
NATIONAL SECURITY AND PRESIDENT YAR'ADUA'S AMNESTY PROGRAMME IN THE NIGER DELTA: A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PEACE MAKING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

The nature of production and distribution in post-colonial Nigeria have given rise to severe inter and intra eth no-regional conflicts in Nigeria. Since the end of cold war, conflict between the oil producing communities and petro-dollar businesses became intensive such that Nigerian state is listed among the most unsafe environment for business in Africa as the Niger Delta region metamorphosized into a deadly war zone. This paper examines how President Yar'adua's Amnesty programme in Niger Delta contributed in the peace making process in the region. We employed intractable conflict theory as our framework of analysis. We argued that the administration of President Umar Musa Yar'adua appears to appreciate the huge lost to Nigeria arising from such black listing and consequently announced the Amnesty Programme for militants in the region on 24th June 2009. We read meaning from second hand information obtained from books, journals, newspapers, magazines and conference paper dealing on national security and amnesty programme in the Niger Delta.

Keywords: National Security, Amnesty, Peacemaking, Peacekeeping and intractable

INTRODUCTION

Colonialism brought to Nigeria new value system and culture with attendant new class and capitalist mode of production. On Nigeria's political independence, the colonial system survived and transplanted its numerous socio-cultural, political and economic problems to postcolonial Nigeria. Ethnic sentiments and segregation had become perpetuated in the National life. The nature of production and distribution in post colonial Nigeria consequently gave rise to numerous inter and intra group conflicts. Since 1990's conflict between the oil producing Niger-Delta and Petro-Dollar businesses has been intensive such that Nigerian State became listed as one of the unsafe environment for business in Africa. The administration of President Yaradua appears to appreciate the huge lost to Nigeria arising from such black listing, insecurity and war in the Niger Delta when he announced the Amnesty programme for militants in the region on June 24th 2009 as a peace building strategy. Since 1960, three main sources were perceived as the major threat to Nigeria's security. They include the communist countries (Soviet Union and China in Collaboration with other Marxist organizations in West Africa); the radical African states grouped under the Casablanca bloc especially Ghana under Nkrumah; and the possible overflow of revolutionary activities in the surrounding francophone states especially Cameroun and Niger to Nigeria (Asobie 1988: 23-25). Remarkably, these are not military of threat. Regrettably, Nigeria's Responses to these non military threats were principally military or Para-military. To meet these threats Nigeria adopted the strategy of deterrence (Asobie, 1988:26). Meanwhile this tendency towards militarization of political threats stems from conception about the meaning,

and nature of national security which is often misunderstood. Nweke (1985: 1-5) insisted that national security does not refer merely to defense and survival of the state. The danger of looking at national security from this narrow angle is three fold. First is the tendency to equate defense with security and hence give much responsibilities to the military as the defender of the stability enjoyed by the state (Babangida, 1984: 311). Second is the tendency for civilian statesmen to use national security as slogan for rallying the citizens in the face of perceived national and external threats to the government in power and for bolstering their local influence and widen their political base (Adebayo 1986:24). Third is the tendency to equate national security with the security of the state. Hence the ruling class uses the concept of national security and defense of the state as a tool for deluding the masses to accept government policies and programmes as designs to protect the masses from hunger, diseases and Ignorance (Nweke 1988:2). In attempt to contain, the environmental havoc in the Delta by these oil petro- dollar businesses or the oil MNCs, a number of groups have emerged from the host communities. Amongst these groups are Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) Ijaw Youth Council (IJC), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) etc. The Federal Military Government of General Sani Abacha in order to secure the state and the illegally procured communal land for oil exploration in Niger Delta killed Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others. Though the killing attracted global sympathy, the Niger Delta had intensified their agitation for a sovereign Niger Delta through the formation of various militant groups.

