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**Analysing the Paradigm Shift in the Nigerian Government's approach to the Niger-Delta Crisis (2009-2021)**

**BY**

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A mini-dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Security Studies in the Department of Political Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria.

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## **Declaration**

I, Tony Onazi Oche declare that this mini-dissertation titled “Analysing the Paradigm Shift in the Nigerian Government’s approach to the Niger-Delta Crisis (2009-2021)” is my work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university. All citations, references, and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Security Studies in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

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**Prof. Christopher Isike**  
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## **Dedication**

This mini-dissertation is dedicated to the resilient people of the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, especially the Comrades who stood firm to advance the cause of their region through strategic and non-violent protest. And also to government officials who stood on the side of the people in their struggle for a better life.

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## **Abbreviations**

Presidential Amnesty Program (P.A.P)

United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP)

Petroleum Industry Act 2021 (The Act)

Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration (DDR)

Nigerian National Petroleum Commission (NNPC)

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, as amended (CFRN)

Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)

the Ogoni Bills of Rights (OBOR)

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## **Abstract**

This study analyses the Niger-Delta security crisis from the prism of the Nigerian Government's approach to the crisis from 2009-2021. It leverages a qualitative research methodology and the human security framework to find and argue that the Federal Government of Nigeria, given the introduction of the Presidential Amnesty Program (P.A.P) for ex-agitators in 2009, has changed its notion of security from a statist paradigm (of the pre-2009 period) to a human security paradigm. Furthermore, it aligns the amnesty program with other human security initiatives implemented by the government in the region, which the extant literature is yet to recognise. While the study acknowledges the paradigm shift in terms of the Federal Government's peacebuilding approach in the Niger-Delta region, it argues that the conspicuous exclusion of non-violent agitators from the process hampers the prospect of achieving sustainable peace in the region. The study recommends an inclusive peacebuilding strategy to engender co-created peace between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Niger-Delta region.

**Keywords:** Environmental Security, Human Security, Niger-Delta, Peacebuilding, Securitisation

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

The crisis in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria over the last four decades has received increased scholarly attention. A notable scholarly perspective connects the Niger-Delta conflict to two incompatible notions of security, upheld by key stakeholders in the region (the government and host communities) (Uzodike & Isike 2009:104). According to them, the Nigerian State, on the one hand, pursued a statist security agenda at the initial stages of the crisis to protect its oil interests, while the Niger-Delta people, on the other hand, held that oil exploration in their region polluted the environment and thus made them vulnerable to environmental and economic decline.

The above explanations became profound from the controversial murder trial of Ken Saro-wiwa and eight of his comrades in 1995 (Gaughran 2009:4). This incident spurred a widespread notion that the Nigerian Government eliminated Ken Saro-wiwa to restrain the region from civil disobedience. The treatment of the activists was locally and internationally regarded as an onslaught on the human rights movement considering they were advocates for the environmental and economic emancipation of the Ogoni nation (Senewo 2015:667). This incident aggravated the Niger-Delta security crisis and provoked the proliferation of militant groups in the larger Niger-Delta region (Omadjohwoefe 2011: 253).

Although, the Nigerian state transitioned from a military regime to democratic rule in 1999, however, the succeeding democratic administration, would appear to have retained the militaristic approach of previous governments to the crisis. This perception is due to how the Nigerian Government reacted to civil protests and criminalities in the Niger-Delta region at the time. For example, at the immediate onset of democracy in 1999, the Nigerian Army raided the Odi community purportedly to retaliate against the killing of police officers by criminal elements in the community (Omeje 2004:432). Rather than embarking on a proper investigation, the Army attacked the entire village causing the deaths of people and the destruction of properties. This incident among others swayed community members to begin to sympathise with militant groups.

With the emergence of militant groups, the crisis took a new dimension (Ogbonnaya 2020:1). The dichotomy between criminal elements and genuine freedom fighters became unclear. Several militant groups used the genuine struggle of the people to pursue their inordinate interests. However, despite this development, a considerable number of non-violent citizens in the region continued to suffer from abject poverty and environmental devastation. This situation appears to have created a dilemma for the government given that it became increasingly challenging to differentiate between genuine activists and self-serving militants. As a result, the government saw the need to set in motion a human security agenda to address the trigger factors of the crisis, while it combats criminality in the region.

Overall, while the first democratic administration following democratisation in 1999, took a statist approach to the crisis, there was a change to the human security approach, by the successive administration of 2007. This paradigmatic shift was implemented in 2009, following the introduction of the Presidential Amnesty Program (P.A.P) for ex-agitators. The program gave the government the legitimacy it needed to confront criminal elements in the region and to improve local communities' conditions. Since the launch of the program, it has received significant scholarly attention, yet not many scholars have acknowledged the program as part of a new security paradigm, held by the government. Also, not many studies have looked at the P.A.P. in consonance with other human security policies of the Nigerian Government. Therefore, this study undertakes a holistic analysis of the new paradigm, associated policy interventions, and its gains and challenges from 2009 to 2021.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Early scholarly publications link the Niger-Delta crisis to state security. The initial Nigerian Government's response to the crisis which Obi (1997:1) describes as the "statist notion of Nigerian security" seems to have shaped scholars' statist perspective of the crisis. However, the Presidential Amnesty Program, which the government implemented in 2009, marks the beginning of a paradigmatic shift towards a human security understanding of the crisis. This development supports the views of Sampson (2008), and Uzodike & Isike (2009) who contend that the dissonance between the state and human security conceptions held by the two main belligerents is central to the crisis.

However, the literature has since the inception of the amnesty program depicted it as the *alpha and omega* of the Nigerian Government's peacebuilding process in the Niger-Delta region. This perspective has some conceptual flaws for two reasons. Firstly, it decouples

other policies aligned with the human security paradigm from the peacebuilding process, which makes it difficult to comprehend governmental interventions in the region. Secondly, the initiative was a palliative (Enu & Ugwu 2011: 258) intended to kick-start a comprehensive peacebuilding process and not a *fait accompli* (Enu & Ugwu 2011: 258).

This study views the above lacuna as a literature problem and therefore undertakes a holistic analysis of the new peacebuilding paradigm in the Niger-Delta region to fill the gap in the literature. In addition, it addresses additional interventions that have a connection with the new paradigm.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

- i. To examine the Nigerian Government's approach to the Niger-Delta crisis (2009-2021).
- ii. To assess how successive administrations have adapted their predecessors' strategies to tackle the Niger-Delta crisis in the above period.
- iii. To recommend effective ways of restoring positive peace to the Niger-Delta region.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What has been the Nigerian Government's approach to the Niger-Delta crisis from 2009 to August 2021?
2. How have successive regimes adapted their predecessors' strategies to address the crisis within the above period?
3. What effective programs could be deployed to restore positive peace to the region?

### **1.5 Research Methodology**

The study conducts its analysis using a qualitative research methodology. It relies on secondary data, sourced from policy documents, scholarly publications, and reports published by reputable organisations to analyse the nature of the security and political relationship between the Nigerian state and the Niger-Delta people. It uses the content analysis technique to analyse the government's approach to the Niger-Delta security crisis from 2009 to August 2021 and its implication for positive peace in the region. It also leverages the human security framework to construe meanings and make conclusions.

### **1.5.1 Data collection**

This study collated data from secondary sources such as scholarly publications, government policy documents, publications by reputable organizations, video documentaries, and media publications. It then analysed the data using the content analysis method to examine the shifting paradigm in the Niger-Delta security crisis. The study focused on the remarkable changes that the amnesty program ignited and its influence on the government's security strategy in the region.

### **1.5.2 Research Design**

According to Akhtar (2016:68), a research design is a blueprint within which a study conducts its research. Zikmund et al (2014:21) view research design as "a master plan that specifies the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the needed information; it is a framework for the research plan of action."

This study analyses the change in the Nigerian Government's basic assumptions in the Niger-Delta security crisis and how it has influenced the peacebuilding process in the region. It uses the qualitative content analysis method and as such made knowledge claims after it settled the literature review. Where it draws inferences about the government's security policy and concept since 2009, as well as how the security paradigm shift impacts the crisis.

The study leverages the human security framework as an analytical tool. Hence, it views issues in the crisis from a human-centred perspective. This design helps the study to distinguish between the two contrasting paradigms. Since scholars popularly agree in the literature that the Nigerian State before the amnesty regime pursued a state-centric security agenda which is in contrast with the human security paradigm.

### **1.5.3 Data Analysis**

Researchers typically analyse secondary data according to their interpretation of it. Even though a theoretical framework determines such analysis, it is primarily unnaturalistic because the researcher does not directly collect it. Secondary data is frequently "re-analyzed," but a study may also use "supplementary analysis, amplified analysis, or assorted analysis" to interpret its findings (Gray 2014:584). As a result, this study re-analyses data and, where necessary, it uses supplementary or amplified analysis.

Since the study utilises a content analysis research method, it segments pertinent data and then links them to one another (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997 cited in Jackson et al 2007:24). Given this context of use, the study integrates analysis into codes and segments and expressed them in numbers and written expressions. According to White and Marsh (2006:39), a content analysis approach directs the researcher to answer the study questions, while allowing room for new items to emerge during coding. Despite the freedom that content analysis provides, this study focuses on the research questions that it distilled after the literature review.

## **1.6 Justification and significance of the study**

This study focuses on the Niger-Delta security crisis to provide practical insights into how neglect of human security can prolong a conflict. The case study of the Niger-Delta supports the thesis that some threats may be beyond traditional security, and it is in the interest of States to recognise and appropriately conceptualise threats, as well as to respond to them according to their uniqueness. In contrast to the classification of all threats under national security.

The Niger-Delta region has been demanding better treatment from the Nigerian State before it became independent in 1960. In some instances, youths have taken violent measures to embark on demonstrations, as evidenced by the rise of militant groups in the region since the 1990s. Because of these dynamics, the Niger-Delta crisis is a suitable case study to examine the importance of appropriate threat conceptualisation and the government's response to security crises.

In addition, while the study emphasises the importance of human security in restoring peace to the Niger-Delta, it also points out a void in the existing literature on the crisis. After reviewing the literature, the failure to recognise the change in the government's approach to peacebuilding in the region underlines the need for further research. Primarily, this body of work highlights the Nigerian Government's change in security thinking in its pursuit of peace in the Niger-Delta. It also emphasizes the importance of not reducing the human security paradigm to the presidential amnesty initiative.

The study employs a qualitative content analysis methodology which entails the review of literature, policy documents, media publications, and other sources to make scholarly inferences. By so doing, the study can review themes that are relevant to the crisis. Finally, it is worth noting that the current literature on the Niger-Delta crisis does not formally

acknowledge the human security paradigm. Scholars appear to have focused significantly on the P.A.P. As a result, they have not yet acknowledged the interventions that fall within the scope of the human security paradigm. This gap justifies the need for this study, which connects the government's different human security interventions.

## **1.7 Chapter Outline**

The chapters in the study are arranged in the following manner:

Chapter one provides the background to the study, highlighting the research problem, the objectives, the methodology it leverages to resolve the research questions, and finally the significance of the study.

Chapter two encompasses the literature review and theoretical framework. The former reviews the extant scholarship on the Niger-Delta crisis, while the latter provides the explanatory framework for analysis.

Chapter three analyses the approach of the Nigerian Government to the Niger-Delta crisis before 2009.

Chapter Four discusses the paradigm shift in the Nigerian Government's approach to the Niger-Delta crisis from 2009- August 2021.

Chapter five concludes the study and makes recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter of the study examines several themes that run through the literature on the Niger Delta crisis, and it is divided into two sections. The first section examines the literature on the Nigerian Government's response to the Niger-Delta conflict from 2009 to 2021. The second section features the theoretical framework adopted by the study. It focuses on the human security framework and also reviews the literature on related concepts like positive peace, securitization, and environmental peace.

