
Security Challenges and Arms Control in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria (A Case of 2009 Amnesty Programme)

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ABSTRACT

One of the huge obstacles disturbing so many societies around the World today and Economic Communities of West African States, as well as Nigeria in particular, is Security problems. But these problem varies from one community to the other which attracted the attention of the World, State, Regional, and Global Non-Governmental Organization as it has increased tension and separated the high number of intra-state crises or violent. But for the purpose of this paper, the study narrows down to the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The region was blessed with mineral resources which cause land exploitation and make the communities live miserable compared to other communities in the country. These conditions of hardship cause internal conflicts and light weapons smuggled from Countries like; Guinea-Bissau, Gabon, and Cameroon which is against the role of ECOWAS on Small and Light Weapon (SALW) adopted in each member States in which Nigeria is not excluded. As an attempt to manage the Security Challenges and Arms Control in the Niger Delta Region, was the declaration of Amnesty Programme by Late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua. The death of the President did not bring an end to the Amnesty Programme, because Good Luck Jonathan was the Son of Niger Delta and became Nigerian's President who allowed the policy and the program to continue. The study examined the effectiveness of the 2009 Amnesty Programme in curbing out the Arms Proliferation in Niger-Delta Region which poses serious challenges to the Security of Nigeria in general. The study used secondary sources of data and created a scholarly argument on the resolution of the armed conflict in the region, with specific reference to the problems of arms proliferation.

Keywords: Security, Challenges, Arms Control, Niger-Delta, Region, Amnesty Programme.

1. Introduction:

For so many years Security Challenges and Arms Control was one of the major obstacles hindering the World, which drawn the attention of World Actors, Economic Communities of the West African States and Non-governmental Organizations to sources for measures as well as mechanisms to curbed out the trend. And Nigeria as a giant in Africa has been harmed by a series of domestic conflicts arising from the policies of the state and those of the foreign oil companies operating in the conflict-affected zone. This region for so many years produced a large amount of Oil turn but has problems of high crisis due to the negative effects of oil extraction and access to the proceeds from the oil markets.

These security challenges ranging from the problems of illegal militia armies, armed robbery, corruption and high level of poverty, economic meltdown, and environmental degradation. The issues of security in the region became very problematic, which ranged from attacks on oil installations, arms proliferation, sea piracy, vandalization of companies properties, youth restiveness, bunkering, kidnap and hostage-taking.

From the words of Okoro (2005, p.7-8) “the advent of oil exploration over four to five decades ago, the region has become the main source of revenue and foreign exchange earnings for the Nigerian Federation”. He further said that “Oil and Gas are the life wires of Nigerian income and provide 70% of the Country’s revenues and the economic importance of Nigeria lies in the oil and resources in the Niger-delta”.

Ojakorotu. (2009:32). Explained that, “One figurehead is known as Late Ken Saro-Wiwa who struggle round the clock on the issue and also succeeded in directing the attention of the international community to the problems of Niger Delta Region, by his advocacy, which helps to draw the attention of the Global Non-Governmental Organization”. According to the Amnesty International Report in the year 2009³, Ken SaroWiwa was killed with eight others of the Ogoni people by the Abacha Military regime in Nigeria. The executions alerted the World to understand the several effects and harm this oil industry has on human beings, on health and environmental Ken SaroWiwa was one of the leaders in Ogoni community of Rivers State and he played very important role in situation of the region preparing proposal of the community, which includes the following; lack of portable drinking water, electricity, job opportunities and also both the oil companies and Government should clean up their environment and pay the affected communities compensation and others benefits due to them.

International Crisis Group, (ICG 2006)⁴ argued that “the high level of poverty, crime, and corruption are the main factor which caused a militant threat to Nigeria’s Security and Niger Delta Region entirely because it is the Government's eyes”. Niger Delta Communities forwarded they complain to the Federal Government in regard to their problems peacefully, while they failed them, which cause people of the area to resists and carry arms and engage in terrorist activities. They believed that these would help to bring government, by all means, closer to their people and solve their plight.