These groups are unfriendly to both oil MNCs and federal government. Since the discovery of large oil deposit in Ogoniland in 1957, competition for control of these oil blocs in Niger Delta has militarized relationship between host communities, Federal government and petro-dollar businesses. Farmlands, which is the major means of labour has been destroyed as a result of harmful activities of most oil multinational corporations in the process of drilling and processing of natural crude (Ibaba, 2001:130). He rightly argued that oil spills and gas flaring in the Niger Delta areas is an agent of underdevelopment and poverty. Ezirim (2008:215-217) rightly noted that Niger Delta is characterized by high level of criminality which involves cases of gun running, oil pipeline vandalism, kidnapping of oil workers for ransom, terrorizing of government officials, oil bunkering and smuggling. The Federal Government especially in the post cold war years have employed both peaceful and violent means of resolving the Niger Delta question. Among the violent means are murdering of Ken Saro- Wiwa and eight other, and massacre of residents of oil producing communities in the name of peace building. Among the peaceful means are the establishment of OMPADEC, Niger Delta Development Commission Oil Mineral (NDDC), Ministry of Niger Delta and the 2009 Amnesty to militants. We shall take national security to be inter-related to national interest which is in the interest of the ruling class to maintain the peace and status quo. This paper examines how the Federal Government Amnesty under President Yaradua to Niger Delta militants contributed in the peace building process in the region. To achieve the above objectives, the remaining part of this paper is divided into the following sub-headings: Conceptual clarification; Exposition of Intractable conflict as theoretical framework; Rationale for the Federal Government Amnesty

to Niger Delta militants; The Amnesty as a strategy and practical method for peace building in Niger Delta; Conclusion and Recommendation.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

National security

The phenomenon of national security is hardly precise. Two main views have emerged in attempt to define national security. One view focuses on a strategic definition (Force, military) and the other non strategic definition with emphasis on socio-economic factors (Tunji 1988:8). For Hans Morgenthau, national security and national interest are inter-related. Encyclopedia of social sciences defined national security as the ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external threat. In this paper we shall adopt the definition of national security as defense of physical, social, psychological quality of life of the society and its members both in domestic and regional setting (Al-Mashat 1985:14).

Amnesty

Amnesty is derived from a Greek word 'amnesia' which stands for oblivion. According to Encyclopedia of social sciences Amnesty refers to an act of the legislature or executive by which a state restores the innocence of those who may have been guilty of an offence. It is popularly associated with state pardon of criminals. Ekine (2009) remarked that amnesty is extended when the state decides that bringing citizens into compliance with the law is better than punishing them for their past offences. In this paper amnesty refers to state pardon to any group irrespective of whether such group or person has been convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction or not.

Peace Building

This is in the same family with peace keeping, peace making and peace enforcement because of the following reasons

- (1) They are all interested in promotion of peace.
- (2) They are interrelated dimension of peace policies of many states (Igwe, 2005, 318)

It refers to political settlement of crisis or disputes in this paper we use it interchangeably with peace making and peace keeping without minding their technical differences.

Theoretical Framework

In this article, intractable conflict theory was employed to enable us explain the puzzle under discourse. Nothrup (1989) was amongst the first set of scholars that popularized the intractable conflict theory. The main proposition of this theory is that intractable conflicts elude resolution (Burgess and Burgess, 2005) added that intractable conflicts remain unresolved for long period of time and then become stuck at a high level of intensity and destructiveness. Such conflicts could arise as people that coexist in their political, economic and religions, life disagree with certain value, culture or interest. Subject of disagreement is usually central to groups survival hence such group resist attempt at compromise and round table negotiation rather each group would desire and in fact do inflict injury or harm on the other as much as possible. Onuoha (2005) argued that some conflicts become extremely