The narrative that the Niger-Delta conflict has persisted because of human insecurity in the region is the justification for framing the analysis around human security. The study explains other relevant theories that enhance the understanding of the theoretical lens employed in the analysis for clarity and conceptual depth.

#### 2.2 Perspectives on the Nigerian Government's approach to the Niger-Delta Crisis (2009-2021)

The literature on the peacebuilding process in the Niger-Delta region, in the last decade, has focused significantly on the P.A.P, introduced by the Yar'Adua administration in 2009. According to President Yar'Adua, the government established the initiative to bring lasting peace and "sustainable development" to the region (Yar'adua 2009). As discussed in the paragraphs below, the two successive administrations after the Yar'Adua administration "President Jonathan (2011-2015) and Buhari (2015 till date)" have initiated policies to further the agenda of the P.A.P and outside its scope.

The Yar'Adua administration adopted a non-militaristic stance on the Niger-Delta crisis from its inception. Although it is best known for establishing the P.A.P., the administration also implemented other programs aimed at alleviating the factors contributing to the crisis. For example, in September 2008, it established the Ministry of Niger-Delta Affairs to give the region the necessary political attention (Ajayi & Adesote 2013: 515).

Ex-agitators also received empowerment packages and specialised training under the amnesty program's Demobilization and Disarmament phases. The government enrolled a total number of 20, 182 former agitators in the program's second and third phases (demobilization and



reintegration) (Francis, LaPin, and Rossiasco 2011: 17). Agba, Okpa, and Ogar (2020) note that the training in special courses such as scaffolding, deep-sea welding, and pipeline welding, enabled ex-agitators to earn decent livelihood after the amnesty program. They maintain that the program recorded relative success considering there was a decline in militant activities.

The Jonathan administration (2011-2015) introduced the post-amnesty program with an estimated budget of US\$188m and mandated multinational companies in the region to provide the funds for the program (Ajayi and Adesote 2013: 516). Through the training, 19,567 ex-agitators were engaged in reintegration and non-violence programs by mid-2011. About 1019 ex-agitators also received training abroad in different fields of endeavors. Companies in the region also employed three thousand ex-agitators within this period (Francis, LaPin, and Rossiasio 2011:17). From these figures, the study argues that the Jonathan administration seems to have achieved remarkable success in empowerment.

It is important to note that the president during this regime hails from one of the Niger-Delta states (Bayelsa). Therefore, the region previously described as politically marginalised (Quaker-Dokubo 2000) felt a sense of belonging. This was another factor that could have engendered reconciliation between the Nigerian State and the region. However, the Jonathan administration, despite being led by a President from the region, could not resolve the environmental crisis that continues to exacerbate the crisis in the region. Although the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP 2011) released a report revealing the menace of oil pollution in the region in 2011, the Nigerian Government did not commit resources to address the findings of the report until 2016.

Unlike its predecessors, the Buhari administration was unwilling to continue with the amnesty program. In addition, it also announced the withdrawal of pipeline surveillance contracts allocated to ex-agitators on 15 June 2015. Adibe et al (2018: 352) describe this initiative as a good move. However, this development coupled with the proposed termination of the amnesty program reawakened militant activities. In response, the government deployed 3 000 military personnel to the region (Ajodo-Adebanjoko 2017:20). However, after considering the economic effect renewed militant activities would pose, the Federal Government retracted its earlier strategies and extended the amnesty program by two years (Mustapha & Ayodele 2016: 42).

The Buhari administration seems to have identified the environmental crisis in the region as an impediment to the peacebuilding programs. Thus, it initiated environmental programs in the post-amnesty period which can be viewed as an effort to ameliorate oil pollution in the Niger-Delta region. The Ogoni Clean-up project, for example, was launched in 2016 to clean up polluted fields in the Ogoni community. The project was one of the recommendations of the United Nations Environmental Program report (2011). The report projects that the clean-up exercise in the Ogoni community will take 25-30 years and will cost \$ 1 billion (Jaja & Obuah 2018:107). In addition to remediation programs, the administration has passed the Petroleum Industry Act (2021) which clearly sets out to proffer a sustainable solution to oil pollution in the region. The Act provides for an environmental remediation fund for “the rehabilitation or management of environmental pollution arising from the operations of licenses and leases” (Odude 2021).

Despite the above initiatives of the Nigerian Government to resolve issues in the Niger-Delta region, scholars appear to be divided on the impact of extant initiatives. For example, while Agba, Okpa, and Ogar (2020), acknowledge the impact of the amnesty program, in contrast, Oyewole, Adegboye, and Durosinmi (2018:72) argue that the achievements of the program were not sustainable, given that environmental degradation, corruption, and unemployment which exacerbate criminal and anti-state activities were not properly addressed. Meanwhile, Ojeleye (2011:142) argues that the program could not achieve significant impact because the Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration program that followed the amnesty program was ineffective. Overall, a cursory view of extant analyses projects perceived marginalisation in the Nigerian State as the main grievance of the Niger-Delta people. Hence, agitators who believed that the program lack a sustainable model to address the marginalisation of the Niger-Delta region also rejected the program (Ojione 2010:1).

It is clear that the P.A.P. has some shortcomings, however, this study finds it essential to acknowledge the paradigm shift it has introduced in the peacebuilding process, and how it has influenced the strategy of the government onward. Perhaps, this perspective may enhance a holistic understanding of the peacebuilding effort of the Nigerian Government.

### **2.3 Human Security Crisis in The Niger-Delta Region**

Scholars popularly argue that the Niger-Delta security crisis erupted because of human insecurity (Uzodike & Isike 2009, Osah & Iyanda 2016, Akhakpe 2012), primarily due to decades of oil pollution, corruption, and economic marginalisation of the region. Since pre-

independent Nigeria, the Niger-Delta people have been demanding a people-centred approach to human security threats in the region. However, the responses of the government and oil companies in the Niger-Delta region in most cases, have been significantly inadequate. The following paragraphs highlight environmental pollution and economic marginalisation and their ripple effect in the Niger-Delta region.

### **2.3.1 Environmental Pollution**

Over the last 60 years, Environmental pollution has plagued the Niger-Delta region. The ecosystem and livelihood of host communities have suffered as a result of this condition. According to a study conducted by the UNEP (2011), cleaning up polluted areas in the Ogoni region in the Niger-Delta region will take 25 to 30 years. This finding measures the extent of the region's environmental degradation.

Although militant operations have played a crucial role in recent oil spills, malfunctioning oil facilities were the cause of the earliest oil spills in the region. It is important to note that oil companies constructed facilities and crisscrossed pipes across the region. As a result, accidents that occur in the course of oil mining and transportation pollute water bodies and farmlands.

One of the most devastating oil spills in the region occurred in January 1980. the Texaco (Funtwa-5) oil well belonging to Texaco Overseas Petroleum Company of Nigeria (TOPCON) blew up discharging over 400, 000 barrels of crude oil into the environment (Aghalino & Eyinla 2009:178). The flow of oil from the well went unattended for about twelve days due to the unavailability of a qualified clean-up company. The incident polluted water bodies and affected farmlands in Sangama, Kuluma-1, Kuluma-2, and Otuo Island communities. The Texaco (Funtwa-5) incident is one of several occurrences of oil pollution in the region.

According to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (2013), there were approximately 1629 oil spillage occurrences in the region between 1998 and 2007. According to the survey, theft and vandalism accounted for 59.7% of oil spills in the region during that period, while human mistakes or machine failures accounted for 40.3 percent. Meanwhile, there were around 510 oil spill occurrences between 2008 and 2010 (Amnesty International 2011). Oil spillage during this period, according to Agbonifo (2016:28), substantially impacts the livelihood and health of the Niger-Delta residents.

The Santa Barbara oil field blowout is yet another disastrous oil pollution incident in the region of Bayelsa state. According to Oyadongha (2021), Oil continued to flow from the blow-out for 35 days before the company could arrange to stop it. In sum, the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA 2021) reported over 387 cases of oil spills in 2021. The report attributed a substantial number of the incessant spills to sabotage.

Gas flaring in addition to oil spills contributes to the environmental and health hazards in the Niger-Delta region. Although the Nigerian Government commits to ending gas flaring by 2020 (World Bank 2017), oil companies flared about 1252.26 trillion cubic feet between 2017 and 2020 (NNPC 2020). This irreconcilable difference between the reality and the promised informs Ojewale's (2021) description of Nigeria's ambition to end gas flaring as "hot air." Meaning that the country has not yet put the necessary mechanism in place to reach the said goal.

Even though, the Nigerian Government regulates the petroleum industry through legislation, the fines imposed by extant laws are inadequate to dissuade oil mining corporations from flaring gas or running facilities without pipeline surveillance systems. Furthermore, laws like the Gas Re-injection Act of 1979 encourage gas flaring with the minister of petroleum resources' permission (Agbonifo 2016: 21). However, the recent Petroleum Industry Act of 2021 (Hereinafter referred to as the Act), provides more stringent prohibition of environmental pollution.

Given the prevailing circumstances, for many years residents of the Niger-Delta region have had limited survival options, due to oil pollution which makes the soil unsuitable for agricultural enterprises. Also, the oil pollution in the region makes the air poisonous, endangering the health of children and adults alike. Indeed, the region's status as one of the world's most resource-rich areas has not yet improved the lives of its people.

### **2.3.2 Economic Marginalisation**

A part of the scholarship views the Niger-Delta crisis from the economy of war perspective (Ikelegbe 2005). While this argument should not be entirely disregarded, it seems to undermine the asymmetry of parties (the Federal Government and the Niger-Delta people) involved in the crisis. Thus, instead of resource conflict, the study contends that the focus should be on economic marginalisation which has been the foundation of the grievances of activists and interest groups in the region.

The existing legislation has steadily exacerbated the complexity of the relationship between the Federal Government and the Niger-Delta region. The Land Use Act (1978) and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as amended (hereinafter referred to as the CFRN), vest land ownership and resources in the Federal Government. Such that the Federal Government decides the revenue that accrues to each state. Although, Section 162(2) of the CFRN allocates a 13 percent derivation fund to oil-producing Communities (The Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999: Sec. 162(2)). The fund, however, has not yet achieved the desired results due to corrupt practices in State Governments where the monies are allocated.

Even though Nigeria extracts the bulk of its foreign exchange value from the crude oil deposit in the Niger-Delta region (Bodo and Gimah 2020: 161, Uzodike and Isike 2009), the region continues to decry economic marginalisation. One of the earliest agitations, led by Isaac Borro in 1956, was partly on the ground of the economic marginalisation of the region. Similarly, the Ogoni Bill of Rights (1990) listed economic control of crude oil resources as part of their demands.

But scholars hold contrasting viewpoints on the economic underpinnings of the Niger-Delta security crisis. Ikelegbe (2005: 209) contends that, while economic reasons are not the roots of the crisis, it has become a sustaining factor. He further argues that extremists have hijacked the Niger-Delta conflict to plunder Nigeria's oil reserves. Using the greed and grievance theory, Tonwe, Ojo, and Aghedo (2011:62) assert that from the late 1970s onwards, militants' greed and pursuit of inordinate interest were total departures from the environmentalism that was the hallmark of the Niger-Delta struggle. Obi (2009:106) while alluding to the rise of militancy in the new economy of conflict phase, note that the crisis is rooted in the persistent economic and political marginalisation of the Niger-Delta people.

From the above reviews, scholars seem to agree that the crisis metamorphosed from a struggle to a resource conflict. However, Ikelegbe (2005:208) does not align with the argument that economic marginalisation was one of the causes of the conflict. He argues thus: "Decades of oil exploitation, environmental degradation, and state neglect has created an impoverished, marginalized and exploited citizenry which after more than two decades produced a resistance of which the youth has been a vanguard." The study contends that the perceived economic marginalisation of the region in the Nigerian State happened simultaneously with environmental pollution and State neglect. Additionally, the economy of war arguments is simplistic. Given that it focuses significantly on the roles and experiences

of the government and militants while ignoring community members who suffer environmental devastation and poverty in the region.

