Militancy in Africa, Unrest and Disruptions in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region

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Abstract

This study examined militancy in Nigeria especially, the unrest and disruptions in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. The purpose of the study is to analyse the resurgence of violence in Nigeria's Niger Delta, and how it resulted in socio-economic and humanitarian tragedies in the region. The study focused on the dimension of conflict dynamics such as, emergency of ethnic militia, cult groups, availability and use of small arms and light weapons which perhaps, have made the region the most devastated in oil production conflicts and militant violence. The study revealed the phenomenon of militancy in the region and their use of sophisticated weapons to inflict sever damages on socio-economic activities including oil infrastructures thereby, disrupting oil production which often times, contribute to fluctuation in oil supplies. The study used primary and secondary sources of data to obtain information. It adopted the qualitative and descriptive approach to analyze data obtained due to its historical nature. However, using the framework of conflict in the region, the study found out that strains on oil supplies and internal instability created by militant activities have prompted national and international security concerns in the region. The study concludes that reactions by the international community to the security challenges in the region have led to designating the region as a dangerous and insecure region inhabited by criminals, vandals, kidnappers, restive youths, terrorists/hostage takes and, oil thieves. The study recommends that the increased conflict dynamics in the region is not with terror but with the underlying factors it interfaces that give rise to it, therefore, those factors needs attention to reduce the spate of unrest and disruption in the region.

Keyword: Militancy, Conflict, Violence, Unrest, and Disruptions

Introduction

Nigeria's Niger Delta region is a vast swamp similar to Vietnam's Mekong Delta, or the South Delta of the Mississippi River of New Orleans. In fact according to Campbell, the Nigeria's Niger Delta region is about the size of Portugal, and also one of the largest wetlands in the World.[1] Nigeria's Niger Delta is the richest ecological region in Nigeria by accommodating over 850 fish species, and about 248 fish species. Equally, the region is the largest mangrove ecozone in Africa, and the last intact low land rainforest in the country that is endowed with the Nigerian oil and gas reserves.[2] Thus, the region hosts the operations of the major multinational oil companies in the country whose activities are devastating the region with the aftermaths of unrest, disruptions, violent conflicts, insurrection, and security challenges.

The ecology of the region is divers, so also are the people of the region hence they cover nine states in the present Nigerian state structure. Campbell further stressed that the Nigeria's Niger Delta is home to about thirty-three million people who are dispersed among six thousand communities which makes the region Africa's most densely population region.[3] Oko-Jaja corroborated Campbell's assertion by observing that the Niger Delta region has at least forty ethnic groups who speak about 250 dialects. He contended that among them, the Ijaws are the largest in number by numbering about fourteen million people.[4] He further observed that they are the fourth largest ethnic grouping in Nigeria, but has never enjoyed the recognition or informal power accorded the other groups including the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo within the Nigerian federation.[5]

In the 1970s, oil production and the petroleum industry had become a viable sector of the Nigerian economy even though oil multinational companies had started

[1] J. Campbell. Nigeria Dancing on the Brink. Ibadan: Bookcraft Publishers, 2010, 63.
[2] J. Campbell. Nigeria Dancing on the Brink. Ibadan: Bookcraft Publishers, 2010, 63.
[3] J. Campbell. Nigeria Dancing on the Brink. Ibadan: Bookcraft Publishers, 2010, 63.
[4] T.E. Oko-Jaja. Lecturer Department of History and International Diplomacy, Rivers State University. Interviewed on the State of the Niger Delta Region within the Nigerian Federation, 10th January, 2024
[5] T.E. Oko-Jaja. Lecturer Department of History and International Diplomacy, Rivers State University. Interviewed on the State of the Niger Delta Region within the Nigerian Federation, 10th January, 2024

drilling and producing oil in the Niger Delta areas since the 1950s. As a result it was observed in the International Crisis Report of 2006, that oil is the successor industry to the palm oil trade, which in turn, succeeded the trans-Atlantic slave trade.[6] It is important to note that the palm oil trade just as the slave trade, was inherently violent and decentralizing, and in some ways, the same pattern is persisting with oil production in the Niger Delta region.

However, the Nigerian civil war which broke out six years after Nigeria's independence was partly centered in the Niger Delta region, and left perhaps about half a million people dead before it ended in 1970. Since then and as a result of the natural resources deposited in her environment, the Niger Delta region has continuously experienced the persistence of smaller-scale violence including the Ogoni and Egi uprisings in the 1990s, murders and kidnapping in Delta and Edo states until 2003, and the killings, kidnapping, and raising down of communities as well as vandalization of oil facilities in Rivers and Bayelsa States till date. These are as a result, of the sustenance of significant environmental degradation that is related to oil extraction and production activities in the area, including population pressure, youth restiveness, unrest and disruptions, as well as, security challenges for both indigenes and foreigners. This led to the conclusion drawn in 2006 by the world wildlife federation that about 1.5 million tons of oil spills had occurred in the Niger Delta area due to oil production activities carried out in the region by the multinational oil companies in collaboration with the Nigerian oil industry.[7] The report further observed that the ubiquitous natural gas flaring by the oil companies in the region, is a significant contributor to global warming even though, the federal government has made some frantic efforts to eliminate the practice.[8] It is against this backdrop that it is popularly held that oil is the glue that holds Nigeria together. That it also motivate the hegemons or elites in the country to preserve the Nigerian federation, because of its potential to generate most

[6] The Swamps of Insurgency: Nigeria's Delta Unrest. International crisis Group Report 115 August 2006, 2-5

[7] The Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy: Niger-Delta natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration Project. Federal Ministry of Environment, Abuja, and Nigeria Conservation Foundation, Lagos May, 2006

[8] The Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy: Niger-Delta natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration Project. Federal Ministry of Environment, Abuja, and Nigeria Conservation Foundation, Lagos May, 2006.

government revenues and foreign exchange earnings with less regards to the environmental impact on the region. Indeed, oil has positioned Nigeria as a major world player in the production and marketing of petroleum products.

