

**The Political Economy of the Nigerian Government Amnesty Program in the Niger
Delta: 2009 – 2018**

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Abstract

The economic or political economy of conflicts and civil wars in Africa is an expanding field with an increase in research and literature especially in the last few decades. However, less attention has been devoted to the role of political economy in peacebuilding operations/interventions. This dissertation examines the extent to which political economy, specifically its elements in terms of interests, incentives and institutions shapes the conceptualization, design and implementation of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and the prospects for sustainable peace. The Niger Delta Amnesty (NDA) is used as an empirical case study.

The objective of the dissertation was to empirically analyze the Niger Delta Amnesty Program as a response to resistance within the framework of political economy. The research uses the verticality of neoliberalism and neopatrimonialism as frameworks for analysis within the political economy and DDR debates. Content and discourse analyses were used to analyze a variety of qualitative secondary sources and semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Evidence generated from the study demonstrated that the conceptualisation, design and implementation of DDR must take due cognizance of the impact of institutions, interest and incentives. Failure to recognize these political economy variables undermine the overall implementation and success of the DDR process. Key findings show that a top-down minimalist DDR approach in contrast to a bottom-up, community-driven peacebuilding, has raised concerns and contradictions about the sustainability of peacebuilding projects. Thus, the thesis concluded that for DDR to contribute to a successful war to peace transition, those that are responsible for its local conceptualization must understand how the elements of political economy that shape the conflict can affect and undermine DDR.

Keywords: Nigeria, Niger Delta, Political Economy, Peacebuilding, Amnesty, Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, Interests, Incentives, Institutions, Neoliberalism, Neopatrimonialism.

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List of Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| AAPW | Academic Associates Peaceworks |
| ACCR | Africa Centre for Corporate Responsibility |
| AFDB | African Development Bank |
| AI | Amnesty International |
| APC | All Progressives Congress |
| AU | African Union |
| AusAID | Australian Aid |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| CI | Critical Institutionalism |
| CNN | Cable News Network |
| CORI | Community Rights Initiative |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| DDR | Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration |
| DFID | United Kingdom Department for International Development |
| EU | European Union |
| FEHN | Foundation for Ethnic Harmony in Nigeria |
| FGAP | Federal Government Amnesty Program |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussions |
| FGN | Federal Government of Nigeria |
| FNDIC | Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GPE | Global Political Economy |
| HDI | Human Development Index |

| | |
|--------|--|
| HI | Historical institutionalism |
| HRW | Human Rights Watch |
| ICG | International Crisis Group |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IYC | Ijaw Youth Council |
| JTF | Joint Task Force |
| KKWDRC | Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre |
| LAO | Limited Access Order |
| MEND | Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta |
| MNDA | Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs |
| MNOCs | Multinational Oil Companies |
| MOSIEN | Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality |
| MOSOP | Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People |
| NAC | National African Company |
| NDA | Niger Delta Amnesty |
| NDAP | Niger Delta Amnesty Program |
| NDDB | Niger Delta Development Board |
| NDDC | Niger Delta Development Commission |
| NDWJ | Niger Delta Women for Justice |
| NDPVF | Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force |
| NDRBDA | Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority |
| NDV | Niger Delta Vigilante |
| NEEDS | National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |

| | |
|---------|---|
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NNPC | Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation |
| NPRC | National Political Reform Conference |
| OMPADEC | Oil Mineral Producing and Development Commission |
| OSAPND | Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta |
| OSAPPM | Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Petroleum Matters |
| PAP | Post-Amnesty Program |
| PCCAP | Presidential Commission in charge of the Amnesty Program |
| PDP | Peoples Democratic Party |
| PE | Political Economy |
| PEA | Political Economy Analysis |
| PEC | Political Economy of Conflict |
| PEP | Political Economy of Peacebuilding |
| PTFNDD | Presidential Task Force on Niger Delta Development |
| RNC | Royal Niger Company |
| SALM | Small Arms and Light Weapons |
| SDN | Stakeholder Democracy Network |
| SGACA | Strategic Governance and Corruption Analysis |
| SI | Sociological institutionalism |
| SPDC | Shell Petroleum Development Company |
| TCND | Technical Committee on Niger Delta |
| TFC | |
| TI | Transparency International |
| TNC | Trans-National Corporations |

| | |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| UAC | United African Company |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| US | United States |
| USAID | United States AID |
| USIP | United States Institute for Peace |
| WB | World Bank |

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

The Nigerian State, oil corporations and resistance movements in the Niger Delta have struggled for decades over control of resources. In this Ph.D. I will consider related debates on peacebuilding, rentierism and the so-called “resource curse” to discuss the Niger Delta Amnesty Program in its context. The thesis is furthermore informed by theoretical debates on Nigeria’s political economy and the relations between different interest groups and institutions and how they frame the Niger Delta Amnesty (NDA) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Program.

1.1 State of the art

1.1.1 The political economy of peacebuilding

To understand the concept of the political economy of peacebuilding (PEP) in the Niger Delta region, it is of prime importance to briefly explore the political economy of conflict in the region. The political economy of conflict in the Niger Delta, particularly oil conflicts, centers on links between resource scarcities, unequal resource distribution and political marginalization (Ballentine & Sherman, 2003, pp. 1-2). In Nigeria, economic factors play a key role in fueling conflicts in the Niger Delta Region. This is as a result of inequalities that exist in the access, allocation and distribution of resources (Berdal & Malone, 2000, pp. 1-3). Bannon and Collier (2003), proposed that most resource endowed countries are prone to conflicts and that it is very easy for an oil producing country to be unstable. Other scholars have evidenced the fact that the availability of lucrative natural resources has a grave consequence for conflict dynamics (Ballentine & Nitzschke, 2005, p. 5). The case in the Niger Delta region portrays key factors such as politics and economics that have fueled social unrest and conflicts in the region. This is chiefly as a result of the interplay between the economics of oil and the influence of politics on the management of resources. In addition, the political economy of conflict illustrates how acting components such as transnational companies migrate to underdeveloped regions and exert influence on the political class, to legitimize their occupation of viable resources in these territories (Lebillon, 2003, p. 68). This framework relates conflicts systematically to a few economic conditions such as dependency on primary commodity exports and low national income (Collier & Hoeffler, 2006). The management of oil has become very complex in Nigeria with the control of politicians represented by the local, state and federal government elites

(Ogege, 2011). The oil industry has always been under heavy influence from politicians and foreign Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs) (Eluka, Uzoamaka, & Ifeoma, 2016). The Niger Delta area accounts for about eighty percent of the country's revenue through the sale of crude oil (Ifedi & Anyu, 2011, p. 75). The Niger Delta region is in the limelight as many politicians want to secure and defend their interest in the regional economy. This has made the area a hot spot for violent uprisings and agitations by indigenous people who live in the constant fear of being dominated by both national politicians and multinational agents (Igini, 2011, p. 1). The majority of these conflicts are caused by lingering grievances surrounding the management of oil (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2012). The violent uprisings in the region has directly affected oil production and management (Ebiem, 2014).

The intervention of the Federal Government in the crude oil business has created animosity and friction in the Niger Delta region. Anatsui and Fagbemi (2014) illuminate this fact:

In Nigeria, the Federal Government is both a key player in oil and gas leasing/mining as well as a referee. It collects all revenues generated in the country and disburses a maximum of 13%, or as it pleases, to the states from which the resources are derived. By the recent Supreme Court decision on offshore lands, the Federal Government now takes everything while coastal states are entitled to nothing, not to talk of ecological impact, infrastructural wear-and-tear, and coastal communities' development, which constitutes the major causes of crises in Niger Delta (p. 288).

The intervention of MNOCs in the oil business has also been a source of instability, making the precious commodity more of a divisive product than a factor of unity and stability in Nigeria (Ngomba-Roth, 2007). Just like the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), MNOCs do have their own economic interests. In highlighting the overwhelming presence of MNOCs in Nigeria's oil industry, Ubhenin (2013) holds that these transnational entities were present at the inception of the oil business in the country. Today a plethora of transnational companies dominate oil production and exploration (p.181). They include Shell, ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, Agip and Elf with the Federal government retaining about 55 and 60 percent shares represented by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) (Bergstresser, 2010, p. 19; Uzoma, Kalu, & Nwakego, 2015, pp. 71-75). In most cases, and in order to protect its strategic interest, the Federal Government intervenes by signing legislations, public policy and the use of the military to shift outcomes in favour of these transnational companies (Omeje,

2006, p. 479), leaving the local population feeling abandoned and betrayed by its own government (Aworawo, 2013).

Economic factors are important in understanding any conflict and peacebuilding settings. In Nigeria, the influence of the mix of various political and private economic interests and practices on the economy is what we call political economy (PE). In this context, PE is concerned with how political forces influence the economy and economic outcomes in Nigeria (Poulton, Douarin, & Buss, 2019, p. 18). The overbearing influence of politics on oil has left the people of Niger Delta embittered and frustrated (I. Udoh, 2013, p. 64). Scholars like Hudson and Leftwich (2014) argue that political economy has become the economics of politics instead of political analysis. They argue that the political economy approach has increasingly focused on how interest, incentives and institutions shape and explain the entire political process and practices that affect development outcomes (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 6). Australian AID (AusAID) (2011, p. 92) and Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (2003, p. 10) analyze political economy as economic incentives, political interest and concentration and networks of power framed by institutional structures and norms (be it formal or informal) that influence development outcomes. This framework is particularly useful in understanding Nigeria when examining the interests and influence of different groups and how their power is exerted within state institutions. It also provides a deep understanding of how power is contested and the ways in which wealth in Nigeria is distributed (Udoh & Chijioke, 2017).

The UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) defines political economy as "concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time" (DFID, 2009, p. 4). Taking a close look at this definition, it is imperative to say that the case in Nigeria is a portrayal of politics in relation to contestations and negotiations between interest groups with competing claims over rights and resources in the Niger Delta. It also involves the economic processes that produce wealth and thereby influence how political choices are made in the country (Selby, 2008). This definition helps illuminate our understanding of the motivations of the actors.

Just as violence and instability often serve a range of political, economic and social functions for individuals, so too do peacebuilding initiatives (Pugh, Cooper, & Turner, 2008). A political economy of peacebuilding relates to the transformation of war-torn societies into a map captioned 'the liberal peace project' that, in its economic dimensions requires convergence

towards market liberalization (Pugh, 2005, p. 23). It focuses a high priority on stabilizing peace by fostering security, rule of law and democratic norms (Pugh, 2011). In the context of the Niger Delta region, a political economy of peacebuilding specifically centers on the role that elements of political economy such as interests, incentives and institutions play in framing the NDA and DDR Program as a peacebuilding project. The political economy of peacebuilding in the Niger Delta region illustrates how power and resources are distributed and contested in different settings. It yields understanding into principal interest, incentives, rules and institutions regarding how these interacting factors come together to explain issues of justice, security and development (Haider & Rao, 2010, p. 4). Also, it focuses on the policies that are implemented in post-conflict environments that have framed and shaped the conceptualization, design and implementation of the NDA and DDR program with profound implications on the outcome of peace in the region. The PEP in the Niger Delta could be seen through the perspective of the politics of economic projects with the liberal peace framework especially the DDR program (Munive, 2014; Pugh, 2005, p. 24). The environment in the Niger Delta shows how politics and the institutional structures, policy choices, and economic outcomes arise from various types of political competition related to conceptualization, design and implementation of the NDA and DDR program (Adam & Dercon, 2009). This political economy of the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR consists of existing interests amongst contesting groups over the control of oil. The incentives influence the behaviours of competing groups in the region. Furthermore, formal to informal institutions are all competing over the method of intervention and models of implementation with a bearing implication on the strategies, design and outcome of the peacebuilding initiative (Hodgson, 2006; Hudson & Leftwich, 2014).

The implication herein is that peacebuilding can lead to profit making (Ballentine & Nitzschke, 2005, p. 14). Little attention has been paid to the economic motivations and processes that have contributed to generating and sustaining contemporary peacebuilding. As such, the political economy of peacebuilding in the Niger Delta posits that economic considerations often shape the calculations and behaviours of the parties participating in peacebuilding as well as those parties, which mediate the conflict (Pugh et al., 2008). Although political and social factors fuel many conflicts and ethnically driven civil unrest in Africa, more often the reasons behind perpetration and re-perpetration of violence is chiefly influenced by economic interest (Paris, 1997). As a result, if a peacebuilding process is not flexible in terms of accommodating domestic, cultural, ideological, social and political dynamics of the conflict in question, there will almost certainly be a relapse of violence (Paris, 2004).

1.1.2 Institutions in rentier states

The rentier state political economy concept applies mostly to states dependent on one resource, in most cases mineral and oil. The rentier approach was first developed in a scientific study by Mahdavy (1970) who examined structural changes in several petrol-producing countries during the 1950s and 1960s in a study of the Persian economy, which entirely depended on oil exports. This concept was further popularized by two political scientists, Beblawi and Luciani, in 1987. According to them, a rentier state exists when rent situations are predominant and only a few are engaged in the generation of rent (wealth), while the majority are only involved in the distribution and utilization of it (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987; Beblawi, 1987, p. 385). Rents are most commonly royalties or other payments for oil and gas exports, but other income such as fees and aid typically are considered rents as well (Gray, 2011, p. 1). This concept constitutes one of the premises of the resource curse or paradox of abundance phenomenon. In evaluating the sectoral performance of the Libyan economy, economists Birks and Sinclair (1984) focus on all the fundamentals of a rentier economy. In their view, many developing regimes utilize oil wealth to subsidize inefficient and unwise economic ventures. These rentier regimes are guided by unwise and ill-advised economic policy, which is wasting and squandering natural resources, particularly oil that in the long run has ruined the economy (Holsinger, 1986, p. 108). In his discourse on the rentier state in Gabon, Yates (1996) argues that most rentier states are exaggeratingly reliant on oil revenues. Within this scope of argument, Elsenhans (1984) posits that economic dependence is a key characteristic for many rentier states.

In their definition of a rentier state, Bagagi et al. (2011) propose two basic features of such a phenomenon. Firstly, a rentier state fosters the formation of political patronage networks, essentially advancing a form of clientelism, which reduces avenues of political pluralism and diminishes democracy. This is certainly the case in Nigeria, where most politicians are sponsored by oil moguls and businessmen who have benefitted from the oil wealth from the Niger Delta, directly or indirectly. These corporate economic giants sponsor political protégées who advocate policies in their favour once voted into office; a practice widely known in Nigeria as “political godfatherism” (Oyebode, 2014, p. 139).

Secondly, that the abundance of wealth generated by the oil rent makes it possible for the government to operate a friendly taxation system. In Nigeria’s case, the government operated a taxation system that was lenient towards taxing the wealthy, thereby helping the elite evade giving back a portion of their wealth to the public. Here again is an example of how oil rents

build a closed-circuit of top-class political elites who become distanced from the local population and unaccountable to them.

Another aspect of the rentier state political economy is how it is tied to different actors interacting within institutions. Hudson and Leftwich (2014), define institutions as follows:

Institutions provide the necessary social infrastructures to harness and channel self-interest: they act as the coordination mechanism for mutually productive outcomes. Institutions provide peace, justice, and stability for the economy and polity to function without disruption. They are the glue that holds society together. Without institutions providing and upholding laws, contracts, property rights, and trust, economic activity would not be able to function smoothly. But – from an economic perspective – their critical role is as incentive structures (p. 32).

Djournessi (2009), who writes extensively about the resource curse and power struggles, takes a cue from Mahdavy (1970) in his 2009 book, in which he acknowledges the fact that most petrol producing countries in the world are now rentier states including some African countries like Nigeria and Angola. The income in Nigeria and Angola and especially their foreign exchange relies on the exploitation of crude oil by multinational corporations paying rent to the respective local governments, thereby providing the major source of revenue to these nations and becoming the livewire of their economies.

Just like Djournessi, Omeje (2013) opens his discourse by focusing on the resource curse concept. A resource curse is when a country is richly endowed with natural resources but characterized by violent low-intensity conflicts, militia insurgency, criminal predation, and obstruction of operations as a result of conflict over the management of natural resources. Omeje asserts that in most African countries with mineral resources, there exists rising waves of conflict alongside alarming rates of poverty. He cites Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan as examples. Omeje contrasts the situation in the above-mentioned countries with the conditions in countries like Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Botswana where the availability of resources exists but has not dragged the country into violent conflicts and abject poverty of the majority of the population.