### **2.3.3 The Implication of Environmental Pollution and Economic Marginalisation of the Niger-Delta Region**

Environmental pollution and economic marginalisation are two factors that exacerbate the human security crisis in the Niger-Delta region. This is because the people engaged in fishing and agriculture prior to crude oil exploration. However, there has been a steady decline in these endeavours due to crude oil exploration, which renders farmlands and water bodies vulnerable to pollution. This condition adversely impacts the livelihoods and economic opportunities of the people. In addition to these conditions, the laws of Nigeria vest all the proceeds of oil resources in the Federal Government leaving the region to wallow in misery in the midst of plenty. In protest, there have been a series of demonstrations to alert the government to honour its social contract. Ironically, the government seemed to have prioritised the economic viability of the region over human welfare. This condition seems to have boosted youths' involvement in militancy, oil bunkering, and illegal oil refinery; as a protest, a means of survival, and to participate in the gold rush on their land.

The emergence of militant groups and illegal refineries exacerbates the pollution in the region. Although blame trading occurs between the oil corporations and host communities whenever there is an oil spill, Bodo and Gimah (2020:161) argue that all stakeholders including communities, agitators, the government, and oil mining companies should jointly bear responsibility. In contrast, Amnesty International (2009) names the government and the corporations in the region as parties responsible for ensuring environmental security.

Although, Oluwaniyi (2010:317) and Ukeje (2001:347) cite oil corporations' hesitation to hire young people as part of the region's grievances. Such arguments are limited by the reality on the ground. Given that direct employment cannot practically make a meaningful economic impact without environmental restoration. To shed further light on the realities on the ground, oil companies' workforce was estimated to be around 19, 820 in 2020 (Okafor 2020), while the region's unemployed population was estimated to be around 8, 138, 646 in the same year (National Bureau of Statistics 2021). Given these statistics, even if all oil businesses in the region accept only Niger-Delta youths in their workforce, the impact would be insignificant considering the region's high unemployment rate. As a result, the government needs to restore the environment to diversify the region's sources of livelihood. This

condition informs the United Nations Development Program (2006:17) recommendation for environmental restoration to create non-oil opportunities for host communities.

Despite democratization in 1999 which was expected to yield development dividends both in the region and across Nigeria, the standard of living in the Niger-Delta has been on a steady decline due to environmental threats and economic hardship. According to the United Nations Development Program (2006), the region's average life expectancy was 46.8 years in 2000. However, it has declined to 41 years in 2021 (Nwaoku 2022).

Given this evidence, it is clear that the region's economic marginalisation and environmental pollution impact human security. Also, armed resistance contributes to environmental damage and the desecration of host communities' legitimate struggles.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

This section of the study discusses human security as a framework for analysing and explaining the response of the Nigerian Government to the security crisis in the Niger-Delta region. It focuses on the environmental security component of human security considering that it triggers other factors to become present in the Niger-Delta crisis. In addition, this section of the study examines the literature on securitisation, positive peace, and environmental peace in the context of the Niger-Delta crisis.

### **2.4.1 Human Security**

Human security is a normative and non-traditional concept of security that encompasses the protection of people from both physical and psychological risks or threats (Tadjbakhsh & Chinony 2007:3). This definition, however, does not fully provide a clear direction for security policy analysis (Paris 2001:88). Despite the vagueness of the concept, it continues to gain increasing traction in global affairs due to the surge of intra-state conflict in the post-cold war era which is often instigated by human insecurity.

However, the aim here is not to entertain the argument for and against the analytical utility of the “human security concept” but to briefly explain its meaning and how it relates to understanding security and insecurity in the Niger-Delta region, and how the government is responding to the crisis within that framework. The concept became popular following a United Nations Development Program report released in 1994. The report defines human security as protection from “hunger, disease, repression, and disruptions in the pattern of daily life” (UNDP 1994:23). It further contends that to achieve human security a state has to

attain a certain level of security in seven dimensions or elements of human well-being which include economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. In essence, as shown in Table 1, it focuses on people as the referent object of security.

Table 1: The 7 elements of the human security paradigm

<b>Dimensions/elements</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Community security</b>	Protection of cultural and religious values, and social cohesion.
<b>Economic security</b>	Employment, basic income, access to a social safety net, education and vocational training, and protection against unemployment.
<b>Environmental security</b>	Access to water, freedom from environmental despoliation.
<b>Food security</b>	Access to basic food, quality of nutrition, share of household budget for food.
<b>Health security</b>	Access to healthcare systems and quality of care, access to safe and affordable family planning, prevention of HIV and AIDS, poor hygiene, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and general well-being
<b>Personal security</b>	Safety from violent crime, all forms of physical abuse, rape, and gender based violence based on sexual orientation
<b>Political security</b>	Civic participation, protection of human, women, and girl's rights

Source: Isike and Owusu-Ampomah (2017:3181)

#### 2.4.2 The Environment and National Security Nexus

The desirable approach to environmental issues has always been contentious. While Matthews (1989), Allenby (2000), and Ullman (1983) argue that national security should be widened to accommodate emerging issues such as environmental threats, conversely, Baldwin (1997), and Deudney (1990) contend that such a perspective will create conceptual ambiguity. However, Buzan et al (1998:76) attempt to resolve this theoretical jam by linking environmental threats to securitisation and dissecting the “scientific” and “political” agenda in dealing with environmental threats. The former, championed by scientists and environmental activists, advocates for the securitisation of environmental issues, in contrast, the latter argues for a political solution whereby states place environmental issues in the



realm of normal politics. The political agenda recognises the environment and human enterprise as referent objects of security.

Following the introduction of the human security theory in the post-Cold War era, a group of scholars has advanced arguments for a human-centric approach to environmental issues. Lonergan (2000:81) contends that a human security approach should be central to addressing environmental degradation. Considering that environmental security is among the factors that have a direct impact on human wellbeing (Brauch 2005:3), Elliott (2015:11) argues that a state-centric approach to environmental threats adversely affects human freedom and dignity. Elsewhere Brauch (2008:47) while conceptual issues relating to ‘environmental security and human security,’ argues further that a non-military approach is suitable for dealing with environmental insecurities.

Indeed, the impact of environmental threats on human wellbeing, especially in developing countries gives potency to the arguments that recommend a human security approach. Several scholars agree that environmental insecurity alters human security (Barnett 2007:7, Brklacich, Chazan, and Hans-Georg Bohle 2010:25). This perspective is relevant to the Niger-Delta crisis due to the Nigerian Government’s inadequate response to environmental pollution which threatens sustainable livelihood.

In most developing oil-producing countries, environmental safety standards are often significantly influenced by multinational companies. This is prevalent in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria; where oil pollutions are often poorly managed and defaulting companies are made to pay friendly penalties (Bello & Moses 2020:11). Although oil companies carry out corporate social responsibilities, it is usually insufficient to ameliorate the damage of oil pollution (Griffiths 2005:222). Therefore, this study finds it imperative to incorporate environmental interventions in analysing the Nigerian Government’s peacebuilding effort in the Niger-Delta region. Since the environment features prominently in the Niger-Delta crisis.

#### **2.4.3 Securitisation**

The Copenhagen School of International Relations coined the term "securitisation" as a conceptual panacea to the conflictual arguments on the meaning of security. Starting from Wolfers (1952:5-7) who described security as an ambiguous concept in his thesis ‘Security: as an ambiguous Symbol’, it has remained an essentially contested concept since then. According to him, scholars can view security either objectively or subjectively. The former being “a measurement of the absence of threat to acquired values and the latter an absence of

fear that such values will be attacked.” This description of security suggests that it has no universally accepted definition.

However, two prominent schools of thought within the broader critical security studies school have presented arguments on the meaning of security. The wideners (Mathews 1995, Allenby 2000, Ullman 1983) argue that the traditional understanding of security does not cover the ground. In essence, some threats to human life and state stability are beyond the scope of military aggression. Therefore, states should widen the scope of security to tackle such threats. In contrast, traditional security proponents, such as (Baldwin 1997, Deudney 1990) argue that such a perspective creates an endless list of items that states would have to consider as part of security. To resolve this argument, Waever (1993) contends that the widening of security scope without addressing its core still envelopes emerging threats in the realm of defence and the state. He further argues that matters become security issues by speech act which he termed “securitisation.” This entails state-representative placing issues under security to justify the use of extreme measures in addressing them. The concept creates the risk of elites pursuing their selfish interest under the guise of national interest.

Therefore, state actors achieve securitisation by three main steps: 1) proving there is a referent object to be protected 2) that the referent object is under existential threat and 3) convincing the citizens of the state that there is a need to use extraordinary means to protect the referent object. Elsewhere, Buzan et al (1998:6) expand Waever’s (1993) argument by asserting that instead of widening security; there should be a clear distinction between more specific security issues (military-related) and political ones (other threats) which may be difficult to measure.

Securitisation, in conclusion, involves the use of speech acts to convince citizens of a state that a referent object is endangered and that the state needs to employ extraordinary means to protect itself from an existential threat. In the Niger-Delta region, the Nigerian Government treated peaceful protests organised at the early stage of the crisis to demand economic and environmental justice (political issues) as threats to national security. However, rather than deter dissent, the perennial clampdown on protesters led to the rise of militancy in the region.

#### **2.4.4 Positive Peace**

In general, policymakers and citizens regard peace as the absence of violence. This definition, however, does not explain the meaning of positive peace which is the direct opposite of negative peace. Although the given definition of peace is vague, it indicates that a good

understanding of violence can uncover the pellucid meaning of peace. Galtung (1969:168) was one of the earliest scholars to uphold this reasoning. To him, the meaning of peace is intrinsically dependent on the definition of violence. He proceeded to define violence as “the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual.” Therefore, any occurrence that limits human beings from reaching their potential amounts to violence. He further contends that violence occurs either in physical or structural form. Given that an actor commits physical violence, unlike structural violence that does not involve a physical actor. Having settled the meaning of violence, he proceeded to define positive peace to mean the absence of structural violence, which engenders lasting peace (Galtung 1969:186, Shields 2017: 6).

Scholars agree with Galtung’s thesis on the meaning of peace, however, Hansen (2016:212) in his “Holistic Peace,” argues that Galtung’s classification of peace into positive and negative peace is limiting. In his opinion, peace should be grouped into “peace within” (inner peace), “peace between” (relational peace), and “peace among” (structural/environmental peace). He argues further, that instead of defining peace from the standpoint of “violence” which glorifies the villain, scholars should study “harm” that is a victim-centred.

Alger (1989:119) argues that the absence of peace is not war but peacelessness. Therefore, his understanding of peace expands the positive peace concept. Given that, the mere absence of peace does not necessarily mean a state is at war; rather peace has been depleted in a way that could be physical violence or mental violence.

#### **2.4.5 Environmental peace**

The study has established a nexus between the Niger-Delta security crisis and human security. Therefore, it is important to discuss environmental peace which is a desirable outcome for the peacebuilding agenda in the Niger-Delta. It is increasingly challenging to achieve positive peace where structural violence propels a conflict. Structural violence occurs when there is an imbalance in power and resource distribution in a society (Galtung 1969:171). In such conditions, even though, conflicting parties may shield their swords after peacemaking efforts, violence can reoccur if the trigger factors are still present.

In the realm of environmental-peace literature, a body of work argues that environmental scarcity and environmental change can induce conflict (Homer-Dixon 1994; Percival and Homer-Dixon 1998). Although this thought is contested by Hauge & Ellingsen (1998) and Hagmann (2005), environmental scarcity has proven to exacerbate conflict. In contrast to the argument for and against the environmental-conflict nexus, another scholarship with a more

transformative perspective argues that States can leverage environmental cooperation for peace building “through cooperation and institutionalised peace” instead of the view that the environment can induce conflict (Ide 2017: 10;Ide et al 2021).

Given the centrality of the concept to the Niger-Delta crisis, this part of the study shall discuss the three stages of environmental peace, which include, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding although the study places emphasis on peacemaking and peace building.

