once someone wants to react against something, if you were not able to stop what happened to them from happening to them, then you have no moral standing to stop them from reacting (Interview, Port Harcourt, Rivers state. 01 December 2017).

Here, a male respondent and a student at the Niger Delta University, who was part of the focus group held in Amassoma, highlights the propensity to fight back by some of the locals. According to him, "my brothers, like my distant cousins rather, most of them are confronting these military in physical combat" (FGD- 29 November 2017). The informant here refers to the various forms of resistance against the state and its oil interest. This could be in the form of ambush of military personnel, attack on military formations and other kinds of criminal

violence, such as kidnapping, amongst others. That was the case in Ogbogbagbene community in Burutu Local Government Area of Delta in July 2017, when suspected militants attacked an army formation in the community "killing a soldier, an unidentified person while others sustained various degrees of life-threatening injuries" before carting away their gunboat (Brisibe 2017).

Another medium through which the people rally against perceived insecurity is through vigilantism. Vigilante groups are composed mainly of young people, which makes them agile, forceful, and able to organise quickly in the face of threats. Vigilantes holds a great prospect for ensuring relative security in communities but is also a platform for violent engagement with the state and oil multinationals. In some cases, vigilantes work in partnership with security agencies like the police and impose local curfews in the communities. This is at an agreed time when people are not expected to move about in the community. One young man in Sagbama, Bayelsa state reflects on this practice:

> In some places, they do have a curfew where people are expected to go to bed from 10 or 12. Within that period, you are not expected to, maybe to drive cars or your bikes. There are also vigilantes on ground. So, when they seize you, they will ask one or two questions. If [your response] it is not genuine, definitely they might even chain your bike, hold you, or maybe hand you over to the police (FGD- 10 November 2017).

However, whilst the vigilantes provide security for the communities, they are also susceptible to manipulations by local elements like traditional/political elites, IOCs and government functionaries. They can use them for their own selfish interest. As one respondent retorted, "the person that is doing the vigilante job. Who is he"? He quipped at the idea that even some of the vigilantes might be of criminal characters and their intentions not altruistic. (FGD- adult male, Bomadi, 21 November 2017). According Nyiayaana (2015: 131), "the arming of vigilante groups by these different actors contributes to the proliferation and availability of arms in local communities in the Niger Delta, with implications for the militarization of the region". The arming of these youths creates incentives for escalation of violence in the region, and like cultists, a platform for fighting back against the state and IOCs in times of crisis.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the (in)security practices of the state security personnel deployed in the Niger Delta. It analyzed the impact of the state's militarization and the lived experiences of insecurity of Niger Delta people. It shows that the conflict environment is a complex one with military, militia and other local actors involved in the insecurity conundrum.

It looked at the actions of the security personnel and what security deployments leave in their wake, including the trauma and loss felt by people long after the military's security operations have ended. Whereas there abounds a rationale for military presence in the region, their logic of occupation, harassment, fear, and killings associated with them portrays the state as a source of threat to the everyday life of people. The security practices of the state, leads to a lack of trust in the ability of the state to protect the citizens. The chapter revealed that the state's securitization continues to manifest more rapidly in the militarization of the region despite the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) since 2009, a policy that supposedly represents an intent of the post-conflict peacebuilding thinking of the state.

The chapter also analyzed the ways in which local people practice security in the process of engaging the state. Their various ways of coping and counteracting the state's (in)security practices. The state militarisation, which results from the securitisation of the Delta, acts as much to increase everyday insecurity as to reduce insecurity, and exacerbates (or at best does nothing to address) the root causes of insecurity. People's everyday strategies of navigation and resistance demonstrate they have agency only to reduce the impact of this insecurity, but their agency cannot impact the causes of the insecurity. Thus, violence becomes a more viable option for resisting the causes of insecurity that have remained unaddressed by the state. The military continues to consolidate its presence in the region and launches security operations to counter any perceived resistance. This militarization approach of the state creates a circle of conflict that reproduces insecurity, with grave ramifications for sustainable peace in the region. The state's excessive show of force underscores its rentier authoritarian approach to the underlying grievances in the Niger Delta over the years, which portrays the state as unjust and oppressive.

The actions of the state in the Niger Delta bring into focus whose interest security serves. As I have shown in this study, the referent object of security to the state is the uninterrupted oil production. It is not primarily about the security of the people and their everyday needs. As Stepputat (2007: 202), notes, "states may be strong in terms of securing regime's survival but weak in terms of providing everyday security for the population". The Nigerian state, having the legitimate monopoly of violence, has continued to prioritise its rentier interest and survival over the everyday security concerns of the people in the region. Thus, the state structures of power reflect acts of oppression which have ramifications for the lived experiences of the people, how they people resist such structures of power in their daily

life. Their testimony brings into focus the need for understanding the social context in which conflict is constructed and the logic of rethinking security beyond the statist approach.

CHAPTER 7

EVERYDAY SECURITY PERCEPTION IN POST-AMNESTY NIGER DELTA

The last chapter examined the everyday lived experiences of the state securitization and militarization on the people of the Niger Delta. However, beyond the state's approach to security, how do the people view security? What does security mean in the everyday life of people in the Niger Delta? This chapter examines the people's perceptions of security and the narratives around these perceptions. Perception is very important in the way security threats and vulnerabilities are defined (McSweeney 1996:87). By examining the lay narratives of security, it shows how people understand and discuss 'security from below'[52]. This way, it explores how security provisions incorporate the needs and values of the people and make them the central focus of the kind of security they desire. This does not obviate the role of the state in security provision but with the state accountable to the people (Colak and Pearce 2009: 17).

The chapter focuses on the everyday security issues that concern the people which included safety and survival, environmental and socio-economic security, justice, and social infrastructural development that emanated from the research data. In addition, it assesses the contradictions between the state's notion of security and the everyday concern of the people and its implications for conflict in post-amnesty Niger Delta. It reveals how local perception of security is shaped in a militarised environment, such as the Niger Delta, in relation to the political imagery of security by the state, which depicts its logic of authority and stability, or as Booth (1991: 319) puts it, 'mainstream themes of power and order'. It finds that security should be beyond power and order, and instead a public service for ensuring peace and development. The analysis provides a more holistic understanding for opening up new vistas in policy discourses for the everyday security concerns of the people, and for sustainable peacebuilding. Thus, the way people conceive security and how security works for them in their everyday life is crucial for understanding the way to engender peace in their environment.

[52] The increasing usage of 'security from below' or 'bottom-up' notions of security reflects the wider attempts for people at the local levels or communities to be able to articulate their security concerns and make "demands for better security provision" for "equitable development and social justice". See Colak and Pearce (2019:11).

7.1 Local Perceptions and Narratives of Security

As discussed in chapter 2, the relatively recent attempts at analysing security as a "social or discursive construction" (Jarvis and Lister 2012: 159) refocuses security's referent on the individual, which serves as the main unit of security analysis - that which is to be secured. This shift from the dominance of state-centrism in mainstream security studies (Wendt 1992) to contemporary realities of security, which exposes the inadequacy of the traditional realist approach to security studies, and thus, enhances the focus on the everyday with the examination of mundane security experiences of people.

In Nigeria, security practitioners often refer to security as a matter that concerns everyone. They contend that issues of (in)security, criminality and violence should not be left alone for the government or security agencies. Hence, citizens are encouraged to play an active role in the security of the country. Security, therefore, is taken as the business of everyone in his or her everyday life. The Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) restated this philosophy recently in their effort to undertake a biometric data capturing of housekeepers, security guards and drivers (Guardian 2018). The rousing call for the involvement of ordinary people in the national security discourses of the country gives the impression that security is not just for the security officials alone. Government programmes, such as the *Transformation Agenda 2011-2015*[53], identified this security role for all, as a nexus to sustainable peace and development. In the Niger Delta, the Transformation Agenda aimed to reduce the high level of insecurity amongst other socio-economic challenges like unemployment and poverty (Federal Government of Nigeria 2011).

However, despite the importance of the role of the people in the security architecture of the state, there has been a lack of genuine engagement by the government with the people in understanding what security means to them, and how they experience (in)security in their everyday life. The everyday life in the Niger Delta is shaped by what residents understand as security and how they experience security practices. As one male respondent explained during an interview in Oghara, Delta state, "security should be about the individual. The individual predated the state" (Oghara, Delta state, 5 December 2017). Engaging the everyday helps to bring to fore the 'voices of real people into discussions of security' (Jarvis and Lister 2012: 173). The everyday security perception determines largely whether it will engender conflict or create an atmosphere for peace to thrive in a region like the Niger Delta. From the empirical

[53] The Transformation Agenda is a summary of the federal government's priority policies and projects under President Goodluck Jonathan's regime (2011-2015).

research for this study, seven broad and distinct thematic categories of how the respondents perceive and understand security were identified from the data. Peoples' notions of security centred on the concerns of the environment, physical safety, socioeconomic security, food, infrastructure, social welfare, and justice. These topics are examined below.

When asked what security meant to them, some respondents identified the environment as the core security issue. They argued that the security of the environment is what matters most, and that environmental pollution serves as the biggest source of threats to their existence, contending that a threat to the environment is a threat to their security. This is understandably so as 'there is an interaction between the environment and the oil industry that endangers the sustainability of the natural environment' (Ebiede 2011: 141) that holds the natural resources, the forests, the arable land for farming and the vast marine resources that the locals rely upon. As one male respondent in Amassoma community in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa state puts it during a focus group, "security of the environment is what concerns me" (Interview, 29 November 2017). The environment holds the ace for the survival and sustenance of the people. As a predominantly agrarian region, the environment provides the setting for farming, and for fish farming (in view of the large body of water in the region). The inability to harness fully, the opportunities provided by the environment due to pollution for example, have been attributed as one of the conflict drivers in the region and continues to create insecurity (Ebiede 2011). The right to the environment and its resources where threatened, has been a 'factor in small wars' (Malamud 2018: 245). One male indigene of Oghara community underscored this centrality of the environment as master security for the everyday survival of the people of the Niger Delta. According to him:

> The environment constitutes the main stay of the individual. Minus the environment, the individual is doomed. You see, if the environment is secured, then every other component of human security is also secured. Because if the environment is okay, I will be able to produce my own food to eat and sell. Then I will make money. My economic aspect will also be secured. My health will improve… then, there is happiness within the community. The individual will also be happy… then a happy man can discuss about politics. How do we govern ourselves? How do we manage our affairs? So, the environment is actually the pedestal on which the rest stand, as far as I am concerned. Without environmental security, there is no other security" (Interview, Delta State, 6 November 2017).

Some respondents expressed the fear posed by the threat of environmental insecurity. They argue that it heightens their inability to achieve other forms of security that is dependent on the environment like agricultural production of food. One opinion leader in Yenagoa, Bayelsa

state, underlined the importance of environmental security for the livelihood of the people of the Niger Delta:

> "Let me tell you one thing. There are three basic things a man requires to make a living. Shelter, clothing, and food. And if the military agents come and destroy our habitat, one of the essential commodities for man to earn a living is gone. If the multinational oil companies pollute our environment, our means of livelihood is gone. So, at every nook and cranny in every ramification we are threatened… I give you for instance, when there is spillage, and because of the deltaic nature of this Niger Delta and because the region in question is just one meter above sea level, when there is a spillage in any place, when the flood occur, you see that this flood spread the spillage to every nook and cranny. Therefore, if you see our food chain is polluted. That is the biggest insecurity" (Interview, 10 November 2017).

Another respondent in Benin City, Edo state, highlighted the damage on the environment caused by oil production, which he blamed for the increasing rate of poverty in the region. According to him:

> The high level of poverty that has been brought about largely by the very high rate of environmental degradation in the region. You know, the people in this region they are largely farmers and fishermen. These days, they cannot go about their survival strategies [and] daily livelihood because the rivers, the streams, the creeks, they have been degraded because of oil spillage. And the rate of productivity of the land has been reduced because of environmental degradation (interview, 6 November 2017).

The respondent further describes the culpability of the IOCs, the youth leaders and elders in the oil-host communities of corrupt practices following oil spills. Rather than carry out the clean-up of the oil spills that pollutes and endangers the environment, the IOCs often bribe the local community elders. Some youths have also seized the opportunity to enrich themselves. As someone who is privy to these issues, he lamented that:

> The issue of environmental degradation is ongoing. Let me just tell you this, whenever there is oil spill, the transnational oil companies personnel prefer to give money to the youth leaders and the elders. They prefer to do that than to clean up the environment. So they just work it out. Oh, okay it is going to cost us 5 million to clean up this environment, if we distribute 2 million naira [Nigerian currency] to this people, they will leave us alone. So that is what they do… I also know that there are a few boys who are also capitalising on this [environmental pollution] to protect their own self-interest. Because of that, they will now supposedly be claiming that they are fighting for the people whereas they are fighting for their interest. But once the government and the transnational oil companies take care of these issues that I have mentioned, these boys they will no longer have something to fall back upon (interview, 6 November 2017).

One respondent also stressed the culpability of the government because of its lack of responsibility to check environmental insecurity by the IOCs arising from pollution. According to the young man, an unemployed graduate in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state:

> There are spillages that go on everywhere. If you are going to Brass, you will see oil on water and fishes floating and nothing actually happens. Nothing happens to the multinational oil companies. Nothing happening in the villages. There is no sense of responsibility" (interview, 9 November 2017).

Some interviewees insist on the remediation of the environmental impact of oil production as the guarantee for their everyday security. A male respondent in Benin City affirmed that, "if the environment is free of these pollutants, I think every other thing can fall in place" (interview, 23 October 2017). According to one community elder in Okrika, Rivers state, he stated that they deserve "compensation for the environmental degradation of their area" (interview, 2 December 2017). The impact of the environmental pollution on the devastation of lives and livelihoods has been acknowledged by president Buhari's government as a reason for the loss of faith in the government that has resulted in the rise in criminal activities in the region (Nwabughiogu 2016a).

Many respondents presented security as the safety of life of the human life and the right to existence devoid of harm or physical threat to one's life. According to one respondent in Bomadi, Delta state, she stated that security to her is the "safety of life and properties" (FGD. Female, 22 November 2017). Another respondent who runs a petty business shop in the rural community of Bomadi, Delta state shares the same thought about security. He was emphatic about the relatedness of security to life when he said thus, "to me, security means life. The reason why I said life is that without security there is danger to human life. That is why I said security means life to me." (Interview. Male. 22 November 2017). According to one civil society activist in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, he asserted that:

> Security, when you look at it from the point of view of the human person, first, is that of security of life…. It is so essential to every human being and that is why we are saying we support every move by all legitimate government to go about the protection of lives and properties of citizens (Interview, Male. 10 November 2017).

Nearly all the respondents argue that the government has the major role in the protection of life and properties of the people. One male respondent in Bomadi, Delta state hinted on the institutional mechanisms of the state to protect its citizens and concluded that, "Security is the measures, plans and practices put in place to protect life and property. Like the Army, Navy, Air Force" (FGD- Male. 22 November 2017). Another young male respondent also stressed the role of the government as the key provider of security for the people. According to him "… government as an institution… is saddled with the responsibility of security and safety of the people…" (FGD- Male. Bomadi, Delta state. 22 November 2017). There is the huge understanding and reliance on the role of the government as the key provider of security in the

region. However, there were worries about the way and manner with which the government deflects from this responsibility and instead creating threats to their safety through its security machinations. This was the view of one young male resident in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state when asked what security means to him. With a long pause and a deep sigh, long pause, and a deep sigh, he commented thus:

> Hmmm... I see security as physical safety first. Because I think, that is immediate and paramount… So with regards to physical safety, yes it is paramount. So, the challenge with regards to physical safety for me as an indigene of Bayelsa sate would be, unfortunately though, the security apparatus of the government- the police or the state security agents. And why that is, is because we have come to notice, myself personally and from accounts, incidents given by friends and members of my family where you are moving around maybe by 6 or 7 pm and the police stops you and maybe for looking in a particular way, then you are arrested. (Interview, 9 November 2017).

Some respondents described this kind of physical security safety in terms of the protection of their communities. According to one young focus group respondent, who is a former militant in Bomadi, Delta state, "Security is a vast word. To me security is you taking proper care of your environment so that nobody can break into the community. When a community is secured, you do not see bad things in such environment" (FGD. Male. 21 November 2017). In the same community, another man during an in-depth interview in his house said that:

> My idea of security is the absence of bad boys from my area [community]. Some of them carries gun. They are bad boys who rob people. Safety is security for me. We do not need those people. We need, from my perspective Army, police, or Navy to secure our community (Bomadi, Delta state, 22 November 2017).