Omeje (2013) considers resource curse and rentier state as the same thing. To him, resource curse countries are good examples of rentier states. A similar assertion is made by Djournessi (2009) who affirms that all resource curse countries are suffering from rentier state syndrome

whereas not all rentier states are suffering from resource curse. He points out that a country like Qatar has used its oil wealth to develop the country with little environmental degradation, meanwhile it solely depends on oil rents.

According to Gray (2011) the rentier state theory explains the effect of external payments (rent) on state-society relations and governance. Nigeria, for example, is considered a rentier state because the country derives a larger portion of its revenue from external rent: eighty percent of government revenue in Nigeria comes from the sale of oil. Gray surmises that the presence of oil in Nigeria actually impedes democratic prospects. Gray's analysis views Nigeria as a country that generates a large proportion of its income and revenue from rent, rent being a form of externally derived, unproductively earned payment (Gray, 2011, p. 1). Furthermore, the author argues for the existence of a link between rentierism and neopatrimonialism, reasoning that only a very small but important group within society is involved in the generation of rent and in the sustenance of the ruling elite.

The rentier state political economy approach attempts to answer some of the most central questions about the political economy of Nigeria as an oil exporting country. It also explains the shortcomings of democracy in the country and illuminates the development obstacles that Nigeria encounters due to the nature of elite politics and wider state-society interactions. In combination with other data, the rentier state analysis focuses Nigeria's strong reliance on oil. The pressure to succumb to the external influences, which have had an impact on the socio-political landscape of the wealthy Niger Delta.

Bagaji et al. (2011) further argue that even though the rentier state concept was developed and experimented in the Middle East, it succinctly fits the Nigerian situation. Since the discovery of oil in 1956 and the oil boom of the 1970s, Nigeria has abandoned the agricultural industry that used to be the mainstay of the country's economy and shifted instead to rely on rents from a lucrative commodity (oil) which is now the main source of revenue (Abubakar, Ahmad, Sani, & Jinjiri, 2016). The country's dependency on oil is on the increase as it accounts for about 97 percent of all foreign exchange earnings and 80 percent of government revenues (Asagunla & Agbede, 2018, p. 64).

Nigeria's economy sees but a fraction of the amount of profit that is generated abroad from its natural resources. Due to the constantly changing price of oil abroad, Nigeria's economy is subject to constant instability. Nigeria does not have the capacity to exploit its own oil resources and depends on others to provide oil rents and consume their resources. In this way, Nigeria's

dependency on oil producing countries has strengthened. Politics within Nigeria and its economy are resultantly affected and influenced by the country's dependent relationships on rich western countries, represented in Nigeria by multinational oil corporations. In the Niger Delta the oil extraction activities of multinationals has widened community poverty and unemployment gaps (Obi, 2010, p. 220). For example, in the oil producing states of Akwa Ibom and Bayelsa, the unemployment rates hovers at 38.4 percent as opposed to the 19.7 percent national average (Tambari & Imoh, 2016, p. 9).

The Nigerian economy is rentier-reliant on external rent sources and is evolving into an allocation state. The Nigerian government is the principal recipient of rent in the country and the generation of rent is centered on a few, mirroring the input-output imbalance of the rentier economy seen in class structures, institutions and politics. In their discourse on how developing countries depend on oil rents, Amin (1976), Frank (1972) and Dos Santos (1970) argue that multinationals exploit Third World economies by extracting surplus resources for export to their respective metropolises, thereby benefiting "the haves" while depriving "the have-nots" and thus creating distinct inequality. Amin, Frank, and Dos Santos further posit that the economic activities of multinationals are distinctly imperialistic and exploitative. Amin (1976) goes even further to argue that capitalists' economic tendencies have led to the underdevelopment of the periphery of society and that as a result the relationship between rich and poor demographics in Nigeria has not changed (p. 38).

Others, like Frank (1972), posit that,

Contemporary underdevelopment is a continuation of the same fundamental processes of dependence, transforming economic class and class structures, and lumpen bourgeois policies of underdevelopment, which have been in operation throughout our history (p. 92).

To Amin, Frank, and Dos Santos, Nigerian political elites who form tactical alliances with these corporations are their intermediaries and subordinate allies in all processes of exploitation. Santos, Amin, and Frank (1969) unequivocally agree that the local bourgeoisie in Nigeria use government positions and institutions to establish imperialistic economic joint cooperation with multinational oil corporations in the Niger Delta region. Conversely, they argue that competition amongst investors is an opportunity to make economic gains (p. 174). In the Niger Delta for instance, Shell, ExxonMobil, Chevron and others are competing to make surpluses, which will be exported to their home countries. Worth noting is the involvement of

multinationals in the lucrative economic sector in Nigeria, which is very central because, in such a case, the Nigerian state becomes a rentier state.

Social scientist Bamiduro (2012) looks at the situation in Nigeria from both environmental and socioeconomic angles. He asserts that hydrocarbons in general cannot be friendly to the environment and so Nigeria with vast quantities of hydrocarbons is severely suffering from environmental degradation. Severe corruption, says Bamiduro, has made it impossible for the people on the ground, especially those suffering from air pollution and environmental spoilage, to benefit from the oil rents and wealth. He goes on to caution Ghana (a nation new to the oil business) not to follow in the footsteps of Nigeria, lest they find the newly discovered crude oil reserves will create more problems to the peaceful country than blessings. Botswana has proven to be one of the least corrupt countries in the world even though endowed with enormous mineral resources. Mining in Botswana is mostly performed by private companies in which the government maintains a significant shareholding. Good governance and accountability have made it possible for the country to use mineral wealth and move from a poverty-stricken country to a middle-income country as opposed to the situations seen in its least well-run neighbors (Bamiduro, 2012, p. 13).

The above-mentioned writers, although coming from different generations and whose works were published over a span of years, all echo in unison that in rentier states, there is less accountability since they are ruled by autocratic regimes and the oil rent is used to put out any dissent and buy off political opponents. In the case of Chad, rentierism extends to maintaining a military force that is showcased in regional conflicts whereas the masses are hungry (Pemunta & Tabenyang, 2016). This would imply that the rentier state phenomenon generally guarantees stability to authoritarian regimes, and in the case of Nigeria, rule by a few who form coalitions, strategies and tactical alliances.

Nigeria is without a doubt one of the most corrupt country in the world, rife with corruption in the oil and gas sector. Rentierism in Nigeria illustrates the dynamic relating oil industries and authoritarianism as well as the linkage between oil and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region. More crucially, substantial examination of authoritarianism has been made by scholars like Ross (2001). Ross underlined three causal mechanisms in his work, rentier effect, repression effect, and modernisation effect, to explain the nexus between oil exports and authoritarian rule in the Middle East. In the case of the “rentier effect”, governments use their oil revenues to alleviate social pressures in order to avoid demands from greater accountability.

This implies that when governments make enough gain/benefit from oil revenues, they tax their populations low or not at all. As a result, the public is likely to demand less accountability of their leadership and institutions. That is, in turn they would gain the public's political acceptance or concession. Ross argues that "repression effect" is visible when resource wealth enables authoritarian governments to spend more on internal security and obstruct the population's aspirations to democracy. Wealth from rents has enabled the state to acquire repressive state apparatus and institutions and to keep the tensions of democratization within. While, "modernization effect" is the linkage between development and democracy due to wealth per se. These concepts are clearly applicable to situations in extractive countries like Nigeria where rents have been bolstered and autocratic, undemocratic governments have maintained power. Ross's three casual mechanisms are visible in the case of Nigeria. The "rentier effect" helps the government utilize fiscal measures to keep the people of the Niger Delta and the larger public politically demobilized. The "repression effect" focuses on the use of force by the Nigerian government to keep the communities in the Niger Delta demobilized. The "modernization effect" highlights the social forces in place that have kept the communities in the Niger Delta demobilized (Ross, 2001, p.332-337).

There is an argument in literature that rent has long been the driving force in fostering socio-political impediment, thereby promoting underdevelopment and hindering democracy (Ross, 2001, p. 337; 2003). In Nigeria, resource-based wealth has led to the establishment of a large military force. Driven by self-interest, elites and the ruling political class in Nigeria have developed effective ways to arm themselves against popular pressures from the Niger Delta and the government has used military force to help maintain order. The concentration of oil in one geographical region of the country (the Niger Delta) that also happens to be populated with ethnic minorities alongside intense resource extraction has aggravated ethnic tensions while federal, regional and local actors with vying interests compete for the Niger Delta's oil right (Ross, 2001, p. 336).

In contemporary times, rentierism has painted a clear image of the economic importance of oil in Nigeria. The injection of wealth has created an absence of democracy in the country. Instead of guaranteeing greater stability and security in Nigeria, oil and the wealth it generates has destabilized the oil states in the Niger Delta region and done nothing, according to Gray, to reduce or address instability (Gray, 2011, p. 9). In fact, Gray posits that the absence of democratic processes and institutions in Nigeria is an outcome of rentierism.

Just like Gray, Beblawi (1990) and Luciani (1990) critically analyzed the connection between oil wealth and the absence of democracy in Nigeria, later in the scholastic timeline, in buttressing this pre-existing discourse, Ross (2001) further illustrates the nexus between oil and the absence of democracy in Nigeria. The above academics concluded that misallocation of wealth, corruption, waste and inefficiency in government institutions form a matrix of elements that have resulted in blurring democracy in Nigeria. Bagaji et al. (2011) went as far as to dwell on the fact that the violence in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria is an ugly manifestation of a country suffering from resource curse. They argue that because the exploitation of indigenous resources did not benefit the local population, the locals decided to take up arms against the Federal Government and the numerous multinational companies operating in the region. Despite thorough coverage of issues in the Niger Delta up until this point, however, most of the aforementioned writers refrained from discussing topics related to the Amnesty and DDR program.

1.1.3 Resource curse discourse and interests

Since the 1970s oil boom in Nigeria (Bagaji et al., 2011, p. 34), the country's economic position as Africa's breadbasket mutated drastically. Nigeria moved from being a food self-sufficient nation to a heavy importer of foodstuffs from its neighbours, especially Cameroon. Within a rapid period of time, Nigeria shifted from an agriculturally based economy to an economy entirely sleeping on the laurels of crude oil. Despite being the continent's primary crude oil exporter, the boom of the oil industry in Nigeria has brought with it many misgivings and has not placed the country as the most "blessed" nation in Africa (Amnesty International, 2009).

The resource curse discourse has become a bedrock for political economy analysis. In his book entitled *Six Books of a Commonwealth*, Bodin puts forward his own definition of resource curse as a situation "where men of a fat fertile soil are most commonly effeminate and cowards; whereas contrariwise a barren country makes men temperate by necessity and by consequence careful, vigilant, and industrious" (Ross, 1999, p. 309). Bodin sees countries with riches in the soil as embroiled in an atmosphere of laziness and mismanagement of their resources, chalk full of leaders who think only of the present and never of the consequences, and insupportable to the men and women who live in the common land enduring havoc caused by the elite class and politicians.

In his pursuit of a broader definition of the concept of the resource curse, Djoumessi (2009) writes that most of the deep soil resources in Africa have brought bad luck to their countries.

He argues that in some cases, such as in Nigeria and Sudan, these resources are the primary source of conflict, while in other cases they help to encourage the growth of conflicts (such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo) leading to a larger debate on the roles of greed and grievance in the political economy. Collier and Hoeffler (2004) and Keen (2012) assert that greed and grievance are the motivations behind contest and competition between different groups. This indicates that varying interests, a key element in political economy, is what motivates different groups to contest. Hudson and Leftwich (2014), define interest as the predominant driver of behaviour and outcomes (p. 32). In Nigeria, for instance, they point out that politicians focus on getting elected or staying in power forever while bureaucrats are motivated by intensifying their power, duties, staff and budgets. This, as in any society, is an obvious competition of self-interest (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 32).

The resource curse discourse looks at the socio-economic development and related concepts such as poverty and economic decline in resource abundant countries (Basedau & Lay, 2005, p. 12). In discussing the resource curse debate, Ross (2003) argues that it is paradoxical that resource rich countries like Nigeria develop at a slower rate than resource poor countries. One critical factor that defines the way in which resource wealth impacts a developing nation is the degree of external rent misuse and possible wrongful allocation of funds by state institutions (Lay & Mahmoud, 2005, p. 47). This could be the driving force behind why the abundance of natural resources in Nigeria does not produce the expected blessings but instead manifests as a curse (Basedau & Lay, 2005). This idea is corroborated by Lay and Mahmoud (2005) who contend that Nigeria is considered to be suffering from “resource curse” because the country has not used its oil rents to finance public investments but has instead used its rents for private gains.

Natural resources play an important role in contemporary Africa. According to authors like Gary and Karl (2003), Ross (2003) and Lay and Mahmoud (2004), natural resources cause economic distress, impair other economic sectors (like mining), affect other sources of economic growth, performance and development, drive misguided economic policies, and expose the economy to economic stagnation. This is what Karl (1997) refers to as “the paradox of plenty”. In Nigeria for instance, the abundance of natural resources has caused, triggered, aggravated and prolonged violent conflicts in the Niger Delta. The “curse” can be traced from the beginning of when oil was extracted and produced in the Niger Delta communities (Basedau & Lay, 2005, p. 9). Engel (2005) contends that Nigeria experiences the blessings and curses of oil riches at same time. The country’s ‘sweet oil’ has reinforced state formation and created

wealth on the one hand while on the other hand, it has been a key driver for violent conflicts (p. 90).

Nigeria has neglected to invest in the development of human resources because the country is carried away by misuse of wealth brought by oil and gas into the economy, suffering from what Basedau and Lay termed “Dutch disease”¹. The oil boom in Nigeria was followed by a surge of capital appreciation that caused other tradeable sectors in the economy to collapse and non-tradeable sectors to multiply (Basedau & Lay, 2005, p. 14). The agricultural industry, for example, completely collapsed following the oil boom in the 1970s. The resulting lack of diversification in Nigeria’s economy makes it prone to unhealthy dependence and is largely in part responsible for the resulting vulnerability of the economy, which is of course also a hinderance to growth (Basedau & Lay, 2005, p. 14).

For decades, the presence of crude oil deposits in Nigeria has caused violent uprisings and serious environmental degradation in the Niger Delta (Ogege, 2011, p. 249). On this paradox of abundance to crude oil, Bannon and Collier (2003) maintain that the discovery of oil in low-income countries increases the risk of conflicts.

Nigeria is regarded as suffering from the “resource curse” because the state is unable to manage its natural resource abundance (Mähler, 2010). The country is endowed with many natural resources, including oil, gas, solid minerals, marine resources, agricultural produce and arable land². It is, however, one of the greatest ironies of the country that all these resources have been associated with intense conflict, sometimes of tragic dimensions. Despite the enormous wealth that has accrued from these resources, Nigeria is yet to experience any significant economic development (IMF, 2011). In the midst of this, controversies over the crucial question of natural resource control remains one of the main challenges that currently confronts the country (van de Ploeg, 2011).

¹ The term was introduced in the Netherlands in the 1960s when foreign revenue increased dramatically following the discovery and exploitation of gas for commercial purposes in the Province of Groningen and later on in other areas of the country. There was massive recruitment in the gas sector as many workers abandoned other sectors of the economy to the more profitable gas division. Even though it was first highlighted in the gas sector, the Dutch disease has transcended into other mineral sectors including crude oil. The Dutch Disease is also a result of the paradox of plenty or resource curse.

² Besides oil, Nigeria has over 40 billion tons of solid mineral deposits. Among these are: 1 billion tons of gypsum spread over many states; 42 million tons of bitumen; 3 billion tons of proven reserve of coal; over 7.5 million and 700 million tons of bentonite and baryte respectively; 1.5 million tons of rock salt; one of the world’s best gemstones deposit and an estimated 3 billion tons of kaolin and lots more such as aluminum, bauxite, columbite, copper, diamond, gold, phosphate, tantalite, tin, uranium and zinc (Khan, 1994).