#### **a. Environmental Peacemaking and Peacekeeping**

This study shall first define peacemaking before delving into the environmental peacemaking discussion. Autesserre (2011:1) defines the term as the process of bringing parties in a conflict to an agreement through peaceful means. In this phase of a conflict, the peacebuilding body introduces peace to the parties as an alternative to force, often through mediation, conciliation, or arbitration producing either a peace agreement or cease fire agreement. Usually, through peacemaking, parties create relative peace to be maintained.

Environmental peacemaking, however, introduces environmental consciousness to peacemaking. Delbako (2006:1) defines the term as “a mechanism that utilizes cooperative efforts to manage environmental resources as a way to transform insecurities and create more peaceful relations between parties in dispute.” To Mische and Harris (2008:4) Boutros-Ghali’s (1992:11) definition of peacemaking as being an “action to bring hostile parties to agreement by peaceful means” can be adapted to understand environmental peacemaking. They further argue that environmental peacebuilding generally entails mainstreaming eco-justice and promoting its advancement to resolve conflicts.

From the above definitions, the study describes environmental peacemaking as a phase whereby conflicting parties bend backward for each other using environment-driven solutions to reach a peace agreement. Thus, this phase avails parties of the opportunity to listen to each other’s position and find ways to resolve resource distribution, environmental practices, and political issues.

Peacekeeping on the other hand denotes the deployment of armed personnel to prevent the resumption of large-scale violence after parties have signed a peace agreement (Brutus Ghali 1992). In the environmental peace process, the peacebuilding organisation may deploy non-governmental organizations working around sustainability and the environment to make an on-ground analysis of the problem and also create room for community participation in

resolving resource or pollution conflicts. For example, the United Nations Environmental Program (2011) conducted research into the Ogoni land pollution which provided the Nigerian Government with the necessary information to embark on the Ogoni clean-up project.

Applying the environmental peace-making and peacekeeping concepts to this study, this paper argues that the Presidential Amnesty Program was a peace-making initiative. However, activities such as military clampdown on militants after the amnesty program, pipeline surveillance exercises, and pollution assessment studies all fall under peacekeeping.

### **b. Environmental Peacebuilding**

The peacemaking phase in a conflict often results in the signing of a peace agreement. However, to achieve positive peace, a state or an intergovernmental organisation can institutionalise a peacebuilding mechanism to solidify the gains achieved in the peacemaking phase. Autesserre (2011:1) defines peacebuilding as the “actions taken to strengthen and solidify peace.” It seeks to achieve sustainable peace by institutionalising fair treatment of marginalised groups. Therefore, the peacebuilding body designs action points and programs to correct the issues that instigated the conflict in the first instance.

The above meaning of peacebuilding can be adapted to understand environmental peacebuilding. Dresse et al (2019:104) define the term as the process that turns environmental challenges shared by parties to a violent conflict into opportunities to build lasting cooperation and peace. Ide et al (2021:2) define environmental peacebuilding to comprise the multiple approaches and pathways by which the state or peacebuilding body integrates the management of environmental issues into the peacebuilding process to ensure conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and recovery. To Krampe et al (2021:2), environmental peacebuilding is the “sustainable management of natural resources before, during, or after conflict, emphasizing the potential for environmental governance—especially cooperative governance between conflict actors—to support peace and stability.” According to Mische & Harris (2008:4-6), the term can be taken to mean a mechanism that leverages the understanding of eco-justice and promotes its advancement to prevent a recurrence of violence and to sustain peaceful relationships among and between different sectors of society at local, national, and regional levels.

Environmental peacebuilding literature began to gain attention around 1992 following Boutros-Ghali’s report on peacebuilding (1992:16). Part of the report recommended

demining as a means of creating room for sustainable peace. Since then, the scholarship has witnessed tremendous development. Although Dresse et al (2019: 99) expresses skepticism that the concept lacks an empirical base, Conca and Dabelko (2002:4) identify the environment as a window for cooperation rather than conflict as viewed by the environmental conflict-nexus scholars. Thus, the study views the environmental peace literature as a transformative turn. This is because the environmental peace thesis deviates from focusing on the negative outcomes of environmental degradation and resource scarcity, but rather centres attention on the role the environment can play to engender sustainable peace.

To provide theoretical depth for the scholarship, Dresse et al (2019:105-107), postulate “three building blocks” for implementing the environmental peacebuilding process. According to them, there is an initial condition that includes biophysical, socio-political, and natural resources. These conditions function as triggers of peace that peacebuilding organisations can use to the advantage of peacebuilding process. Secondly, peacebuilding teams must identify the mechanism through which parties resolve issues bothering shared environmental challenges prior to the peacebuilding phase. Lastly, policymakers and peacebuilding organisations should consider the actual and expected outcomes that propel conflicting parties to seek environmental cooperation as a peacebuilding option. These building blocks help peacebuilding committees to execute an effective process.

Although the bulk of the environmental peace literature focuses on water issues that do not fit into the context of this study. However, Ide’s (2017:6-8) work provides an insight into the role of the theory in achieving sustainable peace in a resource-instigated conflict such as the one in the Niger-Delta region. He argues that states can manage common resources or wealth in an eco-friendly sustainable manner to ameliorate violence exacerbated by indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources that lead to the destruction of ecosystems and livelihoods. Additionally, States can build cooperation with dissenting groups through community participation and the payment of damages. While the payment of damages is essential, it is, however, grossly inadequate in sustaining peace. Especially where environmental degradation and pollution impact sustainable livelihoods. A good practice would be to combine payment of damages with sustainable management of environmental resources and equitable distribution of resources amongst relevant parties.

#### 2.4.6 Conclusion

This Chapter of the study reviewed the literature on the Niger-Delta security crisis and the theoretical framework that it uses for analysis. It also introduces the problem in the literature that the study seeks to resolve. The lacuna is significantly around the non-recognition of the new security paradigm that has emerged following the amnesty program.

Although one can argue that the government has continued to mobilise troops to the region to protect oil facilities just as it did in the pre-amnesty period, the difference, however, in the new paradigm is that government can now profile militants as criminals. Considering that the amnesty program availed militants a grace period to quit alleged criminalities for sustainable livelihood. Since the establishment of the amnesty program, scholars have attempted to assess its successes and failures, however, before such arguments can become useful, the new paradigm has to be acknowledged.

Having reviewed the literature on the crisis, the chapter also highlighted the human security framework and concepts that support the claims of the study. It argues that to achieve positive peace in the Niger-Delta region, the government must ensure environmental security and the politicisation of human security issues.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE APPROACH OF THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE PRE-AMNESTY ERA**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This section of the study focuses on the Nigerian Government's response to the crisis under study prior to the amnesty program. It examines the excessive force employed by the Nigerian state in an attempt to quell agitations in the oil-rich Niger-Delta region before the amnesty era, which has had a significant impact on all spheres of security in the region. Indeed, relying on military measures to address human security issues could have unintended negative consequences. This appears to be the case with the Niger-Delta crisis, where both state and human security have been on a steady decline. In the study, "militarisation" means the extent to which a state uses military institutions and practices to resolve conflicts (Schofield 2007).

The Nigerian Government's pre-amnesty response to the Niger-Delta security crisis has been the subject of extensive research. Scholars who have written on the crisis argue that successive governments had applied militaristic measures to manage the crises in the pre-amnesty era (Ajodo-Adebanjoko 2017; Uzodike & Isike 2009). In their opinion, alternative means of conflict resolution mechanisms could have been more effective than military solutions, which have proven to be counterproductive. Even though the government had relied on militarisation of the region in the pre-amnesty period in search of peace for petro-business, it is essential to note that it has in some circumstances employed non-military interventions to address developmental issues. But the stick and carrot approach often had an insignificant impact because of the lack of political will and corruption. As a result, the people of the region have frequently accused the state of giving lip service to the human security issues in the region, amidst increased environmental pollution and a lack of basic infrastructure. The statist security perception of the government agenda in this period informs Omeje's (2004:425) argument that the state has prioritised oil interests over the well-being of the people, which has triggered violent and non-violent agitations.

While some analysts blame the government's negligence of human security for the crisis' persistence, others argue that the transition of the youth vanguard into armed groups has



created a war economy scenario in which militant groups and the federal government contest for control of oil resources. Indeed, the war economy argument is cogent, but the region's increasing human insecurity despite its rich resources has proven to be the prominent factor exacerbating the crisis. It is in this context of government hegemonic disposition that the youths have resolved to balance state power by forming militant groups.

Given the changing nature of the crisis, researchers frequently employ a variety of theoretical lenses to make analysis. They have prominently used the deprivation and war economy perspectives to discuss the crisis and the government's response in the pre-amnesty period. To Idemudia and Ite (2006:392), the existence of contrasting arguments on the causes and exacerbating factors of the crisis implies that a scholarly work could fuse the deprivation and the economy of conflict viewpoints to study the crisis. Therefore, since the crisis's drivers are multifaceted, there is a need for an integrated explanation. The integrated analysis provides considerable insight into the crisis drivers. However, they acknowledge the clash of the statist security paradigm and the human security perspective, as applied in this study, as the most suitable explanation that has been offered to enhance the understanding of the crisis.

It is indeed compelling from evidence to mainstream the human security framework because of its currency in the crisis. This underscores why this part focuses on themes that enable the study to examine the government's response to the agitations prior to the amnesty program. This method of analysis provides a framework for comparing the previous paradigm, when the government pursued a "state-centric" approach to the crisis, to the current paradigm, in which the government appears to have embraced a human security approach, which the study examines in the next chapter.

To achieve the above objective, this chapter of the study focuses on key issues to contextualise the pre-amnesty period. The first section discusses the evolution of civic movements in the Niger-Delta region. The second section examines how the state dealt with criminality throughout this period. The third and fourth sections which come before the conclusion, discuss environmental policy during the pre-amnesty era, as well as militant groups' emergence and their impact on the crisis.

### 3.2 The Evolution of Civic Movements in the Niger-Delta Region

The Niger-Delta crisis is notorious for being one of the most protracted conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Olusegun (2012:97) qualifies the agitation in the region to be as old as the Nigerian state. As a result, to understand the evolution of the crisis, it is essential to understudy the events that transpired in the pre-amnesty period. Therefore, this section categorises the crisis into phases according to the events that occurred in the pre-amnesty period.

The existing scholarship has traced the genesis of the crisis to pre-independent Nigeria. During the era, the region, that is known today as the Niger-Delta, was one of the minority groups that protested marginalisation at the hands of majority ethnic groups. Their concern seems valid considering the political parties that were in the vanguard of decolonisation throughout the colonial era, as Izuagie (2015:206) contends, formed their ideologies on a regional and ethnic basis. The solidarity that appears to exist at the time was mainly motivated by the agenda to break free from British rule. This political structure was a source of concern to Minority groups. As a result, the Niger-Delta region joined voices with other minority groups to agitate for their rights to be protected just before independence. They considered State creation as a panacea to minority groups' political marginalisation. This core interest, was, therefore, captured in the memoranda submitted by prominent Ijo elites to the Willinks Commission (Enemugwem 2009:166). Their petition sought to address “domination, victimization, neglect, geological, communication problems, population, and manpower” as well as to establish “the financial viability of the Delta for the proposed Rivers State.”

To allay minority concerns, the British government established the Sir Henry Willink Commission on 23 November 1957 to determine petitions. After hearing interested parties, the Commission concluded in its report that the establishment of new states was not a realistic solution to prevent minority groups from suffering marginalisation in the Nigerian State. It is important to note that the famous oil discovery at Oliobiri, Bayelsa State of the Niger-Delta, occurred during this period, in 1958 (Idemudia and Ite 2006:391). Therefore, the region might have foreseen the marginalisation that would befall them despite their rich resource potential.