Other respondents presented security as meaning a state of peace and freedom devoid of violence. According to one young man in Sagbama, Bayelsa state who said he was unemployed and not accommodated in the PAP scheme despite being a graduate, security is 'the absence of fear' (Interview. 10 November 2017). This theme of security was also prominent during a focus group interview with some young women (youths) in Amassoma community, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa state. One of them noted, "I see security as a situation whereby every individual has the liberty to carry out his or her activities without any form of violence. Another participant during the same focus group session, asserted that, "security to me [her] is a condition of peaceful coexistence amongst people. As in, an avenue that allows people to go about their private business without any form of interference". This ability to live without fear was also emphasised by another participant in that session. According to her:

> Security to me is a state of peace where you can carry out your daily activities without any form of harassment from anybody. Either the [state] security parastatals or from people that might have one evil intention or the other… to be able to carry out what

> you want to do without harassment without fear (FGD- female, youth, 29 November 2017).

In the similar vein, an academic in the Niger Delta who lives in Port Harcourt, Rivers state had this to say about what security means to him: "…but for me as a typical Niger Deltan as you said, security to me means being able to live my life free. Taking my daily needs for granted" (Interview, Male. 1 December 2017). One male respondent in Sagbama, Bayelsa state, opined, "Security in my own point of view is when you have peace of mind" (FGD-10 November 2017). The above narratives shows a sense in which people equate security as a function of their psychological wellbeing. A feeling of being free and having the agency to lead your life without fear. Another respondent asserted that, "Security is a degree of resistance or a form of protection. In another way, I see it as when one is satisfied with what he has (FGD. Male. Sagbama, Bayelsa state. 10 November 2017).

The analysis of narratives classed under socio-economic security reflected the perception of security as their basic needs for everyday survival. The issues the respondents identified here centres on having sustainable means of livelihood. Their ability to make a living for themselves and their family daily. Socioeconomic factors like employment, unemployment, underemployment, and their implications for other values of wellbeing, featured prominently. Youth unemployment is particularly alarming in the Niger Delta, which is however, paradoxical considering it is "the richest part of Nigeria in terms of natural resources, extensive forests, good agricultural land and abundant fish resources…" (Moffat and Lindén 1995). According to Etekpe (2009: 5):

> The Gross National Product (GNP) per capita in the Niger Delta is below the national average of USD1.25. Out of the total population of 21 million in 2006, 11.74m were unemployed and over 70 percent were living in rural communities characterized by lack of development, stagnant agricultural productivity, negligible opportunities, tenuous property rights, and high mortality rate.

The huge unemployment situation leaves the youth in a situation where they could be vulnerable to social vices, manipulation by leaders of criminal gangs and cult groups. As one male respondent noted during a focus group interview in Gokana, Rivers state, "talking of security aspect, if you have a tangible job, you can secure yourself but when you have nothing, you'll do bad things" (FGD. 12 November 2017). This is the view shared by one of the youth leaders in Sagbama, Bayelsa state. According to him, "actually as a youth, if you are gainfully employed, I believe part of your life is secured… So, if one is gainfully employed, problems such as youth restiveness, and vandalization of pipelines would be stopped" (Interview, Male 10 November 2017). Commenting on her perception of security, an elderly woman in Okrika,

Rivers state said in 'Pidgin English[54], that her job gives her a sense of security. According to her:

> Wétin security mean to me is that any job wéy you déy do wéy fit give you your own source of income, you go make sure séy you guide am so dat the thing wéy you want to do, you go do am well. Meaning, what security means to me in my daily life is having a secured source of income and ensuring one protects his or her job very well, and be able to work well (Interview, 18 November 2017).

In Bomadi, Delta state, one community elder who described himself as a former 'community DPO', because of his role in organising local vigilante for the protection of his community, emphasised the notion of employment as a form of security. He stated emphatically that:

> Security is employment. The council [local government] should employ our children that have gone to school. They should lift embargo on employment. Many of them are graduates for so many years without work… our children are supposed to work. Maybe it [absence of employment] is what is gingering their mind to do havoc (Interview, 22 November 2017).

In a similar vein, a male respondent in Amassoma community in Bayelsa state reiterated the saliency of having a job as constituting security:

> My own perspective in terms of our daily [everyday] security, I think it has to do with job opportunity. Job opportunity is very scarce in the Niger Delta region and this makes most of us result to violence. And even considering the output of oil from the region, job available is very few and it is causing a lot of problem; so this area should also be looked into. If there are available jobs and youths are gainfully employed, I think there will be minimal issues resulting to all those Niger Delta crises that do occur (FGD- 29 November 2017).

The presentation of security as employment opportunities and having work to do to meet basic needs of life was very profound amongst many interviewees. As one male respondent noted during an interview in Benin City, Edo state:

> Well, I think economic security matters most to me. Because one, if you cannot fend for yourself. There is a popular saying that the hungry man is an angry man. And because the people are not able to fend for themselves due to the deplorable status of the economy arising from oil exploration that left the environment desolate, insecurity that arises therefrom is a popular concern, should be of concern to anybody and it is to me (Interview, 6 November 2017).

The pressures and challenges of youth unemployment came up regularly during my fieldwork. For example, during my trip to Bomadi, after a focus group interview with some youths, one of them beckoned to me and gave me his number. He begged me to help him with a job because

[54] Pidgin English is a combination of local slangs and English language with the latter as its basics. It is a simplified form of communication especially in informal groups or amongst less educated people. It is also referred to sometimes as vernacular English.

he was suffering. I could see the frustration in his face but unfortunately, I had no means of getting him a job. There is the sense in which they think once you come for a research in the local community you either have money or connected to some organisations with the agency to give them a job. It is also a reflection of why many youths are able to engage in militancy as an alternative route to vent their anger against the state and IOCs and survive off it.

Equating security as employment, having a means of livelihood and ability to cater for one's wellbeing as the respondents show, resonates with the emancipatory role of security where the individual wellbeing is security's ideal referent as espoused in the work of Booth (1991). He asserted that:

> Security means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on… Emancipation, not power or order produces true security (Booth, 1991: 319).

An ex-militant expressed this 'emancipatory' perception of security during a focus group in Bomadi, Delta state. According to him, security epitomised a sense of comfort and wellbeing. He said, "I feel security is the feeling of having the basics of life. Having the basic needs, food, and shelter; when you are not scared of your own life… that is what security means to me" (21 November 2017). The inability to have these economic securities could manifest in psychological threats. This was the view of one male respondent, who said that, "… in terms of economic and psychological manifestations of security threats: poverty, unemployment, maybe feeling... loss of [self] confidence are part of the manifestation of economic and psychological security threat (Interview, Benin City, Edo state, 26 November 2017).

Some of the respondents also presented security as meaning the provision of social welfare to them. They argue that their welfare is important for their everyday security needs. As one woman stated, security is the "provision of social benefits by the state' (FGD- Bomadi, Delta state, 22 November 2017). One respondent who shared varied thoughts on his perception of security in his daily life, added:

> That the government is doing those things which it was voted into power to do. Once they provide those welfare facilities which I can take for granted, and the ordinary Niger Deltan too can take for granted. It means that the frustration and aggression, which will occur, which would have built up in the minds of those who felt left out by the state, would be reduced to a very high extent and so we can live our lives free" (Interview, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, 1 December 2017).

In what was a common feature in several interviews where respondents would give integrated or compound responses, one female participant during a focus group session shared her perception of security as meaning "good welfare packages, good jobs for the youths, good roads, good schools, free education, good communication network" (Bomadi, Delta state, 22 November 2017).

Directly linked to socioeconomic security is the notion of food as security. Having food on the table was described by some interviewees as central feature of security and outcome of having jobs or being gainfully employed. Commenting on their notion of food as security for their daily life in the Niger Delta region, a male community elder in Sagbama, Bayelsa state, noted that, "the issue of our well-being on a daily basis cannot be over-emphasized because nobody can survive without food and basic necessities." (FGD, 10 November 2017). Similarly, an unemployed respondent in the same focus group stated that, "for me, security has to do with the stomach infrastructure. If the stomach infrastructure is taken care of, there is security. And it can be taken care of through the provision of jobs" (FGD, 10 November 2017). However, many people in the Niger Delta do not have jobs and are poor despite the region's huge oil and gas resources. Access to basic necessities such as food is difficult for many people. The appalling consequence of this situation has been an upsurge in poverty related hunger. Some people have also used the massive poverty as justification for their involvement in criminal violence that has spurred the increase in small arms and light weapons. Such immense poverty, according to (Asuk 2011: 2), 'opens no other reasonably outlet to human agency to search for justice than resort to violence'. Reacting to the relationship between food insecurity and propensity to violence and crime, one male respondent angrily asserted, "they say a hungry man is an angry man without food on my table for me and my family what do you expect" (Interview, Gokana, Rivers state, 12 November 2017). Similarly, another male respondent in Okrika, Rivers state, responded rhetorically to my question. He asked, "If I don't have any food to eat how can I secure myself? The government personnel undermined the Niger Delta people" (interview, 18 November 2017). Rhetorical responses like these were rife during some of the interviews, which is often borne out of their frustration, and the lack of opportunity to help the situation.

A respondent who works in the local council where worker's salaries were unpaid for several months lamented the threat of food insecurity during a focus group interview in Amassoma, Bayelsa state. According to him:

> Security is very vast but if I really understand your question well, and if I am to make a point, I will say that food security is the major challenge we have at hand presently. Food security is a problem for 'we' in the Niger Delta most especially Bayelsa state. We depend mainly on the government, and it is only when the government pays us that we can buy food items in the market. Because the government is not able to meet up with its' responsibility, we go home hungry most of the time and sometimes this would result to the young ones stealing and robbing people and houses with weapons. So, for us here, food security is actually a major problem of concern to us (FGD- 29 November 2017).

During the fieldwork for this study, I observed a huge reliance on government to provide the basics for their everyday life. I also observed that many respondents reflected a seemingly hapless situation; one where they have either resigned to fate, accepted their condition or taking their destinies in their own hands, good or bad. One woman who organises a local credit thrift association ('Osusu') amongst women that run similar petty businesses (foodstuff), and in whose shop we had a focus group session in Bomadi, Delta state mentioned that "I do not think there will be crises if every person has something doing in order to bring food to their table" (22 November 2017). Another woman in the focus group even hinted on the need for youths to engage in agriculture as a critical means of livelihood, and the need for government to take cognisance of that. According to her, "agriculture is one area where the youths need to grow because without food our growth is not secure. So, the government should consider that too" (FGD- 22 November 2017). This further highlights the connection between not having a means of livelihood, food and insecurity in the region.

Some participants noted that security to them means the provision of infrastructural development. These perceptions of security include things like good roads, schools, electricity, and other facilities that makes life bearable. As one respondent asserted, security means "rapid infrastructural development in the entire region" (FGD, Female, Gokana, Rivers state. 12 November 2017). Although there are self-help measures in providing basic infrastructure in the communities by the locals, the heavy reliance on the government for the development of infrastructure in the region is not in doubt. That was the view of one respondent who stated that security means "infrastructural development from the centre [federal] government" (FGD- Female, Gokana, Rivers state 12 November 2017). However, some participants had the tendency to state their perception of security within a plurality of security choices in their daily life. This idea reflects a plethora of concerns for their wellbeing. There were times when a simple question of "what does security mean to you in your daily life?" will lead to myriads of issues bothering on their challenges in the community. Some of the narratives below depict this trend. According to one young man in Okrika, River state, he stated:

> I am a carpenter. What I understand by security is ehmmm… Daily, I carry out a carpentry work and I need electricity supply so that I can make use of my working equipment. Also, I need to charge my mobile phone for me to be able to communicate with my customers. So, I think electricity supply is one of the major aspects that will guarantee my daily security. And I plead to the government to provide electricity supply (Interview. 18 November 2017)

One senior citizen in Bomadi, Delta state, bemoaned the everyday reality of insecurities created by the dearth of infrastructure. According to him, "we do not have light. The one the government did halfway, stopped in the neighbouring community. We need light and clean water in the community. We need school (Interview, Male 22 November 2017). Similarly, in an expert interview with an academic who researches the Niger Delta conflict, he reacted thus on the centrality of infrastructure for their everyday security:

> Let me give you an example, the East-West road I supposed you passed it. You traversed it severally. From here to Port Harcourt. Is it completed? The answer is no. That East-West road contract was awarded the same day in 1985 that the contract for the dualization of Abuja-Kaduna and Kaduna-Kano[55] highway was awarded in 1985 by Babangida regime. Those roads have been completed and resurfaced twice. Yet, the road that transcends the area that lays the goose that lays the golden eggs is yet to be completed. Yenagoa got light only in October 2007. Before then, they had gas turbine that was performing epileptically. Work one day then for the next three weeks it will not work. It was not connected to the national grid… That is how underdeveloped the area is. Most of the area is water. The roads are not there. No formal waterways transportation… (Expert Interview, Oghara, Delta state. 5 December 2017).

A number of participants further shared their views on the perception of infrastructure as security for them. For one respondent in Oporoza community, Warri South-West LGA in Delta state, security includes "infrastructural development like electricity supply, standard hospital centres, good roads, good drinking water, standard schools, cleaning of the environment, job creation, etcetera" (Interview, Male. October 26). In the same vein, a community elder in Gokana, Rivers state commented; thus, "it [security] matters to me because I am a leader. Secondly, without security there will be no peace, no rapid development and infrastructure" (interview, 12 November 2017). One participant in Amassoma, Bayelsa state, equated the possibility of not having these basic infrastructures as a potential for crises. According to him "of course, you would agree with me that in our communities where there is no water, roads, electricity supply, and where so much is taken away from you and the place, the people of the

[55] The East-West road is the major road that cuts across the Niger Delta states in the Southern part of Nigeria. The Abuja-Kaduna and Kaduna-Kano are key roads in the Northern part of Nigeria. The apparent lack of repair of the former feeds into the narratives of the people of the Niger Delta of a deliberate lack of development by the Northern political leaders who have held political power more in the country. The Southern presidency of Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015) started repairs on the road but did not complete it before he left office.

region would certainly not be happy. The result of this is that it would lead to some form of crisis or the other" (FGD. 29 November 2017). In the words of a community elder, who was livid with anger expressed his perception of security thus: "there is nothing that makes me feel secure in my everyday life in the Niger Delta because there is no empowerment by government to the youths of our region. There is no good road in our community and no-good hospitals in some other communities in the Niger Delta" (Interview. Bomadi, Delta state 21 November 2017).

Some respondents emphasised human capital development as well. They stressed the prominence of education as constituting security for them and the utmost guarantee for their everyday security. According to one youth president, he stated that, "… if you are educated and have outgrown that stage of illiteracy that too is a means of security." (Interview, Sagbama, Bayelsa state, 10 November 2017). Another community elder asserted that, "first, it is education. Education should be free in such a way that 75 percent will be in school…" Second, empowerment package for youths. Third, there should be orientation because most of the youths are ignorant of these crimes". (Interview. Male. 2 December 2017). Another respondent noted, "only if we are given good education and employment then we will be secure" (Interview, Male. 2 December 2017).

The issue of security as justice (and injustice as insecurity) was also rife from the analysis of the respondent's narratives of what security means to them. In fact, injustice to them is a grave precursor for insecurity in their daily life. In a study of ten deltas of the world, (Etekpe 2009: 7) observed that one thing that is a common denominator to all deltas is the issue of justice. According to him:

> The question of justice has not been adequately addressed, whether in the Niger Delta in Nigeria, Mississippi in USA, Okavango Delta in Angola, Pearl Delta in China or Blue Nile in Egypt. The justice question is about who owns the land and who should control the resources in the land? Who suffers from the exploitation of the land? What should be the reaction of local communities where these questions remain unanswered, and the peoples' rights are constantly violated?

The above questions remain at the core of the agitations in the Niger Delta and continues to serve as conflict trigger beyond the amnesty. These issues of injustice or marginalisation draws from the number of resources that is available for the development of the region. However, this has not been the case as the people continue to protest over their political alienation from the profits of oil production in their land and their "lack of access to justice, redress and compensation" (Emeseh 2011: 55). A former community representative in the Bayelsa state

House of Assembly expressed the lack of justice by the state and IOC's operations in the region. According to him:

> Security is a complex word. It is complex in the nature that people have looked at from physical security. But there are some certain ingredients that will lead to insecurity. And that is the absence of justice, when there is no justice, where there is double standard at how things are being handled, insecurity is being ushered in. I can give you an instance in the Niger Delta, what has caused insecurity so far is injustice by the government and by the multinational operators. When I talk about multinational operators, I am talking in relation to oil because of the manner they carry on their activities. And the part of the multinationals like Shell, Agip, Texaco, Mobil, they came from a civilised climate when compared to the Niger Delta, Nigeria. And the modus operandi back home in their home country differs from the one in Nigeria. Therefore, they have ushered in injustice by their modus operandi (Interview, Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. 10 November 2017).

An environmental and human rights activist, who campaigns for resource control and self-determination for the Niger Delta people, during an in-depth interview in her home, insisted that the various gamut of security is important to her, but that justice lies at the heart of her everyday security perception. According to her:

> You cannot choose physical security above environmental security or environmental security above physical security... Yeah. You cannot have all these things without the people having justice… If there is no justice, then you cannot begin to talk of peace. If there is no justice, you cannot begin to say that because of lack of peace that is why there is no investment or development in the region. Because the reason why people are agitating is because of the lack of equity and justice (Port Harcourt, Rivers state. 1 December 2017).