1.1.4 Wealth distribution and incentives

The Niger Delta area existed even before the British created the Nigerian protectorate. According to Ngerebo-A (2013) the Niger Delta is one of the most richly endowed regions of the world with about 34 billion barrels of crude oil and falls amongst the seven biggest crude oil producers globally. The region also produces Bonny Light, one of the finest forms of crude oil in the world. Ariweriokuma (2009) asserts that the prowess of Nigeria is not limited to crude oil but extends to gas and with a deposit of 187 cubic feet (TFC). Awumo (2009) attributes all of the nations' oil and gas to the Niger Delta, writing that the Niger Delta region holds 100 percent of all gas and oil deposits in the country making it the economic heartbeat of Nigeria. Gboyega, søreide, Minh Le, and Shukla (2011) give a global pictorial ranking by attesting that Nigeria has the largest crude and gas reserves in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Ariweriokuma (2009), oil production is mostly handled by multinational companies and the Federal Government as represented by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Shell produces about 50 percent of Nigeria's crude oil and operates the largest joint venture while the other joint ventures belong to Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco, ENI/Agip and TotalfinalElf (Odularu, 2008, p. 8). Most of Nigeria's crude oil goes to the United Kingdom, after which the United States is Nigeria's largest trading partner (Odularu, 2008, p. 4). Despite trading with two of the wealthiest nations on the globe, the people of the Niger Delta fall amongst the poorest in the world because the revenue from crude oil and gas is not well distributed and managed.

In discussing how distribution has become a key factor in the conflict over oil in Nigeria, it must be noted that the term "distribution" can fall into several distinctly different categories. The first category is distribution of revenue coming from these resources while the second is the distribution of privileges and third is the distribution of positions (employment seats in positions of power) (Garuba, 2003). The distribution of revenue is most directly and problematically rooted to the general controversies surrounding revenue allocation in Nigeria.

The form of revenue allocation gives the impression of unfair treatment to the people of Nigeria's oil-producing regions who are often captured in the appellation of "the goose that lays the golden eggs" (Garuba, 2003, p. 127). The reward being sought in their struggle is an increase in diverted oil revenue to them, with many in the region asking for up to 50 percent of dividends. The unanimity of Niger Delta people on this issue was demonstrated in 2005 at the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) when regional representatives demanded that the

implementation of the 50 percent formula should start immediately at 25 percent with successive annual increases of 5 percent for another five years. This was a strategy to mitigate the possible negative effects the diversion of funds would have on Nigeria's financial status.

The second level in the controversies over revenue sharing focuses on the distribution of privileges associated with oil. Different ethnic groups in the Niger Delta are engaged in the controversies and the discussion consists chiefly of two complaints. The first are complaints voiced by different oil producing communities that the government has built up public amenities in places where the community has produced far less oil, whereas their own community has been neglected. Communities making these claims often argue that there is no fairness in the ways that the government disburses these "privileges" coming from oil. Recent efforts to address the alleged imbalances can be pinpointed in the establishment of the Federal Government's interventions in communities in Nigeria's oil producing states – i.e. the now defunct Oil Mineral Producing and Development Commission (OMPADEC) and its successor, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The second major complaint by oil producing communities against oil-multinationals is that the latter are not giving enough back to the communities, compared to what they take and destroy in that process, thereby failing to embody a spirit of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The third layer of controversy is tied to the distribution of positions. This problem also surfaces in two different forms: the first being the distribution of positions at the senior management levels in the various institutions created by the government to facilitate development in oil producing areas. This is true especially concerning the Oil Mineral Producing and Development Commission (OMPADEC) and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). There are often rivalries between different ethnic groups as to who should hold positions at the senior levels of these bodies, a tension which trickles down to local communities. The Isoko Youth Movement, for example, specifically wrote in their manifesto that their condition for peace is based on inclusion of an Isoko indigene into positions at a reconstituted OMPADEC. This also played out at the state level in 2007 when Governor Emmanuel Uduagha of Delta State objected to the Federal Government's chosen candidate to represent Delta State on the NDDC Board, arguing that he was not the state government's nominee for the position. In the wake of the creation of a Niger Delta Ministry in January 2009, the news went around to the effect that some ethnic groups within the Niger Delta opposed the appointment of Chief Ufot Ekaette (former Secretary to the Government of the Federation under President Obasanjo administration) by President Yar'Adua as minister for the new Ministry.

The second major manifestation of conflict over distribution of position has been based on persistent clamour by Niger Delta youths that their region is not being offered positions at the senior management levels by multinational oil companies. This again is an issue that has existed for quite some time. Many oil-companies, in response to this complaint, have argued that the youths are not qualified for the position they seek, and that the technical nature of the oil extraction business makes it unwise to employ incompetent men in a bid to satisfy ethnic and/or sectional interest. It is in this sense that the Bayelsa State Government is currently committed to pursuing youth-targeted human capital development programs (enshrined in the Education, Empowerment and Enforcement strategy) (Garuba, 2003, pp. 127-128).

Wealth distribution forms part of incentives in the political economy. Ostrom, Schroeder, & Wynne (1993) argue that incentives are produced within institutions. Accordingly, the existence of effective institutions will incentivise coordination, generate wealth, and vice versa. To them, incentives are the external stimuli of rewards and punishments that are related to certain types of actions (Ostrom, Gibson, Shivakumar, & Anderson, 2002, p. 6). This is centrally important as actors/agents always act according to their self-interest. In this regard, the institutional structures of a state can produce incentives for people to behave in a certain way, to invest or not invest, and to act out of public interest or involve in clientelistic behavior (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 32). Therefore, good institutions are key to creating incentives.

In Nigeria, the distribution of resources follows certain patterns within state institutions including the Federal Government, the states and the local government (Gboyega et al., 2011; Ikeji, 2011). Despite clear cut patterns, there have always been misgivings regarding the distribution of revenue in terms of what the Federal Government retains and what goes to the state and local governments. Omeje (2013) confirms that since oil became the backbone of the economy, revenue distribution has been consistently rocked by politics. He claims that the government retains obsolete laws and implements the said laws only when defending the interest of political elites in the economy. For example, by law, all land is State land, meaning that all resources belong to the state instead of the communities where they are located. The Federal Government only allocates 13 percent of revenue from petrol and gas resources to their regions of origin. Ngerebo-A (2013) breaks it down as follows: the Land Use Act of 1978 and the Petroleum Act of 1969 gave full control and ownership of both land and sea and all constituents therein to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

In essence, all revenue from oil exploration and exploitation belongs exclusively to the Federal Government under the shrouded guise of its political elites. However, with the demand for more from the oil producing states in the Niger Delta, contestations have developed between the Federal Government (backed by politicians and multinational companies) and the local communities. In a bid to manipulate and divert the attention of the population of the Niger Delta away from oil, Kalejaiye and Alliyu (2013) argue that political elites have provoked inter-ethnic disputes and political upheavals.

Ikeji (2011) presents a startling revelation, concurrent with this argument, that in the struggle for control of oil and gas resources, the Federal Government seized the Supreme Court of Nigeria and in April 2002 passed a ruling that excludes revenue from offshore drilling in the calculation of the revenue attributed to the oil producing states. Odularu (2008) alleges that the situation is even more pathetic with about 80 percent of oil wealth benefitting about one percent of the population. This one percent, according to Omeje (2013), is a faction of the political elites who dominate all sectors of power especially at the Federal level. This one percent forms tactical alliances and coalitions with multinational companies and other powerful individuals in order to evade taxes and would do anything to support dysfunctional institutions so that they themselves cannot be held accountable, giving rise to an atmosphere of political clientelism in Nigeria.

Gboyega et al. (2011), also support this claim. They write that representatives of political and military elites have huge bank accounts in foreign countries fattened from oil wealth and that these same elites gained access to their oil wealth via participation in politics. Meanwhile, as a result of very weak institutions which cannot hold people accountable or defend the rights of the marginalized, Odalonu (2015) argues that there has been an increase in illegal oil business involving expatriates as well as nationals in the form of oil theft, which has become very lucrative and has sustained an illegal economy. This oil theft (“oil bunkering”) has taken on a globalized character and contains serious negative consequences for the economic performance and reforms in Nigeria Garuba (2010).

1.2 Research question

This research is informed by the following research question: How has the political economy shaped the implementation of Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR Program and its prospect for sustainable peace in the region? Specifically, how have elements of political economy such as interests, incentives and institutions helped or hindered the peacebuilding goal of the Amnesty

Program? The main objective of this study is to empirically analyze the Niger Delta Amnesty Program as a response to resistance within the framework of political economy. It specifically investigates the roles of interests, incentives and institutions (political economy).

1.3 Problem statement

For decades, competing claims over access, ownership and control of oil has fueled violent and non-violent uprisings and resistance in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The discovery of oil in 1956 at Oloibiri with its attendant dividends has created disputes among local communities in the Niger Delta region, the Nigerian State and the Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs) concerning control over oil rents, environmental degradation, infrastructural neglect and underdevelopment (Agbonifo, 2018, pp. 1-2; Ahonsi, 2011, p. 28; Ifedi & Anyu, 2011, p. 76). Over the years, efforts by the government, MNOCs, international development agencies and other stakeholders to manage the conflict have resulted in unprecedented violence and militancy. Attempts to diffuse conflict have been arbitrary and often reliant on the deployment of the military because peacebuilding efforts have been unsustainable and intractable.

In 2009, the Federal Government Amnesty Program (FGAP) was launched in the Niger Delta. In line with the FGAP, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) granted amnesty to armed militias in the Niger Delta region. The amnesty program, which was part of a larger framework of the Nigerian government's efforts to resolve conflict between the Nigerian State, the multinationals, militant groups, and the Niger Delta communities as well as a response to the terrible security conditions prevalent in the Niger Delta, granted pardon to militants who were willing to lay down their arms in exchange for willingly allowing the continuation of oil exploitation in their communities. The sixty-day-long amnesty initiative included a Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) component which led to the successful agreement of hundreds of Niger Delta militants to hand over more than five hundred weapons, fourteen gunboats, and dozens of rocket launchers and mortar bombs that were in their possession (Reuters, 2009). According to a BBC report (2009), the amnesty that took place in Yenagoa, west of the oil city of Port Harcourt saw the relinquishing of hundreds of assault rifles, a number of rocket launchers, and at least twelve gunboats. The same report, however, mentions that it was not exactly clear how many heavy weapons were handed over, and that many of those presented appeared to be old and rusty, thereby casting doubts on the true efficacy of the initiative. Vanguard Newspaper (2009), also reporting on the Amnesty, recounts that on August 22, 2009 the Kula community (which was home to militants) in Akuku Toru Local Government

gave back 42 rifles, 371 rounds of ammunition and 14 dynamite explosives.³ The Amnesty Program was a great harbinger of peace and security to the Niger Delta region and was highly applauded by the regional and international community.

Despite initial excitement and broadly acclaimed acceptance of the amnesty and the DDR program, disagreements have been raised by various scholars, analysts and critics over the sustainability of the program. Having examined the Niger Delta Amnesty Program (NDAP) from its successes and failures, many of the above-mentioned analysts have voiced skepticism in the program's continuing ability to address questions of stability, peace and development in the region. Some scholars even contend that the program was a mere subterfuge reminiscent of a change in continuity of the exploitation of the Niger Delta oil resources, as they variously viewed it as "cash for peace" (Ikelegbe & Umukoro, 2016), "cash for arms" (Agbibo, 2015, p. 387; Ushie, 2013, p. 36), "fragile peace" (Eke, 2015, pp. 756-757; Osah & Amakihe, 2014, p. 2321), and "peace for oil" (Nwobueze & Inokoba, 2017; Obi, 2014, p. 250). These same scholars understand the Amnesty Program as an oil-driven response to the conditions seen in the Niger Delta and view the resulting peace from the program as a short-term solution. Others have held the opinion that both programs have led to a reduction in crime, violence, militancy, and sustenance of stability and security in the region (Ajibola, 2015; Akinwale, 2010). According to them, hostilities in the Niger Delta have subsided below the pre 1990-2009 level. In this regard, the Amnesty Program has incentivized peace in the region to some extent. To this end, government officials and the leadership of the Presidential Amnesty Program and the Foundation for Ethnic Harmony in Nigeria (FEHN)⁴, celebrated the 2009 Amnesty initiative as the 'most successful demobilisation ever held the world over' (Obi, 2014, p. 250). The Post-Amnesty Program (PAP) followed the initial sixty-day disarmament period and began the second and third phases of the program: disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. The debate remains ongoing, centered around questions about the effectiveness of the PAP and the possibilities PAP contains for the creation of sustainable peacebuilding in the region (Obi, 2014, p. 250).

The purpose of this research is not to decide on the validity of the arguments in the emerging debate or determine whether the program was successful or not; instead, it seeks to point out the lack of attention paid to the political economy in the analytical discourse surrounding the

³ For more information see: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2009/09/amnesty-and-militants-arms-surrender-how-far/>. Accessed on June 26, 2018.

⁴ The organization coordinating consultancies for post-amnesty training. For additional information see: <http://www.fehnnigeria.org>. Accessed on June 26, 2018.

Amnesty and DDR program in the Niger Delta. While authors like Nwokolo and Aghedo (2018), Agbonifo (2018), Ebiede (2017), Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016), and Dudu and Odalonu (2016) have investigated the program from mainly security, environmental, development and socio-political perspectives, yet, very little attention has been paid to the importance of political economy (Mohammed, Robinson, & Aliyu, 2014; Obi, 2014; Udoh & Chijioke, 2017). Recognizing the absence of this perspective, this dissertation seeks to contribute towards filling the research gap in terms of analyzing the political economy components of the Amnesty and DDR Program. A reading of scholarly reports on these subjects demonstrate that the political economy aspects have not been adequately explored.

The study further analyses the different approaches used to deal with contestations in the Niger Delta and how these approaches come to form tactical alliances, coalitions and strategies that become entangled in the debate on the political economy of peacebuilding (PEP). A political economy of peacebuilding allows us to understand it as a basis of competing political and economic interests and contending relations of power in which hegemonic powers seek to describe the character and outcome of the struggle for peace (Obi, 2014, p. 252). PEP focuses on the politics and economics that play in framing peacebuilding initiatives and development outcomes in war-torn societies (Pugh, 2005, p. 24). PEP illuminates how actors'⁵ agencies⁶; their incentives and institutions dictate and affect the pattern of peacebuilding (i.e. transforming societies that emerge from conflict). It examines the construction of the political economies of peace processes and peacebuilding, with emphasis on war-torn societies and the wider impact of the economy and shifts in the positionalities and construction of security and development (Pugh et al., 2008, p. 390). This certainly connects with the power imbalance that reinforces the project of liberal peacebuilding, and securitization in conflict contexts. The argument is that economic systems and economic behavior can be changed by the actors' agency to fit a securitized model of development and peacebuilding interventions can be hampered to achieve this (Pugh et al., 2008, p. 391). It looks at the state capitalist peacebuilding and development strategies in the Niger Delta (Shaw & Aluko, 1984, p. 13). This analysis emphasizes on the politics of the Amnesty and DDR Project within the liberal peace framework, drawing concrete example from Nigeria's Niger Delta region. It argues that elements of political economy such as interests, incentives and institutions cannot be ignored in the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR

⁵ An actor denotes not only individual people but also any organization that possess the capability to make and execute decisions (Lewis P., 2002, p. 18).

⁶ Agency is understood as the capacity to act upon situations (Hindess, 1988, p. 44; Sibeon, 1999, p. 139) or entities that are able to formulate and implement decisions (Lewis P., 2002, p. 17).

as a peacebuilding program. Contemporary concerns in international studies point to the existence of correlations between politics, economy, conflicts and peacebuilding. These concerns are visible in the growing tendency to discuss contemporary security events in a rentier state in the logic of a global political economy (GPE) (Gilpin, 2001, p. 9). Therefore, peacebuilding activities are not neutral in their normative orientation. Thus, this thesis examines the political economy of the Nigerian Government Amnesty Program (2009-2018) and its implications for peacebuilding in the region.