The Commission, however, jettisoned the agitation for state creation but recommended a centralised policing system and the inclusion of a bill of rights in the Independence Constitution to protect minority groups. While the Commission's recommendation was unsatisfactory to minority groups, it did shelve agitations until independence. In addition, it influenced the Tafawa Balewa government to form the Niger Delta Development Board in 1961. Even though, the board could not make a significant impact due to the sequence of military coups that occurred during the period and the eventual outbreak of the civil war in 1967 (Olusegun 2012:100).

The second phase of the crisis emerged shortly after independence when Major Isaac Ajaka Borro led the Niger-Delta Volunteer Force to demand the secession of the region from Nigeria. Perhaps, because it only lasted for twelve days, the movement has earned the moniker "the twelve days revolution." The agenda of the agitation, according to the movement's leader, was to liberate the Niger-Delta region from political marginalisation in the Eastern region. Below is an excerpt from his speech (Siollun 2008):

*"Today is a great day, not only in your lives, but also in the history of the Niger Delta. Perhaps, it will be the greatest day for a very long time. This is not because we are going to bring the heavens down, but because we are going to demonstrate to the world what and how we feel about oppression..."*

Omotola (2009:134) contends that despite the movement's failure to achieve its sole aim of secession, it nonetheless laid the foundation for civic movements in the area. More so, it gained political traction given that the Nigerian Government exploited the situation to form an informal alliance with the region to contain secession movements in the Eastern region during and after the civil war. But according to Idumedia and Ite (2009:394), the government granted the state creation demand of the region with the intention to open up opportunities for political participation in the region. Whatever the reason for the creation of new states may have been, it has been proven, over the years, that rather than reducing marginalisation, it has transferred majority tribe domination from the old Eastern region to the Federal level, where top positions are manned by people from majority ethnicities, until 2007 when Goodluck Jonathan emerged from the Niger-delta region as vice president.

The militarisation regime is the third phase of the crisis, in which the government used excessive force to suppress ethnic nationalism and environmental activism in the region. As

synonymous with military regimes, the Nigerian state, in this phase of the crisis, wielded near-absolute power, which it employed to subdue dissenting citizens. The Niger-Delta people's demands in the 1980s and 1990s even though centred on environmental resuscitation and economic emancipation, yet the government treated it as a threat to national security. As Osaghae et al (2011) have stated, repressive regimes are only capable of suppressing the voices of marginalised people, but they are frequently found deficient in terms of development. This is often a recipe for disaster since oppressed people often resort to extreme measures to counterbalance oppressive regimes. This is where the war economy and the greed scholarships have a flaw in their arguments. The reason is that their theories ignore the structural violence that victims suffer at the hands of repressive regimes. Their focus on the State to some degree undermines the plight of marginalised people.

The third phase of the crisis witnessed two notable self-determination nationalist movements: the Ogoni People's Movement (1990) and the Kaiama Declaration by Ijaw youths (1998). Although these initiatives were similar to the "12 days Revolution" the MOSOP and Kaiama Declarations had their agenda narrowed to a charter of demand. Furthermore, the self-determination and resource control sought by the aforementioned groups to govern their natural resources for the region's emancipation had greater clarity and purpose. This period, interestingly, coincides with national resentment due to the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections, which were thought to be the most transparent in the history of Nigeria. On the other hand, the people viewed the military regime as repressive and Nigeria as a failing state. Thus, there was a spate of civic movements in the Nigerian State during this period. In addition to the popular movements, elders and notable people in the region established ideological groups to amplify the advocacy for the region's emancipation. Although they did not gain as much traction as MOSOP, they were critical in providing intellectual and moral support for the region's cause.

The foremost environmentalist and playwright, Ken Saro wiwa led the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). The organisation in collaboration with other groups such as the National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP), the Ethnic Minority Rights Organization of Africa (EMIROAF), and leaders from the Ogoni community, drafted the famous "Ogoni Bills of Rights" of 1990 and presented it as the demand of the community to the government. The quest for self-determination was central to the Ogoni Bill of Rights.

The MOSOP movement and the Kaiama Declaration in contrast to the government's perception were not secessionist movements (Osaghae et al 2011). The former (self-determination) is a desire by a region or group to manage its resources and determine its political destiny, whereas the latter (secession) is a movement that demands a permanent separation from the current state to form a new entity (Bereketeab 2012:2).

Given the notion of the movements, the momentum of the MOSOP created a severe security dilemma for the government. It became conscious of the danger the movement portends for the regime. As a result, when some Ogoni chiefs were murdered by unidentified youths for allegedly betraying the cause. Instead of investigating the incident and putting suspects through a fair trial, the Abacha regime held Ken Saro Wiwa and other co-agitators responsible, summarily tried, and executed them. In the military era, the Head of State usually constitutes tribunals and panels to hear matters in the place of a regular court. As one would imagine, dictators often design such quasi-institutions to issue justice at the pleasure of the military Head of State.

The execution of Ken Sarowiwa increased the popularity of the movement and the Ogoni Bills of Rights (OBOR) in international fora (Omotola 2009:134). Ogoni leaders used the OBOR to bring the Ogoni nation's plight to the attention of the United Nations Human Rights Sub-Committee on the Prevention of Discrimination Against and Protection of Minorities, as well as the African Human Rights Commission, the tenth session of the Working Group on Indigenous Population in Geneva in 1992, and the General Assembly of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization in The Hague in 1993. (Omotola 2009:135).

In addition to the international traction that the execution of Ken SaroWiwa gave the struggle, it also seems to have conveyed a message to the youths that peaceful protests would not advance the cause of the region. This was one of the high points of the crisis that turned the movement into armed resistance.

The fourth phase emerged when the crisis degenerated into armed militancy. This phase coincides with the period in which Nigeria transitioned from military dictatorship to democratic rule. The political shift that occurred at the time resulted in a significant increase in youth participation in politics and elections. This also had its downside, given that youths mostly played the role of political bouncers. Hence, there was an upsurge in arms

proliferation within this period. The monies realised from thuggery were invested into funding militant activities.

According to Omotola (2009:137) the Egbesu Boys, Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) were the earliest militant groups to declare war on the Nigeria State. Since their emergence, other groups have joined them in what they claim to be a struggle for their region. Despite the unscrupulous methods like kidnap and oil bunkering used by militants to pursue the Niger-Delta cause, they have received considerable support from host communities. This may have been due to the perception that the government securitised non-violent civic movements in the region and has flagrantly refused to develop the region

The armed conflict in the oil-rich region has been of immense sabotage to the Nigerian State. According to Premium Times (2013), the country lost ₦ 190 billion between January and March 2013 to oil theft. Militant groups sustain their activities with funds generated through oil theft and ransom paid in exchange for kidnapped hostages. Although the groups claim to primarily target State oil interests and aim at attracting the government's attention to the infrastructural deficit of the region, such activities have also contributed to the oil pollution in the region.

The armed conflict between the State and militants took a different dimension in 2007. There was a change in the basic security approach of the government from a militaristic paradigm to a human security approach. This could have been influenced by the economic loss as a result of militant activities coupled with the emergence of President Musa Yar'Adua's Vice President (Goodluck Jonathan) from the Niger-Delta region. Therefore, after preliminary consultation, the Musa Yar'Adua administration established an amnesty program in 2007 for agitators to lay down their arms and accept state amnesty.

The amnesty program has slightly changed the relationship between the Federal government and the region. In contrast to earlier phases of the crisis in which the government securitised agitations in the region, the government has leveraged the human security approach in the amnesty era. Although introduced in 2007, it has ignited a change in thinking that has influenced successive administrations to explore non-military solutions in quelling the crisis. However, despite the strategic gains of the program, it has come under criticism for not extending the intervention to non-violent agitators. Indeed this concern is valid, but the

process of positive peacebuilding is a continuous process. Therefore, the state can initiate policies to consolidate the gains of the program and to make improvements where necessary. Essentially, even though the non-inclusion of non-violent groups is one of the shortcomings of the program, the program is remarkable for ushering in a new security paradigm.

### 3.3 Securitisation of Civic Movements in the Niger-Delta Region

Scholars seem to agree that the Nigerian Government securitised non-violent agitations in the Niger-Delta region in the pre-amnesty period. While the government claimed that it targeted military operations in communities at exterminating militants, it appears from the evidence reproduced in this study that the Nigerian Government applied excessive force to intimidate citizens from demanding their basic rights. For example, one of the earliest and most destructive acts of government repression happened in the Umuechem community in October 1990. Security forces brutalised youths protesting for "the provision of electricity, water, roads, and other compensation for oil pollution of crops and water supplies" resulting in the deaths of eight unarmed protesters and the destruction of 495 houses by the "operating force Action" at the command of the Rivers State Police Commissioner (Uzodike & Isike 2009:110). Since then, there have been a series of clampdowns of government forces on unarmed protesters. The table below, sourced from a different study, lists instances of government repressive use of force in the region.

Table 2 Militarisation of the Niger Delta, 1990–2006

Date	Place	Operating force	Outcome
October 1990	Umuechem	Umuechem Security Protection Unit	Killed 80 unarmed demonstrators and destroyed 495 houses
1993	Umuechem		Razed houses and destroyed properties
1999	Odi	Army and mobile police	Razed the entire community as every house and properties worth millions of naira were burnt down

January 2004	Uwheru	Operation Restore Hope	Killed 20 persons and burnt down 11 houses
July 2004	Egbema	Operation Restore Hope Joint Security Task Force	Used gunboats, military helicopters and bombs to destroy 13 communities and razed a total of 500 buildings. 200 persons, mostly women and children, are feared dead or missing
August 2004	Olugbobiri and Ikebiri	State security operatives	Operatives killed 16 youths for agitating for a better deal from multinational oil corporations
October 2005	Odioma	Joint Security Task Force	Joint Security Operatives Killed 77 persons, including youths

Source: Uzodike & Isike (2009:110).

To explain the rationale for the predominant government repression in the region during the pre-amnesty period, scholars have advanced views through a range of interconnected perspectives. A brief examination reveals the possibility of an integrated explanation or a link between existing analyses. This study examines the arguments of scholars and attempts to connect them to decipher the rationale behind the government securitisation of human security agitations in the region.

One of the profound arguments that scholars have leveraged to explain the rationale for the region's militarisation is the "rentier state" scholarship. One of the earliest researchers to work on the concept, Beblawi (1987:384), contends that in a rentier state, the security of oil revenue determines other government policies. Furthermore, he describes a "rentier state" as one that obtains revenue from resources deposited in a small region but distributes and uses it for the benefit of the entire state, a process that often benefits few elites. Omeje (2006:212)



describes Nigeria as a rentier state in which hegemonic elites use state apparatus for self-interest but have ignored the Niger-Delta region's demands.

Uzodike and Isike (2009:110) view the crises in the era under study through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's hegemony and counter-hegemony theory. They argue that the Federal Government's hegemonic tendencies and dominance strategy have resulted in the rise of militant groups. The militaristic approach of the Nigerian Government to subjugate citizens to the whim and caprices of the state as they note is rarely effective means of resolving conflicts. In most cases, as we have seen with the Niger-Delta crisis, State repression compels citizens to form a counter-hegemonic force to balance state power.

In addition to the "rentier state" and hegemony theses, Ikelegbe (2005) explores the crisis from the standpoint of the economy of war theory. The advent of militant groups, they claim, has generated a struggle for oil resources between the state and militant groups. Obi (2009:108), on the other hand, contends that the economy of war evolved as a result of the government's response to the crisis.

A cursory glance at the aforementioned arguments on the securitisation of the crisis reveals that the nature of the state (rentier) fostered the urge to safeguard the petro-business in the region by any means necessary. As a direct consequence, the prevailing hegemony of the State instigated a counter-hegemonic force in the form of armed resistance. It is also worth noting that as the crisis lingered, issues began to emerge that give credibility to a variety of interconnected scholarly perspectives on the government's response to the crisis prior to the amnesty period. However, regardless of their theoretical approaches, researchers appear to agree on the clash of two opposed security paradigms held by the state and the region.