Similarly, a young man in Okrika, Rivers state, asserted that security to him means, "equal right and justice, full implementation of all government promises and policies in the Niger Delta region" (Interview, 2 December 2017). One respondent in Bomadi, Delta state, even thinks that the deployment of security operatives as seen in the case of the JTF would not have been necessary if there was justice. According to him, "the presence of security is not necessary in an atmosphere of equal right and justice. If everyone can get the basic need of life at their doorstep, I do not think anyone would want to go and take something that do not belong to him or her" (FGD- 21 November 2017). A human rights activist emphasised the lack of peace in the region, which draws from the lack of justice. According to her, "… there can't be peace without justice. How can there be peace in a region where there is no justice…" (Interview, Port Harcourt, Rivers state. 1 December 2017). Another NGO practitioner in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state, shared the same opinion about the correlation of peace justice and security. According to him, "no justice, no peace as far as I am concerned but where there is justice, there is peace". Interview, 10 November 2017).

Beyond, the notion of justice as security, I analysed other narratives of the respondents that conceived what security means to them. A few respondents asserted the prominence of divinity (God) as their security. According to one participant, in Okrika, Rivers state, he stated that, "the almighty God is my security and I feel secure just because of God and nothing more because the Police, Army, Air force, and Navy cannot provide security for the people in the region (interview, 18 November 2017). Similarly, another participant asserted his religious leaning and the divinity of God in his conception of security. He stated that, "God Almighty. Yes, because I am a Christian by religion. God is the highest chief security; he controls the world. Secondly, my personal security of my life and properties, knowing and applying basic personal security tips in my everyday life" (Interview, Amassoma, Bayelsa state. 29 November 2017). It is argued that Nigeria is the "world's second most religious country" (Vanguard 2016b) with about 200 million people who identify largely as either Christians, Muslims, or animists. In the Niger Delta in particular, the Ijaws (the largest ethnic group in the region) are famous for their reverence to their god of war, 'egbesu'. Famed for its "mystical and physical powers", it has been a key source of their ideological and cultural resistance in the region (Ifeka 2006: 723). This thus explains why some of the people will equate their perception of security to God in view of the religiosity of the country and the region.

Some respondents also alluded to Human rights and the respect for personal opinions and choices as constituting security for them. As one young male participant puts it:

> Talking about security goes beyond protecting lives and property. You have to respect my interest, my views about life. Respect my religion for who I am. So it cuts across so many areas… when these things are denied, that is when the fears and uncertainties will come in. If my rights, my beliefs, my values are respected, I think I am secure (FGD, Bomadi, Delta state 21 November 2017).

According to one respondent during a focus group interview in Sagbama, Bayelsa state, that for him, "Security is to be able to achieve what I want to achieve at a particular time.… When my rights are not denied" (Male, 10 November 2017). Another respondent noted that, "Security is health to me" (FGD, Bomadi, Delta state 21 November 2017). One female respondent emphasised that the only thing that will make her secure is the creation of 'Torebe' state out of the present day Bayelsa state. As she observed, it is only when people of her ethnic group have their own state and in control of their resources, then they would have security. Such notion is characteristic of the feeling of oppression and injustice faced by the people of the Niger Delta and the ethnic politics that is common in the country.

In addition, it is interesting to note some respondents differential experiences and understanding of security with respect to gender and their livelihood strategies. Some of these experiences reflects largely how they engage with the socioeconomic manifestations of security threats in their everyday life. The dynamics of mobility around communities in the region- such as their ability to go to the market, farms, and to be able to navigate the many security checkpoints without being harassed - was of great concern to some people. For instance, women would elect to go to the farm in groups to limit the chances of an individual being cornered and molested. This is understandably so, as rape is rife in the region both by local criminals, and the state security agents when they besiege communities like they did in Odi, Choba, Umuechem, Ogoni, and several other communities (Amnesty International 2006; Human Rights Watch 1999; Lenning and Brightman 2009). In April 2020, the Nigerian Army stated it had arrested some of its soldiers who, in a video that went viral, swore in uncouth words to rape and infect women in Warri, Delta state, with HIV (Egbas 2020). Whilst they may have been apprehended by the Army authorities, it shows the open derision some of the soldiers have for women and girls in the region, which influences their actions towards them.

I observed that some women choose to operate kiosks in their compounds where they sell petty commodities in order to limit their daily exposure to the security practices of the state agents that are prominent on the roads and waterways of the region. According to one young woman, "When I see a large number of military personnel I get scared of the possibility of harassment" (Interview, Amassoma, Bayelsa state, 29 November 2017). Another woman highlighted the impact of the curfew imposed in her community on those who do business. Curfews are usually imposed when there are heightened crisis in communities that could lead to breakdown of law and order. As she states, "As from 7pm till dawn, you cannot go out. The curfew affected those who do business in the evenings. We try not to walk at night to avoid harm" (Interview, Amassoma, Bayelsa state, 29 November 2017). One woman during a FGD session expressed the threats of physical violence and her fear of being kidnapped. According to her, "Somebody can steal my body away" (Bomadi, Delta state, 22 November 2017). Some women were concerned about issues around the security of their homes, their children getting employment after their education, and their overall wellbeing. One woman complained of the sad reality of having their children rely on their parents for economic sustenance when they should be getting on with their own life after their education. According to her:

> The lack of educational facilities such as higher institutions of learning means that the children in the community will not be educated, and if they have nothing to do, that will increase the security situation of the community. When the children manage to go to

> school and graduate and they do not have employment, when parents have sold their properties, sold their 'wrappers' [traditional clothes for women] and no work, and coming to join their mother to eat from the same pot, that is a problem (Bomadi, Delta state, 22 November 2017).

Some men mentioned the threats that the lack of functional physical and social infrastructure, which can aid better performance of daily endeavours, could pose to their economic security. I recall how a carpenter lamented his inability to have constant electricity to power his work equipment instead of relying on personal generator, and the added cost of maintenance. He even quipped he could be tempted to return to the 'creeks', a term for oil militancy (interview, Okrika, Rivers state, 18 November 2017). The men are mostly engaged in the high-intensive local cottage activities – like small-scale sand dredging with canoes from the rivers, masonry, carpentry, welding and fabrication, amongst others. The waterways for instance, is critical to economic activities and livelihood of people in the region. The dearth of motorable roads present challenges in the use of the water ways for their economic activities. One young man reflected on the impact of the situation on productivity this way:

> For example in Ekeremor local government area, Agoro community the only way to transport is for me to chatter a boat. So, if I am a resident there and am a farmer I will be handicapped because of no road. And the boats don't operate always; so even when I want to move, I need to wait. You know what it means if time is exhausted and if we go back to labour productivity, it will affect the overall output of even you as a person (Interview, Southern Ijaw, Bayelsa state, 28 November 2017).

Another man narrated his experience thus:

> Some weeks back while I was travelling to Brass and at some points, the military men would tell us to raise our hands up, everybody is now termed as criminals in this civilised society. I only experienced that as disciplinary measure in primary school when I defaulted in certain things, and at this my age, as old as I am, somebody is now telling me to raise up my hands (Interview, Southern Ijaw, Bayelsa state, 28 November 2017).

I observed that the women are the artery of commerce in the communities. They dominate the commercial market activities, the sales of farm produce, clothing, and tailoring business, and also working in the farms. However, in some cases, the economic activity are not linear or the exclusive preserve of one gender. For instance, I observed that fishing is common to both male and female in the Niger Delta. Some men may go further into the Atlantic Ocean that borders the Niger Delta for fishing, but it does not detract from the capacity of fishing activities carried out by women in the rivers closer home in the communities. This might be because the women, apparently, would not only fish as a means of generating income but would

be the ones to finish early to manage the homes – cook and take care of their children, their husbands, and other domestic chores.

However, I noticed during my various trips during my fieldwork that men are more prone to brutality by security forces in the region. The average male, especially youths, are perceived by the security agents as a suspect - a likely militant, oil thief ('bunkerer'), or a 'yahoo boy' (internet scammer). This prejudices them *ab initio* when they come in contact with security operatives in the region, whether they have legitimate jobs or not. As one young woman who is an undergraduate student at Niger Delta University noted:

> Police vehicle pick up youths who were not necessarily doing anything bad. But the fact that they were out late walking on their own, they are being picked up and harassed and arrested. And most at times, we had to bail some of them for nothing when they did not commit any crime. (Interview, Amassoma, Bayelsa state, 29 November 2017)

Although, the military and the police that are prevalent in the region constitutes security threats to some people by their practices of torture, harassment and sometimes, molestation, the continuing insecurity in the region has made their presence a 'child of necessity'. Hence, some respondents believe their presence also ensures there is relative calm in some communities. As one lady puts it:

> When there is crisis between two parties in the community, the police and army makes arrest, and there will be settlement. If they were not there we could have killed ourselves. That one has helped to save my life and those of my children. They also help to limit the actions of the cultists. Before now, they fight and kill themselves even in the afternoon (Interview, Bomadi, Delta state 21 November 2017).

The above shows, how different groups of people experience and understand security in relation to their gender, their livelihood activities in the region. These experiences have implications for their perception of threats to their lives, and how they view the state and its capacity to meet their everyday security needs.

7.2 Conclusion

The foregoing narratives echoes the local discourses of security in the Niger Delta region. It shows what security means to the people in their everyday life; a focus that resonates with the contemporary scholarship on security studies with the human individual at the core of its analysis. This kind of analysis also reveals the contradictions in the perception of security, and its experience in the everyday life of the people as regards what the state and its military apparatchik think about security. As many responses have shown, there is the preponderance of multiple and sometimes overlapping perceptions of security. It is not uncommon to find

security meaning a variety of things or threats to some people. As Jarvis and Lister (2012: 168) notes, 'the very meaning of the term security appears itself inherently contested within public as much as within academic discourse'. Whilst some people perceive security (and insecurity) differently and how it shapes their experiences, there is however the common thread that runs across them which is the basic focus of the people on what matters to them in their everyday life. Irrespective of the gender or status of the persons interviewed, their desires focus on their everyday security concerns, the essential needs that makes their security and survival possible.

Evident also from the responses is the normative appeal of the participants' perception of security that reflects what is, and what it should be. Many respondents said what they thought about security and the situation they experience, whilst in the same breath adding what they feel it ought to be. One example is the response of a community elder in Gokana, Rivers state. Security to him reflects the "infrastructural development and provision of social amenities because if all the above is handled by capturing all the youth in the Niger delta, there will be fair justice for all which will prevent reoccurrences of insurgence" (Interview, 12 November 2017. While it can be argued that the state cannot deliver security alone in all forms which some respondents also alluded to, what respondents criticized is the role of the state in making their lives unbearable with oppressive security practices. While their political demands are rarely heeded by the state, they are unable to live without harassment and intimidation by the state security apparatuses. This brings to mind the pertinent question of security's referent. Whose security does the state exist to protect. As one community elder who bemoaned the neglect of their community farmland following series of oil spill noted, "Is Shell and Chevron not part of government? Is AGIP not part of government? Are the top government officials not involved in it? Why are they not considering us?" (Interview, Gokana, Rivers state, 12 November 2017). The elder points to the 'hegemonic alliance' between the Nigerian state and the IOCs which was by many respondents interpreted as anti-people security. According to Ibeanu (2000:24), 'all groups desire security, yet problems arise when people have different perceptions and want different conditions of security'. He further contends, "conflict arises out of a contradiction of securities, which the Nigerian state because of its character is unable to manage and reconcile. This contradiction of security hinges on the perception of security advanced by local communities and those advanced by state officials and *petrobusiness*[56]" (ibid).

[56] Ibeanu (2000:32) uses petrobusiness to refer to "all aspects of the petroleum industry not just the oil companies that extract and sell crude oil (e.g., oil refineries, oil services).

People in the Niger Delta perceive of the state through their everyday security experiences. Literature confirms the findings that the security attention the state gives to the IOCs popularized the notion that the state values oil more than the everyday needs of the people as the uninterrupted production of oil and the safety of oil infrastructure oil seems to matter more to the state than the safety and wellbeing of the people. (Ibeanu 2000: 24; Oyewole et al. 2018: 66; Uzodike and Isike 2009: 109). Oil then became the state's security referent, and as such influences the securitization of the region whilst deploying the rhetoric of (in)security and the consequent militarization of the region. Some people believe that the enormous resources spent on the military operations in the region is less than what is spent on infrastructural development of the region. As one male respondent noted, "let me tell you something, the state spends more money on maintaining security apparatus in the Niger Delta than they spend on the infrastructural development of the area" (interview, Oghara, Delta state). For instance, whilst the people complain of lack of infrastructural development in their region, they decry the huge number of resources spent on the military in the region. The militant group, MEND once gave the reason for its spate of attacks on oil infrastructure to include the "over 400 billion for security in the Niger Delta" (C. Bassey 2012: 79). However, these expenditures are justified by the state's quest to curtail insecurity in the region due to the rising threats of militant groups.

Lastly, findings show that security to the people extends concerns of physical safety and the alleviation of threats to lives and properties. Security to the people is survival plus the ability to assert their rights to have a good life. The mundane desires for food, gainful employment, a healthy non-polluted environment, infrastructural development, justice, spirituality, are factors highlighted by the respondents. It is in this sense that the individual human is viewed as the referent object of security where humans and their cherished values are the priority of security considerations (Booth 1991; McSweeney 1996). A central focus on the 'human dignity' (Ul Haq 1995: 116) where political and social ambitions are possible for the people and not just for the state.

CHAPTER 8

BEYOND THE PAP: EVERYDAY NARRATIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING IN POST-AMNESTY NIGER DELTA

With the failure of the PAP to address the underlying causes of the crisis in the Niger Delta (Obi 2014b) and thus failing as a conflict mitigation approach for stemming the insecurity in the region, this chapter examines the everyday[57] narratives on how the protracted conflict could be resolved. The chapter analyses the peoples' responses on what they think constitutes the pathway to sustainable peace and security in the post-amnesty Niger Delta based on their perception and lived experiences of the conflict in the region. This follows from the critical approach adopted for this study. Although lauded as a local peacebuilding measure, PAP has been envisioned from a 'top-down' approach by the state. Many local people complained of the government's focus on the militants without adequate consultation and involvement of other stakeholders at the community levels who should be the local drivers of the peacebuilding measures. This raises questions on the peacebuilding credentials of PAP, and on the feasibility of the resolution of the crisis without a broad-based participatory approach of ordinary people to the peace measures on the ground now and in the future. After all, people make peace happen. The involvement of ordinary people is therefore crucial for sustainable peace. Local ownership of peace processes has been increasingly canvassed by scholars and have gained discursive usage in the United Nations since the 2000s (Lemay-Hébert and Kappler 2016: 895).

Thus, examining from a bottom-up perspective, the local perception for sustainable peace in the Niger Delta is vital, as the Nigerian government's estimation of PAP is that of success, since in their thinking, there is relative peace (Utomi 2020). Beyond the government's imposed peacebuilding measure, should the people themselves not determine how the peace process could work best resolving the conflict? People in the local communities identify what constitutes their measures of peacebuilding. Such local determinants of peace is important, as

[57] The increasing usage of the 'everyday' in recent Critical Security and Peace Studies literature reflects amongst others, the routinized, local, or mundane ways people navigate their safety and survival in the face of insecurity in societies. It recognises the inclusion of local agency beyond "the skewed analytics of power that focuses on elites or structural power", Xavier Guillaume and Jef Huysmans, 'The Concept of 'the Everyday': Ephemeral Politics and the Abundance of Life', *Cooperation and Conflict,* (2018), 1-19.

there are no linear approaches to peacebuilding (Gawerc 2006: 442). What constitutes the parameters for the resolution of a conflict never means the same thing for all actors concerned. Therefore, examining the matrix of peacebuilding beyond the statist perspective would reveal the normative dimensions of the everyday perceptions of peace.

The first part focuses on local peacebuilding measure and the narratives of the local people for the resolution of the Niger Delta conflict.

8.1 PAP: A Top-Down Local Peacebuilding Measure

As I have analysed in chapter 4, PAP represents a broad ambition of a local peacebuilding intervention in a protracted conflict setting in contrast to the externally driven peace and security interventions in many other countries of the world. This underscores the critical stance of peace studies where peace measures are attentive to the local context. The PAP did not involve regional peacebuilding bodies in Africa or the UN in negotiating the 'peace' in the region as is common practice in other post-conflict environments. The former Coordinator of PAP, Kingsley Kuku had boasted that, "the Amnesty programme is the only DDR programme in the world that did not rely on the expert advice from the United Nations. It has been acknowledged as a unique Nigerian-made peace model, proclaimed, funded, and managed by Nigerians" (Obi 2014b: 253).