The oil and gas in the Niger Delta are being produced by the largest oil producers in the country including, SPDC, Exxon-mobile, chevron, Total Energies and NAOC, among others. They operate under a joint venture agreement, or a joint oil and gas production contracts with the present Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPCL) to extract crude oil and natural gas, and produce same to various petroleum products and liquefied gas. As a result, Nigeria has become one of the largest oil exporter in Africa, and one of the top-ten exporters in the world especially, during periods of full oil production. It is to this effect that in 2006, the United States of America's Government Energy Information Administration affirmed that Nigeria is one of half a dozen countries that have an average of net crude oil exports of 2million and 2.6million barrels daily compared with the mega- exporters such as, Saudi Arabia and Russia with a daily exports of 8.53million barrels and 6.87million barrels exports respectively.[9] The report further affirmed that in such periods, Nigeria's peers in averages oil production included Iran, Kuwait, and Venezuela who in such periods are all centers of greater geopolitical interests in the world arising from daily oil production and export.[10]

Following the above observations, it is important to note that oil fields in the Niger Delta region are explored and drilled by a group of foreign multinational oil companies, but much of their crude oil are drilled and processed through unguarded oil wells and pipelines in the creeks, passing through flow stations to export terminals on the coast of the gulf of Guinea. Note that the inherent vulnerability of these production and distribution networks are part of the reasons why the companies began to develop their off-shore operations with the mind that attackers would not fancy assault on deep ocean fields of their oil and natural gas activities. However, the Niger Delta region is strategically important to the

[9] M. Peel, A Swamp full of Dollars: Pipelines and Paramilitary at Nigeria's Oil Frontier. United Kingdom: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009, 6.
[10] M. Peel A Swamp full of Dollars: Pipelines and Paramilitary at Nigeria's Oil Frontier. United Kingdom: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009, 6.

multinationals and the Nigerian government because of the size and quality of its oil and gas reserves, as well as, its geographical location along the coast of the gulf of Guinea. Accordingly, the Nigeria's crude oil and gas are much more prized due to the ease with which it can be refined into different petroleum products, as well as, the hugely expanding proven gas reserves which is already contributing to the worldwide shift towards energy generation. Equally, Nigeria's physical closeness in distance to the USA than the Middle East, also reduces shipping cost of Nigeria's crude to the USA and makes them politically more friendly such that in 2007 according to Pell, Washington launched a special military command known as "Africom", basically to improve on the security of Nigeria's oil reserve and elsewhere in the continent of Africa.[11]

Benefits of Oil Production in the Niger Delta Region

In all these arrangements, the Niger Delta residents have only benefited very little from the Nigerian oil industry as most of the region's population are poor, if not the most poorest in the Nigerian federation without any particular concern shown by the government to their many complaints including, the complaints of demarcating local boundaries as a result of oil production activities, and the widespread alienation of the people from their natural resources, among others. It is as a result of these that Ajumogobia observed in 2007, that insurrection has taken hold of oil production in the Nigeria's Niger Delta region with attacks on oil installations that have in some instance reduced actual oil production to as low as 800,000 bpd, far below its estimated 3,000,000 bpd production capacity.[12] He argued that because of the pervasiveness of oil bunkering in the region, it is difficult to determine exactly how much oil Nigeria produces on a daily basis.[13] However, he explained that bunkered oil are largely not captured in oil production statistics, but that in the past, actual Nigeria oil production was regularly exceeding the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposed ceiling.

[11] M. Peel A Swamp Full of Dollars: Pipelines and Paramilitary at Nigeria's Oil Frontier. United Kingdom: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009, 6.
[12] O. Ajumogobia (Minister of State Petroleum). OPEC Riyadh Summit, 2007. Platts Commodity News, 15th November, 2007.
[13] O. Ajumogobia (Minister of State Petroleum). OPEC Riyadh Summit, 2007. Platts Commodity News, 15th November, 2007.

Though, Niger Delta Militants often argue that their attacks on the oil companies installations and the hostage taking of their local and expatriate staffs are intended to cause unrest and disruptions to the oil production activities in the area in order to bring international pressure on the Nigerian government for a political change, but the government under the Obasanjo regime often denied the fact that the Niger Delta insurrection at the time, had any political undertone even though, the government has tried unsuccessfully to control the violence. The government however claimed that the violence which they acknowledged partly resulted from criminal activities in the Niger Delta region, remarkable underdevelopment in the area, and occasional ethnic strife amongst the natives.

However, in 2008 at president Yar'Adua' first visit to the region (ie, a year after taking office in 2007), he publicly acknowledged the spate of unrest in the Niger Delta region and its disruptive impact on the activities of the people of the region due to the oil production activities being carried out in their respective domains. This acknowledgement again spiked up militant activities in 2009, and thus provoked a largely military crackdown in the area, whose aftermath was the declaration of amnesty in the region by President Yar'Adua. Note that this was a presidential proclamation that thousands of militants in the area successfully accepted. It is significant to equally note that unlike other parts of Nigeria, the Niger Delta region is characterized by legions of unemployed youths, most of whom have turned to militant engagements in their bid to fight the alienation and perceived injustice by the oil companies and the government. Though, the amnesty regime was supposed to be accompanied by job training programmes and other development steps to reintegrate these militants back into the civil society, but following official rhetoric's to the contrary, the arrangements as provided by the amnesty document have largely remained an illusion and a dead letter in the trash-can of history.

In what follows, the policy failure and the likely failed prospect promised by president Jonathan to get the amnesty program back on track, led to the resumption of militant activities in 2010. This time, the insurrection enjoyed significant popular support muddled by gang warfare, ethnic strife, and criminal opportunism causing large form of unrest, disruptions and Mayhem in the region, even though, the insurrections were highly decentralized with its political goals.

Nevertheless on the inter-rime, the militants political goals ranging from outright independence advocated by a small minority to a much more modest political and economic reforms which formed the bases of their earlier demands seems to diffuse as their commonly cited demands this time around included among others; that the government should allocate a greater percentage of the oil revenue to the Niger Delta states, local governments, and communities in whose environments the oil production activities of the multinational oil companies are hosted including, the activities of the Nigerian oil industry. These includes shifting control of the Nation's Petroleum Industry from the government to the local communities that host the oil production activities, as well as liberating the Niger Delta people from the shackles and tyranny of the current Nigerian state system even though, they are not advocating total independence of the region from the rest of Nigeria. These apparent attacks on the state system of the Nigerian political structure often led to the gratuitous murder of soldiers and the police by the militants because they are considered as perceived enemies who are connected to the government.

Though, the apologists of re-allocation have often criticized the Niger Delta states and local governments for having failed to make use of their already huge revenues from oil in a socially responsible ways, but a number of politically motivated groups formed and radicalized in the 1990s especially, during the Abacha military dictatorship, provided the context for the present insurgencies in the region. Dating from those years are the movement for the survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP), the movement for the survival of Ijaw Ethic Nationality (MOSIEN), the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), the Egi Youths Federation (EYE), and the Kaiama Declaration of December 1998 among others. They provided a voice that was opposing the government, calling for democracy, and respect for the rights of the indigenous people and the environment of the Niger Delta region, by demanding control of their natural resources and energies. According to Tamuno, their declarations resonated widely among their people that in 2001, more than five hundred communities among a highly diverse population, had at least signed to them nominally because in their views, the declarations represented somewhat of a common manifesto to their grievances and aspirations.[14]

[14] T.N. Tamuno. Oil wars in the Niger Delta: 1849-2009. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd, 2011; 327

At this juncture, it can be argued that an upward revision of the revenue allocation to the Niger Delta states and Local governments would be more palatable to the hegemonic power blocs in other parts of Nigeria who are benefiting from the petroleum industry, instead of the government altogether losing their control of the oil business in the region. This is exemplified sometimes by gang welfare sponsored to cause further unrest and disruptions by those in different levels of government and the oil companies to overlap the insurgencies in the region. According to the report recorded by the Human Rights Watch in March 2008, it was held that in July and August 2007, a gang of militants headed and dominated by rival leaders (Ateke Tom and Soboma George), fought openly in the streets of Port-Harcourt (a major city in the Niger Delta region), and elsewhere in the region, killing innocent civilians and holding the area hostage without each dominating the other.[15] The report which analyzed the episodes goes on to note that the clashes between the groups primarily represented a violent competition for access to illegal patronage doled out by public officials in the state government, and that even though the Nigerian army eventually restored order at the long run, nobody was held accountable for the violence because state-level politicians and their national patrons were directly involved.