difficult to resolve if many people are involved, if issue to be resolved is complex and if there is a history of violent confrontation on the issue. Again he added that all intractable conflict involve values or interests that disputant regard as crucial to their survival. In Nigeria, oil located at the Niger Delta is the mainstay of the economy while the state employ both logic of carrot and stick in maintaining continual flow and exploration of oil for foreign revenue, the local communities whose agricultural land, drinking water and aquatic life has been destroyed seek compensation from both federal government and foreign capital in the extractive sector. The violent confrontation of Federal government in 1995 (Killing of Saro-Wiwa and nine others) has deepened antagonism, and led the Niger Delta militants to ever seek revenge. Notably, pollution free environment is crucial and central to human life in Niger Delta while revenue that accrue to federal government is the life wire of the Nigerian state hence these two groups see round table dialogue as a mark of lost of essential value or interest thus continually resorted to war (Joint Task Force (JTF) and militant) to contain each other. In recognition of the intractable nature and character of Niger Delta conflict; bearing in mind the huge sum of money and human resources lost by Nigeria in this conflict and the need to maintain and secure the Nigerian state from collapsing, Late President Yaradua in 24th June, 2009 announced the Federal Government Amnesty to Niger Delta militants as a peace building strategy to diffuse tension and anger that threatens Nigeria's continuity and sovereignty.

Rationale for Amnesty to Niger Delta Militants

President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration creditably gave the Nigerian economy life after the long years of military underdevelopment. Soon after the administration removed the debt overhang and opened the economy for private investors, Goldman Sach touted Nigerian economy as capable of becoming one of the top 20 economies in the world by the year 2020 (Mordi, 2009:7). Intensified militancy in the Niger Delta, global economic melt down in 2007, and dwindling global oil price greeted President Yaradua immediately he took over the mantle of leadership in Nigeria. The big questions became can Yaradua save the Nigerian economy that has shown signs of recovery? Can Yaradua sustain Vision 20:2020. In order to maintain the vision 20:2020 president Yaradua launched the popular 7-point agenda which include:

- (1) Sustainable growth in the real sector of the economy
- (2) Physical infrastructure- development of power, energy and transportation
- (3) Agricultural development
- (4) Human capital development- education.
- (5) Security, law and order
- (6) Combat corruption
- (7) Niger Delta development (Nigeria project Agend, 2007).

Although some scholars like Mitee (2009) and Blues (2009) questioned the appropriateness of such programme, it has gone down in history book that late President Yaradua's 7-point agenda succeeded in Niger Delta development and helped to revive the declining supply of oil and foreign earnings. Mitee focused on the benefit of the programme, according to him, the Amnesty would not yield the required fruit of peace in the region since it is targeted at

only the militants and not those that legitimately pursue their grievances. Again the survival Niger Delta militants after many years of Federal government's physical combat with the aid of Joint Task Force has proved that the militants constitute state within the Nigerian state with access to instrument of use of force and capable of frustrating state defense and government thereby endangering national security. Blues argued that Amnesty is not necessary for Niger Delta people rather it is a travesty. According to him it is the Niger Deltans that need to pardon the Federal government for illegally occupying their farm lands and not the other way round. The President Yaradua's call for peace building through announcement of pardon to freemen who were never convicted in Niger Delta was a strategy of holding the entity known as Nigeria together. Thus the strategy is used for maintaining the status quo which is in the interest of the dominant class in Nigeria. The rate of crime in the region was unbecoming hence, the amnesty was announced to facilitate the disarmament of the region or reduce the proliferation of light weapons in the Niger Delta. Ajaero (2009:14) noted that Ex-militant Ekpe Mupolo alone handed over a huge cache of arms and ammunition to the Presidential Committee on Amnesty led by Abbe. The weapons he surrendered included 14 Ak 47 rifles, six rocket propelled guns, 24 G3, Six RPG bomb, 44 AGL bombs, heaps of dynamites and several boxes of other assorted weapons. The weapons surrendered by the various militant groups within the period of Amnesty deal significantly helped to reduced the number of light weapons in circulation in the region.