Finally, petrol states, such as Nigeria, are often more inclined to security approaches that prioritise oil rents over citizens' well-being. To pursue this objective, repressive states often interpret a sizable number of nonviolent movements as an existential threat to petro-business often presented as "national security." In contrast to the statist notion of security held by petro-states and elites, the average citizens have in such circumstances remained unwavering in the demand for environmental security, economic prosperity, and political inclusion. Thus conflicts in petrol states are almost inevitable given the usual collision of these two security paradigms created by opposing interests (Ibeanu 2000:26, Uzodike & Isike 2009). The use of disproportionate force to intimidate activists in the Niger-Delta region, such as during the

MOSOP movement, and the effect lends credence to this viewpoint. The response of the government propelled youths to counter-balance government forces with an armed division of the struggle, leading to one of the most protracted security crises in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **3.4 Militant Groups and the attendant effect of their Activities on the Niger-Delta Region**

The early 2000s saw the emergence of militant groups, which turned the Niger-Delta struggle into an armed conflict. This development was a direct result of the state's hegemonic response to the region's instability. In addition to the core issue of state repression, other factors such as party politics, spiritual cultism, unemployment, and greed are also part of the motivating factors of militancy in the region (Osaghae et al 2011).

One of the events that triggered militancy was the 1998 jailbreak at the Bayelsa Government House. Enraged youths engaged the military in a gun battle to liberate their leader, Timi Kaiser Ogoriba, president of the Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality in the Niger Delta (MOSIEND). The first attempt resulted in the deaths of several young people, but the second operation, which occurred in the evening of the same day, was successful (Osaghae et al 2011:12). The Niger-Delta people attributed the success of the operation to the Egbesu deity, whom they believed to have rendered the youths and their commanders impervious to military gunshot (Ebienfa 2011:639). Although the use of Egbesu Shrine fortification charms has been frequently reported as a booster for youths to become fearless of bullet penetration, such claims have not been scientifically substantiated. However, it instilled confidence in the Niger-Delta youths to resist the Nigerian military.

In addition to the Egbesu power, Niger-Delta youths got an increased awareness of the marginalisation of their region when they visited Abuja to participate in the "Youths Earnestly Ask for Abacha" program, which was designed by the then military dictator, General Sani Abacha, to prepare the ground for his transmutation from military to civilian head of state. Thus, a feeling of relative deprivation became one of the factors that triggered youths to form armed resistant groups. The Abuja visit made them realise that the government has used the revenue generated in their region to develop other parts of the country while they were languishing in poverty and underdevelopment.

The region's arms resistance began in an unorganized fashion. However, following a significant military presence in Rivers State around 2003, Mujahid Dokubo-Asari and Ateke Tom formed the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Niger Delta

Vigilantes (NDV) respectively. Other groups include "Egbesu Boys of Africa, Niger-delta Peoples Volunteer Force, Federated Niger-delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), Niger-delta Vigilante (NDV), and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-delta (MEND)" (Osaghae et al 2011:21).

In the course of profiling the various militant groups, Ebienna (2011:641) notes that the various factions were driven by diverse objectives. For example, while he describes Government Ekpemopolu (General Tompolo), Ebikabowei Victor Ben (Boyloaf), and Alex Preye as "freedom fighters," he argues that Asari Dokubo and Ateke Tom used the conflict to develop a political and illegal business enterprise. While this argument could have some merit, it is important to highlight that militant groups' operations and agendas were always changing. It is difficult to tell when they were fighting for a worthy cause or their interest. Moreover, some members of these groups came from campus and street cults, which are known to always pursue nefarious agendas.

Militancy has had a massive impact on both state and human security. Since its emergence in the early 2000s, there has been a series of pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering, illegal refinery, and hostage-taking. Although, a higher percentage of respondents in a perception study conducted by Osaghae et al (2011:56) view militants as freedom fighters, their activities have contributed to the environmental pollution of the region. The table below shows that from 1998 to 2007 a substantial number of oil spills were caused by sabotage (NNPC 2013 cited in Agbonifo 2016:28).

Table 3. Causes of oil spills in the Niger-Delta from 1998- 2007.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Equipment Failure</b>	<b>Human Error</b>	<b>Sabotage/Theft</b>	<b>Total</b>
1998	28	12	65	105
1999	19	28	55	102
2000	34	39	40	113
2001	46	15	64	125

2002	39	20	67	126
2003	41	53	63	157
2004	38	32	96	166
2005	49	27	127	203
2006	37	39	187	263
2007	31	29	209	269
Percentage	22.2%	18.1%	59.7%	100 %

Source: NNPC (2013) cited in Agbonifo (2016:28).

The increasing environmental degradation as a result of militant activities has contributed to the decline in livelihood options in the region. This could be unintended but militant activities directly affect the people whom the militants claim to be advancing their cause. In addition to the environmental effect, the proliferation of weapons and militant groups in the region has also impacted the lifestyle of young people and their overall security. On the other hand, the destruction of oil facilities has come at a huge cost to the Nigerian State. For instance, according to The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NIETI), Nigeria lost about \$42 billion to crude theft between 2009 and 2018 (Okafor 2019). This development has indirectly compelled the government to change its approach to the crisis. The study regards such influence as the only gain of the armed resistance although it is counterproductive.

### **3.5 Content Analysis of the Government's Approach to the Niger-Delta Crisis in the Pre-Amnesty Period**

This chapter of the study examines the events that preceded the Amnesty era through linked theoretical lenses. The extant analyses here show that the political history of Nigeria, the nature of the state, as well as the government's approach to the crisis in the Niger-Delta region collectively are responsible for the protracted crisis. Notably, military heads of state ruled Nigeria in the period under study, as such the governments of the era interpreted civil disobedience of any sort as a ploy to overthrow the regime. Although Nigeria transitioned, from military dictatorship to democracy in 1999, a former military dictator headed the first

democratic government. Therefore, the study argues that the leaders in the pre-amnesty period were inclined to the traditional meaning of security. This is in line with Schofield's (2007) argument that militarisation often occurs when the leaders in larger numbers or of a greater influence fancy a military solution.

In addition, the rentier nature of the Nigerian state makes the government panic at every agitation from the region. This is usual with petro-states because they are often quick to securitise even non-military threats, especially when they have proximity to oil facilities. The method of repressive regimes is to classify issues outside the scope of traditional security as a "threat to national security." This creates justification to use military force to silence dissenting voices. But securitisation, as evident in the Niger-Delta case study, is often an inappropriate solution to human security issues. Therefore, the outcome is usually to graduate agitations into security crises.

The relative deprivation theory explains how the government's actions provoked the Niger-Delta people to revolt. According to the theory's proponents (Gurr 2015:13, Saleh 2013), Relative Deprivation is the disparity between what a certain group anticipates and what the state offers such groups in comparison to other groups. This often results in political violence. The concept correlates with the Niger-Delta crisis given that the people of the region had thought that the discovery of crude oil would eventually lead to development. Contrary to their expectations, oil exploration has resulted in the militarisation of the region and environmental pollution. Such relative deprivation of social, political, economic, and religious rights as Saleh (2013) has noted, can make a group revolt against the government.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This section of the study looked at the Nigerian Government's approach to pre-amnesty agitations in the region under consideration. According to analysts, the government prioritised militarisation of the region to cow the Niger-Delta people into quiet to create a favourable environment for petro-business. This created the boost for nonviolent agitators to evolve into armed groups to fight the military.

The first section studied the evolution of agitations in the region from the pre-amnesty era to the apex of the crisis to centralize the analyses. The second section examined the views of scholars who have used distinct but related lenses to understand the rationale behind the

government's inclination to securitise agitations. Meanwhile, the third section analysed the data and arguments that have explained the reason for the region's escalating crisis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE APPROACH OF THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE POST-AMNESTY ERA**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The Nigerian Government has built its peacebuilding agenda in the Niger-Delta region, over the last two decades, around the four proposals of the Niger Delta Technical Committee, which the Yar'Adua administration established on September 8, 2008. The Committee's mandate was to study past events and proffer solutions to the Niger-Delta crisis. To fulfil this responsibility, it made the following four recommendations to the Federal Government: "a DDR commission to address Niger Delta militants; amnesty negotiations for Niger Delta militants willing to participate in the DDR programme; strengthened independent regulation of oil pollution; an effective environmental impact assessment (EIA) process; and the elimination of gas flares by December 2008" (Oluwaniyi 2011).

Notably, the Committee targeted its recommendations at improving the economic and environmental conditions of the region. The government has also shown considerable commitment towards the implementation of the proposed recommendations, even though, the agenda to end gas flaring has proven challenging. Following this trajectory, the study argues that the government has gradually turned away from the militaristic approach of the past and toward a human security paradigm. Nonetheless, scholars have given little or no attention to the amnesty initiative's paradigmatic significance. Quite a number of them have concentrated on the inadequacies of the DDR program. Even though this narrative has improved our understanding of the crisis, it dilutes the influence of the amnesty initiative on the shortcomings of the DDR program. Therefore, to correct this conceptual problem, the chapter analyses the two concepts (Amnesty Initiative and DDR) separately to determine their limitations and impact.

More so, the study classifies projects that the government has designed to combat environmental degradation under the human security paradigm. This viewpoint fills the void in the existing literature, which confines the region's peacebuilding initiatives to the amnesty program. The government's statist approach, which has limited the crisis to gun violence, could have shaped the existing perspective. However, in light of the new security thinking,

the chapter analyses environmental initiatives as part of the government's peacebuilding agenda.

Based on the above analysis, the first section of this chapter examines the amnesty initiative and the DDR program, concentrating on their achievements, challenges, and overall impact. The second section examines the new paradigm's environmental-peace nexus. The concluding section looks at how the human security paradigm varies from the state security paradigm. The conclusion summarises the themes discussed in this section.

## **4.2 The Presidential Amnesty Program**

This section of the study analyses the amnesty initiative and the DDR program in two sub-sections. The first examines the presidential amnesty program and the impact it has recorded. Meanwhile, in the second sub-section, the study analyses the DDR phases and their lapses. However, before proceeding with further analysis, the study addresses the dichotomy between "amnesty" and "pardon." Given that analysts often use the two words interchangeably, despite having different connotations. In addition, this section gives a little background to the Nigerian Government's amnesty program in the Niger-Delta region.

Ntoubandi (2007:9) has traced the origin of amnesty as a term to the Greek word "amnestia," which means "forgetfulness." One of the goals of the process is usually to return an "alleged offender's" status to a condition of "tabula rasa," which denotes a clean slate. Along with this reasoning, he defines amnesty as "an act of forgiveness usually granted by a government to persons that have committed a treasonable felony or other offences against the state." Meanwhile, he defined pardon as "the executive action that mitigates or sets aside punishment for a crime" According to this viewpoint, the Niger-Delta initiative was an amnesty initiative because a court of law has not convicted the militants of the crimes the government accused them of committing.

In 2009, the Musa Yar'Adua administration introduced the concept of amnesty into the Niger-Delta crisis lexicon. When it absolved militants of all their previous alleged crimes for the option of surrendering their arms to the Federal Government. Although Section 175(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria ((1999), as amended) makes provision for the prerogative of mercy in form of pardon. It does not, however, make provision for the grant of an amnesty. But the Nigerian Government saw the need to grant amnesty to militants due to the necessity to meet the needs of aggrieved youths.



The amnesty initiative in the Niger-Delta context was successful. Based on its acceptance by militants to take the offer of the government to surrender their weapons. Another impact of the initiative has been the manner in which it has influenced the government to begin to consider the people as the referent object of security; in contrast to the militaristic regime.

However, despite the impact of the amnesty initiative, the ineffectiveness of the DDR program has made scholars sometimes overlook its impact. This is because of the popular view that the peacebuilding process needs an effective DDR program to transform the crisis condition into a lasting peace. As a result, this section analyses the impact of the amnesty initiative and the DDR program separately in the sub-sections to identify their achievements and challenges.