Furthermore, the insurgencies and gang warfare are overlaid by tribal or ethnic strifes such as, the Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Urhobo ethnic strife; and equally, environmental degradation popularly blamed on oil spills which has partially destroyed among others, the fishing industry of the people and agricultural enterprises which are the main sources of income for the regions locals. As a result, more rural population began to migrate to the urban areas in search of employment. Thus according to Campbell, when rural people move into an urban multiethnic environment as it happens elsewhere in the African continent where there is significant rural-to-urban migration, their sense of ethnic identification increases.[16] For example, in the Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Urhobo insurrection, where the Itsekiri traditionally believe that Warri is their exclusive or personal preserve, they therefore resent the arrival of large numbers of different ethnic groups to the area. These usually set the stage for inter-ethnic strife that are often connected with

[15] Politics as War: the Human Rights Impact and causes of Post-Election Violence in Rivers State, Nigeria. Human Rights watch Report N0. 3, Vol. 20, March, 2008.
[16] Campbell. Nigeria Dancing on the Brink. Ibadan: Book Craft, 2010, 66

struggles among rival hegemons in the area. Therefore, the subsequent killings, hostage taking, and sabotage of socio-economic activities in the area are too often normally carried out by gangs of cults groups, with the approval of their respective larger communities who attribute the insurrection to the government and the oil company's uncaring attitude towards their plights.

However, the government's complicity in the Niger Delta sage has always discredited its efforts because they are unable or unwilling to control the violence, while the militias who are heavily or thoroughly in their hegemon's patronage system with access to sophisticated weapons and alleged training by foreigners in the art of warfare, often outrun the joint-security outfit of the government, by changing their spots with impurity. Such that they are both freedom fighters muscles for disgruntled politicians on one hand, and on the other hand they are syndicates that exists primarily to enrich their members. These multiple roles played by the militias who does not see any contradiction among the roles they play in the system, have in common a war tendency on duly constituted authorities of the Nigerian State system.

Though, president's Obasanjo, Yar'Adua, and Jonathan's responses to these unrest and disruptions in the Niger Delta region were always summits and stakeholders meetings where peace conferences, the government and few militants negotiates cease-fires and amnesties, but the initiatives have always been undermined due to lack of political will by the government to genuinely address the grievances of the people, either by the government not keeping to its promises, or by not including all the insurgent groups in its dialogue. For instance, there is often deep-seated cynicism for government initiatives in the Niger Delta as a result, the amnesty proclamation by president Yar'Adua in 2009, was viewed more favourabely abroad than it was in the Niger Delta area because they see the amnesty initiative essentially as an element of government pay-off to militant leaders rather than an initiative for re-integrating the militants into the civil society.

As a result, lending credence to the Niger Delta cynicism in part, is the government's paralysis as a result of President Yar'Adua's hospitalization and eventual death in 2010, but Jonathan who acted as President from February 2010 and full constitutional President in May of the same year (who himself is a Niger

Delta from Bayelsa State), was constrained by demands from other parts of country that their share of the oil revenue should not be reduced hence, he was under pressure from the Niger Delta region to bring about fundamental reforms to the derivation formula in the country. So as the first Niger Deltan to head the Federation of Nigeria, he was on a razor edge on which way to go.

Though, there was a government sponsored technical committee in 2008 to review the approaches adopted over the past half-century on how to address the Niger Delta issues, but the committee highlighted that one of the solution to address the issues of the region is to adopt a political measure to the deep-seated grievances in order to restore among others, popular confidence for the government in the region; restore security by ending conflictual relationship between the oil companies and their host communities; end ethnic conflicts, and discourage criminal activities by state and local politicians who engage in diverting the initiatives by international donors to support small-scale indigenous non-governmental organizations for humanitarian projects, and for peace and reconciliation in the region, even though, some of these NGO's initiatives, including, few of the governments initiatives have enjoyed limited success and equally made little progress. The committee also highlighted that the Niger Delta master plan which was a product of over six years consultations with stakeholders in the region should be implement.[17]

Spate of Unrest and Disruptions in the Niger Delta Region

Following the above analysis, the study shall examine the spate of unrest and disruptions in the Niger Delta region, as well as, ascertain the processes of militant activities and its implications on the socio-economic development of the region with particular reference to the oil production activities being carried out by the multinational oil companies operating in the area. Equally, the study shall chronicle some militant attacks affecting persons and socio-economic activities, as well as, oil installations in the area, and also discuss some of the effects of oil production activities and its socio-economic implications including possible recommendations to tackle the menace of militancy in the Niger Delta Region, other parts of Nigeria, or elsewhere in the world.

[17] Government Technical Committee on the Review of Issues and Grievances in the Niger Delta Region. Abuja, 2008.

In what follows, the Niger Delta militant groups are a recognized terrorist gang in Nigeria. As a result, following the 1990s crackdown of law and order in the area such as the Ogoni crisis resulting from government insensitivity to their plights due to the impact of oil extraction and production activities in the area their actions have eventually escalated into different dimensions of violence including killing, kidnapping hostage taking of local and foreign oil company workers, destruction of oil facilities and installations, among others. Their violent actions since 1998, have become known and the region has been labeled as a 'lawless zone; where youths engage in the art of disrupting oil production activities and causing frequent Mayhem in the communities thereby, provoking inter and intra communal conflicts and or ethnic strife that affects socio-economic activities in the area all in the hope of gaining control and self-autonomy of the oil and gas resources in the region.