However, beyond the 'Nigerianess' of the programme and the grandstanding of the erstwhile coordinator lays its internal contradictions with respect to local ownership and inclusiveness, and the resolution of the fundamentals of the conflict. PAP represents a "state-imposed peace from above which sidesteps issues of equity, justice, scrutiny and everyday democracy" (Obi 2014b: 253). The federal government chooses the leadership of the programme as with other interventionist development agencies in the region such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). With the people unable to determine the leadership of the programme through a democratic means, appointments made by the central government are viewed as a political largesse for loyal party elites who are detached from the everyday realities in the region. Similarly, the manner of such 'selections and appointments' portray the focus on political considerations more than the concerns that will engender "sustainable peace and local representation in affected oil communities" (Nwokolo 2012: 233). Thus, the implementation of PAP has shown the appetite for state-elite capture in peacebuilding. The ordinary people do not have ownership of the 'local' peace process. As Obi (2014b: 253) contends, "PAP provides a case with which to demonstrate that, far from being a neutral process, certain actors, in this case the Nigerian state and elites, can use the notion and practice

of peacebuilding to pursue dominant political and economic interests". As with the practice of liberal peace interveners who choose the local actors or NGOs, they work with those who acquiesces to their ideals (Kappler 2015: 882), the Nigerian state has been able to co-opt prominent local leaders as agents of political legitimisation of the peacebuilding programme. The government has used some politicians, traditional rulers, and former militia leaders (local actors) to symbolise the 'localisation' of the programme and a veiled sense of inclusion. As Julian et al. (2019: 213) notes, "the recognition of local actors is different from their inclusion". So, whereas Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2014: 21) for instance, argue about the structural forms of exclusion of the majority of local people in the post-conflict project, the state's elite capture of the programme, represents a negation of the idea of local ownership. In other words, the people who bear the impact of the conflict are not determining the nature of the peacebuilding process nor how it will work in their interest because the state has captured the programme and co-opted local actors.

Sadly, contending issues remain and the 'peace' elicited by the amnesty deal has not been sustainable. The region has remained in a 'no war, no peace' situation (Osumah 2013), with the structural issues behind the conflict unaddressed in the peace process. As R. Solomon (1997: ix) notes,

> Sustainable peace requires that long-time antagonists not merely lay down their arms but that they achieve profound reconciliation that will endure because it is sustained by a society-wide network of relationships and mechanisms that promote justice and address the root causes of enmity before they can regenerate destabilizing tensions.

As has been noted, the PAP peacebuilding adventure has been criticised for its apparent lack of proper consultation with stakeholders at the community levels in the region before setting up the PAP programme. A situation that deprived these stakeholders of their input, participation, and ownership of the peace process. Victims of the oil insurgency - men, women, children, youths, and communities had no provision in PAP. Instead, it favoured the views of the local political elites (who are often perceived as pro government by the ordinary people), and the militia lords. As one male interviewee in Amasoma Bayelsa state observed, [there should have been] "proper consultation directly with the community leaders, youths, women, chiefs, etc., before taking decisions, and not the decision that are based on the self-acclaimed political leaders" (Interview, 20 November 2017). His comments highlight the distrust for the local political elites especially, the notion of their self-serving interests as opposed to those of the ordinary people. Likewise, another male respondent in Amasoma, Bayelsa state,

emphasized this point of the people feeling distant from the local political leaders when he claimed that:

> The political leaders are not the leaders of our communities. The people who are affected are the stakeholders. Hold 'town hall meetings'[58] directly with the people. Not selected political elites who care more about their office and their perpetuation in power than the welfare of the people (Interview, 20 November 2017).

Whilst it is important that many stakeholders and actors in a conflict environment should be involved in the dialogues for the resolution of the conflict and building peace, Does (2013: 3) argues there are times where it may not be "politically appropriate". There might be issues about the willingness and the capacity of the people to engage. The ethnic diversity of the conflict actors may also mean a divergence of views, values and expectations, which could pose challenges for the post-conflict peacebuilding. However, the limited involvement of the local people in the peace process calls to question the utility of PAP and the notion of local ownership. Instead of being a bottom-up approach, it is the reverse, a top-down model of peacebuilding. Essentially, the process of peacebuilding presents an opportunity for "narrowing the vertical space between the authorities and the population" (Does 2013: 4). Policies and programmes aimed at engendering peace and security in a volatile region like the Niger Delta, should not be limited to the ex-warlords and local political actors alone without the critical involvement of the generality of community stakeholders. Such peacebuilding decisions "must take account of the most basic needs identified by the people who are affected by violence and insecurity" (Kaldor 2007: 189)**.** They are the ones that should be at the centre of economic recovery, peace and stability efforts of the peacebuilding programme. "Thus communication, consultation and dialogue are essential tools for both development and security, not simply to win hearts and minds but in order to gain knowledge and understanding" (Kaldor 2007: 189). The utilization of local knowledge, narratives and agency of the people is imperative for resolving a conflict and building sustainable peace.

8.2 Local Narratives for Sustainable peacebuilding

In this section, the dynamics of local perception of engendering sustainable peacebuilding is considered. Nuances of local narratives based on the direct experiences of the people living in the conflict environment are important for understanding the conflict situation, and for resolving them. This approach provides an inclusion of local people in the "collection

[58] 'Town hall meetings' are the traditional ways of addressing community issues including settling disputes and passing judgements at a local gathering either in a hall (for those who have a building), or at the village square designated for such purposes. At such meetings, unanimous decisions are taken, which are binding for all.

and dissemination of experiential knowledge" (Julian et al. 2019: 215)**.** Such everyday narratives help to give voice to the local people beyond the state rhetoric and practice, on how the conflict can be resolved. Allowing the people to determine what constitutes their everyday measures of peace[59] would engender a better prospect for sustainable peacebuilding as it takes into account peoples' perceptions of peace and security. Engaging the people's views (as shown below) would help the government to evaluate the effectiveness of its PAP policy in line with local expectations and make the necessary adjustments. With such a pool of ideas, the government can effectively determine what the local people and their communities need for sustainable peace and not just from its own elitist top-down lens. The demands of the local people who are victims of the crisis should be at the heart of peace processes for it to be sustainable.

Several interviewees gave a plethora of opinions on how they think the Niger Delta conflict can be resolved. The perspectives (which have been arranged thematically) ranges from the government addressing the root cause of the conflict, to socioeconomic and infrastructural development, resource control, political restructuring, justice, international oil companies (IOCs) corporate social responsibility, amongst others. Some were of the opinion that the conflict cannot be resolved as the conflict provides a means of pillage for the local actors and the mangers of the PAP.

To begin, some respondents emphasised the need for the government to focus on the issues that triggered the conflict in the first place. As that, to them, represents the panacea for resolving the protracted conflict. According to the Youth President of one of the foremost Ijaw youth associations in the Niger Delta:

> We have placed the issues on the table. Address the core issues and it will address all the security challenges. One, we have told the federal government to kick start academic activities of the Maritime University at Okerenkoko[60]. Two, we have said restructuring. We want Ijaw people to be part of the economic benefits of this country. Not just ordinary restructuring, restructuring with economic benefits. So that Ijaw people can also own oil well. Ijaw people can also own oil blocs. Oil that is been

[59] See the idea of 'the everyday peace indicators' project by Pamina Maria Firchow and Roger Mac Ginty, that looks at "Bottom-up, anecdotal indicators of peace and change" from the local people. https://everydaypeaceindicators.org

[60] President Goodluck Jonathan, an Ijaw man, proposed the establishment of Nigeria Maritime University in Okerenkoko, Delta state in 2014. His predecessor, president Buhari, a Northerner shut down academic activity in the school over allegations of corruption in the acquisition of the school's temporary site from a former warlord, 'Tompolo' who accepted the federal governments amnesty offer. Fearing it may be moved to another part of the country, in addition to the anger of a region whose 'son' (Jonathan) had just lost the presidency in 2015, the reopening of the University became a key demand by the Niger Delta people.

> taking from our environment. All the oil well owners are from the North or from the South-West. In 20, you will see one Niger Deltan. In 50, you will see one and half Niger Deltan. In 100, "*na 2 or 3 na im you go see*" [in vernacular English meaning, you will see 2 or 3 people] (Interview, Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. 11 November 2017).

Although the above respondent spoke in favour of his ethnic group, the Ijaws, his observations resonated with other informants' sentiments. An NGO practitioner and rights activist lamented the manner the federal government allocates oil wells to non-indigenes of the Niger Delta (especially Northern elites). She wondered why the 'largesse' is not extended to the Niger Delta elites in similar manner. According to her:

> They [federal government] just decide. We share the oil wells. Some oil wells are just sitting down there; give one to Gen. Danjuma, give one to Gen. Babangida [Northern elites]. They just sit down in Abuja, in their states, in Katsina, wherever, and just decide, and yet there are Generals in the Niger Delta. They do not say give one to Gen. Diriyai. They do not say give one to Admiral Pobeni, give one to Admiral Bob-Manuel, give one to this... They do not say that. They just share what is in our backyard to themselves, and to their in-laws, and to their children and you know. They just hand over our wealth from one generation to another. And they marry themselves. One of these guys married [president] Buhari's daughter last year because his oil well was coming up for renewal and he married Buhari's daughter. Of course, automatically his oil well license is renewed. So, if this is not enough to cause anger and frustration that will lead to insecurity and agitation, I do not know what else is justifiably so (Interview, Port Harcourt, Rivers state. 1 December 2017).

The comments show the resentment for the political structure of the country that allows the mass ownership of oil wells in the Niger Delta by people from outside the region especially Northern oligarchs who have benefitted from the long spell of the North being in power. The reference to the retired Military Generals above reveals also the preponderance of the military in the socioeconomic and political life of the country and not just in relation to the oil in the Niger Delta alone. The military ruled Nigeria for many years (see table 1 in page 6 of chapter 4) and they seem to have immersed themselves well as an elite class in the country. They ensured one of them (President Obasanjo) became president in 1999 after 20 years of authoritarian military regime. Currently, a retired military general is the president of Nigeria. Whilst Ahmed Indimi, the son of an oil billionaire, Alhaji (Dr) Muhammadu Ndimi, married the incumbent president Buhari's daughter, Zahra Buhari in 2016, it is hard to ascertain the extent to which his father's oil well renewal license may have played a factor in the relationship as the respondent alluded. Besides, marriages amongst elites and their children is an age-long practice, and a common way of maintaining social status, business deals and connections. It only becomes worrisome if these social relations are exploited in a manner that is detrimental to people's interests as reflected in the narratives of the Niger Delta people.

The federal government's skewed approach to development in the Niger Delta have been one of the reasons given for the resurgence of conflict by the militant groups like the Niger Delta Greenland and Justice Mandate (NDGJM) and the Iduwini Volunteer Force (IVF) in 2016 (C. Okafor and Stephen 2016; Vanguard 2016a). The idea of a restructured economic and political system that would empower more people in the region has been clamoured for a long time. However, the changing dynamics of the conflict where violence has been incentivised make it difficult to conclude that, even if the issues listed above were addressed today, immediate peace would return to the region. It would be naive to measure the success of a peace deal like PAP by just conflict cessation or to assume that peace simply entails the absence of violence. A peace deal could bring a temporary truce, but if the structural issues fuelling the conflict are unaddressed, it will be a recipe for future resurgence of the conflict. As Adetula et al. (2018: 4) argues, "if peace agreements do not deal with how people are going to live in the future, and do not promote "positive peace", they will continue to fail to end suffering and prevent future conflict". The notion of 'positive peace' refers to a more lasting peace that is built on institutions, sociocultural and economic factors that fosters peace in society. It goes beyond ending conflict or the absence of wars and violence but ensures the harmony and stability of societal values for sustainable peace (Institute for Economics and Peace 2018).

Another interviewee during an expert interview echoed the need for the government to address the root causes of the conflict, which, to him, includes environmental and infrastructural issues. He stated that:

> It can be resolved. It could take a long time. But rather than this ad-hoc, palliative measures that is been undertaken by the federal government sometimes in collaboration with the multinationals and some other bodies, I think what should be done is to address the root causes. One of the root causes is the issue of environmental crisis because of oil exploration. Then the other one is to address the infrastructural deficits in the region. Because these two factors I have mentioned, a combination of them, engender the other things like unemployment, poverty, and so on in the region. Because if there is environmental serenity - a preserved environment, a sustainable environment - I think the people will be able to embark on the kind of livelihood they want to (Interview, Benin City Edo state. 26 November 2017).

Similarly, an ex-militant youth during a focus group discussion hinted at the rationale for the youth restiveness in the region and the need to address the root causes. He said:

> I will recommend if they want to solve the issue of insecurity, let every government - local, federal, state - sincerely look at the root causes of these problems. Why are we restive? We are deprived. So, provide for us all those things, and then I think we will have peace (FGD, Male. Sagbama, Bayelsa state. 10 November 2017).

The control of oil proceeds by the people of the Niger Delta, popularly referred to as 'resource control' also came up amongst the respondents as a panacea to building peace in the region. In fact, one male interviewee, a teacher in his community school asserted that:

> The only way we can resolve this issue [conflict] because the last one they did was this amnesty issue. But, even at that too, the crime still persist. So, the best way for this issue is, let the people control their resources. And let them give a particular percentage to the centre. That is just the issue that will bring a lasting solution to this problem (Interview, Mile 3, Sagbama, Bayelsa state. 10 November 2017).

This idea was similar to one shared by an indigene of Oghara, Delta state but resident in Benin City. He focused on the need for government to be sincere and for an equitable fiscal structure where states in the region can control their resources. According to him:

> It can be resolved if only we are sincere to ourselves. First, it will lead to overhaul of our present political arrangement. One, we need to go back to fiscal federalism where regions will be made to control their resources. Naturally, if they are controlling their resources, there will not be crises no more. What we had in 1960 up to 69 thereabout. The derivation principle was 50%. Why did it change that we now have miserable 13%? I think these two will go a long way. By the time, you have a sincere government that is willing to engage, then restructuring the system can be effectively done. Sincerity of purpose is the key thing. Because if there is no sincerity of purpose, the process could be scuttled, and you now have the circle of crises repeating itself (Interview, Benin City, Edo state. 6 November 2017).

The narrative above is consistent with the works of several scholars on the subject who have argued for a recalibration of the current fiscal arrangement that is not in favour of the Niger Delta, that owns the main source of Nigeria's wealth but has nothing to show for it. Thus, by owning their oil resource in an arrangement where taxes and royalties are sent to the centre in a true federal structure could be a panacea to the conflict in the region (Antai and Anam 2014; Etekpe 2007b; Ifeka 2001; Okolo and Raymond 2014).

The political marginalisation and deprivation faced by the Niger Delta people has been pivotal to the Niger Delta crisis. This has raised the question about access to justice (Emeseh 2011: 55) and any effort to build peace in the region will rest on how much injustices have been redressed by the state. A local community leader and former representative at the Bayelsa State House of Assembly harped on the need for restructuring based on justice for the people of the Niger Delta. He describes the lack of opportunity that the educated youths of the Niger Delta face in the recruitment drives of oil multinationals operating in the region. He stated that:

> Restructuring should be with regards to the constitutional, economic and political... Total restructuring that is what the country needs. Because the constitution does not elicit justice. For instance, how will oil blocks be shared and the people of the Niger Delta are not participants in the sharing of the oil blocks. It is when justice is in place. When justice is instituted. For instance, how can you deny somebody who has gone

> to the university employment in his own domain? I have given you an instance where a multinational now use some universities outside the Niger Delta as their recruitment base. And you know that nearness to education is easier for you to be educated. If you are staying in Yenagoa and there is an institution in Yenagoa, you can either trek to school, then you will be educated. When your parents cannot afford to send you to universities that is far away, that is a recruitment centre of all these multinational companies, that means you will end up being denied employment opportunities (Interview, Yenagoa Bayelsa state. 10 November 2017).

The quest for justice highlights the argument of Ikelegbe (2010: 81), that the amnesty peace deal will amount to 'paper peace' if there is no effort at reconciliation of the key actors - the federal government and the security agencies, the oil multinationals, militia groups and the communities. He contends that the actions of the state that exonerate the security agencies and the oil companies from their atrocities and injustices in the region whilst declaring the militants guilty cannot engender peace. He advocated the need for "transitional restorative justice for perpetrators of violence (the military and TNOCs[61])" and the victims in communities that have suffered oppression and abuses. Thus, the military and security agencies would need to reconcile with communities like Odi, Umuechem, Odioma, Gbaramatu, Choba, Kaiama, and Ogoni communities amongst others, for the atrocities they have committed there. Although such reconciliation will not take away the consequences of the military brutality, it will go a long way to kick-start a healing process and show a government that is willing to take responsibility for its atrocities to the victims.