This study will analyze the key elements of a political economy, taking a critical look at institutions, interests and incentives that frame the Niger Delta Amnesty (NDA) and the DDR program as a peacebuilding project. The study utilizes three primary concepts of political economy as analytical framework: interest, incentives and institutions. Interests refer to contesting groups over the control of oil; incentives refer to due influence on the behaviours and actions of diverse groups; and institutions refer to formal institutions (state institutions); and informal institutions (non-state institutions) competing over oil rents in the Niger Delta. This research angle has been previously employed by scholars such as Hudson and Leftwich (2014) who wrote that a perspective on political economy emphasizes how interest, incentives and institutions frame and interpret the behaviour of agents and political processes and practices that affect peacebuilding outcomes (p. 6). Scholars like McLoughlin (2014) further support this assertion through a political economy based examination of the significant impact on development resulting from fundamental political and economic processes in society particularly, the incentives, interactions (connections), distribution, and contestation of power between different groups and individuals. The political economy paradigm provides an invaluable lens through which to understand the motives and drivers of the amnesty program. This lens will be used to specifically place focus on analyzing interactions between different groups in the Niger Delta such as the Government and political elites, MNOCs, militias and the Niger Delta communities to study how they compete to exploit oil for private gain.

1.4 Overview of research methodology

1.4.1 Structural framework of the political economy approach

The political economy approach first surfaced in academia at the beginning of the 1980s in what was projected to be a critical response to neoliberal theory (Engel, 1994, p. 13). Shaw and Aluko (1994), one of the proponents of the political economy approach, argued that neoliberalism is characterized by an “essentially super-structural and not sub-structural” level

of analysis, a “descriptive not critical” mode of analysis and, a “behavioural not a materialist” method (p. 10). Shaw and Aluko focused on “modes and relations of production, the division of labour and inequalities and contradiction”. They anticipated that the implications of such a method would tend towards “revolution” rather than “reformation”, “towards disengagement and self-reliance rather than renegotiation and incorporation”. They further posit that the political economy perspective is radical, entailing a fundamental reassessment of Africa’s place and potential in the global system. Political economy according to him is the “economic” substructure taken to be central in explaining “political” or diplomatic superstructure” (p.11-17).

Manning (1975) refers to political economy as socio-economic analysis of the production and utilization of an economic surplus (p. 24). He views this from an anti-capitalist perspective where new patterns of investment by large private firms concentrate on production and use of capital-intensive techniques. The surplus (excess of output over socially necessary consumption) ends up being mostly exported from the periphery to the centre and is also consumed in part by the African employees of these firms, but it is not focused on productive investment (Manning, 1975, p. 25). This has resulted in a stagnant economic growth and/or growth without development with the rise of an elite or sub-elite class, which dominate the bureaucracy.

Hudson and Leftwich (2014) on their part present a vivid analysis of political economy, building their discourse on three generations of political economy. Their argument is that political economy has become the economics of politics instead of political analysis. They posit that political economy is the way political and economic processes interact (p. 6).

The first generation of political economy, according to them, focuses on governance challenges, particularly issues related to good governance. This is seen from a highly technical, administrative, managerial, capacity building and, subsequently, public sector management perspective in the 1990s. Hudson and Leftwich’s (2014) second generation of political economy concentrates on historical, structural, institutional and political features that frame the settings within which actors and agents work. Hudson and Leftwich evidence this position using the DFID Drivers of Change, Sida’s Power Analysis, and the Dutch Strategic Governance and Corruption Analysis (SGACA) frameworks. Finally, Hudson and Leftwich’s third generation of political economy is focused on the premises in which institutional incentives frame their behavior to create intentionally positive or dysfunctional developmental outcomes. Existing at the end of the process, the center of third generation political economy pays more attention to

how interest, incentives and institutions, shape and justify how agents behave, as well as places emphasis on political processes and practices that affect outcomes (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014). According to the authors, the third-generation political economy is the economics of politics. All three generations of political economy contain a common ground: their analytical approaches concentrate on institutions, structure, agency, ideas, contingency and above all else power (p. 6).

This research makes use of the conceptual tool and analytical framework made available by third-generation political analysis in an attempt to better understand the contested dynamics of political and peacebuilding processes. More specifically, employing third-generation political analysis can help also broaden our understanding of how institutions generate opportunities and resources that agents/actors use and create space for manoeuvre (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 10). In the case of Nigeria, the third-generation political analysis approach provides the possibility for understanding how political elites in Nigeria interact and contest not only amongst themselves but also against the structural and institutional contexts in which they operate in, exploiting and manipulating the very same resources and opportunities they create.

A deep analysis of the political economy of the Niger Delta might reveal how power and resources are distributed and disputed by taking into consideration three principal elements into (interest, incentives, and institutions) and mobilizing these elements to provide explanations about issues of justice, security and development in the region. In order to effectively interpret these elements, the study builds its analysis on two basic approaches to the political economy of peacebuilding in the Niger Delta: the neoliberal and the neopatrimonial approaches. These two approaches serve as the foundations to guide comprehension of information surrounding the contestations, tactical alliances, coalitions and strategies that exist in the Niger Delta and subsequently how these elements blend together to form a mirror for the conception of justice in the region. Finally, adopting the political economy approach in studying the Niger Delta further allows us to analyze the tendency of actors to manipulate available institutions in order to reinforce, support, safeguard or protect their interest and what they perceive as justice.

1.4.1.1 Neoliberalism Approach

The neoliberal approach focuses on democracy and market economy. The dominant paradigm in contemporary peacebuilding is liberal peace, which is a neoliberal idea. Pugh et al. (2008) identify five predominant components of liberal philosophy on the political economy of peace processes. The first component argues that states should liberalize their economies and embrace

globalization, which will promote sustainable peace. The second states that the promotion of regional cooperation will foster bilateral peace settlements as well as regional economic and political integration. The third posits that, apart from the direct causal impacts of commercial interdependence, globalization engenders various new styles of politics and identity. This indirectly supports peacemaking through the blurring of state boundaries and disintegration of traditional nation-states and a rise in the flow of global flows of goods, capitals and people. Further, globalization has contributed to increasingly complex governance in nation states. It has also helped facilitate the decline of traditional-state-centric national identities while fostering a concomitant upsurge in new forms of sub-national, ethnic and religious identities, thereby witnessing profound effects on peace processes as a result. The fourth predominant component rests that contemporary liberal philosophy views poverty as an existing relative to conflict and thus poverty is a problem that must be addressed for security reasons as well as development reasons. The fifth component relies on the assumption that business actors are a powerful and principally positive constituent for peace and that growth in private sector investment (both foreign and domestic) is vital to help conflict prone countries achieve peace (Pugh et al., 2008, pp. 16-19).

While sensible, Pugh et al.'s framework for liberal peace framework contains some contradictions. First, it is not proven with certainty that a positive relationship between commerce and economic openness on the one hand yields peace and peace processes in the other. At odds with this idea is the fact that amongst the world's most economically open and globally penetrated societies are many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America that are also persistently home to civil and cross-border violence (Pugh et al., 2008, p. 20). The second major pitfall in Pugh et al.'s model is its silence towards questions of economic inequality, uneven distribution and the political implications of both (Paris, 1997; Pugh et al., 2008). For our purposes, when applied to the case of Nigeria, Pugh et al.'s approach shows the contradictions surrounding the neoliberal peacebuilding used by the Nigerian state.

Neoliberal economic policies usually promote external economic assistance in management and reconstruction of conflict in vulnerable communities. In the case of Nigeria, however, these policies have failed. Neoliberalism forms the component of a hegemonic project seeking to concentrate power and wealth in the hands of elite groups in Nigeria by transferring state-owned assets to private individuals and Trans-National Corporations (TNC) (Hahn, 2015, p. 143). It is evident from a global perspective that international development agendas have more to do with political and economic interests than with benevolent pro-poor development and peacebuilding

(Hahn, 2015, p. 144). Furthermore, neoliberal peace initiatives have demonstrated over time that peace support operations are big businesses for the leading state funders of UN missions (US, European Union member states, Japan, Canada and Australia) (Tom, 2017, p. 40). In this way, it can be argued that it is likewise beneficial for these UN actors to participate in peacebuilding efforts in conflict prone regions. The underlying interests behind liberal market reforms and natural resource mining contracts in the aftermath of deadly conflicts and foreign direct investments in the strategic mining sectors – post-conflict (Bavinck, Pellegrini, & Mostert, 2014).

In his book *After Hegemony*, Keohane (1984) contends that states choose policies that reflect the aggregate preferences of the dominant societal coalition. In the case of Nigeria, this dominant societal coalition is comprised of multinational oil companies, the Federal Government, and wealthy elites. This group stands outside the governed population, which Keohane and Nye (1987) both agree that State-created institutions mostly rely upon. They also argue that foreign investment is not an uncontested blessing for developing countries. Instead, Keohane and Nye both contend that neoliberal economic programs are geared towards promoting domestic economic and political objectives.

Taking a look at Nigeria, Bergsten, Horst, and Moran (1978) argue that governments in developing countries are rationally-minded and operate according to a changing global economic and political environment. Bergsten et al. view the Nigerian government as rational but characteristically influenced by certain global conditions such as an increase in market competition among investors in the Niger Delta (p. 374). Liberals like Keohane and Nye (2001) assert that the Nigerian government has provided absolute gains for the Niger Delta communities, be it economic wealth or military security. In short, the Nigerian state becomes the key actor and acts to promote its own interests and interpretations of national interests. The liberal political economy looks at the fairness of the world economy and its benefits: they believe in freedom of private powers rather than public powers and see the market as a socially embedded institution.

By building upon the different debates and positions raised by liberals, this research seeks to expose controversies produced by the type of neoliberal peacebuilding introduced by the Nigerian State between 2009 and 2018. It will be of great use throughout this paper to question the politics that surround most peace deals in Africa, particularly the amnesty program in the Niger Delta. In the Niger Delta, neoliberal peacebuilding approaches were not well suited to

tackle socio-economic grievances and instead became part of the factors influencing conflict and violence. This thesis argues that neoliberal peace does not represent an emancipatory peace strategy (Fukuyama, 1989; Doyle, 1986) and as such, in the Niger Delta, subjugation rather than emancipation continues to be injected into the politics of peacebuilding. The Niger Delta, rife with contradictions, in fact becomes a critique of neoliberal thinking and peacebuilding.

It must be stressed that using international intervention approaches which insist on liberal constitutions, democracy, human rights and justice, separation of power, rule of law and development failed in Nigeria (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 175). These government policies have instead fostered historical injustice and inequality in the Niger Delta. The arguments are offered in the spirit of legitimacy where the government of Nigeria, uses legitimate liberal instruments such as the law (that is amnesty to Niger Delta militants) to foster their agenda. This can hence be described under the law as “masking”.

Interrogating the model of neoliberal peace opens up the possibility to reflect on the objectification of violence in the Niger Delta region and the rationale for the political economy of peacebuilding. Neoliberal peace has been responsible for global capitalism in the region through the presence and influence of foreign multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta exploiting oil at low cost with cheap labour. The neoliberal model has also ignored the socio-economic problems these communities now face, such as environmental pollution and degradation as well as aggravated vulnerability in the Niger Delta region. It is unarguable that the search for global capital by multinational oil companies resulted in inequalities, unemployment, and poor health conditions including abject poverty. As such, the Niger Delta region finds itself within a vicious cycle of poverty, desperation and violence (Tom, 2017, p. 74).

The case of Nigeria illustrates that peacebuilding is for the most part interest-driven. Neoliberal peacebuilding in Nigeria has not promoted the democratic institutions and norms it advocates for, yet it promotes the shared interests of the African political elites and external free market entrepreneurs (H. Gray, 2015, p.69; Schultze-Kraft, 2017, p. 616-617). Frequent relapses into violence and poor levels of peace in the Niger Delta warrant the need for a strong questioning of the neoliberal peacebuilding practices in the Niger Delta. The collective memory of the people of the region, as evidenced in the interviews conducted as part of this research, point out the significant gravity of returning to armed hostilities to uphold political order. The neoliberal theory will be used in this research to show how different perspectives and practices of

peacebuilding tend to project different vested interests and how this has affected communities in the Niger Delta.

1.4.1.2 Neopatrimonialism approach

Gray (2011) defines neopatrimonialism as the technique by which the allocative state distributes oil wealth and manages the elite relationships that substitute for wider legitimacy or electoral mandates (pp. 6-7). Gray also contends that rentierism is linked to the concept of neopatrimonialism because in rentierism, it is a very small but important group within society that is involved with the generation of rents and in the sustaining of ruling the elites. In other words, neopatrimonialism is a post-independence method of distributing resources (Tom, 2017, p. 29). Erdmann and Engel (2006, p. 18) refer to the concept of neopatrimonialism as a mixture of two partly-interwoven coexisting types of domination, namely patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic domination. Under patrimonialism, all power relations between the ruler and the ruled (political and administrative) are personal relations; there is no differentiation between the private and the public realm. Under neopatrimonialism, however, the distinction between the private and the public at least formally exists and is accepted, and public references can be made to this distinction.

The Nigerian state is said to be a neopatrimonial state (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). The behavior of the government is rentier-neopatrimonial. The government has claimed ownership over all-natural resources and distributes them based on patron-client to political elite relation (Chazan, Lewis, Mortimer, Rothchild, & Stedman, 1999). Existing discourses on neopatrimonialism allow us to examine and question how resources and power in Nigeria are being distributed. The rentier-neopatrimonial nature of the state has reinforced political dynamics and pervasive rent-seeking within economic policy (Lewis, 1994, pp. 437-438).

Social scientist Mcloughlin (2012) concurs with the debate that neopatrimonialism undermines the functioning and institutionalization of formal political systems in fragile states, particularly such as Nigeria. Young (2004) also writes that the establishment of politics combined with the neopatrimonial nature of reciprocity and exchanges in Africa is 'the instrumentalization of disorder'. This idea, however, has been disputed since there exists some sort of correlation between neo-patrimonialism and economic growth. Nigeria is a system of patron-client rule wherein elites and political leaders exploit public resources and distribute these resources to their political followers in exchange for their loyal support during elections (Isaksson & Bigsten, 2017, p. 621). The situation in Nigeria demonstrates controversially that patrimonialism does

not necessarily preclude state citizen accountability (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997, p. 63). The country possesses what German sociologist and philosopher Max Weber calls patrimonial authority⁷ (Pitcher, Moran, & Johnston, 2009, p. 126). The economy is highly entrenched by politicians who influence this key sector, which depends on oil rents from the Niger Delta, and promotes corruption, rent-seeking, predation and patronage in the country. All these actions are in line with the spirit of patrimonial authority (Tom, 2017, p. 29).

The neopatrimonial concept argues for a particular style of leadership in Nigeria where the leader is at the centre of the elite network, surrounded by humble subaltern elites that are obedient to their leader yet still manage to encourage an atmosphere of competition (this is to monitor any potential rivalry for power) (Bill & Springbord, 2000). All government groups in Nigeria consist of leaders and a small portion of strategic elites. These groups bargain with others to form tactical alliances, which grow into a larger elite network that supports the government. This elite network strengthens traditional forms of privilege and builds new elite dynamics as conditions impose the need. These elites establish their own patron client networks in the Niger Delta into the neopatrimonial systems, institutions and social entities in Nigeria (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Zolberg, 1969). They also act as a vector through which resources, political order, and power are centrally distributed to different groups and forces in the country, along with the passage of political information and demands for patronage down from the top (Gray, 2011, p. 7).

In their discussion of the phenomenon of “political clientelism”, Bagaji et al. (2011) point out that clientelism in Nigeria is embedded in an oligarchic network of bureaucracy in which oligarchs sponsor political candidates in favour of contracts and economic benefits (Bach & Gazibo, 2012). Voting in Nigeria is also often based on particularized loyalties based on kinship and ethnic ties. As a result of clientelism and patterns of voting, material incentives accrue to the loyalty groups instead of being dispersed towards broad-based accountability (Lemarchand & Legg, 1972; Kura, 2014). Aderonke and Awosika (2013) approach the issue of political clientelism from the perspective of a syndrome called “political *godfatherism* which is undermining genuine democratic exchange in Nigeria. *Godfathers* select candidates for political parties, sponsor them, and in turn, these elected officials pay homage to their *godfathers* who control both the electorates and the parties in the country. Godfatherism is an advanced form of clientelism and neopatrimonialism. It is believed to be a cultural element

⁷ Contrasting ways ruler may establish authority by securing consent from their subjects.

where the ancestors are believed to communicate with the living and respect of the elders and their authority is applied without any challenge (Oyebode, 2014, pp. 138-139).