Their attacks over time have been publicized as terrorist actions in order to alert the general public, particularly the people of the region on the danger in their activities. For instance, on 16th July 2006, the punch national newspaper reported that Militants from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), attacked and killed four naval officers, and injured three army officers who are on a joint escort to a chevron oil tanker along Chomoni creek in Southern Warri local Government Area.[18] Equally, the Mid-Week Telegraphy of 18th – 24th April, 2007, also reported the Militants attacks on Mini-Okoro and Elelenwo Police stations which left some police officers dead and others injured.[19] Furthermore, the paper reported that on 1st January 2008, the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF), said to be led by Ateke-tom attacked a police station and a five star hotel in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The paper in the same edition also reported that in 1st October 2010 (Nigeria's 50th independence anniversary celebration), the Niger Delta Militants Under the Leadership of MEND carried out an attack on the Eagle Square in Abuja the Nation's capital, and disrupted the events of the day.[20]

[18] The Danger in the Niger Delta Region. Punch National Newspaper. Lagos, 16th July, 2006
[19] Militant Attacks on Mini-Okoro and Elelenwo police Stations. The Mid-Week Telegraph, Port Harcourt, 18th-20th April, 2007.
[20] Militants Attacks on Police Station and Five-Star Hotel in Port Harcourt. The Midweek Telegraphy, Port-Harcourt, 1st December, 2010

Accordingly, hostage taking and kidnapping of both local and foreign oil company workers in the region with the intention for ransom payments have also been identified as components of the militant's deadly attacks and terrorist activities. Francis, Lapin, and Rossiasco observed that from 2006 to 2009, there have been over 700 cases of kidnapping in different locations in the region, involving Niger Delta militants.[21] However, the publicity of their successive and successful attacks according to Ogbanaya et al., have led to the emergence and stronghold of such militant groups as, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), said to be led by Henry Okah; the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), said to be led by Asari Dokubo; the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF), including the Bush Boys, the martyrs brigade, the Icelanders, and the Greenlanders, etc, said led by Ateke Tom and others.[22]

These militant groups and emerging ones, have spread to other parts of the region and across the country thereby introducing a fear factor to their existence. Their activities have severally led to the shutting down of oil production activities in the region, and a further increase in violence attacks including killing of oil company workers and civilians as well as, damaging governmental and non-governmental properties within their reach in their respective areas of operations.

In the bid to terrorize the country, the Niger Delta Militant groups headed by the Ijaw Youth's Council (IYC), have turned their actions as an attack on the government to recognize and address the numerous injustices and deprivations suffered by the region as a result of oil production operations in the area. According to Onduku, the IYC is the people's organization at the forefront of the struggle for resource control and the restoration of justice for the Niger Delta environment.[23]

[21] P. Francis, D. Lapin, & P. Rossiasco. Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A social and Conflict Analysis for Change. Washington D.C: Woodrow Wilson International center for Scholars, 2011, 65

[22] U.M Ogbonaya, & U.K Ehigiamusoe. Niger Delta Militancy and Boko-Haram Insurgency: National Security in Nigeria. Global Security Studies, vol. 4, No.3 (2013), 1-14

[23] A. Onduku. The Lingering Crisis in the Niger Delta: A field Report. Journal of Peace, Conflict, and Development, Vol. 3, No 1-10, (2003), Doi: 7246/Pcd 0305

The IYC was founded on December, 1998 at the wake of the Kaiama Declaration of 11th December, 1998, whose content expressed the unabated environmental damages caused by the uncontrolled exploration and exploitation of the oil and gas production activities in the region. The letters of the declaration document emphasized that the region has experienced among others, numerous oil spillages, uncontrolled gas flaring, indiscriminate canalization, perennial flooding, coastal erosion, deforestations, and earth tremors due to oil and gas extraction and production exercises in the region. These environmental disasters in the region according to the declaration, have been the forces behind the militancy and the aggravated terrorist actions of the groups which have led to several accusation and allegations against the government, and the companies, especially, SPDC, Chevron, TotalEnergies and NAOC, as well as, the issuance of various ultimatums to the government particularly, the ones contained in the Kaiama Declaration of 1998.[24]

In what follows, part of the aggravated issues is the perception that the government and the oil companies are benefiting from oil and gas resources of the region without a corresponding response to the region's demands. They however claimed that the activities of the oil companies have reduced their land productivities, especially, agricultural yields and impacted negatively on fish reproduction in the rivers due to oil production chemicals that continually contaminate the body of waters in the area. As a result of these environmental conditions witnessed in the region due to oil and gas activities, the youths of the region who argued that they need a robust socio-economic and infrastructural support from the government and the oil companies are been forced or compelled to take part in asymmetric warfare against the government and the oil companies in the area as an avenue to seek redress for the deprivation and injustices suffered from the government's decline in meeting their political, and socio-economic, and infrastructural developments demands. In otherwords, the above facts can be buttressed by arguing that the failure of the government and the oil companies to fairly address these demands necessitated father escalation of militancy and insecurity in the area thus, resulted in their inability to forestall future attacks in order to ensure the security of lives and properties in the region especially, for the

[24] The Kaiama Declaration. In T.N. Tamuno, Oil Wars in the Niger Delta: 1849-2009. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers, 2011, 327-328.

people, the oil operation activities, and the socio-economic activities in the area. Hence, they could not reduce the implications or consequences of the unrest and disruptions on the socio-economic activities in the area.

As a result, in attempt to draw government's attention to the region, the militants periodically causes further unrest and disruptions to socio-economic activities in the area by violating traffic laws, among others. For example, in 2007, a police officer (Alex Last) accounted that Soboma George, a Militant Leader alleged to be affiliated to MEND and a Port-Harcourt street gang 'Icelanders', was arrested for traffic violation on his way to Church on a Sunday morning, but by mid-afternoon, sixty of his heavily armed men stormed the streets of Port-Harcourt causing unrest and disrupting socio-economic activities in the city. Last recounted that the militants defied every attempt made by the joint military task force (a combined security force of police and army known as operation flush), to stop their onslaught until they brought George out of security custody.[25]

Worst of all, the government in order to influence public opinion to their favour, usually announce with fanfare the arrest of Niger Delta Militant leaders, only to be followed by their subsequent release or escape. For instance, in October 2007, the federal government announced an impending crack-down on the Niger Delta Militants because of the unrest and disruptions they have been causing in the area and beyond, but the militants humiliated the government security forces with significant causalities thereby demonstrating that they (militants), can largely attack from anywhere in the coastal region, including the outskirts of Lagos and the far Eastern fringe of the country with impunity. This was displayed for the first in 2007, when the Niger Delta Militants struck at an oil installation outside the region (in the far Eastern part of the country), causing significant unrest and damage by disrupting socio-economic activities. According to Ahiamudu, the Niger Delta Militants embarrassed the federal government by attacking Cameroonian troops at the Bakassi Peninsula which the government under

[25] A. Last, Eye-Witness Account on the Activities of Militant's Terrorism in the Niger Delta Region. Interviewed in Port Harcourt, 10th January, 2024

president Obasanjo ceded to Cameroon in response to International Legal Judgment which was against the wishes of the locals.[26]

To further demonstrate their range and show their fire power, the militants also attacks offshore oil platforms, sometimes ranging over sixty miles out to the sea. For example in June 2008, the Niger Delta Militants attacked SPDC's Bonga platform sixty-five miles offshore. Ahiamadu further explained that apart from the Militants attacks on oil and gas facilities and installations, they also engage in kidnapping and hostage taking of oil industry employees who fall prey to their whelms, thus he argued that such activities have long been established and profitable for them.[27] It is important to note that some of the oil company employees make On-the-Ground efforts to resolve whatever the matter might be. That might include payments of some sort by the affected company to secure the freedom of their hostage employee or employees whom on some occasions might be seen in a local bar with its captors showing some sort of insider involvement in these kidnapping racketeering.