Although, when Government called for the settlement of the issues, they completely change the request to base on a reworked revenue allocation formula to considered oil communities with large shares of oil revenue, and to resource control, that is, the right of communities to own oil wealth while paying rent and royalty to the State. In the general terms peace is a panacea for sustainable development in any society, but in the Niger Delta Region, where there are large number of small arms and where peace and security are eventually absent, that was the rationale behind the 2009 Amnesty Programmes as one of the measure as well as mechanism for arms control in Country.

Abati. (2008:5). Examine that, “to handle the ugly situation of the Niger-Delta Regime you must take into cognisant the past administration attempt to bring lasting solution to the problems, the past Government set up the Niger Delta Technical Committee, which was mandated to collect and review all previous reports and recommendations on ways of resolving the conflict”. Therefore, the presidential committee on Amnesty and Disarmament on militants in the Niger Delta was signed to design a programme to disarmed, demobilized, rehabilitate and integrate the agitators. “On the 25th June, 2009⁶, the President Proclamation of Amnesty was declared, so that the militants in the Niger-Delta to accept dialogue rather than confrontation in resolving their agitation to bring peace and harmony, because the Amnesty Programme will cease to exist on 4th October 2009, in respect to section175 of the Constitution. In the amnesty document the then Government of Yar’adua, pinpointed the shortcomings of the past Governments to intervene and resolve the problems of the Region amicably”.

(abid:25) “Government realized the threat to peace, security, order, good governance and the Nigerian economy by militant of the region. The amnesty policy is to engaged the youth of the Region for the meaningful developmental programme by involving them in economic activities so that they will be self-reliance and productive, in order to take up their hands and hand over all the equipment, weapons, arms, and ammunition, to the committee on exact time”.

‘Hinshaw, (2012:14) “In 2011, Nigeria’s oil Company, Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC) commenced paying MujahidDokuboAsari \$9 million, by his bank account to pay his 4000 former foot soldiers or group boys to protect the pipelines they had damage in the past. NNPC also agreed on a \$22.9 million one year contract with Government ‘Tompolo’ Ekpemupolo to protect and maintain pipelines that his boys used to attack. They also gave \$3.8 million yearly shares to generals Ebikabowe, ‘boy loaf’ victor Ben and Ateke Tom, to have their men protect Delta pipelines they used to attack”.

(ibid, p.23). “Three years after the proclamation of amnesty in the Niger Delta Region, violence has dropped completely and crude oil production has risen back to 2.6 million barrels per day. But the amnesty is beginning to attract obnoxious comments from the oil industry watchers and conflicts analysts. The amnesty has been described as a gilded pacification campaign, which Nigerian Government regards as a success story”.

(ibid, p.26) “The Niger Delta conflicts is just a pause. The challenges are to move from pause to stop”. Chris, (2011, p.18)¹¹ says “the amnesty process opened a door for stabilization but did not reduce the long term potential for violence or deal with root conflict issues”. (ibid, p.25)¹² “most of the graduates from the vocational study sites have yet to match with jobs, the complex development related issues have yet to be addressed, the disarmament process was not holistic, and there is a resurgence of criminal activities in the region. Godwin, (2012:4)¹³ “From early January to August 2012, the Joint Task Force (JTF) raided illegal oil bunkering sites that led to the discovery of 2700 illegal refineries in two States”. This article fills the gap in the literature, using scholarly argument regarding the effectiveness of the 2009 amnesty programme in curbing out the arms proliferation in the region.

1.1 Conceptual Analysis:

One of the major critical analytical problems in the discussion of the Niger Delta Security Dilemma and Arms Control was finding appropriate terminology to explain the situation and its perpetrators. But considering the articles, magazines, and newspapers, which helped a lot in the process of writing this paper. Like in the views of these groups, such as, (Osaghae, 1995, Suberu 1996, Adejumbi and Aderemi 2002), described the perpetrators of the crisis like a terrorist, revolutionaries, freedom fighters.