Writing on the same subject, Omobowale (2011) sees political “patronage” as the link between the government and the governed while Omeje (2013) and Garuba (2010) highlight the aspect of domination by political elites in oil transactions. Erdmann and Engel (2006) approach the debate from the perspective of the co-existence of patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic elements of domination. Their investigation goes further towards constituting elements of hybrid structures caused by patrimonial domination and legal-rational bureaucratic domination. These hybrid structures often take the shape of obscure public and private domains, provoking insecurity and uncertainty about the conduct and role of both institutions and agents in the country (pp. 10-17). Neopatrimonial dynamics are prevalent in Nigeria, especially in the Niger Delta. This dynamic serves the elite by actively strengthening alliances and solidarity, managing oil rents, and controlling business interactions thereby strengthening new forms of capitalism irrespective of the impact of the changing market and global environment (Schlumberger, 2008).

The neopatrimonial state of elite behavior in the Niger Delta, (including struggles between significant elites within government institutions as well as lower-level sub-elites) has been the driving force behind misguided political and economic policies in the country. In the Niger Delta, patrons appoint clients who obtain rent privileges from the state at the detriment of the masses who see no benefit from the profits generated from oil rents (Erdmann & Engel, 2006, p. 22). The misallocation of wealth, corruption, waste and inefficiency in government institutions have blurred democracy in the country. Such neopatrimonial behaviour provides room for Nigerian elites and their patrons to reinforce new economic opportunities for themselves and their clients, thereby creating a large framework of clientelism and neopatrimonialism in the country as a rentier state (Médard, 1982, p. 165). Eisenstadt (1973), however, see clientelism and neopatrimonialism as essentially the same thing, connected by their shared “uncertainty” of public institutions and different only because they exist as individual and collective goods. Thus, clientelism involves individual benefits from patron to client while neopatrimonialism entails collective benefits from an individual to a larger group (Erdmann & Engel, 2006, p. 21).

1.4.2 Comment on sources

1.4.2.1 Research design

- Case Study

This research will be operationalized through a single case study. The case in question is a contemporary issue. The research intensively explores the Niger Delta region and the entire Nigeria polity for analysis. The choice of a case study is to focus on a “bounded case” in order to better understand and gain deeper insights into the amnesty program and the DDR while taking caution not to generalize. Hence, insights within this bounded case study enable us to understand these programs from the point of view of a social actor. This method is used to understand the social relations between diverse groups in the Niger Delta with particular focus placed on three elements of political economy (interests, incentives and institutions) that motivate peacebuilding. I am aware that various actors (local, regional, national and international) interact at multiple scales. This makes the Niger Delta region to be connected to the macro-global political economy through its oil wealth and the interaction of various actors at multiple scale.

1.4.2.2 Research method

- Qualitative research method

A qualitative research methodology was used to generate the data for this study. This research methodology was selected because this research seeks to understand certain investigations and phenomena from the point of view of people who were directly affected by the Amnesty and DDR Program. The research is grounded in the philosophical underpinning of Max Weber’s “*verstehen*” (understanding social action) which seeks insight into understanding an actor’s action from his point of view (Emmet & Macintyre, 1970, p. 10). It is also the understanding of the actions of actors in terms of their motives and goal. To Weber, *verstehen* is “subjective interpretation” as it enables us to find out what actors mean in their actions, in contrast to the meaning, which this action has for the actor’s partner or neutral observer (Abel, 1948; Emmet & Macintyre, 1970). *Verstehen* illuminates our understanding of social reality as experienced by the people of the Niger Delta in their daily lives (Abel, 1948). In terms of qualitative data, the research relied on thick data gathered from interviews and a variety of secondary data sources to provide a broader understanding of how elements of political economy are reflected in the Niger Delta. Content and discourse analyses were used to analyze secondary sources. The

selected methods of analysis show how contestation can radiate into interest, incentives and institutions. The analysis also specifically investigates how political elites manipulate legislations, the police, and the court systems to advance their own interests and agenda. Likewise, content and discourse analysis are employed to understand how the political elites in Nigeria use legitimate instruments such as the law to mask their actions. The overall goal of analysis is to identify policy and practice gaps in the available literature as well as generate new valid knowledge.

- **Sample Size**

Credible respondents were selected which enabled me to get reliable and valid information for my research in order to validate my own observations. The respondents selected had special experiences, expertise and were knowledgeable and familiar with the socio-economic and political depictions of my case study. Purposive sampling was used to choose the respondents. Another technique I adopted was to use various networks. In this regard, I employed snowball sampling where I was recommended to other resource persons and people who had a broad knowledge on my subject matter. I also used facilitators who assisted me to get access to certain institutions and actors. They were both state and non-state facilitators and enabled me get access to militants, government officials, NGOs and academic experts.

1.4.2.3 Data generation method

I deployed best conduct with the political economy approach to determine the interest, incentives and institutions that framed the Niger Delta Amnesty Program and DDR.

- **Secondary sources**

As my research subject touched upon contested issues in the Niger Delta region, secondary sources to support this research necessarily took different avenues. First, I analyzed the government Gazette (including General Notices and Statutory Instruments in Nigeria) which proved to be valuable. Next, came the analysis of government legislations (such as the Nigerian Government National Assembly Revenue Allocation Derivation Law, The Nigerian Petroleum Decree and Bill, The Land Use Decree, Offshore Oil Revenue Decrees, the National Inland Waterways Authority and the Amnesty legislation) to draw observations on policy versus practice. It is worth stressing that written sources originating from within the government are usually difficult to access due to bureaucracy except when addressed for the national or international public. However, the research includes government sources, including public

statements made by different successive governments on the problems of the Niger Delta and the Amnesty, official reports (report from: the Willink Commission; the Belgore Commission report; Ministry of Niger Delta; the Technical Committee on Niger Delta report; report from the Presidential Commission in charge of the Amnesty Program, etc.). In addition, I make use of records that could help to create a better understanding of Nigerian political economy (such as internal policy papers, memoranda, protocols of deliberations in parliament, staff lists, declarations, meeting minutes, briefing reports training reports, DDR Program reports, etc.) which will be released by the National Archives of Nigeria. This policy related data is significant to the institutions that enact laws and provide oversights on these laws and is thus critical to my research because the information contained is very authentic.

Second, I explore an array of documentary analysis and archival information obtained from Nigerian newspapers, both pro-government and critical to the establishment. General articulations on Amnesty are included, such as programmatic speeches covered by local media and interviews found in international newspapers. A thorough analysis of the contents of Nigeria's media was, therefore, inevitable. This made allusions to the government-influenced daily *Guardian*, *Business Times*, *Herald*, *Channels*, and *NTA* etc. Furthermore, this refers to privately-owned weeklies such as *Nigerian Tribune*, *the Punch*, *Vanguard*, *Daily Trust*, *Sahara Reporters*, and *Premium Times*, all published in Nigeria. I made additional use of transcripts from radio and video broadcasts in Nigeria and other African regional stations outside of Nigeria like *VoxAfrica*, *BBC Africa*, *RFI* and *Africa Magic news* etc. I also employed reliable summaries of World Broadcasts from sources such as the *BBC*, *CNN*, *France 24*, and *Al Jazeera*. These secondary data sources are to an extent used as a substitute for a lack of unbiased primary sources. They are also included to give perspectives into contestations that exist in Nigeria and how people conceptualize the government with regard to the political economy (interest, incentives and institutions). These sources also enable us to see how the Nigerian government situates itself between the boundaries of peacebuilding and justice.

Third, the research employed social commentaries obtained by crowdsourcing information on social media networks. Networks analyzed include blogs, YouTube videos, documentaries and chats, Facebook content, and Twitter posts related to the Niger Delta conflict and the amnesty. Although these sources have been criticized for ethical reasons, they still fit within the purposes of my study to analyze how different groups perceived and received the Amnesty and DDR program. These portals are also relevant because they share new and recent developments

regarding the Niger Delta with the world, thereby enabling us to see how policy and practices are shaped.

Finally, I was able to gather information from both international and local think tanks and other institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Kingdom Department For International Development (DFID), African Development Bank (AFDB), Amnesty International (AI), Transparency International (TI), United Nations (UN), International Crisis Group (ICG), Human Rights Watch (HRW), United States AID (USAID), African Union (AU), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and non-government organizations (NGOs). These sources are reliable because they are critical institutions that write and document on conflict, peacebuilding, political economy and issues of justice in the Niger Delta. In addition, I also perused information from books and journal articles. The analysis of published secondary sources alone could certainly have established a sound basis for an interpretation of the discourses on how amnesty is instrumentalized for personal gain. It was therefore important to apply these sources because they are cost-effective and easily accessible to the public.

- **Semi-structured in-depth interviews**

The research used semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussion sessions to complement myriad secondary sources. The choice to include interviews was important because respondents provide unique understanding of their attitudes, opinions, perceptions, feelings, and sentiments regarding the subject matter (the Amnesty program and DDR). Conducting interviews allowed me to gain additional contact information of individuals who are known to have broad knowledge in this area. Personal relationships forged with interviewees made it easier to get hold of documents, which are not often accessible to the public, some that would usually be referred to as “confidential” such as reports and mission statements.

The study used an interview guide. In this case, a list of specific issues for exploration was established depending on the category of respondents and the issues they were likely to be knowledgeable about. This gave me the flexibility to probe and prompt respondents. Altogether, forty (40) respondents were interviewed. These respondents are represented on the table below (see tab. 1.1).

Table 1. 1: Number and Types of Respondents Interviewed and with whom I had Focus Group Discussion (FDGs) sessions with.

| | Type of Respondents | Interviewees |
|----|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Ex-Militants | 5 |
| 2 | Community Elders | 5 |
| 3 | Nigerian military/Security Forces | 3 |
| 4 | Staff of the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on the Niger Delta | 1 |
| 5 | Staff of the Ministry of the Niger Delta Affairs | 3 |
| 6 | Staff of the Niger Delta Development Cooperation in Port Harcourt | 2 |
| 7 | Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) | 10 |
| 8 | Academia | 11 |
| 9 | Total of Respondents | 40 |
| 10 | Two FDGs | 6 and 5 participants per group |

Source: Author’s compilation

- Focus group discussion sessions (FDGs)

Information was collected through the interaction of groups relating to the Amnesty and DDR program. Two focus group discussion sessions were held: one in Abuja with a group of six (6) youth leaders from the Niger Delta, one of them being an ex-militant commander, and another discussion held at Okrika village with a group of five (5) elders comprising of three (3) women and two (2) men. The FDGs provided a platform for individuals and groups to narrate their experiences while facilitating our understanding of factual and insightful accounts into the events that took place in the region. Thus, it provided understanding on the cultural, ideological and social narratives of why and how people became militants, their impact on the entire region, as well as their motivations for accepting the amnesty offer.

FDGs were also complemented by observation. This was backed by “verstehen” which allowed the researcher to observe the behaviors of the actors. It also enabled the researcher to understand the actions of actors in terms of their motives and goals.

1.4.2.4 Method of data analysis

Qualitative data collected was analyzed using thematic content and discourse analysis. This allowed me to analyze the most important content. As a result, all thick data was reduced into categories. First, the thick/raw data collected was organized by classifying and labelling according to the names, dates, times, and places and where the interviews were conducted. This eased the transcription of the interviews. Second, I adopted the immersion approach. I listened to the audio recordings of the interviews several times. Each day an interview was conducted, I replayed the audio and listened to them while still on the field. Immersing myself into the thick data allowed me to gain insight into interpreting the research questions. Third, I generated different categories and themes to code the data. Fourth, I coded the data into categories and themes relating to the opinions of respondents on the causes of conflict, the management of the conflict, the designing and implementation of the Amnesty and DDR Program as well as related interests, incentives and institutions associated with the program. After coding the data, I jotted down key points that helped guide my analysis and interpretation. This was later followed by offering a broad interpretation of the coded data. I did compare and contrast the different parts of the data analyzed. This was done through inferences and deduction. Furthermore, after deducing, I employed alternative understanding as part of my analysis. I looked for multiple sources and points of views to draw conclusions on the political economy of armed conflict, the amnesty program and DDR. The last process was to write the final report of the case study, which seeks to contribute by highlighting that elements of political economy such as interests, incentives and institutions should not be ignored during Amnesty and DDR.

1.5 Challenges in the field

I faced several challenges during the course of my research trip. First and foremost, were the obvious challenges relating to personal security and instability in the area. General safety was a constant concern. Looming over the basic logistic challenges of travelling in Nigeria was the political atmosphere of Nigeria at the time: the country was locked into a political stalemate and confronted with multiple national security challenges such as extremism from Boko Haram, right to self-determination by the new Biafra uprisings as well as the conflict between Fulani herdsman and farmers in the middle belt, making safety a huge concern in Abuja. The Niger Delta region is a war zone and poses great risk to researchers who willingly subject themselves to the risks associated with being in proximity of constant crimes, robbery, kidnapping, human trafficking and piracy endemic to the region. In the few areas I could access, I hired a local security guard and a guide to take me around. There was traffic and bad roads in both Port

Harcourt and in the villages, and the cost of hiring taxis were very expensive. As a result of this insecure environment and the risk associated with it, I could not access the entire region. It is expensive to conduct field studies in a war-torn region situated in the difficult swampy mangroves of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and ultimately, I was also confined by limited financial resources.

Furthermore, I also faced difficulties related to the administrative and bureaucratic nature of the state and various institutions. It was challenging to book an audience (interviews) with state and local government officials, and to get authorization to access offices. I was often confronted with the long waiting times and cancellation of appointments at short notice. Another interesting complexity was linked to trust and suspicion from both the government and the public. Taking into cognizance the sensitive nature of the oil sector and the Niger Delta in Nigeria, I was perceived as a spy and many people, especially the government officials, ex-militants and respondents were not receptive to my probes. This was mitigated by me taking informed decisions on how best to approach them, gaining familiarity and cooperation with the population, in order not to create suspicion and mistrust. In tandem with standard social research ethics, respondents were debriefed and had the option to withdraw their participation at any point in time and without consequences. In this written report, the names of places and individuals have been anonymized using numbers to protect their identity and to maintain confidentiality.

1.6 The structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is structured into six chapters. Each chapter is divided into subsections. Chapter One, the introductory chapter, gives a general background to the study. It presents the key research question, objective, methodology, methods of data collection and analysis. The chapter introduces the emerging debates relating to the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR Program through the use of theoretical and empirical assumptions that are further analyzed in the following chapters. Most importantly, the section frames the debate by reviewing relevant theoretical and empirical literature on political economy related to conflict and peacebuilding. This presentation of information exposes the gaps in currently available research.

Chapter Two explores the origins and dynamics of the conflict in the Niger Delta. The first section lays out a historical timeline of events spanning precolonial, colonial, independent and post independent Nigeria and discusses the different government responses used to manage the conflict. The second section critically examines the Nigerian political economy. Empirical and

secondary literature evidence a rentier economy in Nigeria, which relies on oil, rents as the main source of revenue for the country. Here we interrogate the nature and character of the Nigerian state which is rentier-neopatrimonial as is suggested by supporting literature. It specifically focuses on how the rentier-neopatrimonial character of the state has significantly contributed to contestations amongst different groups in the Niger Delta.

Chapter Three analyzes the role of institutions. Specifically, the chapter investigates the agency of actors as well as the people operating institutions in Nigeria and how they create opportunities and resources that agents/actors manipulate, specifically in regard to the Amnesty and DDR Program. The first section examines state institutions and how they interact amongst themselves, while, the second section takes a critical look at non-state institutions. The third part analyses the interaction between state and non-state institutions and how they produce the program. The fourth section of the chapter discussed the different encounters between state, non-state and international institutions. The last section discusses empirical and secondary literature evidencing the impacts of these institutions on the implementation of the Amnesty and DDR Program. This leads to a discussion of how the actors that control these states, non-state and international institutions tend to manipulate the institutions that are available in order to reinforce, to support, safeguard or protect their interests. In examining the interaction of these institutions, the chapter gives a vivid portrayal of the character of these institutions and how this has affected the outcome of the type of DDR that was implemented in the Niger Delta Region.