Interestingly, the closest any Nigerian government has come in a semblance of reconciliation was the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (HRVIC) popularly known as 'Oputa Panel[62]'. The Commission was set up on 14 June 1999 by then President Obasanjo to investigate the actions of the military regimes between 1984 and May 1999 before he assumed office. The scope was later widened to cover events from 1966 when the first military coup d'état and counter coup happened with widespread assassinations and violence in the country (United States Institute for Peace 1999). Modelled after the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Oputa Panel sought to review abuses of the past military governments with a view to achieving reconciliation, building national unity, and deepening Nigeria's nascent democracy. Despite receiving over 10,000 petitions on cases ranging from torture, to murder, and disappearances, etcetera, the Panel soon hit a snag as key actors - senior military officers including former presidents Babangida, Buhari and Abdulsalam - refused to

[61] TNOCs - Transnational Oil Companies.

[62] The panel was commonly referred to by the surname of the Chairman, Justice Chukwudifu Oputa (Rtd.) who was a judge of the Nigerian Supreme Court (1984-1989).

appear before it. In addition, the panel was inundated by several court injunctions in an attempt to stop it. It finally submitted its report to the federal government in 2002 but in a bizarre twist, the government annulled the report on constitutional grounds (Zwanbin 2017: 73). Thus, the report was never officially released to the public. The government bungled the hope of any reconciliation or retributive justice for the victims. The Oputa Panel revealed the attitude of the Nigerian government to issues of abuses and the demand for justice and accountability, which has been the bane of the conflict in the Niger Delta. However, a former Nigerian President Yakubu Gowon, underscored the need for reconciliation when he apologised to Oloibiri community during the premiere of a movie titled "Oloibiri" in 2016. The movie captured the tragedy of neglect in the first oil exploration town in the Niger Delta. Gowon acknowledged noting that the people of Oloibiri have been "badly neglected and of course they are hurt... I move as a former head of state to offer the nation's profound regrets and my personal apology to the good people of Oloibiri" (Caleb 2016). This apology represents a symbolic gesture for the hurt done to the region and aids the healing process of the people psychologically.

Another issue that was prominent amongst the interviewees as a means for resolving the conflict and building peace was the issue of economic empowerment. Most especially in the area of employment opportunities. The Niger Delta region is rife with many graduates who are unemployed. One man who was unemployed for a long time before he took up farming stated, "the first thing is job, employment and all other social amenities. We also need fertilizers" (Interview, Gokana, Rivers state. 3 November 2017). During a focus group discussion, a female petty trader lamented the failure of the amnesty programme in absorbing the youths trained in the programme. According to her:

> Some people 'go' [accepted] Amnesty. After their training, they dropped them. Many of them today have no job. After learning trade, no job to take care of themselves. All those people are going back to the old life [militancy]. Then, what is really making the problem worse is the lack of job. Not all the grown-up youths will agree to go back to schooling. They are already matured with their 'evil heart'… Let the youths have jobs. Once they have jobs, once they occupy themselves with work, they will go out to exhibit good character (FGD, Bomadi, Delta state, 22 November 2017).

Another interviewee, a young man who runs a local betting shop alluded to the need for government to create employment for the youths. In his words:

> The Niger Delta crisis can be resolved in one way or the other. Every blessed year, you will see thousands of graduates. So, Government should try and absolve at least 70 % of these persons so that the income can flow generally to all bits. With that, I believe the tension will go down a little. Due to lack of job and other issues, some persons have no option to join any gang they wish to. Like myself, I have been a graduate for almost three to four years now. I finished my NCE programme since

> 2014. There is no job. I tried to find myself doing one small-scale business to empower myself awaiting when government will absorb me (Interview, Bomadi, Delta state. 21 November 2017).

The above views reflect the tendency for many Niger Delta people to depend on government jobs as the formal means of work. When they cannot find one, they are left jobless or engage in self-employment as a stopgap measure. Such 'waiting' period is often crucial for many youths as it could be a fledging opportunity to indulge in criminal violence including joining militant gangs. The oil industry jobs are difficult for the ordinary Niger Delta people who do not have the skillset to work in the high-skilled industry. Besides, as some participants suggested, there are discriminatory practices in oil sectors as many of the oil multinational staff are recruited from outside the region. Less than 5 percent of the people from the Niger Delta work in the oil companies (Umana 2018), a situation that often fuels the cry of marginalisation and injustice. The 'local content' policy of the Nigerian government was supposed to address this situation. However, not much success has been recorded in that regards.

One respondent alluded to the need for corporate social responsibility and the enforcement of the Petroleum Industry Bill[63] as originally conceived within a climate of true federalism and autonomy for the local authorities, as a solution to the conflict. According to the youth who is an unemployed graduate:

> I think an end to the Niger Delta crisis, or a resolution would involve a combination of more corporate social responsibility from the multinational oil companies and implementation of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) as it was before it was changed. That Bill gave communities where oil is drilled, a percentage of the oil revenue that comes to the community itself. Not to the state, not to the local government, but to the community itself. In addition to that, I think more devolution of power and actually practicing true federalism. Even at the state level, an autonomy for the local government would ensure that the local government actually perform their role in job creation and facility provision in their local communities. Now, that would actually give their people more access to opportunities (Interview, Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. 9 November 2017).

However, whilst IOCs have engaged in various forms of corporate social responsibility in the Niger Delta, questions remain about the motives behind such projects. As J. G. Frynas (2005: 581-82) observed, "there is mounting evidence of a gap between the stated intentions of business leaders and their actual behaviour and impact in the real world". Some industry

[63] The Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) is a legislation to regulate the oil industry and is supposed to give 10 percent of oil revenues to oil-host communities. The bill was first sent to the National Assembly by the government of late President Yar'Adua in 2007 with the hope that it will mainstream community participation and enhance peace and development. As of November 2020, after several modifications including changing its name to Petroleum Industry Governance Bill (PIGB) and the contention over the removal of the oil-host community fund, the bill was yet to be passed into law owing to an inter-play of ethno-religious politics.

insiders see it as “a waste of time”, a way of “managing perceptions and making people inside and outside the company feel good about themselves”, and “a red herring in terms of development projects” (J. G. Frynas 2005: 582). These narratives are significant as it determines the quality and effectiveness of such CSR initiative in the region. It is the reason many CSR projects have failed to engender development and peace in the region. An academic and expert on Niger Delta conflict issues alluded to foregoing point during an expert interview. He stated that:

> The IOC projects do not mitigate the problems they have created. So, you destroy the environment, and you build a six-classroom block, it doesn’t solve the problem. You have displaced people from their means of livelihood there should be alternatives. If you do not do that, even though you give them gold plated classrooms, you have not solved the problem... Their CSR practices. They see it as a Father Christmas thing. They see it as if they are doing favours to the communities (Interview, Amassoma, Bayelsa state. 29 November 2017).

Some interviewees noted the practice of the oil multinationals who continue to operate their head offices outside the Niger Delta. All the IOCs moved out due to the conflict. They have refused to relocate despite the post-amnesty peace deal and the directives of Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, the vice president of Nigeria. Osinbajo had on 2nd March 2017, directed the oil majors to relocate to the Niger Delta during a town hall meeting in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state (Udoma 2017). The Ijaw Youth Council also issued a 90-day ultimatum to the IOCs to return to the region (Sahara Reporters 2017). They have not complied. Interestingly, the state owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) also operates its headquarters outside the Niger Delta, contradicting the directives. The interviewees think their return would make them more corporately responsible to their obligations that will benefit the region and be able to feel the pulse of the people of the Niger Delta. However, there are concerns about the security situation in the region, and how those offices could become targets for militants. As one female interviewee in Amassoma, Bayelsa state, expressed “the multi-national oil companies that come to extract crude oil from our region and reside in another state should be brought back to our region. But before we bring them back, we still have a role to play, which is changing of our mind set” (Interview, 9 November 2017). By “mind set”, she is referring to a host of issues bordering on the actions of the people of the region that negate the peace of the region and the smooth operations of the IOCs if they return to the region. During an FGD session, a young man added that, “the federal government should ask the oil companies to come to the oil-bearing community. They should come and build their leasing offices in the communities and maybe there may be some employment opportunity for the youth through that. It will help to limit the Niger Delta crisis” (FGD, Okrika, Rivers state. 2 December 2017). Similarly, the

President of an Ijaw youth organisation re-echoed the view that the oil multinational companies should return their headquarters to the Niger Delta whilst stating that the local youths are better able to protect oil facilities. According to him:

> Again, we have said that all the, IOCs should relocate their headquarters to the Niger Delta. Give the security contract to Ijaw youths. We want to protect the IOCs. Their facilities. Not military. So that the monies they are using to pay military. If you use that money to pay Ijaw youths, do you know the number of Ijaw youths you will employ in one oil and gas installation. Let me tell you, it is not about military. If you are sincere, you bring 3 billion Naira, take for instance, to my community, Alaebiri. And the Alaebiri boys form vigilante and all the rest and protect your facility; no external force will come and attack those facilities. Rather they will give the billions to military people and they will not do anything commensurate to what they are taking from the environment (Interview. Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. 11 November 2017).

Whilst the government has experimented with the idea of the Niger Delta youths protecting oil pipelines by giving ex-militant leaders oil protection contracts, there is no evidence in its ability to stop criminal violence and create an atmosphere for sustainable peace in the region. Oil theft continues unabated, and some militia gangs have reportedly used proceeds from the contracts to strengthen their 'armoury', and sponsor gang/cult wars in the region (Boris 2015; Katsouris and Sayne 2013; Oyefusi 2014; Ugor 2013).

Another narrative shared by many interviewees is the need for the government to develop the Niger Delta region through the provision of basic infrastructure. It is an essential duty of the state in its 'social contract' with the people. As Nelson (2019: 3-4) asserts, "all governments have a rational motivation to provide public goods… public goods raise the productivity of a population". In the Niger Delta, it has been a core demand on government who have not lived up to the demands. This was the view of one interviewee who owns a small business outfit. He asserted that, "what is needed is for the government to do the roads. Roads are the biggest problem for us here. The roads are bad. But go to Lagos. There are so many bridges there. Very solid. So, we need road. That is what we need. And water" (Interview, Bomadi, Delta state. 22 November 2017). The views expressed above reflect the sentiments of many people in the region who often compare the dearth of infrastructural development in the Niger Delta as opposed to other key cities like Lagos (former federal capital) and Abuja (current federal capital). The angst stems from the fact that the resources with which those cities were developed came from the Niger Delta that is the source of the oil wealth and is underdeveloped. In a similar manner, a male interviewee and an ex-militant youth who had embraced the Presidential Amnesty Programme stated the need for basic infrastructural

provisioning. He lamented the failure of the government to fulfil some of its post-amnesty promises to the ex-militants. According to him:

> What can be done is for the federal government to provide basic amenities such as constant electricity supply, good roads, scholarships and employment. So many graduates are unemployed. People like me do not 'see' [get] anything from the federal government even as ex-militants. They are not paying us our allowances and the promises they made with us if we come out from the creeks, none of it has been fulfilled (Interview, Okrika, Rivers state. 2 December 2017).

In an 'expert interview' with a male academic who researches the Niger Delta conflict, he underscored the importance of political will for the infrastructural development of the region by the government and IOCs as a way of resolving the conflict and building sustainable peace. However, he also stressed the poor administration of development measures where resources are sent to 'wrong hands', and instead sued for project-specific disbursements. He states that:

> I believe the Niger Delta crisis can be resolved, But, there is a 'but'. The 'but' is that the government needs a very strong political will. All these issues of ethnicity, issues of political correctness, they should be put aside. If the government and the transnational oil companies actually want to develop the region, they can do it. A lot of money is coming to the region. But this money is going to the wrong hands, including the development money coming from the Government, and the transnational corporations. So, if the government and the oil companies want to develop the region, they should tie these monies, they should tie them to community projects. Instead of giving the money to people, to strong individuals, to strong men, big men. They should tie it to projects. Community projects, strict monitoring, reduce the ethnicization and politicisation of the conflict whether from the government angle or from the oil company's angle, let them mean business. Yes. Once they do this, once they open up the area developmentally, this criminal violence, abduction, kidnapping, piracy, all of them will just fizzle out (Interview, Benin City, Edo state. 06 November 2017).

The above assertion feeds into the need for good governance mentioned by some participants. In fact, it is apt to say that everything rises and falls on governance. The quality of governance is a reflection of the development found in a place whether good or bad. Good governance deficit has been a glaring factor in the protracted conflict in the region. Elections are nothing more than an opportunity for power grabs, where, in many cases, votes do not count. Thus, making votes count will contribute to peacebuilding in the region, as it will make government accountable and responsive to the people who elected them knowing the people can vote them out (Ibaba 2017: 98-99). This was the point made by a respondent who argued that the ultimate solution to the Niger Delta problem is "a government that pursues the public good. That is all. That is the solution. Yes, in all levels". He contends that, "what government need are two things: the resource and the political will to intervene, and the issues will be sorted out. But at the moment, I do not think we have enough of either of these two crucial factors,

the political will and then of course the force to do it (Interview, Amassoma, Bayelsa state. 29 November 2017). Another respondent emphasized the role of 'leadership sincerity' as a way to resolving the crisis. According to the community leader:

> First thing is leadership sincerity. You know there is nothing as bad as saying one thing and doing another, "*so rom no onu oku, é so rom na aka*" [says it in his local Ibo dialect]. It has its own problem. So, and you are talking to people who are hungry. Who are seeing you. At one point, they will get angry and say no we cannot continue looking at you. So, when they see that leadership is sincere, committed to its words, a lot of persons will on their own say okay lets be patient "*If e no reach me, e go reach my son, e go reach my brother* [meaning if it does not get to me, it will get to my brother] (Interview. Port Harcourt, Rivers state. 1 December 2017)[64].

A close theme to that of good governance expressed by some participants was the need to checkmate the scourge of corruption, nepotism, and ethnicity in the region. A solution some think could engender development and peace in the Niger Delta. During a FGD session, a participant who identified himself as a retired security man alluded that:

> The first thing we have to do is to shun nepotism because this what causes community conflict. It is not that the federal government has not done anything or caused it [conflict] but when opportunities will come in, it would go to the hands of the chiefs and the chiefs would say that it's for himself and family. When there is such in place, there is bound to be conflict. So, nepotism should be shunned. To actually stop the unrest, individual persons should see themselves as a contributor and not a destroyer. This is because some of the people instead of being a builder would become a destroyer. Our leaders should stop playing or beating the drums of nation building meanwhile, they are not building anything (FGD. Sagbama, Bayelsa state. 10 November 2017).

The narrative of the above participant reflects the tendency for some local chiefs to enrich themselves corruptly with funds meant for their communities. As a result, the youths have grown increasingly resentful of such chiefs and compete with them in assessing IOC largess, which in some cases results in community-wide crisis (HRW 2005: 7). Interestingly, there are those who hold contradictory opinion and instead believe that resolving the conflict could be achieved by routing development aid through the local chiefs. One of such people was a commercial bike rider (popularly referred to as 'Okada') who during an FGD session argued that:

> Our politicians have been failing us even till date. So, whenever the government want to come up with a project, it is better they pass through the traditional rulers since the politicians are not helping matters. So, passing through the traditional rulers is preferable so that they can come down to the various communities immediately to

[64] The last sentence in Nigerian vernacular English is often expressed when people are ready to be patient with someone (especially a leader/government) who is perceived to be doing something right such that even if they do not end up benefitting, they are contented knowing it will benefit their loved ones.

> negotiate the issues with the community people themselves so that the people can easily benefit, and their communities as well can also benefit, and it will help reduce the crisis in the Niger Delta (FGD. Okrika, Rivers state. 2 December 2017).

Another participant, who is a field officer with a local NGO, argued that the conflict could be resolved, "if we mean it. And when I say we, I mean it holistically. Both the people of Niger Delta and other Nigerians. Let us keep ethnicity aside and see that what is due to Mr A, should be given to Mr A" (Interview, Male, Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. 10 November 2017). This notion raises the rationale for ethnic groups within and outside the region to have the political will to coexist together if the goal of peace, security and development are to be achieved. However, a female human rights activist argued for the mainstreaming of ethnic nationalities in the peace process in the Niger Delta. She notes that the region is ethnically diverse and any approach to peacebuilding should involve all the ethnic groups in the region. According to her:

> People say resolve Niger Delta crises. How do you resolve Niger Delta crises? I am an Ijaw person. No matter what I say, unless your people agree with what I say, what I am saying here in Port Harcourt as an Ijaw person, that this is what we want, if it is not the same thing as your people want, they will say, "*no mind am. No be Ijaw person, é dey there for Rivers state. Déy there dey talk* [meaning she is an Ijaw woman that is talking from afar, River state]. So when they say solve Niger Delta problem, Niger Delta problem is the problem of every ethnic nationality. So talking to Ijaw people, talking to Ogoni people, is not solving Niger Delta. So if you want to solve the Niger Delta problem, first of all, you have to know that there are people who own the Niger Delta. And those people are the identified and recognised ethnic nationalities. I do not believe this concept that we should forget ethnicity. How do you forget ethnicity? (Interview. Port Harcourt, Rivers state. 1 December 2017).