Looking at the concept of Terrorism which has no specific agreed definition, from the word of Walter Lagueur in Lizard (2008:13)¹⁴ “the use of violence, a method or means to gain a specific targets or objectives, the fundamental issue at stake is to deter away people by instilling fear and terror in their psyche, that is serious consequences and does not go down well with International Humanitarian Rules”.

The methods applied by these militants groups have to do with; the bombing of oil installations, kidnapping, hostage and vandalizing of government properties, etc. In which by these definitions above the group has the same natures of operations with the terrorist organizations across the World. From the point of Ward law cited in William (2008:173) “Political Terrorism simply can define as the use of violence by an individual or group of people, whether directly or indirectly to create fear and anxiety so that negative impact will be felt by the people or the immediate victims with the purpose of manipulating that group to accept their political request of the perpetrators”.

So here the aims and objectives of militia groups could be clearly understood as those that are demanding total control of resources on their Niger Delta communities, politically the issue was domestic in as much as it does not go across the territory of Nigeria. On the other hand, the concept of Security also has no collective agreed definition but according to Gallie cited in William (ibid: 1) “security as an essentially contested concept”. While Lasswell in William (ibid: 1) sees it “as one of the important aspects which play a vital role in deciding who gets what, when, and how in World Politics”.

Buzan and Hansen (2009:2) “security of human collectivises ‘not just states’ was affected by factors in five major sectors; Military which concerned with the interplay between the offensive and defensive Military capabilities of Nation-states, perceptions of each other’s intention. The political focus on the structure and organization of Nation-State stability, types or forms of government and their policies that give them authority and legitimacy. Economic which entails access to financial resources and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power. Societal involves the emergence of languages, culture, identity, norms, traditions, and religion. Environmental, specifically concerned with ecological and biosphere in which human being depends on their existence or survival”.

Security is a concern with alleviation of internal and external threats to cherished values, especially those which if left not tackled will be harmful in the near future. From there views the concept is a concern with justice and the provision of human rights. Here the concept has a relationship between different actors rather than a commodity. From this perspective, security in this will be negative terms that are, when it about absent of something threatening, or positive terms that are, involving phenomenon that is enabling and make things possible.

According to Buzan cited in Baldwin (1997:7)“security at the personal level also affected both National and International system, they are inter-related. He further elaborated that the security situation cannot be different at any single level”. Ullman’s opinion or perception of security cited in Baldwin (ibid: 8)²⁰ “one way of shifting toward a more detail definition of the term security is to ask what one would be ‘interested to give up’ in order to obtain more security”. He further said if one has no concept of security, one cannot know whether one is threatening with losing it or not.

1.2 Literature Review:

The paper used scholarly point of view on Security Challenges and Arms Control in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, and in light of these, John (2009:423) emphasizes that “under development and enormous economic disparity within Nigeria have been the driving factors behind the use of small and light weapons. He observed that Nigeria is the six leading oil producer in the World, only a few have benefited from these resources. Approximately seventy percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line of less than a dollar per day and 48 years is the average life expectancy”.

Osakwe (2006: 7) argued that “women suffer disproportionately from firearms violence either directly or indirectly. They suffer through displacement, molestation, and sexual violence, also becoming breadwinner at the death of husbands, lost sons, daughters and loves ones. People were killed and injured, these have a negative psychological impact, and they were traumatized particularly women and children as well as old age. These prompted the victim relatives for revenge”.

According to Heinrich (2006:11)“small arms and light weapons circulation are very dangerous and have effects on public health, human rights, social and economic development which make them primarily an issue of human security rather than of national or military security”. He further observed that Africa is one of the most affected lands by armed violence and poverty, the connection between the locally made weapons and illegal SALW caused under development which seems evidence in Africa compared to in any other regions of the World. He said, conflict and social violence, including armed crime, are the major cause of the persistence of poverty, underdevelopment and the denial of human rights which are all causes of violent armed conflict and circulation as well as demand and supply of arms and ammunition.

Muggah, (2003: 9) Explained, “the connections between misuse of weapons and violent armed conflict hinder development. He noted that half of a million people are killed through the misuse of small arms, million more are crippled. And he further elaborated that unemployment, poverty, and idleness are some of the reasons that encourage arms circulation in the black market. African Countries are currently the worst hit when it comes to the issues of armed conflict that threaten the safety and wellbeing of the people in developed and developing countries alike”.