Chapter Four examines the different actors and interest groups in the Niger Delta. It further looks at the significant role that interest plays as an accelerating driver of the conflict in the region. Section one identifies the key actors, their correlations, capacities, resources, strategies as well as their incentives to continue the exploitation and control of oil rents in the Niger Delta. Section two captures the various contested interests and social encounters of actors and how the common interest of various groups (the government, MNOCs and Oil communities) come together to form networks of patronage and tactical alliances as well as to defect or break the alliances in order to pursue their agendas. Literature is referenced that illustrates how the interest over resources creates alliances. This leads to a discussion of how interest has incentivized decisions and strategies to address the conflict that the Amnesty and DDR Program addresses.

Chapter Five provides a detailed analysis of the Amnesty and DDR program from the perspective of the neoliberal peace approach. The first section analyses the different processes of conceptualization, negotiation and implementation of the DDR program. Furthermore, empirical literature indicated that in conceptualizing the DDR Program, the Nigerian government adopted a minimalist approach, which focused on addressing insecurity and instability instead of a maximalist approach, which encompasses the latter, as well as enhance development opportunities in order to address the root causes of the conflict. The second part of the chapter describes how the Nigerian government shifts its position in implementing the program from a neoliberal approach to a neopatrimonial perspective especially whenever it fits the interest of the government. This is backed by literature that revealed that Niger Delta DDR is a mix of a neoliberal-neopatrimonial peacebuilding program.

Chapter Six concludes the study and shows how the case study has been able to answer the main research question. The chapter also mentions the theoretical contributions of the research as well as exposes the gaps in the research and points out possible areas for further study on the Niger Delta.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICIZING OIL CONFLICT IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION

2 Introduction

This chapter covers the history of oil conflict in the Niger Delta region through an examination of natural resources, ethnic conflict and political developments in this region of Nigeria. The goal of this chapter is to communicate a brief yet thorough history of the historical situation in Nigeria over time and the country's transition into economic dependence on oil exports. The first part of the chapter analyzes the origins and dynamics of conflict in the Niger Delta region. It presents the different issues that span the pre-colonial, colonial, and independent eras in the Niger Delta.

In the first section, we trace the presence of militancy in the Niger Delta by identifying the current primary militarized operators, who these parties have been in the past, what their interests are, how they operate, and how their interactions have impacted Nigeria's history and continue to affect the oil economy in the Niger Delta region. In the second part of the chapter, the nature and degree of influence of the Nigerian government is also considered through an examination of the role that civic institutions play in determining the dynamics of armed conflict. The final section of the chapter brings together the previous topics and combines them into a comprehensive presentation of Nigeria's political economy. This analysis places specific emphasis on the solidification of Nigeria's current rentier-neopatrimonial state by discussing how Nigeria's economy suffers from both internal and external shock factors, such as the decrease in the global price of oil and sets the groundwork for understanding Nigeria's political economy as it moves into the future.

2.1 Analyzing the Origins and dynamics of the Niger Delta Conflict

The Niger Delta has a history of agitation. A review of the area's past reveals definite patterns, which fall into three distinct time periods: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. Throughout all three periods, a blend of three main factors form the conditional basis for the agitation and conflict in the Niger Delta. The first factor is state authorities within Nigeria but outside the Niger Delta exerting control to the Delta region; the second factor is the presence of lucrative commodities (availability of oil in the Niger Delta); and the third factor is resistance to exploitation by the people of the Niger Delta (World Bank, 2008, p. 4). These three factors play key roles in understanding the history of oil conflict within the Niger Delta. It is important to

note that the first two factors share the similarity of existing as institutions while the third factor remains constant and unchanging throughout the last two periods (colonial and independent).

Since the entrance into the area that is today known as the Niger Delta by non-indigenous peoples, there have been fairly regular to intermittent conflicts between (and amongst) local ethnic groups, British colonialists, and the post-colonial Nigerian state. From the onset of contact with Europeans, it has been clear that the demand for human rights, justice and entitlement is the main cause of quarrels between the people of the Niger Delta (Ifedi & Anyu, 2011, p. 80).

2.1.1 The Geography and People of the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta region is one of the world's largest wetlands and is home to most of Nigeria's natural biodiversity; it is also the area where the largest quantities of Nigeria's oil are found, with over 80% of the country's revenue being generated from oil extraction sites in the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta region has a population of approximately 32 million people, covers a land area of about 112,000 square kilometers, and a core delta of 75,000 square kilometers (Francis, LaPin, & Rossiasco, 2011, p. 10). The people live in several large cities and over three thousand small and often remote village communities in the Delta's mangrove swamps and lowland rainforests (Omene & Obaebor, n.d.). The indigenous people of the Niger Delta mainly depend on fishing and farming as their primary self-sustaining economic activities, while those who reside in urban centers mainly depend on commerce and oil industry related enterprises for their livelihoods (Francis et al., 2011, p. 10).

The Delta terrain is extremely difficult, and a large swatch of the area falls under what is termed "the world's fragile ecosystem" (Okonkwo, Kumar, & Taylor, 2015, pp. 452-453). Many Delta communities are located along the creeks and are only accessible by boat. Due to their "fragility," these Creekside communities are particularly vulnerable to climate changes, vagaries of the weather, and human-made disasters such as floods, sea encroachments, and oil pollution (Akaruese, 2018, p. 361). The Niger Delta consists of a number of ecological zones: sandy deserts, coastal ridge barriers, brackish and saline mangroves, fresh water areas, permanent and seasonal swamps, forests, and lowland rain forests. While being home to twenty estuaries, the whole area is crisscrossed by many rivers, streams, and creeks (Okonkwo et al., 2015, pp. 452-453).

The Niger Delta area is supplied with water from the Niger River and the Benue River, which conjoin in Lokoja and then break up again at Abutor where they split into the Nun River and the Forcados River and empty out into the sea. The Niger Delta proper is the landmass and body of water traversed by the Nun and the Forcados rivers and their tributaries. On a cartographical map the Niger Delta covers the area of land located north of Aboh, west of the Benin River estuary, east of Imo River estuary, south of Palm Point, and below the Akassa and Nun River estuary. Prior to the discovery of oil, when the Niger Delta was redrawn with new borders, the Niger Delta was split into the old Ahoada, Degema, Opobo, Ogoni (Rivers), Brass, Yenagoa (Bayelsa), and Warri (Delta) divisions (Asuni, 2009, pp. 5-6; World Bank, 2008, p. ix).

The Niger Delta contains a wide array of 40 different ethnic groups speaking a wide spectrum of 120 languages and dialects and cultures across the region. Among these are the Ijaw people in the eastern, western, and central parts of the Niger Delta who form the largest ethnic group. Others involve the Ogoni, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Isoko, Ikwere, Ibibio-Efik and Igbo people in the eastern areas (Austin, 2005, p. 74). After independence in 1960 and with the discovery of oil, conflicts emerged between the local communities, oil multinationals, and the federal government of Nigeria.

2.1.2 Pre-colonial Niger Delta and the Emergence of European Trade in Nigeria (1444 – 1850)

Early contact between Europeans and the people of the Niger Delta was dominated by the slave trade. As the contact increased, so the slave trade had increasingly become predominant (Flint, 1960, p. 9). The introduction of profitable international slavery framed the conflict, rivalry and cooperative efforts amongst the many ethnic groups living in the Niger Delta region who vied against one another to gain an economic and political upper hand (Ifedi & Anyu, 2011, p. 76). Starting in the late fifteenth century and spanning over three hundred years, the trans-Atlantic slave trade sat as the most significant part of the life of the people of the Niger Delta as well as their primary mode of production (ICG, 2006, p. 2). Slavery had become a fundamental feature of the Niger Delta's political economy, as it made Nigeria to enter the international system of market of exchange (Ohles, 1985, p. 154). During this period, the West Coast of Africa provided the slave labour supply for West Indian sugar plantations (Flint, 1960, p. 9). Contacts with Europeans transformed slave trade from a marginal feature of society into a central institution and mode of production (Ohles, 1985, p. 154). The slave shipment records made by English slave traders estimated that 1,010,000 slaves from Bonny and Old Calabar, approximately 24.1

percent of the total population of West Africa, left the ports of Biafra between 1650-1800 (Lovejoy, 2012, p. 81). These records also document that between the years 1690 and 1807, English traders reportedly shipped 1,069,100 slaves – 40 percent of their total trade – from port cities in the Bights of Benin and Biafra (Ifedi & Anyu, 2011, p. 77; Lovejoy, 2012, p. 18). During this time, Portuguese and British slave merchants (and later Dutch, French, and Swedish) traded with local elites (ICG, 2006, p. 2). Payments were made in the form of iron or copperbars, cowrie, shells or “Manilla” bracelet currency. Disputes over payment occasionally resulted in pitched gun battles between African and European traders and skirmishes between the different groups were rife (ICG, 2006, p. 2). After 1807, when Britain abolished its slave trade, and 1815, when Britain sought to suppress the trade by other nations, the sale of humans and the magnitude of human trafficking from West Africa decreased dramatically (Graham, 1965. pp. 329-331).

The collapse of the slave trade prompted merchant groups from Liverpool that had been previously engaged in the slave trade to shift their business towards other Niger Delta exports, such as palm oil, a key ingredient needed for the production of soap and candles (ICG, 2006, p. 2). Palm oil soon supplanted slavery as the primary good traded in the Niger Delta, ushering in a new phase of Niger Delta history (ICG, 2006, p. 3).

2.1.3 Colonial Considerations: Increasing Agitations, Palm oil Production and the Discovery of Oil (1851 – 1960)

With the abolition of the slave trade in the 19th century, the exploitation of palm produces (palm oil and palm kernel) became paramount to the British traders. The industrial revolution and the development of railways across Europe necessitated the need for palm oil as a lubricant (Aghalino, 2000, p. 9). Trade and politics had always been jointly interrelated in the regions around the Niger River. The trade was organized as trade from Liverpool and the Niger Delta (particularly in towns such as Bonny, and Old Calabar) (Lynn, 1981, p. 333). Liverpool the old slave port was pre-eminently the palm oil port throughout the century (Lynn, 1992, p. 89; Tibbles, 2000). The profound quest for palm oil, largely dominated by wealthy British smuggler George Dashwood Taubman Goldie (Flint, 1960, p. 9). Within two years of visiting the Niger, Goldie established a trading empire on the river. Goldie managed to convince Britain’s four main commercial groups to merge as a single enterprise under his leadership. This merger formed the United African Company (UAC), later renamed the National African Company (NAC). Under Goldie’s leadership, the United African Company entered into many treaties

with chiefs and kings in the Niger Delta (ICG, 2006, p. 3). The transition from trade in slaves to trade in palm oil culminated in what Hopkins (1973) calls a “crisis of adaption in the coastal states of West Africa”.

In 1884-1885, after the Berlin Conference, European powers partitioned Africa into designated areas of their control, and the British laid claim to the lower Niger area. One year later, in 1886, the British government in London granted Goldie a Royal Charter and renamed his company the Royal Niger Company (Flint, 1960, p. 34). Backed by the British crown, the Royal Niger Company now had its own administration in the Niger territory, customs courts, prisons, police, and secret service (Lugard, 1937, pp. 379-81; Pearson, 1971, pp. 73-79). Unlike the dynamic between today’s oil companies and the present-day Nigerian government, the institutions put in place by the Royal Niger Company protected the company’s interests and enterprises. In an effort to bring about a monopoly on the palm oil trade in the Niger Delta, The Royal Niger Company incited agitation in many trade entities and shipping merchants in Europe as well as in the Niger Delta (Ifedi & Anyu, 2011, pp. 79-80). The monopolistic policy was of itself a new narrative to renewed competition. Competitions increased and merchant groups tried to break the middleman’s monopoly and get directly to the interior (Lynn, 1981, p. 338). Having bought out their competitors, the Royal Niger Company cut out the need for middlemen in the Niger Delta and effectively deprived any smaller traders of their livelihood by imposing a prohibitive tariff system (Flint, 1960, p. 34). Colonial capitalism hindered the establishment of local industries to consume the products, instead, they were exported to Britain (Fayemi, Amadi, & Bamidele, 2005, p. 11). During this period, the way in which the British traders had penetrated the Niger Delta and the attitude that the British Government had adopted towards their activities heightened tensions in the region (Baker, 1997; Ukpabi, 1987).

The environment was characterized by resistance, agitation and disloyalty by the people for the power the colonial state exerted and had (Fayemi et al., p. 8). Further ruthless punitive efforts were organized and led in the Niger Delta by the Royal Niger Company against dissident indigenous institutions and leaders such as King Jaja of Opobo and Nana of Ebrohimi (Itsekiri), accused of attempting to establish trade monopolies of their own (Onwumere, 2002, p. 174). External oppressive efforts by the British and the Royal Niger Company resulted in reactions from Niger Delta natives who began to attack company officials in a manner reminiscent of today’s attacks on oil companies’ operating in the Delta (ICG, 2006, pp. 3-4). One such attack involved a raid on the Royal Niger Company headquarters in Akassa. During the raid, 24 people were killed and 68 were taken prisoner, most of whom were company employees from Liberia.

The Nigerian attackers later released some prisoners, but not before killing 48 in total. The Royal Niger Company retaliated against the attack by sending armed forces to the Nembe Kingdom (located in the modern day state of Bayelsa) and losing five British officers in the ensuing battle (ICG, 2006, pp. 3-4; Ifedi & Anyu, 2011, p. 80). The entire incident prompted a British government inquiry into the activities and trading conditions of the Royal Niger Company (RNC), which was losing favor with the British government. The firm soon sold its commercial interests to the Lever Brothers and another merger led it to be renamed the United Africa Company Limited (AUC) and it pushed for the modernization of the palm oil industry (Aghalino, 2000, p. 23). After the demise of the Royal Niger Company, the British government continued to carry out punitive expeditions in order to disempower resistant natives in the Niger Delta. This retaliatory behavior continued well after 1914, when Southern Nigeria and the Northern Protectorate region of Nigeria became amalgamated to form one administrative unit in 1914 (Afigbo & Falola, 2005, p. 232).

Around November 1929 to January 1930, general discontent about the regularly pervasive colonial intrusions on ethnic life in the Niger Delta (i.e. political, economic and social participation in local communities) as well as strong opposition to the ruthless punishments dealt by British control led to a revolt by women in the eastern communities of the Niger Delta (predominantly Igbo, Ibibio, Ogoni and Andoni women) (Paddock, 2018). The revolt, sparked by gossip of the introduction of a direct new tax which the British intended to levy on their income, resulted in the death of over 50 indigenous women when British troops opened fire on crowds of demonstrators in Opobo, Utu Etim, Akpo and Abak (M. Robinson, 2001). This incident, like the previous hostage raid on the Royal Niger Company, prompted additional government inquiries and triggered the British government to impose without the consent of the people, a warrant system of autocratic chiefs (Afigbo, 1972, p. 61). Warrant chiefs became the link between local communities and local government. The new system included the addition of native courts and a native authority system; designed with the intention of incorporating local Nigerian governing hierarchies, although still led British officers or local chiefs appointed by British authorities (Adewoye, 1977, p. 33). This flamed opposition within the region. The women's war significantly contributed to redefine women's position in the colonial state (Paddock, 2018). Resistance to colonial rule continued and women were prominent in anticolonial resistance. The resistance took different forms of strategies including removing the cap of office from warrant chiefs, looting factories, burning down native court buildings, blocking train tracks, cutting telegraph wires, releasing prisoners from jails and destroying or confiscating colonial property (Paddock, 2018). In an echo of the violence, the

colonial government resorted to lethal force. Consequently, the women war forced the British to abandon the warrant chief system and establish a new system of village councils. The war played a decisive role as it marked the start of a transition in Eastern Nigeria from mainly localized ethnic-based resistance to British colonial rule, to resistance movement that transcended ethnicity and class (Paddock, 2018).