As important as the narrative of ethnicity is as an opportunity for driving peace through ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta, the trajectory of the conflict reveals also the dangerous role of ethnicity in mobilizing clan-based violence. As already shown in chapter four, the major sociocultural organisations, and the militia groups in the region have utilised ethnicity as a rallying call for their agitations against the state and IOCs. Such sentiments are also deployed at the personal level in inter-ethnic relations within the region. For instance, during a focus group session, one female participant touched on the contentious issue of ethnicity by clamouring for the creation of a state solely for the Ijaw ethnic group in Delta state, and for the government to provide employment for the people and pay regular salaries. Although the non-Ijaw participants in the group did not share in her sentiment for a state exclusively for the Ijaws in Delta state, she cared less about their reactions. This is a pointer to what some interviewees have mentioned as the tendency of the Ijaws to dominate issues in the region, including the post-amnesty peace deal. In her words:

> I don't think the crisis can be resolved. Up till now we cannot have peace. The first thing that can bring peace is for them to create separate state for us. Separate state for Ijaw people. "Torebe state". That is Ijaw entirely. No combination of Urhobo, not whether partly Delta South. We do not want Ibo, to mingle with us. We don't want Isoko, Urhobo to mingle with us. An entirely Ijaw state. That is the first solution. After then, employment. Some of us are educated. Like me, I graduated from College of Education in 2006 but no job. When we have no food to eat, that is a problem. Most of those cultists you see are graduates. If they have something doing, they will not take to crime. Again, no regular salary for the government workers. They are collecting foodstuff on credit basis, which is affecting us the petty traders. Until that is done, there can be no solution to the crisis (FGD, Bomadi, Delta state. 22 November 2017).

The above narrative brings into focus also the views of some respondents who doubt that the crisis can be resolved and that the efforts to build peace would be difficult despite the government's claim with PAP. They dismissed the capacity of the government to build peace whilst deferring only to the armed groups, a practice that has led to the proliferation of armed groups in search of ransom, and the pillage by local political actors like the Governors and managers of PAP. During an expert interview with an academic and researcher on Niger Delta issues, he stated that:

> It cannot be resolved with the present attitude of the federal government. We had an opportunity to resolve it when Goodluck became the president [2010-2015]. That was a very good opportunity, but we missed it. Now it will become very difficult to resolve it because there is no proper development plan for the peace… No, there is no conscious plan of the federal government to build peace. There is no conscious effort. The state governments too don't have any plans to build peace. Peacebuilding for them is to ensure that oil continues to flow without interruption. So, the state Governors would be preaching do not destroy oil installation because it will affect quantity of money coming. That is their concern. They are not concerned about how the welfare of the people can be improved so that they will have alternative source of income. Last month another group Niger Delta Avengers issued ultimatum that if by certain period, certain development programme has not taken place, they will attack oil installations. The federal government quickly put up a small team to discuss with them. So, it now means that the insurgency in the Niger Delta has become a trade. By that method, it will encourage other people [militia groups] to come up (Interview, Amasoma, Bayelsa state. 29 November 2017).

In a similar interview with an academic and researcher on the Niger Delta, he argued that some problems persist with societies, and, with the finite nature of oil, the future abandonment of the region by the government would continue to fuel conflict beyond now. According to him:

> Some societal problem is unsolvable, and the Niger Delta crisis or question is one of those unsolvable problems in Nigeria. The reason is that the oil source as a revenue to the federal government will one day dry up and that will create more problem in that region. Because the federal government will definitely abandon the region and their basic demand of infrastructural development will continue to be a problem in that region. So long as the problem continues, the agitation will continue. And that will create more insecurity in the region (Interview, Benin City, Edo state. 2 November 2017).

However, in a contradictory opinion from the above, he stated further that with proper consultation with the people on what they need, and an inclusive policy by the government, the potential for the resurgence of conflict can be reduced. He states thus:

> Well, you can reduce the possibility of resurgence when you engage the people in a tacit consultation over what they need in order of priority. Policies of the government is formulated based on cost-benefit analysis. When they interview the people, the Niger Deltans, they will be able to tell them these are the things we want in order of their importance. And government will have to see how much those needs, those agitations can be managed in that order, giving them a time frame. Also, the federal government should avoid running an exclusive government when it comes to issues affecting the Niger Deltans. They should have an inclusive programme that gives opportunity to more Niger Deltans to be part of the solution to the problem in that region. So, their exclusion from negotiation, from bargaining and from agreements will continue to build dissatisfaction about government attitude to the region and to the youths of that area (ibid).

The above narratives by the local people of the Niger Delta (both optimist and sceptics) demonstrates a desire for better management of the conflict situation and an aspiration for sustainable peace in the region, as Mani (2005: 28) puts it, "balancing positive and negative peace to secure sustainable peacebuilding". This entails engendering measures for a cessation of violence whilst building structures, relationships, and institutions to build peace. It has been said that "without justice, peace is just a nice sounding word[65]" or that "peace without justice is only a symbolic peace[66]". It is important therefore that justice (in all ramification - social, economic, and political) is a key factor in the peacebuilding process in a post-conflict environment. This is because it will be difficult for a people to commit to any peacebuilding measures that do not address the injustices suffered. According to Mani (2005: 25) the point of departure of such redress following a conflict is to, "first understand the kinds of injustice suffered by the ordinary people during conflict. It then becomes clear that injustice is not just a consequence of conflict but is also a symptom and cause of conflict". Thus, the narratives demonstrates the interviewee's responses on how the crisis could be best resolved, in order to engender lasting peace in the region.

The attempts at a people-led agency in peacebuilding as shown above, has been emphasised as constitutive of alternative approaches in contemporary scholarship and practices in security, conflict, and peace studies. This engagement of local dynamics, actors, and institutions from within the conflict-affected societies have been commonly referred to as the

[65] Dom Helder Pessoa Camara - Roman Catholic Archbishop (1909-1999)

[66] Phil Gunson (1996) Guatemala's "peace without justice". Guardian, 28 December. Cited in Mani (2015:25).

"local turn" (Hughes et al. 2015; Leonardsson and Rudd 2015; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Paffenholz 2015), amongst several others. In contrast to the externally contrived liberal peace model, scholars, and practitioners of local peace "advocates a central role for local people as agents for peace" (Paffenholz 2015: 857). It is increasingly unthinkable not to find key terms like 'local', 'indigenous', 'national' and 'ownership' in contemporary peacebuilding amongst policy makers, interventionist experts, international organisations, and academics. These peacebuilding concepts have gained "discursive use" in the United Nations since the 2000s[67] (Lemay-Hébert and Kappler 2016: 895) and other bodies like the World Bank and UNDP. The works of John Paul Lederach[68] pioneered the notion of the 'local turn' in peacebuilding in the early 1990s, which has been "revitalised in recent years with critical peacebuilding research"[69] (Paffenholz 2015: 857). The local approaches to peacebuilding exemplify a fundamental shift from the dominant western form of peace-support interventions to the recognition and inclusion of local agencies - actors, communities, and civil societies - in conflict resolution measures. The logic of the local context is that eventually the local people are better suited to build sustainable peace based on their lived experiences and understanding of the conflict dynamics[70].

8.3 Conclusion

This chapter explored the utility of local agency and ownership of peace management processes, and their practices in post-conflict environment. From the everyday experiences and narratives of the local people, the chapter shows how the Niger Delta conflict can possibly be resolved, and the basis upon which potential sustainable peacebuilding can be achievable. It reveals that the path to peace is not linear even amongst local people as they all share both convergent and divergent views of what the peacebuilding process should represent. The varied responses presented above, show a longing for the tackling of the root causes of the conflict, justice, inclusiveness, economic empowerment, amongst other issues. Although there are some people who argue that the protracted conflict cannot be resolved anytime soon despite the state's attempt with PAP as a vehicle for placating militia groups. However, balancing the normative ambitions of the local people for peacebuilding with the practicality of the political

[67] See Lemay-Herbert and Kappler (2016:895) for a list of UN's policy engagement with the idea of the 'local' in peacebuilding policy papers; and Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013:772) 'The local turn in Peacebuilding.

[68] See Lederach, John Paul. Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. Washington, DC. United States Institute for Peace Press, 1997.

[69] See Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013) 'The local turn in peace building: a critical agenda for peace, Third World Quarterly, 34:5 763-783

[70] As the empirical section of chapter 8 shows, it is the understanding of the conflict issues that determines the way the local people want the conflict to be resolved.

economy of the conflict provides challenges for both the state and the local actors. Several factors influence the peace process: the willingness of some militant actors to give peace a chance, the intransigence of the government, its fixation on oil, and the political will to act in the interest of the people in an environment of mistrust.

The chapter showed that the everyday notions of peace and agency of the local people are important in peacebuilding processes to guarantee sustainable peace, and that the state should focus on what security means to the people and the factors the people think should constitute the pathway to peacebuilding. Accounting for voices of the local people is critical for security and development in post-conflict societies. Interestingly, as Mac Ginty and Richmond (2007: 493) states, "most peacebuilding and reconstruction processes now take place in development context". Where the views of the local people are not considered in peacebuilding processes, they could pose a hindrance to the peacebuilding project and scuttle whatever gains there are to be achieved for the development of the crisis area, thereby leading to conflict resurgence. The impact of such 'spoilers' on peacebuilding can be huge. Newman and Richmond (2006: 1) describes the phenomena of 'spoilers' and 'spoiling' on peace processes as "groups and tactics that actively seek to hinder, delay, or undermine conflict settlement through a variety of means and for a variety of motives. The extent to which the government and the stakeholders involved in resolving such conflict (as in the case of the Niger Delta) listen to the people, is crucial for the 'spoilers' and the 'spoiling' of peace agreements.

The views people hold about peace reflects their lived security experience. The rentier character of the Nigerian state in its authoritarian and militaristic disposition to the Niger Delta, reflects the way the people perceive the states' approach to (in)security in the region. As the state securitizes and militarizes the region because of oil rent for its own survival without recourse to the everyday security needs of the people, it will reproduce insecurity and negatively affect any attempt towards peacebuilding by the state. This is because the current state-centric approach accentuates the resource curse and the consequences it continues to have for the weak political institutions, feeble social structures, deprivations, and insecurity in the Niger Delta. Hence, the everyday security needs and pathways to peace identified by the respondents support the contention that with the state's rentier character and the resource curse dynamics, Nigeria's peacebuilding measure is at odds with the reality of the citizenry's own real security needs.

To achieve sustainable peace in the Niger Delta, there must be a bottom-up approach to development with the active top-down support of the state and oil multinationals. There is

an urgent need to address the state's securitization and rentier nature, engage the structural issues (such as the political economy of oil revenue allocation) that is at the root causes of the conflict, mitigating the everyday security threats to people's lives, and engendering economic empowerment and social provisioning. The state and IOCs should be responsible and allow the local people to own the peace and development process in the region. Thus, beyond the PAP, there is the need for a pan-Niger Delta approach to peacebuilding that factors the views of ethnic nationalities in the peace and development measures in the region. This will create a sense of inclusion for all in the region and present a possibility for sustainable peace in the Niger Delta devoid of oil insurgency.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

This research has examined the protracted oil-related conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, which pitched the state and IOCs against the region's oil-host communities for over three decades. It provided insights on how Nigeria developed out of colonialism as a weak, patrimonial, authoritarian and rentier state, and as such it has securitised the oil resources and the Niger Delta region where the oil comes from – all evidence that it has fallen victim to the resource curse. This means that it has failed to fulfil its obligations of security and development to citizens in the area. When they protest, its response – being securitised – is militarisation. This brings some instrumental security but does not address the basic grievances of the people. They understand both security and peace-building (the making of security) very differently and, since the state does not provide mechanisms for their grievances to be legally addressed, their peaceful agency brings only temporary and marginal security to them, meaning many of them see violence/militancy as the only option for seeing either to get grievances addressed or to 'compensate' for those grievances through other means. As a post-colonial state, its attributes of poor governance, weak institutions and patrimonialism reflects in the ascriptive lines of ethnicity and regional sentiments of its ruling elites (mainly from the major ethnic groups) in relations with the people of Niger Delta. Despite the claim of engendering peace and security in the Niger Delta through the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), the state, however, continues to securitize and militarize the Niger Delta, engaging in security practices that undermines, and without recourse to the everyday security needs of the people.

The thesis demonstrated how the people of the region perceive, experience and practice security in their everyday life in relation to the state security practices. The importance to advance the understanding of security perceptions and lived experiences of people was introduced as necessary for a conflict mitigation process. Thus, in utilizing a critical approach to security, the study moved from the traditional state-centric notions of security, to the everyday security approach that emphasizes security experiences of people, and captures the ways the people resist the state, and what security matters for their survival in their daily lives. Any measure that does not seek to understand how people perceive and experience security in their everyday life, will undermine any effort at peacebuilding in the Niger Delta.

Consequently, the thesis argued that the state's securitization and militarization of the Niger Delta, constitutes a narrow and unsuccessful conflict mitigation approach, which has created new security problems with the resurgence of oil militancy and persistent insecurity despite the PAP. Thus, there is the need for the state to understand the social context in which conflict is constructed, the effects of its securitization and militarization, and what security means for the ordinary people in their everyday life. It is imperative therefore, for the state to rethink its security practices in the Niger Delta in place of the everyday security concerns of the people as the ideal security referent, for there to be sustainable peacebuilding. So far, the federal government's idea of PAP as a peacebuilding measure, is just another way of managing the securitization of the region through a 'stick and carrot' approach to the prevailing conflict without addressing the underlying grievances.

The research adopted a qualitative methodology that allowed for the interpretation of the empirical data through the performative utterances of state actors, and through interviews, focus groups and participant observation methods of data collection. The research methodology enabled an exploration of state securitization – the way the state constructs the Niger Delta as a security issue through its speech acts and discursive performances, and how it legitimises the militarisation of the region as a countermeasure to the security threats. It further explored the everyday security experiences of people in the Niger Delta - their perception of what security means to them, and their agency for resistance against the state. This methodological approach, thus, places the securitization of the state as a 'top-down' security approach, against the everyday, as a 'bottom-up' security approach. By putting these two narratives against each other, one is able to best recognise and understand the social of people in the Niger Delta.

The thesis aims were to examine the securitization of the Niger Delta through the state security practices, and to explore the lived security experiences of ordinary people in post-amnesty Niger Delta. It revealed how the actions of the state and the agency of the people to resist the state creates a conflict cycle (see chapter 2, figure 1, and chapter 4.6) that shapes the nature of conflict resurgence in spite of the PAP. I will summarize below the findings for the research questions that guided the research project.

The first research question examined what security means to the people of the Niger Delta. The research found that people had multiple meanings of security. For some people, security meant the presence of an environment devoid of pollution, where oil spills and gas flaring will no longer endanger their health, and their land. This is important to many people in a region where people are predominantly farmers. Many respondents harped on the physical

safety of their lives and properties as constitutive of security to them. Having a means of economic livelihood, such as being gainfully employed, resonated with some people as their own perception of security. Similarly, other people noted that for them, it was food security, that is, having access to food for them and their families. Some people viewed the improvement of their lives and wellbeing through infrastructural development as constitutive of security. The lack of development has been a fundamental trigger for the conflict in the region as it more glaringly reveals the paradox of the oil wealth of the region. It is also, the indices used by many indigenes for comparing the region's abject situation with other parts of the country like the federal capital territory, Abuja that was built from scratch with oil revenue. Necessities like pipe borne water, electricity, good roads, schools, amongst others, are not readily available in many communities in the Niger Delta. Some respondent's perception of security centred on social justice, that is, getting fair and equitable attention from the state and IOCs. This includes the respect for their fundamental human rights as well as the equitable distribution of oil resources that is due to them. The research revealed the contradictions between what security means to the people on one hand and what it means to the state on the other. Whilst the people are concerned about their safety and wellbeing, the uninterrupted production of oil and its revenue preoccupy the state, and thus emphasizes the relevance of the everyday security concerns of the people.

The second research question explored the effect of the people's perception of security and the failings of the state's policy of Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) on the resurgence of conflict in the Niger Delta. The research found that the disconnect between the people's notion of security and that of the state, and the flaws of the PAP accentuated the renewed resistance by the people of the region. Although PAP was proposed as a peacebuilding mechanism, there is the mixed feelings on the utility and impact of the PAP in the conflict dynamics of the region. This is because the PAP has not and cannot guarantee security and peace in the everyday life of the people of the Niger Delta without addressing the underlying grievances that occasioned the conflict. The inability of the PAP policy to meet the anticipated aspirations of development for the people has created further security challenges in the region. The prospect of a peaceful environment to engender development made the many people hopeful and receptive to the idea of PAP. The focus on ex-militants alone to the detriment of other non-combatant groups in the region also created an illusion that militancy presents opportunities and rewards. However, what seems evident is the belief that the amnesty was more of a way by the state to stop the insurgency on oil and gas infrastructure because of its

crippling consequences for the Nigerian economy, than about the desired infrastructural development of the region. It was another way of managing the securitisation of the region.