However, it is important to note that since the later part of 2005, the dimension of hostage taking by the Militants changed because of insider's prominent involvement in the act. For example, in May 2007, the Daily Champion Newspaper reported that in the past three years over One Billion Naira has been doled out as ransom to effect the release of some expatriate oil company workers kidnapped by Niger Delta Militants.[28] The Militants captured groups of expatriate oil company workers and kept them for long period in isolated camps in the swamps, and as well, tie their release to political demands, economic empowerment, and infrastructural developments in the region. Though, they also demand much larger ransoms, but some oil company spokespersons publicly insisted that ransoms are not paid. This is to corroborate the unsuccessful efforts made by the

[26] A.D. Ahiamudu. Former Local Government Chairman of Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State. Interviewed in Port Harcourt on the Range and Fighting Powers of the Niger Delta Militants in the Face of Oil Production Activities in the Region. 8th January, 2024

[27] A.D. Ahiamadu. Former Local Government Chairman of Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State. Interviewed in Port Harcourt on the Range and Fighting Powers of the Niger Delta Militants in the Face of Oil Production Activities in the Region. 8th January, 2024

[28] O. Ljosne. Victims of the Niger Delta Militancy. Daily Champion Newspaper, Lagos: May, 2007

government to dissuade states, local governments, and oil companies in the region to stop ransom payment to the militants in order to discourage them from the activities of causing unrest and disruptions of socio-economic activities in the area.

Following the above assertion, Pege observed that majority of the kidnapped victims appears to be employees of the oil serving contractors who are engaged by the major oil companies operating in the area including SPDC, Exxon-mobile, Chevron, Total Energies, Conoco-Phillips, or NAOC, who provides well-guarded security protection for their employees.[29] He narrated that the major oil company employees are not immune from kidnap attacks or other forms of attacks by the Militants. For example, he explained that Militants killed the child of an SPDC staff during a kidnap attack attempt in Port-Harcourt which thereby caused unrest and disruptions in the area because the people were unease in their respective environments. It is important to note that in the effort to entrench the fear factor in their activities, they cause more unrest and disruption in the Niger Delta region by expanding their kidnapping rang to children of expatriate employees, wealthy locals, and even the elderly and aged people within their vicinity.

Joseph recounted how the incidence of oil and gas production activities in the Niger Delta region, and the accompanying attacks on innocent citizens in the area by the militants have led to the hostage taking of the aged father of the then Bayelsa State Deputy Governor (King Simon Ebebi), who regained his freedom after about seventy-two hours in captivity.[30] Though, it was highly alleged that the Bayelsa State Government paid some ransom to secure the release of the man, but the veracity of that allegation could not likely be ascertained. Pega also narrated the incident of the kidnap of the father of Prof. Charles Soludo who was then the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria.[31] Soludo is from the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, and presently the Governor of Anambra State of Nigeria. It was then rumored that he ransomed his father's release from his captors. In a related development, Okonjo observed that Mrs. Kamene Okonjo the mother of former

[29] S. Pegg. The Cost of Doing Business: Transnational Corporation and Violence in Nigeria. Security Dialogue, Vol. 30, No. 4, December, 1999, 473-84

[30] R. Joseph. Victims of Niger Delta Militancy. Global Terrorism Analysis, Vol.5, No. 15, August, 2007.

[31] M. Pega, The Intimidation Game. In N. Okonjo-Iweala. Fighting Corruption is Dangerous: The Story Behind the Headlines. United States: Palatino LTSTD., 2018, 2

Nigeria's Minister of Finance (Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala) was kidnapped in the twilight of 19th December, 2012 in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria too. He alleged that the act was carried out by the Niger Delta Militants to demonstrate their range and bring home to the government the extent to which they can cause unrest and disruptions even beyond the Niger Delta region.[32]

Though expatriate's kidnappings have most often provoked indignation from the Western World and its media, but the fragmentation of the Niger Delta Militants have left the unwilling Nigerian government with little or nothing to do to checkmate their excesses against the oil companies and the Federal Government. As a result, following a round of kidnapping in 2006 of Italian expatriates who are oil company employees, the Italian press was particularly shrill in tis pressure on Rome demanding the Italian government to do something about the kidnap of their citizens in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Abati's account corroborates the above allegation as he observed that a non-governmental organization (NGO) estimated that there are more than twenty militant groups in Bayelsa State alone, with each of the groups including a number of smaller groups within it who are in turn called cults and are being overseen by a leader or a boss to whom they pay their respective allegiances.[33] Furthermore, Asari Dokubo, a militant leader from the Eastern Niger Delta extraction made a claim in the Guardian Newspaper of 4th October, 2007, that there are about 312 separate Niger Delta Warlords in the entire Niger Delta region, with each commanding a band of dedicated followers who takes instructions from their leadership, thus he boosted by asserting that they will bring the Nigerian State to its knees.[34] Though, despite these purported claims of the unity of the Niger Delta militants to cause unrest and disruptions to the government, oil companies operating in the area, socio-economic activities in the area, and the people of the region, the militant groups lacked overall and ordinated leadership. Because the question quite often asked is if there is or there are any Niger Delta politburo who can cordinate the groups? It will be interesting to note in view of the findings in this study, that militants activities or militancy either in

[32] O. Okonjo. The Intimidation Game. In N. Okonjo-Iweala. Fighting Corruption is Dangerous: The Story Behind the Headlines. United States: Palatino LTSTD. 2018, 1

[33] R. Abati. Warlords of the Niger Delta. In J. Campbell. Nigeria Dancing on the Brink. Ibadan: Bookcraft Publishers, 2010, 69.

[34] D. Asari. Ijaw Warlords in the Niger Delta. Lagos: Guardian Newspaper, 4th October, 2007.

Northern, Southern, Western, or Eastern parts of the Niger Delta region are separate and uncordinated and seem to respond to different leaderships and commands in carrying out their disruptive and unrest activities.

The above point can be substantiated with the events of 2003 when the militants fighting involved the group led by Asari Dokubo and other groups plagued the Niger Delta region for years, and the groups waxed and waned with surreal names including KKK, IceLander, and Germans among others. In these groups, there are other groups constantly springing up from the ashes of the old, and because of their intellectual bankruptcy as a result of stark illiteracy, most of them chose and adopted strange names without minding the racial implications of such name just like the name KKK, among others. They also indulge in substance taking such as cocaine, heroin, and other sorts of substances to keep their spirit of mindless destruction alive thereby causing unrest and disruptions in the region.