Amnesty as Strategy for Peace Building in Niger Delta

Having identified oil as the major resource that generates conflict between Niger Delta militants and Federal government's (JTF), an all inclusive programme like the Amnesty programme is required to manage the conflict. The post amnesty package in Niger Delta involves general re-socialization and education of the ex-militants to re-embrace societal norms and values. Dudley (1992:183) agreed that certain conflicts are inevitable and prescribed eight steps to conflict management and resolution. These strategies include:

- (1) Create effective atmosphere
- (2) Clarify perceptions
- (3) Focus on individual and shared needs
- (4) Build shared positive power
- (5) Look to the future then learn from the past
- (6) Generate options
- (7) Develop Doubles-The stepping stone to action
- (8) Make mutual- Benefit agreement

The creation of ministry of Niger Delta, OMPADEC and NDDC are targeted at providing effective atmosphere for the Amnesty programme. Various perceptions on these establishments in the Niger-Delta were clearly addressed by the Federal government on the grounds that the region serves as oil reserve of the nation. Also, the effect of environmental degradation on both individuals and groups were considered and attempts were made to resolve them. Discussion channels were opened with various stakeholders in the Niger Delta. The Federal government also learnt to avoid the use of force like they did in 1995 when Ken Saro Wiwa and eight others were killed. The options of granting Amnesty to the militants,

disintegration of Nigeria, another civil war and declining oil supply were considered and granting of Amnesty to Niger Delta militants was favoured. The programme was however implemented by requesting the militants to surrender their weapons and orientation camps were opened to re-socialize the ex-militants. Today, the benefit between the two groups (Niger Delta militants and federal government) appears to be mutual. While, the militants secure oil pipe lines instead of destroying them, secure oil workers instead of kidnapping them and negotiate instead of warring, the Federal Government pardoned instead of prosecuting the militants. Again, the Federal government now focuses on communal welfare rather than settling a microscopic few, thus the government had began to pay Niger Deltans compensation for destroying their land and water. Ryan (1990:51) combined the peace strategies introduced by Galtung and Mitchell to set out various aspects of conflict that need to be addressed to reduce violence. He noted that different conflicts could be solved with different techniques either through peacekeeping, (military action), peacemaking (reconcile incompatible interest of leaders) and peace building (restoring hope and happiness to the ordinary people through coordinated action) which cuts across these three technique.

The Niger Delta Amnesty was for the people of Niger Delta the greatest opportunity for rapid development and transformation of the people from the culture of militarism to pacifism; culture of armament to disarrangement, authoritarianism to democracy and propagation of prejudice to counteracting prejudice which some observes believe that those who submitted arms in the Amnesty deal. While some observers believe that those that surrendered arms in the Amnesty deal were not the real militant, other hold that the militants were treated as prisoners in camps and feared that they might re-launch attack on the oil pipelines (Abubinke, 2009:24). On the contrary, Maduekwe, (2009:4) on the contrary remarked that the participation of the militants in the amnesty offer is yielding some benefits for the Nigeria in government. Similarly, Taminu Yakubu, the then Chief economic Adviser to late President Yaradua noted that the gains of the programme was manifesting in the form of improved oil revenue for the country thus Nigeria for the first time gets closer to her OPEC oil supply quota (Ajaero, 2009:20).

CONCLUSION

The Federal Government's Amnesty to Niger Delta militants under late President Yaradua was a remarkable strategy and method for peace building in the region. We argued that the Niger Delta conflict is an intractable conflict that re-occurs despite the techniques applied in resolving the conflict. This is because oil is the basis for survival of both the host communities and the state. While the dominant class use state power to maintain national security in her interest (secure oil), the Niger Delta militants are poised to frustrate governments' action that pollutes her environment hence an intractable conflict. The ability of the Amnesty programme to reduce the vandalization and destruction of other MNCs oil facilities in the Niger Delta is temporal. Until Nigeria address the nationality question through sovereign national conference Niger Delta militants would always emerge to project group or ethnic interest.

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