He went further to say that, small arms circulations are highly associated with the increasing illegality criminality, forced migration, the bad conditions of investment and trade as well as the abstraction of aid delivery and assistance. Annan (2000:47) in the two thousand millennium declaration “observed that the proliferation of small arms is not only a security dilemma but also human rights violation. The proliferation of small arms, maintained, supports and aggravates armed conflicts, they put danger, agents for the maintenance of peace and humanitarian workers, they weakening the respect of international humanitarian law and they put in danger, the legitimacy of weak government and profit terrorists and organized crime syndicates”.

Jekada and Dolard (2005:30-39) highlighted that “interference with goal-directed behaviour creates frustration which in turn, leads to aggressive response usually directed against the disrepute frustrating agent and that a psychological variable, relative deprivation, is the basic precondition for political violence of any kind. The marginalization of the people can contribute to violent armed conflict in many ways”.

He further observed that in social life, context men come to value many things, includes; wealth, status, power, security, equality, freedom, the nation, etc. when they cannot achieve these values, then, it has to turn through collective violence. If the group feels that collective violence is a legitimate response to its anger, and violence is the only means to alleviate discontent, then the livelihood of violence is greater.

Fleshman and Nnoli (2001:7-9) argued that “Nigerian politics has presented an image of struggle among the various ethnic groups. They are with the belief that unless their own

men are in government position if not they would not be able to secure those socio-economic amenities that are disbursed by the government". From the point of Obi and Jonah (1991:2-7)²⁸ "that an environment of mass poverty the simple way to elbow yourselves to the front is through the seizures of states power, what it implies is that you will acquire the use of violence and arms proliferation to get yourself wealth illegally".

UNDP Human Development Report (2005) said, "Conflicts disrupts food production system and contributed to human hunger and also lead to the destruction of social facilities". The report further said it shift in the allocation of public resources towards security and military expenditure generally lead to a downsizing of the public health, educational institutions and food were also subsidized by the government. Further indicated countries affected by civil war, almost eighteen percent of its annual production was spent on military expenditures, sometimes amounting to more than health and education expenditure combined. These are the effect of small arms proliferation in the country which also leads to underdevelopment.

In the other words, Amnesty according to Gad Zama (2009:11-14) "the word borrowed from a Greek 'amnestia' which is a legal action that majorly comprises disarmament, that is, giving up of arms by ex-combatants at designated centers, demobilization which is transition conversion from militarized to civilian life, and the ex-militants were trained and became self-reliance and productive economically and financially".

Ikelegbe (2010:6) argued that "it is official forgiveness from the Government side to those that had prosecuted and pardon from punishment for certain criminal, rebel and insurgent charges in which they committed usually against the entire state". From the point of Facah, (2009:1-14)³² "Amnesty Programmes enable understanding the Government, on the other hand, militants groups for the development of the region. Despite substantial economic progress and social advancements in other parts of the country while delta dwelled on diseases, poverty, low human development and environmental degradation and this harmed the social existence of the people of the area".

(ibid:24-28)"The Government's general forgiveness renders to all persons who were being arrested for one offense or the other similar to militant activities, exhibit the possibilities of attaining peace and development in the Country. Mr. Henry Oka was released from jail which also contributed immensely to the peace in the area, and it also reducing charges against him before the court of law. While in the case of DokuboAsari was different because it was granted in the court of law. To him, only those who accepted the amnesty were many well-known generals, foot soldiers.

2. Theoretical Framework:

The paper adopted the theory of Conflict Transformation which helps us to examine the effectiveness of the Amnesty Programme in Curbing out the Security challenges and arms control in circulation in the black market. There is a different school of thought in regard

to these theories but for this paper the (Miall, 2004). the view was conceived and used to serve as a framework of this research.