Accordingly, Obulor observed that these groups are mass movements, and he conservatively estimated them to number about 2,000 people under arms. He equally observed that over 100,000 application forms are regularly sent out for prospective applicants to be conscripted as members into these gangs.[35] He also explained that these forces (groups), have heavier weapons including Rocket-Propeller Grenades with which they use to cause Mayham that leads to unrest and disruption of activities in the region. However, if these common beliefs of the Niger Delta Militants are true, then there are facts grimly appropriate about their emergence from a deeply corrupt political system that was claimed to have established them. For instance, Peel revealed that there is a universally believed allegation in the Niger Delta area that in 1999 election in Rivers State, the PDP armed the Niger Delta Militants to rig the election in their favour, and that in 2003, the PDP under Peter Odili who was governor until 2007, armed Dokubo a militant leader, to rig the elections in the party's (PDP) favour thereby making militancy a legitimated authority in the Niger Delta region for election victory.[36] Therefore,

[35] I. Obulor. Political Economy of Ethnic Militias and Political Violence in Nigeria. Port Harcourt: Kemuela Publication, 2013, 2

[36] M. Peel. A Swamp Full of Dollars: Pipelines and Paramilitaries at Nigeria's Oil Frontier. United Kingdom: Lawrence Hill Books, 2010, 10.

like the Frankenstein's monster, the militants often turn against their people who they claimed to be fighting for their interest.

In otherwords, the Niger Delta militancy has turned to become a cosmopolitan affair where different parties are said to be involved in the unrest and disruptions in the area with regards to the activities of the oil producing companies in the region. This is exemplified by the impact of militant activities on oil production output from the area. For instance in 2003, SPDC commissioned a report that concluded that as many as 685,000 barrels of oil (or about 1/3 of total oil production per day), generating about 4Billion Dollars were taken through oil theft annually. Though, official estimates has it that as high as 300,000 bpd went through oil theft, while oil industry figures quoted lower than the above. But the report still concluded that a substantial figure of about 40,000 and 100,000 bpd was lifted through oil theft.[37] This incidence prompted a lucrative business in oil bunkrey or fuel black market, thus creating domestic fuel shortage which ridiculously, but frequently gripped Nigeria as one of the world's Top-Ten oil exporters. The situation left the militants spending their lives navigating between profits from this system that caved in partly because of corruption by the government and oil company officials who allowed the domestic refineries to fall into disrepair so that they could claim a cut in the lucrative fuel import contracts.

The above developments entrenched a long standing contempt against the government and the oil companies by the militants who believed that the Western nations are eager to project an image of progress in Nigeria, in order to secure the country's oil supplies to their nations. Idoniboye highlighted that oil production activities in the Niger Delta region have brought nothing except environmental pollution, making it harder to produce agricultural yields and catch fishes. He observed that the area lack clean drinking water, electricity network, educational infrastructure, and medical facilities, among others. Thus he argued that these have made unrest and disruptions of socio-economic activities in the area which arises from conflict and insecurity inevitable.[38] He narrated that most times, farmers and fishermen pay voluntary protection fees to militants or community

[37] Confidential Report Commissioned by Shell (SPDC), in 2003

[38] O. Idoniboye. Lecturer Department of Philosophy, Rivers State University Port Harcourt. Interviewed on the Benefits of Oil Production in the Niger Delta Region. 10th Jan. 2023

leaders pay the cash into an account administered by a supposed local militant commander assumed to be giving the money as donations to those in need in their domain. These arose from violence and insecurity in the region.

To corroborate the above assertion by Idoneboye is the March 2001 Presidential visit by Obasanjo which was commemorated by a Black Tilled Monument announcing the foundation laying stone of Oloibiri 'Oil and Gas Research Institute, to the glory of God and Service to the Niger Delta People of Nigeria'. Though the institute, after six decades of oil production in the region, like many other unfinished projects, had been promised but was not built till date. According to a report recorded by Opubowatch in 2015, a local official of one of the Niger Delta Militant groups who claimed to be present on the project dedication day, argued that it is irritating to found out that the government and the oil companies operating in the region did not make funds available before embarking on the project, hence the failure of the project.[39] He revealed that the government's cheating and brainwashing the people of the Niger Delta region are the major sources of the attacks on oil operations in the area which is causing unrest and disruptions in the region, and the larger Nigerian society. It is important to note that the historical landmark of Oloibiri is understated in a signboard rendered barely legible and accompanied by corrosion that reads, 'Oloibiri: Well Number One, drilled, June 1956, Depth, 12.008 feet.

Therefore, following the above analysis of militant activities causing unrest and disruptions in the Niger Delta region due to the oil production activities in the area, it will make sense to chronicles the timeline of some major attacks that have caused unrest and disruptions to the socio-economic activities in the Niger Delta region.

Table 1

S/No	Date	Attacks
1	February 2006	Militants belonging to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which is a group representing several militant groups in the

[39] Opubowatch. Bi-Annual Newspaper Publication in Opobo Rivers State, Vol. 6, N0. 7 December 2014-May 2015

		region kidnapped and abducted nine expatriate oil company workers. This was considered the first high profile abduction of oil company workers that occurred in the region that has caused unrest and disruption to especially, oil production activities, and socio-economic activities, etc.
2	Sept. 2006	Soldiers invaded Okochiri village near Port-Harcourt the main oil city of Rivers State in the Niger Delta, said to be the hideout for suspected kidnappers of oil company workers.
3	October 2006	Army confirmed the killing of nine soldiers in a clash with militants which set fears of unrest in the region.
4	October 2006	Militants led villagers numbering over one hundred to occupy four oil pumping stations in Delta State over alleged SPDC renegal on its promise to award supply contracts to the host communities.
5	October 2006 to June 2007	Kidnapping of oil company workers by the Niger Delta Militants intensifies in Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States.
6	November, 2006	Soldiers and Militants clash in Bayelsa State and two militants were at least reported dead in the shootout.
7	December, 2006	Three Italian NAOC workers were seized in Rivers State. Militant gangs abducted more than 20 oil company workers who belong to different oil companies that are operating in the Niger Delta region, and release some after about 20days in captivity.
8	May, 2007	Four American oil company workers who were held by militants regained their freedom after about two weeks of being under hostage.

9	August, 2007	Government troops continued the sweep of main restive communities within Rivers State the oil city of Niger Delta region.
10	November, 2007	Pipeline attacks by militants steeped up in major pipeline areas in the Niger Delta.
11	February, 2008	Henry Okah, a prominent militant, was arrested in Angola and extradited to Nigeria thus heightening militant activities.
12	June, 2008	President Yar'adua ordered a military crackdown on the Niger Delta militants following their persistent rebel attacks on the oil activities in the region.
13	13th September, 2008	Militants declared oil war by stepping up attacks on oil facilities, which sparked up one of the heaviest clashes that lasted for two years between government security forces and the militants, where dozens of the militants and security personnel were reported dead, and security forces allegedly razed down three villages in Rivers State in search of MEND leaders including Farah Dagogo.
14	10th September, 2008	Militants kidnapped 27 oil company workers in different oil locations in the Niger Delta area, but released 25 of them after 7 days, leaving two behind.
15	November, 2008	Military launched crackdown on militants and oil thieves in the Niger Delta.
16	December, 2008	Government forces arrested Sabomabo Jackrich a militant leader, and this sent waves of unrest in the area thereby disrupting socio-economic activities.
17	January, 2009	Militants called off the unilateral ceasefire announced in September 2008, and declared a hurricane step-up attacks linked to a rebel camp led by Ateke Tom.