The third research question explored the lived security experiences of the people of the Niger Delta, and the ways they cope with, and respond to the security practices of the state. It examined the actions of the security forces in the region and the ways the people respond to the (in)security by the state agents in their everyday life. The research reveals the complex engagement of the military and the people in the conflict environment, where the military is perceived as the common enemy perpetuating insecurity on behalf of the state. The research found that whereas there abounds rationale for military presence in the region, their logic of occupation, intimidation, sexual harassment, fear, torture, and killings associated with them portrays the state and the security forces also as a source of threat. The state's securitization of the region continues to manifest more daringly in the militarization of the region despite the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP). The situation that leads to a lack of trust on the ability of the state to protect the citizens. More so, the analysis reveals the ways people have adopted to respond to the security forces as a form of resistance and the reproduction of (in)security. Many people avoid the conflict flash points by running away into the forests and through the swamps, a situation that predisposes them to further harm and creates social dislocations. Others resort to the supernatural and occult imaginations. They pray to God and invoke their deities as a means of security and protection. In other situations, they resist the security forces by direct confrontations. The combustible mix of state security response and local resistance accentuates the conflict cycle and the insecurity in the region.

The fourth research question explored the pathways to resolving the conflict and achieving sustainable peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. It examined the state's PAP mechanism as a local peacebuilding approach in the conflict environment, and the nuances of the people's perception of what constitutes the approach to peace. As a 'home grown' approach, the PAP differs from other liberal peacebuilding measures that are externally designed and administered by intergovernmental organizations or non-governmental organizations. The research observed the diverse narratives and expectations of the people on how sustainable peace can be achieved in post-amnesty Niger Delta. There is the desire by the local people to own the peace process and not just a 'top-down' policy by the state appropriated by the political elites in the interest of the state and the oil majors in the region. The path to peace is not linear (Gawerc 2006: 442). The voices of the people are important in peacebuilding and where they are not allowed to determine the way the conflict can be best resolved, they can pose a hindrance to the peace deal

as ‘spoilers’ and undermine the peace process (Newman and Richmond 2006: 1). The resurgence of the conflict in the Niger Delta has followed this pattern where the state’s-imposed amnesty deal has not met the people’s desire and aspirations for peace, security, and development. At the fulcrum of any peacebuilding measures, is the desire of the people to see the government addressing the core issues necessitating the conflict. They want the development of the region through economic empowerment, improved corporate social responsibility, good governance, respect for human rights, and social justice amongst others. The mainstreaming of local peace with the active involvement of the local stakeholders in the peace process provides a model for the possibility of having sustainable peace and security. Such participatory approach between the oil-host communities, the state and oil multinationals holds the best promise for peace in the Niger Delta.

This thesis has demonstrated that security is about people. Thus, how people perceive, experience and practice security reflects the realities of their everyday life in relation to the actions of the state. The value of the research findings above, therefore, demonstrates that whatever measures aimed at mitigating the conflict in the Niger Delta, which does not factor what security means for the people as the ideal security referent, would be self-defeating and further accentuate the conflict cycle. This is why the amnesty programme as currently constituted remains elusive as the panacea to sustainable peacebuilding in the region.

The overarching contribution of this research has been the utility of the ‘everyday’ conceptual lens to explore the lived security experiences and practices of the people of the Niger Delta against their perceived marginalization and underdevelopment of the region. As a form of strategy, response and agency, the analysis of the everyday security actions of the people reveals the resistance to the militarized approach of the state in the post-amnesty era and the notions of what security means to them. It underscores the contradiction between the perception and experiences of security of the people in the Niger Delta, and the state’s security practices in the region that creates a cycle of conflict. Thus, the actions of the state security forces are counteracted with active reactions of the people both as a way of resistance and survival. Reflecting on different perceptions of security experiences and resistance in the everyday life of the people, allowed for an enriched understanding of the dynamics of oil resource conflicts and efforts towards peacebuilding in conflict-affected areas. This study is innovative, as it is the first within the Nigerian context to explore the conflict in the Niger Delta from an ‘everyday security’ conceptual perspective. This is interesting as the everyday provides

a useful model to understanding the nuances of security to the people in their quotidian environments.

The thesis contributes further to the empirical and theoretical knowledge of Critical Security Studies (CSS) as an 'alternative' approach to state-centred focus of mainstream security studies. Engaging the analysis of everyday security from a critical security perspective represents a bottom-up approach to security provisioning, which provides a focus for people-centred issues and not just the security interest of the state. This research shows an understanding of the dynamics of (in)security practices in resource conflict-affected areas, and the challenge of 'alternative' approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, that captures the narratives of the people beyond the traditional militarized approach to issues. Thus, the study provides relevant insights and references for security researchers and practitioners in the field of CSS interested in the regional conflict context of the Niger Delta in particular and other developing countries with proximate natural resource conflict.

In addition, this research contributes to an incremental understanding of the intersection of security, peace, and conflict studies in the Niger Delta conflict environment. The study has shown the connection between the issues that fuelled the conflict in the Niger Delta, the insecurities that it has created with militancy, and the militarization of the region by the state, and the search for peace using the state policy of PAP. It shows how interconnected the phenomenon of conflict, peace and security are in a political system, where real life issues when not attended to could generate conflict and insecurities with grave consequences and then requiring peacebuilding efforts.

The research contributes to the relevance of policy and practice. Research should have an impact on public policy where knowledge generated allows policy makers to adjust their policies. The dynamics of public policy making through the PAP mechanism was brought to the fore in this research. Any programme aimed at resolving insecurity or building peace and development must be context specific. It must resonate with the people and reflect the voices of the people such programme is targeted at, for it to be effective. The PAP policy showed promise as a homegrown programme unlike other liberal peacebuilding measures that are externally formulated and implemented by international bodies. However, a policy perceived to be skewed in the main interest of one party (the state), or as a mere tokenism to the peoples' demand as the PAP policy has been in practice, would be problematic. It will be farcical to earn the trust and support of the people when they do not own the process. The challenges of PAP as a peacebuilding mechanism reveals it is not a silver bullet to the conflict in the Niger Delta.

It is hoped that the knowledge drawn from this study will inform agenda setting or policy (re)formulation for the political actors and policy makers to engage with more effectively in tackling the issues at the heart of the underdevelopment and insecurity in the region. Therefore, this thesis makes a useful contribution to knowledge for policy makers within the local context of the Niger Delta and beyond. The analysis of the issues raised in the thesis reveals what has worked, what is not working and what needs to work in demilitarizing the conflict, ensuring security of not just the state but the people, and building sustainable peace in the Niger Delta.

In conclusion, the following observations and policy recommendations will suffice as measures for an alternative approach to the authoritarian and rentier character of the Nigerian state in the Niger Delta. Conflict over a long time becomes 'normalised' and loses its sense of urgency. Even where violence is used to justify a political goal like the Niger Delta militants resulted to, or the militarisation of the region by the state in defence of its interest, it loses its rationality when it becomes protracted. As Ray (2014: 8) noted, "endemic conflict strips violence of its ethical garb and the legitimacy of violent actions in such situations can be contested". The military deployment in the region, whilst necessary for maintaining law and order, has been high handed and inadequate for addressing the region's insecurity. The increase in military presence in the region has not reduced the rate of militancy and criminality, rather it heightened the insecurity. The military practices of wanton destruction of communities, rape of women, and indiscriminate arrest aimed at forcing the people to submission in the guise of providing security in the region, have exacerbated insecurity. The killings of unarmed civilians by the Nigerian Army in Oyigbo, an oil producing community in Rivers state over the alleged hijack of protests by hoodlums in the community (Adebayo 2020), reflects the coercive and repressive actions of the military in the region. The actions of the JTF heightened the insecurity in the region that spurred the renewed attacks by the Niger Delta Avengers (Aljazeera 2016). Thus, the presence of the military has not been able to halt the violence and insecurity in the region. This points to the fact that the militarized approach of the state is not a sustainable option for building peace and for the development of the region. Thus, the clamour for a more nuanced approach which focuses on the security concerns of the people, beyond militarization, becomes apparent for any form of amicable resolution of the conflict and peacebuilding measures in the region.

It is impossible to have sustainable peace in a place where people feel aggrieved over unaddressed needs. The emergence of militia groups like MEND was borne out of "a process of marginalisation, alienation and political mobilization" (Watts 2007: 653). Thus, the attempt

for peace is not only to mitigate the violence that characterises the region, but a process where a peacebuilding mechanism for addressing the issues driving the conflict is instituted. The PAP as operationalized by the federal government does not yet address the underlying issues fuelling the conflict in the region. Hence, there is the resurgence of violence. The future of peace and security in the Niger Delta will depend on these factors and not the militarization by the state.

The divergence in the perception of security by people in the Niger Delta and the security practices of the state, as this research found, continues to exacerbate the conflict situation in the region. Whilst the security referent for the state is the uninterrupted oil production in the region, which is a product of its state-centric security approach, the people are concerned about their everyday security – basic welfare, economic survival, and safety - not marginalization, oppression, and militarization. This is significant for the way the protracted conflict is perceived by the people and the state. The people feel the government elites care less about them and continue to protest and resist the state and its oil allies – the IOCs - while the state conceives the conflict sorely as violence against it and not as a grievance-based behaviour. Therefore, understanding security from the point of view of people in the Niger Delta, and not just the state securitization, could be the best way for engendering sustainable peace in the Niger Delta. This idea for rethinking the state security approach in the Niger Delta in consideration of what matters most to the people, underscores the key contribution of the critical approach to security adopted for this thesis - a people-centered approach. Whilst the state reserves the right to protect its oil interest, however, its continuous (in)security practice(s) deflects from the everyday security needs of the people. The government's policy on PAP cannot achieve sustainable peace whilst militarizing the region at the same time. A practical approach would require a concerted effort towards peacebuilding with the Niger Deltans owning and determining the peace process.

The life span of the PAP has been under the spotlight in recent times. For how long will the palliatives that the PAP's peacebuilding measures represent last? This debate is interesting as it will determine largely the turn the current conflict would take. From the initial 5 years duration, it was extended to 2018, and possibly, because of the 2019 general elections, the planned termination was delayed, and the programme continues to run. However, the plan by the federal government to end the PAP as hinted by the National Security Adviser to the President citing the alleged wastage of over ₦ 700 billion (Naira) on the programme (Udegbunam 2020), has been condemned by some Niger Delta people. The plan if executed would further escalate the crisis in the region. Some elites from the region like Senator Ovie

Omo-Agege[71] and Chief Edwin Clark[72] fear it is a wrong move and have urged the federal government not to scarp the programme. In addition, the threat by ex-militants to unleash attacks on oil infrastructure in the region if the government scraps the Amnesty programme is probable (Birisibe 2020). This is interesting as it reveals that despite the failings of PAP on the core issues of development in the region, the ex-militants see it as representing something than nothing for them. Many of them rely on the PAP stipend monthly to get by. I contend that until the federal government is willing and able to implement a development master plan that will address the core issues that fuels the violence in the region, stopping the amnesty would be a call to further anarchy in a scale unprecedented. Already, a new coalition of 36 militant groups have recently announced their existence with the bombing of oil and gas pipelines in Bayelsa state. The group, Continuous Emancipation of the Niger Delta (CEND), have made a list of demands including that the federal government should pay the 13% derivation fund directly to oil-host communities, call for true federalism, demilitarizing the Niger Delta, amongst others (Amaize 2020; Folaranmi 2020). This is remarkable as it bears resemblance to the emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) in 2016 that heightened the resurgence of militancy in the post-amnesty era with oil pipeline bombings. It further reveals the tight rope the government must walk in negotiating peace in the region except the grievance fuelling the conflict are addressed.

The above points does not obviate the need for the people of the Niger Delta to hold their local leaders to account for the poor governance and checkmate the internal factors that undermine the development of the region. It is convenient for many people in the Niger Delta to blame the political structure of Nigeria which skews political power in favour of the major ethnic groups. However, such vertical narrative (the people of Niger Delta versus the central government) very often masks and obviates from the horizontal reality of underdevelopment malaise foisted on the region by the local political elites of the region, especially by the corrupt state governors. As the local politicians compound the socioeconomic deprivation and livelihood conditions of people in the region, so will the deprivation heighten the sense of frustration and aggression. The implication will be the manifestation of insecurity in the region. More youths will need little or no motivation to take to arms in a region already awash with small arms and light weapons (I. U. Daniel 2016). Until the issue of poor governance in the

[71] Senator Ovie Omo-Agege is the Deputy Senate President of Nigeria's National Assembly since 2019.

[72] Chief Edwin Clark is a foremost opinion leader in the Niger Delta, a former Nigerian minister of information, and currently the national leader of the Pan-Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF).

region is addressed, it is most likely impossible to be able to address the security situation in the region.

The lack of justice and equity sits deeply in the grievances of people in the Niger Delta. The political structure of Nigeria should favour a Nigerian federation that operates on the template of equal rights and social justice for the constituent parts that make up the country. The clamour for resource control by the people of the Niger Delta rests on the functional principle of true federalism (Okolo and Raymond 2014). They want a fair share of the oil resources, be able to control, and manage the oil production in the region whilst paying rent to the central government. For the states in the region to continue to depend on the federal government for monthly allocation in a skewed revenue formula as shown in chapter 4.3, would continue to raise the contentious debate of fiscal federalism, resource control nexus and environmental justice (Ikporukpo 2004). This has implication for the peace and security of the region. Local politicians, militia groups and opinion leaders are able to deploy the narratives of political marginalization and deprivation of resource control to rally local sentiments against the state interests and IOCs. They are the discursive fervour that energises protests and resistance. It is the same with the discourse of military brutality in the region.

The state and the IOCs should prioritize negotiation over the deployment of force as it has shown to heighten the insecurity of the region. Some of the activities of IOCs remain a potent trigger for conflict. Their actions are instrumental to the state's rentier profile whilst also contributing to the oil 'curse' in the region. Negotiating with oil-host communities, and interest groups, and having the political will to implement agreements reached, will end the cycle of violence in the Niger Delta. That way, they can win back trust, and each party can hold the other accountable for breaches. This will significantly eliminate the psychological and moral impetus for militants. It will reduce the sympathy the militants enjoy from their communities and deal a psychological blow to them knowing they will no longer be viewed as community champions they were hitherto where criminality is subsumed as necessary assets for the resource struggle against the state and IOCs. Thus, the state's responsibility for protecting lives and properties, and preventing/arresting criminality will be perceived as normal and not an avenue for oppression of the people because of oil, which is the prevailing narrative in the region.

A key limitation of this research was the inability to incorporate 'elite interviews' of senior military officers because of the tensed security situation in the region due to safety reasons, occasioned by the military's Operation Crocodile Smile II, at the time of the field

research. Further research should fill this gap in examining views of the military elites beyond the speech acts from secondary sources of data. Also, it would be interesting to examine for further research, the social mobility of former militant leaders/members, who have found their way into leadership positions of government in the post-amnesty era - to see what their current disposition to the Niger Delta 'struggle[73]' is. I would want to analyse whether there is a significant difference about their narratives on the issues that informed their involvement in militancy in the first place, as against their current disposition as government functionaries. To what extent do they appreciate the magnitude of the problems and the solutions from the inside-out or are they observing the proverbial 'table manners'[74]. In the light of their new reality, would they have involved in oil militancy like they did, and how differently would they engage the state for a development agenda.

It would be interesting also, to conduct a comparative study of other oil rich countries in the Gulf of Guinea region that have had oil-related conflict. This is with a view to examining how significantly similar or different the state and local responses to the conflicts have been to those of Nigeria. For instance, a comparative analysis of countries like Congo and Angola to examine what was/is the state of (in)security in their oil regions? Did they operate a DDR programme? Was it a home-grown process by the state or externally facilitated by liberal peacebuilding Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), Nongovernmental International organisations (INGOs) or a hybrid peace process? How was conflict resolution strategies operationalized and to what extent has it engendered security and peacebuilding in those countries?

A study on the role of women in the oil militancy in the Niger Delta could warrant a deeper insight. There has been an increasing body of literature in feminist/gender security studies in recent years (Detraz 2012; Sjoberg 2010; Wibben 2011), amongst others. For instance, many Niger Delta women have been engaged in non-violent protests against the underdevelopment and insecurity practices of the state and the IOCs in the region (Anugwom 2007; Ekine 2008; C. O. Emuedo and Emuedo 2014; Okonta and Douglas 2001). However, the rhetoric of the oil militancy is framed largely around male prowess and domination. It will be interesting to undertake more studies on the combative role of women in conflict. Are women involved in frontline roles as 'combatants' or auxiliary actors? How do they perceive their roles

[73] Niger Delta struggle is the discursive narrative of the militants to justify their resistance against the state over the perceived social injustices.

[74] The silence of political office holders who allegedly become docile because they now benefit from the system.

in view of the dominant narrative of masculinity in the region? How involved are they in the violence? What drives their motivation? The findings would contribute to the role of women as active participants in armed conflict and not just victims as some research show about women in conflict affected areas.