During this time, the lack of proper participation in their own governance, underdevelopment, unsatisfactory living conditions, and increasing distrust of outsiders fueled continually growing discontent amongst the people of the region. The people of the Niger Delta saw opportunity for self-governance arise as British administrators in Nigeria began to prepare the country for independence (Badmus, 2006; Nixon, 1972)). Regional leaders in the Delta persuaded British government officials to grant small measures of local autonomy within Nigeria's federal governing structure. These efforts, however, proved to be futile. In the 1950s, several indigenous leaders from the Niger Delta traveled to London in further attempts to convince the British government to grant regional autonomy to the Niger Delta people, but again, the attempts failed (World Bank, 2008, p. 57). These failed efforts at achieving autonomy resulted in an uncomfortable sociopolitical climate in the Niger Delta, an atmosphere in which feelings of political dispensation and persistent neglect of the region by institutional forces set the stage for a series of events that would shape the politics in the Niger Delta when the train of post-independence Nigeria arrived (Obi, 2011).

The major event to cross the horizon was the discovery of oil in Nigeria at Oloibiri in the Niger Delta in 1956 (Obi & Rustad, 2011, p. 4). The large quantity of oil discovered marked a turning point in Nigeria's economy as the country became one of Africa's major oil producing countries. In 1908, a British oil company named the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation had started operation. However, oil exploration began in the 1930s in communities in the Niger Delta and oil prospectors in Nigeria had managed to locate and steadily yield quality oil products, slowly transitioning economic and political focus in the area away from its previous trade, just as the palm oil industry had done earlier when it replaced slave trade (Ifedi & Anyu, 2011, p. 80). By 1958, the first shipment of Nigerian crude oil arrived in Rotterdam (Steyn, 2009, p. 249). This rapidly transformed the relationships that evolved between the colonial state and the communities (Umejesi & Akpan, 2013, p. 111). The dominance of the major oil companies like Shell D'Arcy a pioneer explorer, remained a significant characteristic of the Nigerian oil industry well into the 1990s (Steyn, 2009, p. 249). The British hegemonic colonial state centralized and monopolized the production and distribution of oil as a community through the

declaration of the colonial ordinance Edict in 1945. This gave full control of all minerals, mineral oil and lands to the Crown (Omoruyi, 2001). However, when Nigeria was granted independence in 1960, such rights were transferred to the post-colonial state and the latter has implemented the same political culture till date (Omoruyi, 2001).

2.1.4 Independent and Post Independent Nigeria and the Foundations of the Oil Conflict (1960 – Present)

Shortly after Nigeria's independence, the new state was plunged in conflict over resource control (Ogunbadejo, 1980, p. 751). Colonialism formed the foundations of the evolution of the present and past independent Nigeria and the Niger Delta. Colonial legacy has deep-rooted implications for the present conflict in the Niger Delta. One of the major legacies of colonialism in Nigeria is the enclave nature of the oil sector within the wider Nigerian economy and the relevance of oil as a national concern (i.e. revenue distribution) (Lynn, 1981, p. 250). Another important legacy that was evident in the new state is the myopic geographical and ethno-numerical configuration of the Nigerian state, where the geospatial and population size of Northern Nigeria strategically gave it more political advantage to influence and marginalize other regions after independence (Osha, 2007, p. 24). This has been the basis for the North-South divide and the failed federation which increased during the 1960s and 1970s (The Economist, 2015). The divide is sparked by political dominance of the North and the economic inferiority of the South that has been at the root of the unwillingness of the Northern elite to rely upon market techniques or to give up control over the distribution of oil revenue (The Economist, 2015). This resulted in the mobilization and vociferous oppositions of the Niger Delta people against the contradictory nature of the federalism (Osha, 2006, p. 17).

Crude oil became a decisive commodity in not only the Niger Delta but also the entire nation. The entire nation became inextricably connected to the Niger Delta (Osha, 2006, p. 17). This transformed the relationship that evolved between the new post-colonial state in alliance with multinational capital and the communities. Petroleum became the largest source of National income under successive military governments and the question on shared revenue accruing from mining rents and royalties on an equal rate became constant since independence (Gboyega et al., 2011, p. 13). Just like their predecessors, the post-colonial state centralized and monopolized the oil economy. The suddenly booming trade in crude oil set local communities in the Niger Delta against the economic interests of the Nigerian government just as palm oil production had put the Niger Delta communities against the Royal Niger Company in the past.

The legal institutional framework for oil operations favored the oil explorers (multinationals) which followed through contemporary Nigeria (Umejesi & Akpan, 2013, p. 111). This has resulted in socio-ecological dislocation and local opposition. As had happened already in the past with palm oil, the Nigerian state and the communities of the Niger Delta found themselves locked in on-going and sporadic violence directly tied to arguments over the allocation, distribution of proceeds from oil, as well as the damaging environmental impact of oil extractive activities in the region. Oil exploration rapidly transformed the Nigerian economy into a rentier state dependent on oil rents (Obi & Rustad, 2011, p. 4).

The state emerged as a rentier-neopatrimonial state, as was constructed as a means for private accumulation by an indigenous neopatrimonial ruling elite that negotiated independence from the British colonial masters (Graf, 1988, pp. 11-12). The colonial politico-administrative apparatus was adopted by the emergent ruling elite which strengthened its oppressive mechanisms of domination (Osha, 2006, p. 20). This period marked two related events: first, the discovery of oil and second the country was granted independence. These events laid another basis for conflict as the people in the Niger Delta began to see themselves as second class citizens in the new state which the British created (SDN, 2018). The people of the Delta started to raise concerns about their marginalization in the new state. These concerns were raised by the Ijaws, the largest ethnic group in the Niger Delta (Okolo, Akpokighe, & Igbokwe, 2014). Their demands started to mount pressure and tension over unfair distribution of the wealth that accrues from oil extraction and production in the region (Obi, 2001, p. 19). This led to open conflicts between the local communities and the state. At its incipient stage these conflicts were mostly nonviolent and consisted of pressure groups lobbying for greater representation for the people of Niger Delta. Between 1960 and 1967, Niger Delta elites formed pressure groups, which centered on coalitions demanding for a separate state of their own. In other situations, they joined the struggles for power at regional and federal level (Obi, 2001, p. 19). Marginalized minority groups also joined the struggle for power and resource control at the Federal and state level (Obi & Rustad, 2011, p. 5). The struggle for power and shares of oil wealth between rival political and military factions resulted in the militarization of the government. This fueled several regional and ethnic tensions. The worsening tensions and increasing violence between different ethnic and political groups culminated in the Biafra quest for self-determination in 1967. This incident sparked a bloody civilian war in Nigeria (SDN, 2018).

The impact of oil production on the environment and the economy of the Delta was environmentally destructive compared to slave trade and the trade in palm oil (Fayemi et al., 2005, p. 13). The presence of multinational oil companies could be clearly seen as disturbing a naturally fragile landscape used for hundreds of years to support fishing and farming (Jike, 2004). Production resulted in endemic poverty, environmental destruction and the loss of traditional livelihoods of the people. To understand the extent of the damage from oil spillage in the Niger Delta ecosystem over the past 50 years, ecologists equate the damage incurred in the delta region to be roughly equivalent to the same amount of oil lost in one “catastrophic spillage” (such as the Exxon Valdez incident) per year (i.e. up to 1.5 million tons of oil, 50 times the pollution unleashed in the Exxon Valdez tanker disaster) (Independent, 2006). The basic causes of the agitation, frustration, poverty, lack of development and prevalence of violence in the Niger Delta are obvious. The resistant approach of the government and multinationals to address the demands of the people has resulted in the mobilization of radical armed groups, cults and confraternities, gangs, vigilantes and militias (Asuni, 2009, pp. 8-9).

2.1.5 Militant Movements in the Niger Delta in the Recent Past (1990s – Present)

The first rebellion by the Niger Delta peoples over unhappiness with their status in independent Nigeria was masterminded by Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro on 23 February 1966 (Joab-Peterside, 2007, p. 3). Boro coordinated this struggle under the banner of the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) (Financial Times, 2006). He was a former military officer whose dissatisfaction with the economic and social conditions of the region provoked him to stage a secessionist attempt and proclaim an Independent Niger Delta Republic for the Ijaw ethnic group (Abidde, 2017, p. 23). Just six years after independence, Isaac Adaka Boro with about one hundred and fifty fighters, orchestrated a guerrilla warfare against the federal government over injustice and marginalization of the Niger Delta people (Sahara Reporters, 2011). It was a “twelve-day revolution” in the region which resulted in a bloody confrontation between Boro’s forces and the Nigerian military (Sahara Reporters, 2011). With the outbreak of the Biafra war, Boro and his followers were granted amnesty by General Yakubu Gowon and eventually recruited into the Nigerian army (Bourne, 2015, p. 7). However, Boro’s rebellion marked the beginning of post-independent gun violent arms agitation in the region (Sahara Reporters, 2011). This transformed to political activism in August 1990 with the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).

Against this backdrop, in 1990, MOSOP under the leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa, an environmental activist, concentrated efforts to campaign for social, environmental and economic justice on behalf of the Niger Delta people, specifically the Ogoni (Ejovi & Ebie , 2013, p. 131). In 1991, MOSOP launched the Ogoni Bill of Rights regarding the control and ownership of oil. The bill demanded “political autonomy to participate in the affairs of the Republic as a distinct and separate unit” (ICG, 2006, p. 4). Ken Saro-Wiwa’s group protested against the pollution of the environment through gas flaring and constant oil spillage and the neglect of the communities over the years by the government and MNOCs. MOSOP became the platform for the collective action of the Ogoni people against state-MNOCs alliance (Bob, 2002, pp. 139-142; 2005, pp. 61-70). In response to the outcome of MOSOP’s activities, General Sani Abacha in November 1995, issued the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa together with eight other environmental activists (Premium Times, 2018). The death of these activists heightened and increased violent agitations across the Niger Delta region (Ejovi & Ebie, 2013, p. 131). As a result, patterns of protest and agitations led to direct confrontations with MNOCs and the state alliance resulting in destruction of oil installations, hostage taking of oil workers, robbery, rape, and capsizing of boats (Onwuazombe, 2017, p. 118). This internationalized the struggle by communities as well as their resistance against oppressive government interventions. MOSOP’s activities also drew international attention to the Ogoni peoples’ demands for political and economic empowerment at the inception of the contemporary Niger Delta strife for resource control (ICG, 2006, p. 4).

Following these trends, in response to high levels of agitation and feelings of exploitation by the government and MNOCs, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) of the Ijaw National Congress led by Isaac Adaka Boro on 11 December 1998, convened a conference in Kaima. The outcome was the Kaima Declaration 1999 (Ukaga, Ukiwo & Ibaba, 2012, pp. 2-3). The Kaima declaration was the final ultimatum ending 31 December 1998, given to MNOCs to leave Bayelsa State because their exploration activities had led to environmental degradation in the communities. The declaration stated that all land and natural resources within the Ijaw territory henceforth would be fully controlled by Ijaw communities and cease to recognize any laws that deprive them from the right to ownership and control of their resources (Ibaba, 2008, p. 13). In this vein, this was followed by the stoppage of oil exploration and production, the banning of all oil workers from oil locations in the Delta state, and the attack of oil vehicles owned by MNOC and Federal Government from accessing the East-West road. The outcome was a violent approach from the government-MNOC alliance who deployed the military and police to Kaima and led to confrontations and the loss of lives and property boats (Ejobowah, 2000, p. 36; Ukeje,

2011). At present, twenty years after the Kaima Declaration was formally announced, the demands put forward by the Ijaw people have not been met or even considered seriously (Sahara Reporters, 2017). Consequently, this snowballed into a full armed militancy against the government. This also marked the breeding ground for the rise of different protest groups and youth groups in the Niger Delta region, as many youths became aware of the social realities affecting them. For example groups such as: The Isoko Youth Movement, the Nembe Youth Movement, the Izon Youth Vanguard, Youth Movement of the Southern Ijaws, the Youth Movement of the Reparation of Ogbia (Fayemi et al., 2005, p. 52), Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEN), Community Rights Initiative (CORI), Niger Delta Women for Justice (NDINJ), Chiiccoco Movement and Egbema National Congress etc. (Ejovi & Ebie, 2013, p. 131) among others, became the groups that waged protest and demonstrations against the government and MNOCs. Many of these youths joined these movements/groups for the reason of gaining a sense of belonging and importance, which they have been denied by the state and MNOCs (Ibaba, 2008, p. 20).

These armed confrontations and struggles against the government and MNOCs can be linked to Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) debate on greed. They argue that armed conflicts are framed by greed and grievance motivated by the economic interests/agendas of the drivers of the conflicts (pp. 564-565). The conflict in the Niger Delta is prominent as severe grievances over the control and ownership of oil has been opportunities for creating armed groups and rebellious youth movements in the region. This reinforces our understanding of how rebellion generates economic opportunities for the youths. In support of this, Grossman (1999, p. 269) assumes that insurgents could be linked to revolutionaries rather than bandits and pirates as this relates to rebellion as a business that produces profits from looting.

Also connected to the dynamics of militant and armed groups is cult groups. 2003 saw a rise in cults and gangs designed to protest social injustice in the region. Cults in the Niger Delta were group of young people committed to deliver security and economic opportunities for their members and their various communities (Osaghae, Ikelegbe, Olarinmoye, & Okhomina, 2011, p. 21). To be a cult member, individuals have taken an oath of allegiance and secrecy, and rely on violence as a means to generate economic opportunities. There is a connection between cults and militias as most of the militia groups are close alliances to cult groups. In essence, to be qualified a militant, individuals must first be initiated to cultism⁸. For instance, in 2003, most

⁸ Respondents 07 and 09, July 2018, Nigeria.

cult groups in the region formed tactical alliances with either Asari Dokubo or Ateke Tom's armed groups (Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) respectively) as the two commanders fought for the control of routes for oil theft. Consequently, they became the leaders and controlled the militant activities of these cult/gang groups (Osaghae et al., 2011, p. 21). In 2004, NDPVF, one of the largest Ijaw militant groups started a war against the Nigerian Government. Asari together with other militant leaders were granted amnesty and financial payments in exchange of their weapons by President Obasanjo, unfortunately, this was a failed attempt as Asari was later charged with treason and arrested (Council on Foreign Relations, 2007).

Against this background, 2005 saw a shift in the patterns of conflict from peaceful and unarmed protest and demonstrations to violent and full-blown militancy in the region. The shift was equally produced by heightened insurgency in December 2005 connected to the arrest, incarceration and trail of Asari Dokubo seen as the leader of Ijaw protest. The insurgent struggle resulted in the kidnapping of about 200 foreign oil workers, which forced oil companies to abandon their activities, close oil production and leave the region (Osaghae et al., 2011, p. 21). This period saw an increase in militia armed groups such as Egbesu Boys of Africa, Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), and community and warlord based militias including: the Ijaw Federation Fighters, Mobutu Boys, Niger Delta Freedom Fighters, The Atangbata Youths, the One More River to Cross Youths, the Olabrakon-Opre Youths, the Oweiesan-Ogbo, the Adaka Marine, the Ogbokore Youths, the Alagbada Youth of Kombo, and the Tomgbolo Boys etc. (Abidde, 2017, p. 23).

The destabilization of NDPV led to the coalition of other independent militant groups to form a larger group known as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) under the leadership of Henry Okah (Badmus, 2006). MEND emerged as the deadliest, most sophisticated and powerful militia group in the region (Hanson, 2007). The group embraced the strategy of sabotage of oil pipelines and installations, kidnapping and oil theft (Abubakar D. , 2001, p. 31). In January 2006, MEND positioned itself onto the international scene by claiming responsibility for the hostage of four foreign oil workers. Henry Okah was arrested on the grounds of conspiracy to commit terrorism to detonating explosives (BBC, 2013; Sahara Reporters, 2010). MEND's activities drastically took the conflict to a whole new level. This negatively impacted oil production and revenue with destructive bearings for the MNOCs and the Nigerian rentier state (Ikelegbe, 2010, p. 40). MEND internationalized and drew the attention of the international community to the conflict in the Niger Delta. The group portrayed

a significant shift from the MOSOP period relating to their game of engagement with the Nigerian State from passive resistance/non-violent to violent resistance (Inuwa, 2017, p. 155). Between 2006 and 2009, the conditions in the region deteriorated. In November 2007, militants step up oil pipeline attacks and military crackdown continued amidst the stale security conditions in the region (IRIN, 2010).