18	February, 2009	A prominent Daroama militant camp was destroyed by joint security task force in Bayelsa State after militants attacked a civilian helicopter for the first time.
19	12th May, 2009	Clashes between government forces (the joint security task force), and the militants broke out which both sides denied initiating the attack.
20	14th May, 2009	Militants abducted 15 hostages, but the JTF eventually freed some of them and destroyed the compound of Tom Polo as most of the residents of the Niger Delta region were said to be displaced in the fighting.
21	25th May, 2009	MEND destroyed several oil pipelines in the Niger Delta belonging to chevron oil company, and the company confirmed that the attacks on their oil pipelines have reduced their oil production activities by cutting down its oil production output below 100,000 bpd.
22	26th June, 2009	MEND reject plans on government amnesty programme, and vow to continue attacks on the oil industry until the injustice meted to the oil-rich regions is corrected as a result, about six high profile attacks was carried out on oil wellheads, offshore platforms, major pipelines, and oil pumping stations etc, after days following the amnesty declaration.
23	8th June, 2009	20 soldiers were reportedly killed by militants in one of the attacks on SPDC Forcados offshore platform in Delta State, and after their attacks, chevron evacuated about one hundred of its workers from the Niger Delta region.
24	12th July, 2009	MEND commits a rare raid on an oil offloading facility in Lagos, which is the group's first attack outside the Niger Delta, and five people were reported killed in the attack.

25	15th July, 2009	MEND announced 60days unilateral cease-fire and released six crew members it had seized from a foreign oil tanker (Sichem peace) but could not restore the ease of doing business in the area.
26	15th Sept. 2009	MEND extended a two-month cease fire in the oil producing region to 30days, but dismisses as a shame the government's amnesty programme thereby reinstating the fears of unrest and disruptions in the minds of the people of the region.
27	25th October, 2009	After about three decades of hostilities in the Niger Delta region, MEND reinstated an indefinite cease-fire and raised hope for peace prospect in the troubled oil producing region, but the people lost trust in their promises due to the fear of further paralyzing socio-economic activities.
28	19th December, 2009	MEND delivered what it called a warning strike by destroying a major crude oil pipeline in the Niger Delta. They expressed frustration over stalled peace talks due to the absence of ailing President Yar'Adua, a situation which they described as unacceptable because they claimed that the future of the Niger Delta is tied to the health and well-being of one man.
29	18th January, 2010	Militants abducted three British oil company workers and one Colombian, though they regained their freedom after six days of their abduction near the main oil city of Rivers State in the Niger Delta.
30	30th January, 2010	MEND called off its declared cease-fire, and threatened an all- out onslaughteen the on oil industry in the Niger Delta oil producing areas, and warned of more attacks in the weeks to come.

Source: International Crisis, Group: Timeline of Recent Unrest in Niger Delta Region, (IRIN: 2010), Available @https://www.refworld.org/docid/4b71214bchtm/(accessed12 Jan. 2024)

The above illustration shows that the attacks on the oil production activities in the Niger Delta region especially from 2006-2010, impacted negatively on the socio-economic activities and developments in the region. Many of the oil companies relocated their staffs and offices to other region in the country such as, Lagos. However, despite the abundant oil wealth in the region, the residents lack basic services including electricity, piped water, health clinics and or schools. As a result, the region has experienced decades of unrest and disruptions stemming mostly from local uprisings by militants over what they consider as neglect the by government and the oil companies operating in the region.

Having thus far chronicled some of the major attacks causing unrest and disruptions in the Niger Delta region's socio-economic activities, arising from mainly the oil and gas production activities in the area, it will therefore make sense to state few of its consequences on the Nigerian economy due to crude oil theft. Therefore, following the crude oil theft in the Niger Delta Region due to Militant activities, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), revealed that Nigeria lost about 619.7million barrels of crude oil valued at N16.25trillion (ie, 46.16billion dollars) to crude oil theft from 2019-2020.[40]The report also quoted a former National Security Adviser Gen. Babagana who equally revealed that in 2023, Nigerian Might lose about 23billion dollars to crude oil theft.[41]

Accordingly, the National Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), through a report by group of lawyers engaged by the Agency from 2011 to 2014, confirmed the stealing of crude oil valued at 29.17 billion dollars. Their report also confirmed that 60.2million barrels of crude oil valued at 12.7 billion dollars was illegally exported to the USA arising from Militant activities in the Niger Delta area.[42]

Equally, the Federal House of Representatives through an investigation report in 2014 on crude oil theft in the Niger Delta Region disclosed that undeclared volume

[40] Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), Report 2020
[41] Gen. Babagana, Oil Theft in Nigeria. In Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), Report, 2020
[42] National Maritime Administration and Safety Agency Report, 2011.

of crude oil worth about 17 billion dollars was exported to different global destinations from 2011-2014. According to the report, the crude oil theft activities involves multinational oil companies that are known to the government who lack the will to bring the companies and their militants collaborators to book in order to recover the sum of 29.7 billion dollars being the value of the stolen crude oil.[43]

Furthermore, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Imitative (NEITI), also revealed that between 2007 and 2020, the security forces in charge of oil theft such as the Joint Military Task Force (JTF), and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) among others, have not been able to stop the stealing and smuggling of crude oil from the Niger Delta Region to other parts of the globe. They observed that though, Tantita Security Services Nigeria Limited (TSSNL), a private security company has discovered illegal pipeline through which crude oil was been diverted from a 40.000 bpd Forcados pipeline (belonging to SPDC), to the high sea for export to different global destinations, but they argued that the indicted oil companies and their local collaborators are yet to be prosecuted by the Nigerian Government.[44] As a result, these consequential incidences arising from crude oil theft in the Niger Delta Region due to Militant activities on the oil production business in the area are among others, the direct effects of the unrest and disruptions to the Nigeria's economy, and other socio-economic concerns in the area including infrastructural developments.

Conclusion

Obviously, this study and its findings focuses attention on the Militant activities in the Niger Delta Region due to the oil and gas production activities in the area, and the implications of the oil operations on the socio-economic development of the region, its people and their environment. But it can be recalled that since independence till present, the Nigerian social formation has been engulfed by large-scale social crises and violence including political crisis, military violence, economic crisis, riots, ethnic and religious conflicts, urban and rural violence, as well as cultism, militancy, and general lawlessness. These may be attributed to the

[43] House of Representative Report on Crude Oil Theft in the Niger Delta Region, 2014

[44] Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), Report on Crude Oil Theft in the Niger Delta Region, 2009-2020.

failure of the Nigerian state to deliver on the promises and hope of good governance that could accompany the attainment of independence in 1960.