### **4.3 Impact of the Amnesty Program**

The amnesty program is not the first non-military solution that has been employed by the government in the course of finding a solution to the crisis. As Duru & Ogbonnaya (2012: 167) notes. the government has in the past implemented programs such as “the Niger Delta Development Board, River Basin Development Authority, Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission and recently, the Niger Delta Development Commission set up in 2001 by the Obasanjo administration.”

In contrast to previous non-military programs which involved processes and bureaucratic bottlenecks, the government designed the amnesty program to revolve around granting state amnesty to agitators who had been at war with state forces. Thus, the program was easy for every Niger-Deltan to understand, irrespective of their academic background. This simplicity of the program was strategic since young people could easily connect to it.

Yet, scholars have criticised the entire process due to the non-inclusion of non-violent groups in the DDR process. Another prominent criticism has been the “weapons for money exchange” strategy the government employed to execute the program. It offered the agitators who accepted the amnesty offer a daily compensation of US\$13. According to reports, the government spent US\$63 million on catering for 10,000 to 25,000 insurgents who were enrolled in the program from August to October 2009 (Duru & Ogbonnaya 2012: 167).

In addition to the exclusion of non-violent groups, Oluduro & Oluduro (2012:52) questions the government for not consulting the agitators as independent parties in the peacebuilding process. It rather designed the program and offered it to the insurgents. Indeed, there was no

formal mediation, but the process did not absolutely exclude the opinions of the agitators. The government made concessions and accepted counter offers from camp leaders. For example, when the leaders of the region rejected Ibrahim Gambari's appointment as a mediator, the government did not insist on his nomination. Rather, it constituted the Niger-Delta Technical Committee in line with the Niger-Delta groups' recommendation and gave it the responsibility to study the history of the crisis and make recommendations.

Even though the Nigerian Government did not design the amnesty program in collaboration with the host communities and the agitators, the Technical Committee held a series of meetings and consultations to get input from the leaders of the region. On the strength of the consultations, it proposed an amnesty program, a DDR program for repentant agitators, oil pollution legislation, and an effective environmental impact assessment (EIA) process, as well as an agenda to eliminate gas flaring by December 2008 (Oluwaniyi 2011: 48). These recommendations motivated President Musa Yar'Adua to establish the Presidential Panel on Amnesty and Militant Disarmament to oversee the amnesty program. The panel oversaw the entry of 26 358 ex-agitators into the program. About "2 760 armaments of various classes and calibre, 287 445 ammunitions, 3 155 magazines, 1 090 dynamite caps, 763 explosives and sticks of dynamite, and 18 gunboats" were surrendered (Oluwaniyi 2011:49).

While the amnesty initiative had limitations in terms of inclusion flaws, it made an impact in certain areas. For instance, the government's revenue increased during the initial period of the program. The relative peace at the time in the region improved the oil output remarkably to 2.3 million barrels a day in 2010 from 800,000 barrels per day between 2006–2008. In addition to the increase in revenue, the program also introduced the human security paradigm.

#### **4.4 The DDR Program and Inclusion Issues**

The framework of a DDR program is usually determined by the context of a conflict. According to Rufer (2005:9), a peacebuilding body may elect to implement DDR with additional "Rs" which could stand for "Resettlement," "Repatriation," and "Reinsertion." This is due to the belief that states can only attain positive peace when they structure peacebuilding processes to address the drivers of conflict.

However, the traditional DDR seems to be popular in terms of adoption. Since the concept contains three words, its definition is often challenging. However, Rufer (2005:9) defines it

by adopting the description of the words by the United Nations. The author, therefore, defines “disarmament as combatants’ voluntary or coerced surrender of arms; and demobilisation as the removal of military structures to allow soldiers to return to a normal, nonviolent life. Meanwhile, the author describes Reintegration as "the process of preparing ex-combatants to fit into civilian society."

In the Niger-Delta context, the government claimed to have implemented a DDR. The program commenced in October 2009 with the deployment of 15,000 repentant combatants to the Okrika, Tombia, and Aluu camps in Rivers State and the Agbarho camp in the Delta state (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011:45). Repentant agitators received deradicalization and re-integration training in the camps. Although poor camp conditions and delayed stipend payment jeopardised the initial stage, the program improved tremendously in 2010 recording about ten thousand beneficiaries (Davidheiser and Nyiayaana 2011:56).

While the program was successful on the face value of weapon surrender and training of militants, scholars have criticised the government for excluding non-violent groups. For instance, Davidheiser and Nyiayaana (2011:57) question the implementation of the DDR program. The authors argue that the Presidential Panel on Amnesty and Militant Disarmament did not put the context of the crisis into consideration. To these scholars, the program was a unilateral decree enforced on agitators without robust consultation, negotiation, and the signing of a peace agreement. This top-down approach that the government applied in the DDR phases (Oluwaniyi 2011:50, Oluduro & Oluduro 2012: 52) usually results in negative peace (Galtung 1969). Okonofua (2016:7) further argues that the program lacked clarity in terms of processes and goals, which could hinder the achievement of long-term peace.

Meanwhile, Obi (2014:252) defines DDR as “a set of ideas and practices, mediated by the interactions between local communities, and international, national, and regional actors aimed at ‘preventing the resumption or escalation of violent conflict and establishing durable and self-sustaining peace.’” From this perspective, he asserts that the DDR program executed in the Niger-Delta context, was more or less a “gun buying” exercise, which cannot bring about positive peace. But will eventually create an economy of conflict for ex-militants.

Of all its flaws, the exclusion of nonviolent actors appears to have had the greatest impact on the DDR program's outcome. A top-down approach to peacebuilding is usually ineffective in transforming a conflict condition into sustainable peace (Autesserre 2011:4). Especially

where the process ignores the views of critical stakeholders. In the Niger-Delta context, the manner in which the government executed the DDR program excluded nonviolent communities while prioritising violent actors. This approach glorifies violence and could make non-violent agitators regret their peaceful method of protest.

Finally, despite the exclusion of non-violent groups, the program still recorded a remarkable feat in human development. For example, the government has in the demobilisation and reintegration phases, sponsored youths from the region on scholarships abroad and within the country to acquire skills that could help them earn a legitimate source of livelihood (Ajayi and Adosote 2013: 517; Davidheiser and Nyiayaana2011:56).

#### **4.5 Environmental peace in the context of the Niger-Delta crisis**

The environmental peace thesis focuses on effective resource management as a means of achieving positive peace. The co-creation of solutions to resource conflict is one of the primary pillars of peacebuilding offered by its proponents. Therefore, the scholarship promotes resource management that ensures companies do not deplete natural resources in the course of mining or oil exploration. This approach protects the interests of both the state and the host communities. Furthermore, in a post-conflict scenario, the theory considers affected communities as essential stakeholders who should decide resource allocation and environmental threat mitigation with the government.

Akpabio and Akpan, (2010:112); Orubu et al., (2004:204) contend that the environment has been a significant factor in the Niger-Delta crisis. The survival of the state (petrol rents) and the livelihood of the host communities depends on the environment as the bearer of natural resources. However, the Nigerian state has not been able to manage the environment effectively to secure state and human security interests. This limited state capacity instigates incessant agitation in the region.

Therefore, in the context of the Niger-Delta, environmental peace is the most effective method to reconcile the long-running conflict between the Federal Government and oil-rich host communities. The negative impact of poorly regulated oil exploration has been detrimental to the ecosystem, and has affected the region's oldest economic enterprises (agriculture and aquaculture). Besides environmental pollution, the government in its handling of the peacebuilding process has ignored environmental peace ideals. The study bases its assertion on the noticeable omission of nonviolent agitators, as previously discussed, from the DDR program. This approach to peacebuilding limits the impact of the program.

Despite significant challenges in the peacebuilding process, the government has taken steps to address environmental insecurity. Though activists and researchers claim that such initiatives, particularly the clean-up project and the commitment to stop gas flaring, have not had the desired impact. In 2011, the UNEP undertook an environmental impact assessment of the Ogoni contamination sites at the request of the federal government. The final report which UNEP released in 2011 samples the views of host communities to make recommendations and findings (UNEP 2011). The study provides evidence for the region's environmental crisis. Furthermore, its recommendation serves as a referent instrument for the two Billion Dollars Ogoni land clean-up project, which the government launched on June 2, 2016 (UNEP 2017).

According to data from the Federal Ministry of Environment's official website, which is replicated in the table below, the clean-up project is now at a 76 percent average execution rate (Federal Ministry of Environment 2021). But, Dr. Marvin Dekil, the Project Coordinator of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP), has stated that they have completed the remediation work in five of the Ogoni land sites (Iheamnochor 2020). He was quoted as saying: “As at today... the five lots where remediation work had been completed are: Deebon Bodo/Mogho in Gokana, Nkeleoken/Alode in Eleme, Korokoro Well in Tai, OboloEbubu in Eleme and Bara AkporBotem in Tai Local Government Areas of Rivers state.”

Table 4. Progress report on the ongoing Remediation project in the Niger-Delta

S/N	Remediation Contractor	Site Name	Local Government Area	Performance Percentage
1	Odun Environmental Ltd	Saanako, Mogho	Gokana	68
2	MosvinnyNig Ltd	Debon-Bodo/Mogho	Gokana	84
3	Shamsa Resources & Services Ltd	Debon. Bodo/Mogho	Gokana	89
4	Centennial Devt. & Investments Ltd	Nweekol/Zorbuke, K.Dere	Gokana	83
5	Newline West Africa Ltd	Buemene/Korokoro Well 005	Tai	56

Source: The Federal Ministry of Environment (2021).

In contrast to the aforesaid, Environmental Rights Action (ERA), a Civil Society Organisation that focuses on environmental advocacy in the region, has countered the HYPREP's claims. It also challenges the body to provide proof that it has completed the clean-up project. Indeed, the information in table three above appears to contradict the project coordinator's claim that the ministry has completed work in the aforementioned areas. This kind of disparity can potentially exacerbate tensions between the federal government and the host communities.

In addition to land pollution, oil companies continue to flare gas into the air in the Niger-Delta region, despite the continuous promise of the Federal Government to end gas flaring. The practice, which has been going on for decades, decreases the region's air quality and depletes resources that the government could sell for additional revenue. Companies emit toxic compounds into the atmosphere, including "methane, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and sulphides, as well as carcinogenic substances such as benzo(a) prone and dioxin" (Uzoekwe et al 2021:8), which are harmful to human health. Also, gas flaring has severe economic effects. For instance, in 2020, oil companies flared gas worth \$1.24 billion.

Despite the above high rate of gas flaring, from a global perspective, Nigeria has tremendously reduced gas flaring between 2012 and 2021 (World Bank 2022:10). The government has also put legislative frameworks in place to check incessant gas flaring in the region. The current Petroleum Industry Act "hereinafter referred to as the Act" mandates a licensee or lessee who engages in upstream and midstream operations to within a year of the effective date or six months of license or lease submit an environmental management plan for projects which require an environmental impact assessment to the Commission for approval (The Federal Republic of Nigeria 2021). Section 103 of the Act also mandates a licensee or lessee prior to the forgoing approval contribute a specified amount to an environmental remediation fund for the repair of the environment in case of pollution.

Furthermore, the Act compels a licensee or lessee of an oil field who flares gas to pay a fee assessed by the Flare Gas Control Board (prevention of waste and pollution). However, it does not hold a company liable for flaring gas in an emergency situation, under an exemption approved by the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, or as an acceptable safety practice under the established law. Furthermore, Section 106 of the Act requires a corporation planning to begin petroleum production to install specified metering equipment

on the facility where it foresees that it may flare gas. Failure to comply with this condition is punishable by the payment of a fine.