The central argument and preposition in conflict transformation are that conflict requires something more than ordinary changing of location as well as identification who is the champion or otherwise in the changing process. It also considered that the natures of different people and relationships they may bring in a pattern of conflictual relationships that reach beyond the specific area of violent conflict. Miall (2004: 4) “conflict transformation is a process whereby violent has been converted to non-violent because the Laws do not support the continuations of violent conflict, interests, discourse. Also, this theory recognizes that conflicts are transformed gradually, through a different kind of little or huge changes as well as specific steps by means of which divergent power players can have a role play/participate”.

In relating this theory with the body of the paper by first of all considering how amnesty program contained a general pardon to all persons who participated either by commission or omission in violent armed conflict in the region. It was a general amnesty pardon that included forgiveness and automatic freedom from any form of prosecution what so ever. The amnesty has a time table for its existence and elapses. Within this time, an individual member of the armed groups in the region was expected to surrender his or her weapons in exchanges for a presidential pardon.

Akinwale (2010:201-207) highlighted that “There is some reintegration programme established by the Amnesty Committee which is in two parts. Part one was the rehabilitation program that lasted for ten days. The ex-militants were educated formally and informally, peacebuilding and management of conflict and its dangers or consequences. These provisions were made for counseling the psychologist of the ex-militant and give them the chance to decide what kind of vocation he or she would embark upon in the second segment of the programme in implementation. They pointed out that the period allocated to the rehabilitation programme was rather very short to make any serious impacts on people spent years as combatants”.

He further said, the second part of the reintegration programme is the skill acquisition or empowerment training for the ex-militants, which they have to decide how this combatant life will be change into civilian life for the good of the Nation. The different profession was put on the ground for them to choose, starting from Welding, Engineering, Safety Management, Carpentry and a few have indicated interest in attending higher school.

While the second segment of the policy lasted for few months and elapse. Which has to do with assistance to help the ex-militants to establish sustainable means of livelihood by providing them with easy capital and other necessary materials. This is done in connections with the Government Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, and other agencies like

the National Poverty Eradication Programme, Small and Medium Enterprises, and the National Directorate of Employment who fully participated in the activities.

On the other hand, another group of authors believed that the 2009 amnesty programme was not effective enough to curb the issues of insecurity and arms control, despite the level of success recorded in another aspect. Adeyemo and OluAdeyemi, (2010:23) argued that “the amnesty programme should be repositioned to transform the contexts, structures, actors and issues in the region. At that moment due to narrow contexts and militant centeredness of the programme, the focus was bias and limited to personal and group transformation”.

To them, this was a great mistake that will, in the long run, bring a collapse of the peace process in the region. They further suggested that for the lasting peace in the region to be a success, attention must also be paid to the transformation of contexts, political, legal, economic and ecological or environmental sphere of the area.

3. The Argument:

The argument arisen from this paper was that, in the process of examining the effectiveness of the 2009 amnesty programme in curbing out the arms proliferation in the Region. The paper considered the clashed of scholars' points of view in the ocean of knowledge, from the position of those scholars in favours of Amnesty Programme whose considered it as effective in reducing the arms proliferation in the region. According to Adaramola, (2009:10) “Recommended the amnesty programme he said without any reasonable doubt, the programme succeeded in curbing out arms proliferation in the Region and also the transformation enables some peace and tranquillity to rain in the area”.

He further emphases that, almost whole scale embrace of the amnesty by the repentant militants has been a great relief for Nigeria Security at large. Despite the fact that after amnesty still some Nigerian have opined it may not be an end to the crisis in the region. Muogbo, (2009:49) “the presidency has given the Nation Peace by reducing the arms circulation at least for now. But sustaining that peace remains the source of concern for Nigeria”.

Mato, (2009:43) highlighted that, “amnesty programme was largely a success, we are not unaware of positions expressed against the amnesty programme at its very beginning. He further says, some commentators thought that the amnesty programme was at variance with Yar’adua’s avowed due process and rule of law disposition”.