Undoubtedly, in the case of the Niger Delta region hopes were high on the part of its people that since the discovery of oil and its production in the region was achieved in the Mid 1950s, that the new Nigerian leadership in collaboration with the multinational oil companies operating in the area, starting form independence in 1960, would put in place processes and structures that would ensure a radical upliftment of the material circumstances of the people. Unfortunately, several decades after independence, this dream of hope by the Niger Delta people was far from being the case hence, leading to widespread disappointment, social crises, violence and insecurity across the Niger Delta region. Thus staring form the 1990s, the upspring of ethnic militias and political violence across the Niger Delta region became unprecedented and thereby metamorphosed into militants activities that caused unrest and disruptions on the socio-economic activities, and development of the region. As a result, militant activities in the Niger Delta comprising mainly the activities of the Niger Delta Peoples-Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), and other street gangs such as the Iceland, Greenland, KKK, the Germans and the Bush boys among others, became very prominent in the with area as their activities bears a direct consequence on the oil production activities in the area, and the socio-economic development of the area through the unrest and disruptions that their attacks causes in the region.

Indeed, their activities almost paralyzed socio-economic and political activities within and outside the region because they are armed with sophisticated weapons. The study revealed that the groups launched attacks on oil installations in the region, and on personnel of the oil companies including some innocent citizens as indicated in the study. The study also found out that the groups engaged in kidnapping, and shooting encounters with members of the Nigerian Police and armed forces with their agitations centering on self-determination of the Niger Delta people and their resources especially, the crude oil from the Nigerian state which they perceive as the main instrument of oppression and insensitivity to the age long plight of the region from where the resources that is sustaining the economy of the country is derived. As stated in the study, militancy is an

organized group action of a population from an ethnic or regional grouping that are engaged in armed struggle against the authorities of the state in order to secure political, economic and or social benefits based on the resources in their domain.

However, the phenomenon or emergence of regional or militant agitations in Nigeria are not certainly new in the history of the country, it dates back to 1966 with Isaac Adaka Boro staging the protest that translated to a revolution against the marginalization of the Niger Delta (Ijaw) area by the Nigerian State. The violence that erupted during the period was suppressed in a matter of days by the forces of the Nigerian State, after months of insurrection. However, the issues raised by the agitators later re-echoed and plunged the country into a 30months (1967-1970) civil crises that was bloody in nature and outlook. In other words, regional or ethnic suspicion, political marginalization, oppression, inequity, and social injustice are perceived or alleged as part of the process of managing, allocating, and or distributing economic and political goods of the country, but the mismanagement of these processes resulted in the declaration of the Sovereign State of Biafra in 1967, which witnessed the aggressive conscription and enlistment of a major part of the region's population into their army.

In this study, militant attacks, violence and conflict are perceived generally to lead to loss of lives, destruction of properties, economic retardation and damage to national image, but in the case of the Niger Delta region, the above vices led to the damage of socio-economic activities in the area. It is an incontrovertible fact that conflict and violence are the panacea to slow development in any society hence the argument by scholars that violence is perceived only in the negative sense without reference to its positive effects in societies. Infact, according to Ukiwo, conflict and violence could contribute to development in another context when viewed in their propensity to bring about a desired change to the original status of the situation on ground or the life condition of the people.[45] Thus these two postulations are more eloquently captured in Ogban-Iyan, when he observed that

[45] J.W. Ukiwo, Oil, "Babylonian" "Mathewnomics" and Nigerian Development: Inaugural lecture, University of Port Harcourt, 2006

social crises and violence may serve one or two purposes of strengthening, broadening, destroying or weakening the social order.[46]

This in no doubt led to the upsurge of militancy and political violence in the Niger Delta region which has posed enormous challenges to the national security including political instability and national integration. The open display and actual usage of sophisticated weapons by the various militant groups in the area by unleashing harm to people and properties, including violent clashes with members of the Nigerian security forces have not only posed serious and disturbing security problems for the country and its people, but also seriously challenged the socio-economic development of the Niger Delta region, and questioned the stability of the Niger Delta region. This is why John Campbell former United States Ambassador to Nigeria opined that the Federal Government of Nigeria had failed to provide basic security for its citizens and had lost its monopoly on violence.[47] He explained that popular alienation and fragmentation establishments in the country, have contributed to Nigeria being one of the violent riden countries in the world due to the oil production activities going on in the area, and the militant attacks on the oil installations and the people of the area.

The study revealed that several encounters between the militant groups and Nigerian security agencies in the area, always result in increased casualties on both sides, including civilian population especially, the vulnerable in the society such as, children, women, the elderly and the physically challenged persons. It is important to note that this situation had continued unabated thereby constituting national embarrassment to the country in the comity of nations. Furthermore, the phenomenon or emergency of militancy and violence across the Niger Delta region have continued to raise the level of mutual suspicion among the militant groups in the area, and have introduced a fear factor to the existence in the region both for indigenes and non-indigenes alike most of whom are oil company employees, thereby making the efforts of government at national integration based on unity and political stability a fruitless exercise. As a result, the study found out

[46]O. Ogban-Iyan, Social Production and Reproduction, Social Conflicts and the Challenge of Democracy in Nigeria." Journal of Political Economy, vol. 1, No. 1. Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2005.
[47] J. Campbell, Nigeria Dancing on the Brink. Ibadan: Bookcraft publishers, 2010, 63-69

that these concerns in the Nigerian polity extends to the worries expressed by the international community over the activities of militant groups across the Niger Delta region against the oil production activities in the area by the multinational oil companies operating in Nigeria.

The Niger Delta region with its vast swamp, large witlands, ecologically rich by accommodating over 850 tree species and about 248 fish species, large mangrove ecozone, intact lowland rainforest that is endowed with the Nigerian oil and gas reserves, and hosting the oil and gas activities of the major multinational oil corporations in the country whose activities are devastating the region with the aftermaths of conflicts, violence, insurrections, and insecurity, as well as, unrest and disruptions to the socio-economic activities in the area with its diverse peoples, could unleash serious refugee problems for the country and beyond should the region be plunged into war.

Equally, Obulor stressed that the Niger Delta region with its population of about 33million people spread across nine states in the present Nigerian state structure, dispersed among 6,000 communities making the region the most densely populated region in Africa with at least forty ethnic groups that are speaking about 250 dialects, has made Nigeria occupy the sixth largest oil producer position in the World, second major suppliers of oil to the USA, and due to the enormous deposit of oil and gas reserves in the area, it has become the major contributor to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), contributing about 85% foreign exchange earnings, and about 92% of the national budget. He therefore affirmed that the region could pose a serious threat to the economy of the nation should the agitated issues that led to the upsurge of militancy in the region are not properly addressed.[48] As such, any disruption in the production of oil from the region and the subsequent supply of the product by Nigerian government to the Western allies including the USA, would be a major concern to the West and thus, would require increased security presence in the region with all the implications such as, unrest and disruptions of socio-economic activities particularly in the area, and generally in Nigeria. This however, will undermine the sovereignty of the Niger

[48] I. Obulor, Political Economy of Ethnic Militias and Political Violence in Nigeria. Port-Harcourt: Kemuela Publications, 2013 5-6

Delta region amongst other regions in the country, and would also undermine the sovereignty of Nigeria amongst other nations of the world.

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