Moreso, Section 101 of the Act states that a licensee or lessee may not exercise its rights under a license or lease agreement if the area allocated for petroleum production or exploration is located on a sacred land. Similarly, except with written permission from the commission, a licensee or lessee shall not enter or use a licensed or leased land located in public areas, within a township, village market, cemetery, or land located fifty yards within the site of any building installation, reservoir, dam, public road, or railway. In the event of privately owned property, the Act requires a licensee or lessee to pay compensation to the landowner before gaining admission into the land.

While these measures are commendable, their execution may be challenging because companies can manipulate their operations to qualify for one of the exceptions and avoid paying a penalty. Furthermore, some sections of the law are ambiguous and centred around the Commission. This may impede the successful implementation of the law since the Commission officials may be susceptible to bribery from oil companies.

In addition to environmental impact assessment and remediation, section 235 of the Act stipulates that any company operating in the upstream sector shall establish a Community Development Trust Fund in consultation with the host community within the first year of operation. The Act requires upstream companies to make 3% of revenue available as contributions to finance the Community Development Trust Fund. These provisions, which attempt to integrate the voices of host communities in decision-making on matters affecting them, are undoubtedly novel. However, the Act's implementation remains critical in securing host communities' interest and benefit from the resources housed on their land.

#### **4.6 Analysis of the Human Security Paradigm**

Paris (2001) describes the Human Security theory as an imprecise concept for research and policy analysis. This is due to the popular definition of the term as “safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And the protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life whether in homes, in jobs, or in communities.” According to him, such a definition does not clearly define the scope of the concept. Nonetheless, he acknowledges the human security paradigm as an “effective rallying cry.”

However, the UNDP report which gave increased traction to the concept lists seven thematic areas as components of human security. They include economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. These issues have been present in the Niger-Delta crisis.

Indeed, the Nigerian Government has centred the Niger-Delta peacebuilding effort on issues related to the aforementioned components. In order for it to implement the recommendations of the Technical Committee on the Niger-Delta Crisis, the government has implemented initiatives such as the establishment of the Ministry for Niger-Delta Affairs, the amnesty initiative, DDR, environmental rehabilitation, and, lastly, the cessation of gas flaring campaign, all of these falls within the scope of the human security paradigm. Therefore, the study attempts to determine whether there has been a change in thinking or whether the government just implemented a human security project at some stage of the crisis.

The study contends that the amnesty initiative has influenced successive governments to renounce the extreme militaristic response to the crisis and instead embrace the human security paradigm as a solution for the Niger-Delta crisis. The study bases this argument on the initiatives that successive administrations have implemented (the Jonathan administration 2009-2015), and the current Buhari administration) since their predecessor introduced the amnesty program in 2009.

The Yar'Adua administration was the brain behind the amnesty initiative. Meanwhile, his Vice President and successor (President Jonathan) continued Yar'Adua's legacy by launching post-amnesty programs. It was also during the Jonathan administration that the UNEP conducted an environmental impact study on Ogoni land. The study produced a report in 2011 that provides evidence of the pollution in the area. The Buhari administration has attempted to implement one of the recommendations of the UNEP report through the HYPREP initiative, which the government created to remediate polluted areas in Ogoni land.



Moreso, over this period there has been an increased reduction in gas emissions in the Niger-Delta region.

Despite these efforts by the Nigerian Government to address issues affecting human well-being, the process has been far from utopia. Although, extant initiatives appear to take a human security form. Yet, the implementation style reveals traces of the Nigerian state's hegemonic disposition in the peacebuilding process. This is based on the top-down approach it has used to conduct the amnesty initiative, the DDR, and environmental remediation projects. Hence, the question of security for whom and to achieve what will continue to resurface. If the government, in all honesty, intends to protect host communities against threats to their existence, non-violent agitators should be involved in the peacebuilding process. The Act (2021) attempts to bridge this inclusivity gap. Given that it creates a place for communities to co-govern the Community Development Fund intervention. Still, in the areas of environmental remediation, the people ought to be involved as co-creators in a bid to secure the region from environmental insecurities. Anything short of an inclusive process could project the human security paradigm as a façade that the state has employed to secure the region for its petro-business.

While the study agrees with analysts that the peacebuilding process ought to be more inclusive than we have it now, it is necessary to state clearly that the amnesty initiative was exclusively for those who engaged in violent agitation. States do not usually offer amnesty to people who have not committed any offence. However, the Nigerian Government could have designed the DDR process to include non-violent agitators who have been law abiding in the toughest circumstances.

#### **4.7 The Human Security Paradigm: implication for Peace in the Niger-Delta Region**

It is clear that the Nigerian Government has changed its security strategy in response to the Niger-Delta crisis. The study comes to this conclusion after considering how the government has since the amnesty program leveraged a human security approach through the various non-military projects it has launched to address environmental and human development crises in the region. Yet, the main question that this section of the chapter seeks to address is whether the new paradigm has been successful in restoring positive peace to the region.

As stated in the chapter, the amnesty initiative recorded an immediate economic impact. The relative peace in the region as a result of the program created an enabling environment for oil production and transportation to thrive. But this impact has declined following renewed

attacks on oil installations by militants. According to Onuoha (2016:3), the activities of the resurgent Niger-Delta Avengers (NDA) in 2015 alone have caused the state an unprecedented decline in oil production.

The resurgence of militant activity seems to be a reaction to adjustments made since President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office in 2015. The administration revoked the pipeline surveillance contract awarded to ex-militants in the Niger Delta region. Furthermore, the government also reduced the annual amnesty program budget for the amnesty program by 70%. This development prompted the emergence of the NDA, which demanded that “the government allocate more money to be spent on development in the Delta, the withdrawal of the military from the region, and an order for oil firms to move their headquarters to the area” (Sweet Crude Reports 2017). The militants carried out a sizeable number of rapid attacks reproduced in the table below to prove their capacity to disrupt petro-business even after the amnesty program.

Table 5. Renewed Militant attacks in the Niger-Delta Region

Date of attack	Facility	Sect responsible
10 February, 2016	Bonny Soku Gas Line, Gbaran	NDA
13 February 2016	Launch of Operation Red Economy with 14 days ultimatum for the government to meet NDA demands	NDA
14 February 2016	Attack on the Trans Forcados Pipeline which transports 400,000 barrels per day	NDA
4 May 2016	NDA blew up the Chevron Valve Platform located in the Delta state of Warri	NDA

5 May 2016	An attack on the Chevron Well D25 in Abiteye	NDA
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Source: Sweet Crude Reports (2017)

Although the government remobilised military forces to neutralise militants in the region following the aforementioned attacks, it subsequently retreated and held peaceful negotiations with militant leaders due to rising economic losses as a result of sabotage (Sweet Crude Report 2017).

The renewed militancy in the Niger-Delta region shows that the new paradigm has not brought about the much-desired positive peace. According to Oluduro and Oluduro (2012: 51), the amnesty initiative alone cannot bring long-term peace. They also argue that the Nigerian Government should put the recommendations of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta into action to support the amnesty initiative and the DDR program. In addition to implementing the recommendations of the Technical Committee, we opine that the government should make its peacebuilding interventions more inclusive of local communities. Only such a process can make local communities take ownership of peacebuilding initiatives and promote sustainable peace in the region.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

The chapter examined the Nigerian Government's amnesty initiative in response to the Niger-Delta security crisis. It also looked into various non-military interventions employed by the government, including the DDR program, the elimination of the gas flaring campaign, and environmental remediation. The study has argued that a new security paradigm emerged with the amnesty initiative. It further argues that the new paradigm has created a pathway for the government to continue to explore non-military approaches to peacebuilding in the region.

Again, the chapter has dichotomised the amnesty initiative from the DDR program. It claimed that a separate study of the two concepts would identify the point at which each of the government interventions became ineffective. It aligned with previous analyses that called the government's exclusion of nonviolent agitators from the rebuilding process into question. However, it argued that the state cannot offer an amnesty program to an agitator who has not engaged in a "criminal" form of protest.

The chapter added a novel argument to the literature by asserting that the environmental initiatives of the government are part of the peacebuilding process in the region. This argument is based on the background that environmental insecurities triggered the crisis in the region. Hence, the goal to stop gas flaring, the environmental impact assessment of the Ogoni land, the novel provisions of the Act, and the environmental remediation program are part of the peacebuilding process; which are in line with the human security approach.

Overall, the central argument in the section is that government should tailor DDR programs to the context of conflicts. It also claimed that the government should have incorporated host communities in the peacebuilding process in accordance with environmental peacebuilding principles. Although the amnesty initiative could not have accommodated nonviolent agitators, the section identified the necessity to develop the DDR program to include nonviolent agitators who had abstained from participating in armed agitation.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

The study analysed the Niger-Delta security crisis using a qualitative research methodology. It leveraged the human security concept and other related theories as a framework for analysis, it primarily focused on the Nigerian Government's response to the crisis during the last six decades and the implications for peace in the region. Although the study agrees with previous scholarly arguments that the government's security strategy has been largely militaristic in nature, it contends that the amnesty initiative launched in 2009 signaled a security paradigm shift in the Government's approach to the crisis. Indeed, the new paradigm has laid the groundwork for other human-centred initiatives. Mainly, these interventions have been targeted at the enhancement of human capital development and environmental security. But the study questioned the exclusion of non-violent agitators who suffer the brunt of the crisis from the government's peacebuilding initiatives.

#### **5.2 Conclusion**

The study analysed the Niger-Delta security crisis, which has lasted for almost six decades. It used the human security theory and associated concepts to examine the government's evolving security thinking, which has had a significant impact on peace in the region. The crux of the study's argument is that the amnesty initiative marked the beginning of a security paradigm shift in the Nigerian Government's approach in which there has been an increased reliance on human security initiatives to tackle the crisis.

The analysis shows that environmental, political, and economical issues were at the heart of the crisis. Based on this logic, it argued that economic marginalisation and environmental degradation have been the drivers of the crisis, while the government's military-based response to agitations increased the people's desire to balance state power, which over the years has resulted in a multi-pronged security crisis.

While the crisis lingered, the state's main source of revenue (oil sales) was also dwindling. This condition was one of the factors that compelled the government to turn to a human security approach. In line with the new security thinking, the government has executed

several initiatives which the literature has not fully grasped as it focused only on the amnesty initiative and the DDR program as the government's peacebuilding programs. To contribute towards filling this void, the study highlighted environmental remediation programs and environmental impact assessment as part of the peacebuilding program the government has undertaken alongside the P.A.P and DDR initiatives. However, a critical analysis of the government's new approach shows that it excludes the participation of the same people it is purported to be focused on especially those who have not been involved in violent agitations. These include critical stakeholders in enabling sustainable peace such as youths, women, children, and other civil society actors.

The study, therefore, concluded that, while the government appears to have changed the form of its intervention, it has, however, excluded non-violent agitators from the process. This has given a significant currency to the region's violent enterprise and has impacted the sustainability of the peacebuilding gains. As a result, there has been a resurgence of militant activities in the region since the government has given more attention to violent agitation. It is therefore clear that a state can achieve positive peace only when it co-creates the peacebuilding process with host communities and other key stakeholders involved in a conflict.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Given the findings of the study, it is indeed important for the government to consider the following recommendations:

There is an overwhelming need for the Nigerian Government to employ an adaptive collaborative governance framework to cocreate interventions with host communities. Therefore, before developmental decisions are concluded, residents of host communities should be consulted. In addition, the views of host communities should be considered during implementation.

Furthermore, the Nigerian Government should organise periodic capacity-building programs for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to understand the purpose, planning, and execution of projects. Such organisations should also be given the freedom to monitor and make inputs at the different stages of developmental projects. Capacity-building programs should also be designed to equip Civil Society Organisations and community groups with the knowledge of new legislation with a particular focus on the rights and obligations of host communities.

Also, the Nigerian Government in partnership with stakeholders should ensure religious

implementation and periodic review of the Petroleum Industry Act. Reviews should be aimed at reflecting the host communities' views on the implementation style of the Act and new areas that can be considered during the amendment of the law.

Finally, the Nigerian Government should increase its funding for field research to have informed insights into the views of host communities and researchers.

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