Appendix 1: Participant Consent Form

[This form was read out to the respondents to acquaint them of their rights and seek their consent]

Please tick

- I have been invited to participate in this research titled 'Oil, Conflict and Everyday Security in Post-Amnesty Niger Delta, Nigeria'. The purpose and nature of the research has been fully explained to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I understand what it involves. I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time or refuse to answer any question. ☐

- I am aware that the researcher may ask for permission to record the interview or discussion or take photos. It is my decision whether to allow the tape recording or photos of me and my neighbourhood to be taken. I am free to stop the recording at any time. ☐

- I am aware that all my personal information will be treated as confidential unless otherwise stated and will not be passed to anyone else not involved in the project. I understand that the findings from this research will be used in the thesis, conference presentations and publications. ☐

- I have agreed to participate in this study and my signature or verbal approval proves that I am willing to participate in this study ☐

Participant Name (Please Print):
……
Signature …….. Date: __ __ / __ __ / __ __ __ __

Investigator's Name (Please Print):
……
Signature …….. Date: __ __ / __ __ / __ __ __ __

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Part 1. General information/socioeconomic characteristics of respondents

Name, sex, age, status, employment/occupation, residence. [place and date of interview]

Part 2. Research related questions. Please note that these questions serve only as guide for the interviews and may not be asked directly in the same manner.

1.`Everyday and security perception

- How would you describe your everyday in the Niger Delta?
- What are your main activities, can you describe a typical day?
- What does security mean to you with respect to your daily life?
- When do you feel secure, and when/or on which occasions are you rather insecure?
- Are there particular security concerns that matter most to you?
- Can you rank the security concerns with respect to their importance in your life?

2. Government and Everyday Security Provision

- Which of these everyday security concerns are related to the government?
- What does the government do to meet these concerns?
- Who else is important for meeting the concerns?

3. State security Practices

- How would you describe your experience of the state security personnel in the Niger Delta?
- What is the effect of the state security practices on the people of the Niger Delta?
- How do you cope with the security practices of the state in your daily life?
- Are there specific measures taken to overcome the security challenges?

4. Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) and everyday security concerns

- How has PAP changed or affected your everyday life?
- To what extent has PAP captured the key aspect of your everyday security concerns and which aspects of it?
- Did PAP accommodate the concerns of agitators in the region?
- Are there people that have not benefited from PAP?
- What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of PAP?

5. PAP and community consultation

- Were you (as part of a social group) or your community leaders consulted before the promulgation of PAP? And if so, how were you consulted (meetings, individual discussion, through representatives etc.)
- How would you rate the consultation process?

- Is consultation or lack of it related to contemporary security issues?

6. Everyday security concerns and conflict resurgence

- Why do you think people continue to agitate?
- What role do you think private companies like international oil companies (IOCs), Niger Delta Avengers, and other social groups in the region have played in the post-amnesty conflict?

7. Everyday security and peacebuilding

- Apart from PAP, what security measures has the government put in place towards managing the conflict in the Niger Delta region?
- How does the government security measures impact you and your community?
- Do you think these measures are aiding peacebuilding or contributing to conflict resurgence in the region? And if so, how (with respect to both)
- Do you think the Niger Delta crisis can be resolved, and if so how?

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does security mean to you in your everyday life?

2. What is the most important thing that guarantees your security in your daily life as a group or community?

3. What are the main challenges to the everyday security concerns of your community?

4. Do these challenges contribute to the Niger Delta conflict resurgence?

6. To what extent does the Amnesty programme capture/ reflect those concerns?

7. What is your overall assessment of the Amnesty programme in terms of weaknesses and successes?

8. What do you think of the security measures of government in the Niger Delta conflict?

9. What is the impact of the government security measures on you /your community?

10. How do you cope with the state security practices?

11. How do you think the Niger Delta crisis can be resolved to avoid conflict resurgence

Appendix 3: Socio-Demographics of 80 Interview Respondents *

Socio-demographics	Age group	Gender		Total
Community-based interviews		**Male**	**Female**	
	Younger adult**	23	9	31
	Older adult	30	13	43
	Total	53	21	74
Expert interviews	Younger adult	0	0	0
	Older adult	6	0	6

* The respondents were anonymised for confidentiality purpose.

** Younger adults (18-35 years); older adults (35 years and above).

Appendix 4: Selected Militant Attacks on Oil installations in the Niger Delta since the Resurgence of Violence in 2016*

Suspected Militant Group(s)	Target Company	Location of Target (Oil/Gas installation)	Date of Attack	Online Reference
Suspected militants (No official claim of responsibility by any group)	Nigerian Gas Company, Chevron Nigeria Limited, NECONDE.	Gbaramatu, Ugborodo, (Warri South-West LGA) and Egbema (Warri North LGA)	16/01/16	**N/A**
Niger Delta Avengers (NDA)	Chevron Nigeria Limited	Forcados 48-inch Export pipeline (Warri South-West LGA) Delta State	14/02/16	N/A
NDA	Chevron	Valve platform, Abitiye, Warri North Local Government Area, Delta State	04/05/16	http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/05/06/again-militants-bomb-chevron-facility-in-escravos/
NDA	NNPC and Chevron	Oil flow station, Warri South–West LGA, Delta state	05/05/16	http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/05/07/for-second-day-running-militants-attack-chevron-facility-in-warri/
NDA	Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC)	Ogbembiri (Southern Ijaw LGA) Bayelsa State	17/05/16	http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/05/18/again-militants-blow-up-agip-gas-pipeline-in-bayelsa/
NDA	Nigerian Gas Company (NGC) a subsidiary of NNPC	Near Ogbe-Ijoh, Warri South-West LGA	20/05/16	http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/05/21/again-militants-blow-up-another-escravos-gas-pipeline-in-warri/
NDA	Chevron	Crude Oil Trunk Line, Seria Creek near Abiteye, Warri South-West LGA, Delta State.	26/05/16	http://www.punchng.com/breaking-2/
NDA	Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC); Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC)	Nembe 1, 2 and 3 Brass to Bonny Trunk Line, Rivers State.	28/05/16	http://tribuneonlineng.com/ndavengers-blow-up-shell-agip-trunk-lines-in-bonny
NDA	Chevron	RMP 23 and RMP 24 at Dibi, Warri South West LGA, Delta State.	01/06/16	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/06/breaking-avengers-strike-again-blows-up-2-chevron-oil-wells/

NDA	Eni	Ogboinbiri to Tebidaba, and Clough Creek to Tebidaba crude oil pipelines, Bayelsa State.	02/06/16	http://www.punchng.com/militants-attack-oil-pipelines-bayelsa/
NDA	Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC)	'Forcados 48' Export line, and Brass to Tedibaba crude pipeline, Bayelsa State.	03/06/16	http://guardian.ng/news/avengers-attack-another-shell-facility/
NDA	Chevron	RMP 20 near Dibi, Warri North LGA, Delta state.	08/06/16	http://guardian.ng/news/national/avengers-blow-up-chevron-oil-well/
NDA	SPDC	Chanomi Creek around Ogidigben, Warri South-West LGA, Delta state.		http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/06/breaking-news-militants-blow-another-pipeline-delta/
NDA	AGIP ENI	Obi Obi Brass Trunk line, Bayelsa State.	10/06/16	http://guardian.ng/news/niger-delta-avengers-blow-up-another-agip-pipeline/
Red Scorpion	Shell	Gas pipeline in Awara Community, Ohaji/Egbema LGA, Imo state	22/06/16	http://sunnewsonline.com/niger-delta-miltants-strike-again-blow-shell-pipeline-in-imo/
Red Scorpion	Shell	Oil pipeline in Awara Community, Ohaji/Egbema LGA, Imo state	25/06/16	http://guardian.ng/news/again-red-scorpions-blow-shell-pipeline-in-imo/
NDA	Chevron, NNPC and NPDC	Multiple attacks in Delta state. 5 attacks in all. (see online link)	1-3/07/16	http://guardian.ng/news/niger-delta-avengers-launches-multiple-attacks-on-oil-facilities/
NDA	NNPC and Chevron	Batan, Makarava and Otunama oil installations, Delta state	04/07/16	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/07/rampaging-avengers-blow-up-3-more-oil-facilities/
NDA	Chevron	RMP 22, 23 and 24 in Digbolo, near Dibbi in Warri North LGA, Delta state	06/07/16	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/07/avengers-hits-chevron-blows-3-manifolds/
'Suspected militants'. (No official claim by any group)	Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC)	Agip Tebidaba-Brass pipeline, Bayelsa State.	08/07/16	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/07/suspected-militants-blow-agip-pipelines-bayelsa/
'Suspected militants' (no official claim by any group)	Gas pipeline (Gas company unidentified)	Ogijo/Simaya axis of Sagamu LGA, Ogun State	13/07/16	http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/206914-suspected-militants-set-gas-pipeline-ablaze-ogun.html
'Suspected Militants' (no official	PPMC (a subsidiary of NNPC)	Oil pipeline, Batan, near Warri, Delta State	18/07/16	http://guardian.ng/news/bombed-oil-pipeline-causing-massive-spills/

claim by any group)				
NDA	NNPC	Nsite Ibom LGA, Akwa Ibom State	24/07/16	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/07/avengers-blow-nnpc-gas-pipeline-ibom/
'Suspected militants' (no official claim by any group)	SPDC	Trans-Ramos crude oil export trunk line, near Odimodi Community, Delta State	31/07/16	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/08/militants-attack-spdc-trunk-line-delta-2/
Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate (NDGJM)	NPDC shoreline Resources	Isoko to Eruemu manifold trunk line in Urhobo, Delta state	10/08/16	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/08/new-militant-group-blows-npdcshorelines-trunk-line-delta/
NDGJM	NPDC and shoreline Petroleum	Ogor-Oteri major delivery line in Delta State	30/08/16	http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/08/30/urhobo-militant-group-mocks-military-launches-operation-crocodile-tears/
NDGJM	NPDC/Shorel ine petroleum	Afiesere-Iwhrenene major delivery line to UPS/UQCC. Ugheli North LGA, Delta State	13/09/16	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/09/militants-blow-up-another-pipelin/
NDGJM	NPDC/Shorel ine Petroleum	Afiesere-Ekiugbo delivery line, Ugheli North LGA, Delta state.	18/09/16	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/09/breaking-news-again-militants-blow-up-npdcshoreline-pipeline-in-delta/
Niger Delta Avengers (NDA)	SPDC	Bonny crude oil '48 inches' Export line	23/09/16	http://punchng.com/niger-delta-avengers-break-truce-pipeline-blast/
NDGJM	NPDC	Unenurhie-Evwreni Delivery line	29/09/16	http://guardian.ng/news/new-attack-on-pipeline-in-delta-state/
NDGM	NPDC	Iwhremaro Quality Control Centre (QCC) delivery line, Ughelli, Delta state.	13/10/16	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/10/militants-attack-crude-oil-delivery-line-delta/
NDA	Chevron Nigeria Ltd.	Escravos export pipeline, Warri South West LGA, Delta State	25/10/16	http://punchng.com/avengers-blow-chevron-pipeline-fresh-attack/
'Suspected militants'	NPDC	Trans-Forcados Export Trunkline, Warri South West LGA, Delta State	01/11/16	http://tribuneonlineng.com/48-hours-repairs-militants-blow-trans-forcados-export-trunkline-delta/
NDA	Agip, Oando and Shell	Nembe 1, 2 and 3 Trunklines, in Bayelsa State.	15/11/16	http://guardian.ng/news/again-avengers-blows-up-trunklines-in-bayelsa/
'Suspected militants' (No official	Nigerian Gas Company	Gas pipeline, Saromi creek, near Warri	20/05/17	http://guardian.ng/news/suspected-oil-militants-attack-niger-delta-pipeline/

claim by any group)	(subsidiary of NNPC)			
'Suspected Militants' (No official claim by any group)	Unnamed oil services vessel with JTF escort	Ekebiri water ways (Southern Ijaw LGA, Bayelsa State	22/09/2017	http://guardian.ng/news/militants-attack-vessel-kill-three-security-escorts-in-bayelsa-creeks/

Source: Compilation from different leading Nigerian newspapers online

*Following the resurgence of militancy by Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) militia group especially.

Appendix 5: Records of Oil Spills in Nigeria 1976-2005

Year	No of Spills	Qty spilled (Barrels)	Qty Recovered (Barrels)	Year	No of Spills	Qty Spilled (Barrels)	Qty Recovered (Barrels)
1976	128	26,157.00	7,135.00	1991	201	106,827.98	2,785.96
1977	104	32,879.00	1,703.01	1992	378	51,187.96	1,476.70
1978	154	489,294.00	391,445.00	1993	428	9,752.22	2,937.08
1979	157	694,170.00	63,481.20	1994	515	30,282.67	2,335.93
1980	241	600,511.00	42,416.83	1995	417	63,677.17	3,110.02
1981	238	42,77.00	5,470.20	1996	430	46,353.12	1,183.02
1982	252	42,841.00	2,171.40	1997	339	81,727.85	
1983	173	48,351.30	6,355.90	1998	399	99,885.35	
1984	151	40,209.00	1,644.80	1999	225	16,903.96	
1985	187	11,876.60	1,719.30	2000	637	84,071.91	
1986	155	12,905.00	552	2001	412	120,976.16	
1987	129	31,866.00	6,109.00	2002	446	241,617.55	
1988	208	9,172.00	1,955.00	2003	609	35,284.43	
1989	195	7,628.16	2,153.00	2004	543	17,104.00	
1990	160	14,940.82	2,092.55	2005	496	10,734.59	
				Total	9,107	3,121,909.80	550,232.90

Source: (C. Emuedo 2013: 7).

Appendix 6: Phases of conflicts in the Niger Delta

Period	
Pre-independence	Agitation for special developmental attention because of unique ecological difficulties.
1966	Militant insurgent engagement by Adaka Boro and the NDVs. Separation or autonomy was the goal of engagement.
1970s	Agitations by host communities against Oil TNCs demanding for basic social infrastructure/amenities and payment of compensation for damages to land and property.
Mid 1980s	Conflict between host communities and oil MNCs over payment of adequate compensation for damages to property. Litigation was the instrument of engagement.
1990-1996	(a) Emergence of civil, community, ethnic, and regional groupings in response to state and oil TNCs insensitivity and repression. (b) Peaceful demonstrations by host communities and occupation of oil production facilities, demanding for adequate compensation for damages and development attention.
1997- 2009	(a) Militant and militia actions against oil TNCs (b) Demand for resource ownership and control by civil, political and militia groups (c) Violent confrontations and low intensity war between militia groups and the military

Source: Watts and Ibaba (2011: 9)

Appendix 7: Militant camps in the Niger Delta as of 30 June 2009

S/N Name of camp	Location	Status of camp	Leaders
1.Olugbobiri	Southern Ijaw Local Government Area (SILGA), Bayelsa state	Major	Joshua Mckiver
2. Korokorosei	SILGA, Bayelsa state	Major	Africa Owei
3.Okiegbene/Ebrigbene (Ikebiri I & II)	SILGA, Bayelsa state.	Major	Gidson kala (Prince Igodo)
4. Robert Creek	Nembe, Bayelsa state	Major	
5. Cowthorne Channel	Nembe, Bayelsa state	Major	
6. Camp 5	Warri South, Delta State	Major	Government Ekpemupolo (alias Tompolo) and Henry Okah
7.Okerenkoko	Warri, Delta state	Major	
8.Opuraza	Warri, Delta state	Major	
9.Azuzuama	SILGA, Bayelsa State	Major	Jackson [Fabouwei, alias Jasper Junior]
10.Gbekenegbene	SILGA, Bayelsa State	Minor	
11.Ezetu	SILGA, Bayelsa state	Minor	
12. Agge	SILGA, Bayelsa State	Minor	Victor Ben Ebikabowei (alias Boyloaf)
13. Kurutuye, Forupa and Okubie	SILGA, Bayelsa State	Minor	
14. Ken Camp	Odi, Bayelsa state	Minor	Ken Niweigha
15. Egbema camp	Warri, Delta state	Minor	Kem Agbakara
16.Ubefan	Warri Delta state	Minor	John Togo
17.Berger Camp	Warri Delta state	Minor	Inilo Sinite
18.Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF)	Akuku-Tori Rivers State	Major	Alhaji Asari Dokubo
19.Niger Delta Volunteer Movement (NDVM)	Okrika River state	Major	Tom Ateke

20.Borokiri (Icelanders/Outlaw cult)	Borokiri, Port Harcourt, Rivers state	Minor	Soboma George
21. Yeghe	Bori, Ogoni, Rivers state	Minor	Solomon Ndigbara (alias Osama Bin Laden)

Source: (Etekpe 2012: 99).

The table above reveals the various camps operated by the militant commanders and their location prior to the 2009 amnesty deal. The camps were all located in Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers state, showing their status as the key conflict states in the region.

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