Igwe, (2010:11).“Report from the Government indicated that following the relative peace ushered in by the cease-fire as a result of the amnesty programme, the country’s oil output had increased from eight hundred thousand barrels in a day to two million three hundred thousand barrels per day, due to the tight and constant security as well as effectiveness of

the programme in the oil area”. He further analyzed how incensement of 1.5 million barrels a day indicated 120.45 million dollars of revenue to national coffers every day. Some companies also took the opportunity to repair some of their damaged oil facilities.

On the other hand, the scholars that considered the 2009 amnesty programme as failure and un- succeeded or ineffective in curbing out the arms proliferation in Niger Region. Ojo, (2009)⁴¹ believed that “the program has poor planning and further argued that, Government rushed to prevent possible disruption of the under seventeen World Cup Tournament, held in Nigeria”.

Davidheiser and Nyiayaana, (2009) said “this rush affected the implementation of the rest of the programme. Part of the reasons for the hasty planning was the pressure from foreign actors on the Nigerian Government for peace and stability in the Gulf of Guinea for the purpose of getting adequate oil in the Nation. The demobilization camps in Okrika, Aluu and Tombia, all in Rivers State and Agbarho, Delta State opened without any camping facilities”. The camps had no medical facilities, no electricity, and no portable drinking water and general living condition in the camps were grossly insufficient. One of the ex-militants died in the camp due to a lack of medical health care.

Adeyemo, (2010)emphases on how to reposition the issues like, the political context which should put into consideration, to him “political context has to do with the allocation of the percentage to the Niger Delta Region which fell to two percent, until 1999, constitutional amendment which raised it up to thirteen percent. After the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta finished their tasks, part of their recommendations was that the State should grant a general amnesty to all militant groups in the region and proceed to prosecute those rejected the offers such amnesty programme was to include disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration for militants who accept the offer”.

(EIA, 2009) “From the socio-economic perspective of the amnesty programme, these simply means, oil politics in the Gulf of Guinea”. Prominent parties in these politics include the United States, France, China, India, and Brazil. For example in 2005 44 percent of Nigeria’s oil exportation was to the United State, 25 percent to European Union, 7 percent to Brazil, 11 percent to India and 4 percent to South Africa”.

Ibeanu and Momoh, (2008) “The strategic role and interest of the United State in the Gulf of Guinea, a zone in which France and Chinese equally have an interest, it is seen like the systematic interplay of oil politics which has necessitated the need for more security in the region”.

Ianaccone, (2007) “such measure of arms proliferation in the Niger Delta Region was for economic purpose, in other to ensure a consistent oil flow from the Gulf, provided that the crises are not persisted in the area. The United State consider Nigeria as a pivotal state in maintaining security in the Gulf of Guinea and a better way to start was to ensure

measure control of these small arms to enable domestic security. So the pressure to ensure such security mounted on Nigeria Government who played a vital role in the conceptualization and implementation of the amnesty programme”.

From the issues of environmental context, Obi (2009:100) observed that “extraction of oil involves the findings and removal of hydrocarbons by drilling deep into the earth. This is a major aspect of transforming natural resources such as oil and gas into energy fuels. In the process of this interaction between man and his environment, lots of environmental problems are generated, which include; oil spillages, gas flaring, water contamination, trees poisoning, atmospheric pollution, to mention but few”. But all these factors amnesty programme committee did not consider it; they only take the side of militants whereby the other members of the communities were excluded.

From the legal perspective, Moro (2009) “emphases that examine various law in Nigeria would help to sustain structural violence in the Niger Delta Region. These laws actually helped to stop escalating the crisis as they were an instrument of oppression”.

4. Conclusion:

From the foregoing argument majority of scholar considered the amnesty programme in curbing out arms proliferation in Niger Delta Region as unsuccessful and ineffective enough to solve the primary objective, due to the reasons they forwarded and said beyond amnesty, the underlying social-political economic, as well as environmental problems, affected militancy in the Niger delta needs to be addressed, as these left without remedies, it became very doubtful if amnesty alone could bring durable peace to the volatile region. The introduction of amnesty must be backed up by socio-economic and socio-political development in the entire region. Amnesty alone will only bring temporary peace to the region sooner or later, new and more dangerous groups may emerge in the region if nothing is done to adequately tackle the problem of the Region.

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