In addition to the trend of militancy, in September 2008, militants declared an “oil war” and attacked oil facilities and security forces, igniting the heaviest clashes in the region in two years (Tantua & Kamruzzaman, 2016, p. 7). The organized attacks by MEND caused over 300 deaths and 119 expatriates held hostage. Also, oil production decreased from 2.6 million barrels of oil a day to 700,000 barrels during this period. Furthermore, the government and MNOCs, spent close to \$3billion dollars yearly on security to protect oil facilities (Tantua & Kamruzzaman, 2016, p. 7). In order to quench the tensions, in September 2008, the government set up the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND) mandated to propose a holistic approach that would address violence in the region (IRIN, 2009). In addition, in order to satisfy the interest of the rentier state, the government tried to “buy peace” by paying off different divisions of MEND and some of their leaders to allow oil operations. This is part of the pattern that has sustained the conflict in the region (Courson, 2011, p. 22). Following this assertion, scholars like Watt (2007) and Cuvelier et al. (2014) have argued financial inducement as a payoff to cooperative factional militant leaders is a game that serves the interests of political elites like governors. Such acts offer the elites the avenues to squander government funds without accountability with the motive of buying peace. It also provides political leaders the opportunity to improve their relationship with prominent militias and coalesce during elections (Collier & Hoeffler, 2005).

On 13 September 2008, Nigerian security forces allegedly raided three villages in Rivers state looking for Farah Dagogo a member of MEND (Financial Times, 2006). In 2009, just five years after the formation of MEND, violent tension levels rose in the Niger Delta dramatically, with countless incidents reportedly involving militant groups regularly attacking federal troops in random gun fights (IRIN, 2009). For instance, the attack of a civilian helicopter by militias; the demolition of the famous “Daroama militants” camp in Bayelsa state; the destruction of Chevron’s oil pipelines by MEND and the declaration of Amnesty and DDR for the Niger Delta Militants. The timeline of militant activities in the Niger Delta is summarized on the table below:

Table 2. 1: An Abbreviated Timeline of Militant Events in the Niger Delta

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1990 | Formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) |
| 1991 | Ogoni Bill of Rights published by MOSOP |
| 1995 | Hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa by the Nigerian Government |
| 1998 | The Kaima Declaration is made by the Ijaw Youth Council |
| 2003 | Rise of violent cult/gang groups operating in the Niger Delta region |
| 2004 | Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) launched war against the Nigerian Government |
| 2005 | <p>Nigeria enters a state of full-blown militancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Emergence of MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta) led by NDV, NDPVF, MEND, and the Egbesu Boys - Arrest of Asari Dokubo, leader of NDPVF |
| 2006 | Spiked increase in hostage taking of expatriates, sabotaging of oil pipelines and facilities, rampant kidnapping and oil theft by MEND |
| 2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Surge in pipeline attacks by militant groups - Nigerian military begins crackdown on militancy in the Delta region |
| 2008 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Declaration of “oil war” by militants attacking oil facilities - Arrest of Henry Okah (leader of MEND) - Brutal raids are conducted on three villages in the state of Rivers by government security forces - Creation of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND) |
| 2009 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Niger Delta militants attack a civilian helicopter for the first time - JFT demolished a prominent “Daroama militants” camp in Bayelsa state - MEND destroys Chevron’s oil pipelines - The Nigerian Government declares the Amnesty Program |
| 2013 | MEND pulls of ceasefire agreement with the Nigerian Government and resumes an “all-out-assault’ mentality |

| | |
|------|---|
| 2016 | Re-emergence of Militancy by the Niger Delta Avengers |
|------|---|

Source: Author’s compilation

All efforts at peacekeeping in the region have been futile. Setbacks occur on all levels due to the inability to form agreements and the failure to effectively implement strategies. However, in June 2009, a presidential pardon was granted to all militants on condition they stop violence. The following year after amnesty was been granted, on January 30, 2010, MEND threatened to resume “an all-out assault” in the region by calling off its ceasefire (Reuters, 2010). In view of this, 2016 saw the reemergence of militancy in the region by a new militant group called the Niger Delta Avengers (Niger Delta Avengers, 2018; Reuters, 2019). The group on 14 February 2016 claimed responsibility for the damage of Royal Dutch Shell’s Forcados Pipeline in Burutu, Delta state (Stratfor Worldview, 2016). The trends of events and patterningx of militant activities that have changed over time in the Niger Delta is not only critical to the understanding of the Nigerian political economy but to the different state-centric approaches in addressing the conflicts in the region as well as the nature and character of the state. This will be analyzed in the proceeding section.

2.2 Nigerian Political Economy, State Policy Response and the Nature of the Nigerian State

2.2.1 A Survey of the Nigerian Political Economy

Nigeria is recognized as the most populous country in Africa (Martini, 2014) with a population of about 200 million (World Population Review, 2019). The country has the most known reserves of petroleum and gas in Sub-Saharan Africa (Gboyega et al., 2011). Since the 1970s, petroleum has been significant to Nigeria’s political economy, accounting for more than half of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), about 85% of government revenues and over 90% of exports and foreign exchange earnings (Lewis, 2018). The country’s overdependence on oil with negative development indicators, very low Human Development Index (HDI), and high levels of inequalities, unemployment and governance challenges notably corruption and social conflict has resulted in a natural resource curse (Amundsen, 2010, p. 2; Chukwuma, 2015, p. 38; Humphreys, Sachs, & Stiglitz, 2007, p. 94). Nigeria has been a source of strategic oil supplies to oil dependent global powers like the USA, UK, and China etc. (Punch, 2016; Statista, 2017). Attacks on oil wells implies a reduction in imports of the crude to these countries. The oil industry is dominated by a large number of multinational oil corporations

including Chevron, Texaco, Exxon-Mobil, Total, ENI/ Agip, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), TotalFinalElf and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) (Pak & Ebienu, 2011, p. 140).

Prior to the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region, the Nigerian economy was largely agrarian (producing cash and food crops) in nature, stable and steadily growing (Alley, Asekomeh, Mobolaji, & Adeniran, 2014, p. 377; Akanmidu, 2015, p. 18). Past statistics revealed that between 1964 and 1965, agricultural products accounted for about 55% of Nigeria's GDP and employed about 70% of the country's work force (Sekumade, 2009, p. 1385). Moreover, by 1970, agricultural produce like rubber, cocoa, palm oil, palm kernel, groundnuts and cotton accounted for almost 75% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings (Sekumade, 2009, pp. 1385-1386). However, with the oil boom in the 1970s, the tides turned against agriculture (Omeje, 2013). Oil has displaced agricultural resources as the principal commodity that sustained the economy. The emergence of an oil economy as a formidable commodity has virtually transformed the country's economy to operate as a monoculture extractive economy depending primarily on oil rents (Pak & Ebienu, 2011, p. 140).

Oil and gas have particularly been blamed for a number of Nigeria's problems such as poverty, corruption, political instability and conflict (Basedau & Mehler, 2005, p. 9). Nigeria's political economy is more complex and involves a wide range of aspects including fragility and violence. The economy is fragile because oil resources have damaged other tradable sectors and sources of economic growth and development (Alley et al., 2014, p. 382). This accounts for the weak linkage and differential levels of growth that exist between the oil sector and other sectors in the country. Between 2000 and 2009, 34,2 trillion Naira was recorded by the Federation Account as opposed to 7,3 trillion Naira that represented non-oil sector contributions to the national revenue (Ekperiware & Olomu, 2015, p. 76). The general economic performance is very poor as the economy is a fledgling economy struggling for survival standing side-by-side a thriving oil sector and low human capital (Baghebo & Atima, 2013, p. 103). Furthermore, the overarching influence of political elites and bureaucrats on economic activities have intensified the vulnerability of the economy. The abundance of oil has equally stimulated unwise economic policies and rendered the economy vulnerable to external shocks. In June 2014, the country witnessed a 40% fall in crude oil prices and the Naira triggered by the effects of the fluctuating oil prices and other global crises where oil prices dropped from \$115 a barrel to \$49 a barrel (Plumer, 2015). Amidst this deteriorating world market situation, the Nigerian economy was

plunged into economic recession as it did not have the necessary mechanisms to resist such shocks (IMF, 2018).

In Nigeria, the crowded political economy of oil has become the most important mechanism in determining domestic economic and political affairs (Gilpin, 2001, p. 8). The country's economy is characterised by unrestricted trade, illicit financial flows and the exploration activities of MNOCs (Gilpin, 2001, p. 9). The economy is precarious and motivates the looting of resources. This has created room for an informal economy to thrive where illicit incentives exist in many illegal and hidden activities within the oil sector. Illegal oil business and refineries have become a very big industry in the country (Garuba, 2010, p. 4). The prevalence of the informal economy is framed by the invisible hand of the government for its corrupt and rent seeking practices. For example, the size of the informal economy in Nigeria accounts for more than half of the country's entire GDP (Khandan, 2017, p. 38). The high microeconomic vulnerability of Nigeria's economy stems from the fact that the economy is solely reliant on rent from oil resources and the country depends on external expertise to extract oil. In other parts of the world, the growth of the manufacturing sector is usually accompanied by broad-based demand for medium skilled workers. Unfortunately, Nigeria has neglected the development of its human resources, which impacts the country's economic performance (Basedau & Mehler, 2005, p. 13).

Also, oil has posed a security challenge in the region. The country has weak economic institutions and the economy is strongly affected by security and the political interests and relations among dominant national, regional and local powers (Gilpin, 2001, p. 12). Thus, economic considerations are at the centre of national concerns in Nigeria. It is important to note that oil has a significant impact on the economic behaviour of the Nigerian state as economic forces and security are intimately linked (pp. 20-22). For instance, the economy acts as an avenue where diverse interest groups (including political leaders, elites, bureaucrats, MNOCs, and militia groups) interact in pursuit of wealth and power creating a very fragile economic environment.

In addition, the economy is characterized by a wide array of violence. Petro-violence is central to the country's political economy (Obi & Rustad, 2011, p. 1). The discovery of oil has been met with stiff resistance from the people of the Niger Delta. The distribution of economic proceeds from oil has been highly biased as oil has benefited some groups (such as political elites, MNOCs and Militia groups) while disadvantaging the local communities in the region

(Usman, Madu , & Fatimah, 2015, p. 3). This bias has triggered grievances which have been the sources of prolonged violence and civil unrest in the region (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Oil politics has resulted in competing clashes and factional interests (Obi & Rustad, 2011, p. 2). The economy is threatened by the militant uprisings in the Niger Delta. Violent actions by militants have snowballed into economic implications for the rentier economy and Nigeria's international position as an oil producer (Pak & Ebienfa, 2011, p. 142). At the heart of militancy between 2006-2009, the country lost about 61.6 billion dollars (Pak & Ebienfa, 2011, p. 144).

The government has tried to diversify the economy by initiating some economic reforms. These reforms aimed at reviving the ailing economy of the country. Previously, the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo initiated the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) to run from 2003-2007. NEEDS was a modernization economic policy targeted to revamp the structural and institutional weaknesses of the economy. The restructuring of the economy was to be done through a variety of macroeconomic policies such as privatization, liberalization, commercialization and deregulation (Eze, 2014, p. 152). Unfortunately, NEEDS failed due to lack of leadership commitment to concretely stimulate planned objectives as well as corruption and the neopatrimonial nature of the economy (Ikeanyibe, 2009, p. 19).

Despite the country's natural resource endowments, the majority of the people of the Nigeria and the Niger Delta still live in abject poverty. Coupled with this, Nigeria is still grappling with a high rate of youth unemployment (Kayode, Arome, & Anyio, 2014). Ekperiware and Olomu (2015, p. 76) noted that the majority of workers employed in the oil industry are expatriates who transport the surplus to their home countries for investment. Such a situation coupled with the frustration of being unable to find or secure jobs within the oil sector have motivated many youths to be involved in criminal and violent activities. The violence is further aggravated by federal, state and local elites that dominate the control of rents derived from oil production (Auty, 2004, p. 2). For instance, since 1990 there have been regular raids, burning down of villages and brutal killing of innocent people. Armed militancy in the region has increased the flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) with constant attacks on oil and gas installations, bombing of pipelines, kidnapping and illicit financial movement (Edeko, 2011, p. 57). It is this catastrophe that has paved the way for sustained civil unrest and conflict in this region that seem to be affecting the Nigerian economy adversely, that forced the government to sort various solutions to address the grievance of the people of the Niger Delta.

2.2.2 State-centric Responses to the Niger Delta Oil Conflict (1960 – 2009)

Since the independence of Nigeria in 1960, successive civilian and military governments have made various efforts to study and resolve the Niger Delta problems. A 2006 report contended that in the forty-six years after independence, the Federal Government of Nigeria had appointed more than twelve panels to review the needs of the Niger Delta region and find solutions to the endemic poverty and problems connected to the area's oil riches. Each of these panels were derided by residents of the Niger Delta. Niger Delta politicians and activists were not only as disillusioned, they were prompted by frustration to increase their demands for control over oil and other natural resources in the area (ICG, 2006, p. 17).

According to Obi (2002), the conventional tactics in which the Nigerian government uses to address conflict in the Niger Delta region is based on "avoidance and confrontation" (p. 99). This implies that the government does not genuinely acknowledge the concerns and agitations of the people in the region and thus dismisses the peoples' claims and agitations. The basic causes of agitation, frustration, poverty, lack of development and prevalence of violence in the Niger Delta are obvious (Ottuh, 2103, pp. 257-259). Avoidance and confrontation by the state further exacerbated the tensed environment and relationship between the state and the people of the Delta. Inuwa (2017) argues that policy responses to manage the conflict in the region were premised by both minimalist and maximalist approaches. From a minimalist perspective, minority agitations in the Niger Delta are a threat to national security and stability (Ikelegbe, 2010, p. 39). This implies that if the situation is not well handled, it could jeopardize state security and stability. Hence, there is the need for the military to apply coercion or lethal force to address the situation. Conversely, a maximalist approach argues that the grievances and frustration that sparked resistant agitations in the region are grounded by the deep-rooted underdevelopment and harsh environmental conditions that make development difficult (Inuwa, 2017, p. 160).

Generally, solutions to conflict usually involve actors with their own set of priorities and incentives (Becsi & Lahiri, 2007, p. 1169). Thus, understanding the incentive (positive carrots and coercive sticks) of the Nigerian government provides us insight into the seemingly haphazard way the oil conflict in the Niger Delta was dealt with (Arena & Hardt, 2014, pp. 127-129). This analysis shows that the government used both carrot and stick strategies to manage the problems. The carrot and stick method is built on the argument that the demise of violence

can be attained by addressing some underlying grievances that triggered the agitation (Inuwa, 2017, p. 161).

2.2.2.1 Positive “Carrot” Approach

A “carrot”, which is a reward, is particularly used as a non-violent approach to respond to conflict (Cortright, 1998). This approach is what Nye (1990) refers to as soft power approach to resolving conflicts. While a “stick” refers to a punishment, is a coercive and violent approach to respond to agitation (Emeseh, 2011, p. 58). This is usually equated to hard power (Nye, 1990, p. 157), i.e. the use of military and force to manage conflicts. Suffice to say, the government has employed development interventionist methods such as the carrot approach to respond to the concerns of the people in the Niger Delta. In 1960, the government of Balewa followed up on the Willink Commission report⁹ recommendations by establishing the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) 1960-1966 (Akinyoade, 2018, p. 223). The NDDDB was essentially mandated to address agricultural development challenges (Francis et al., 2011, p. 73). Unfortunately, NDDDB’s work was derided by the outbreak of the 1967-1976 Nigerian Biafra civil war, which followed quickly on the heels of its formation (Ifedi & Anyu, 2011, p. 85).

Following the demise of the civil war in 1976, the military Government of General Olusegun Obasanjo, instituted the River Basin and Development Authorities Decree, creating eleven basin authorities to assist “irrigation, water supply facilities, fishing regulations and pollution control” (Ezenweani, 2017, p. 1590). Four years later, in 1980, the civilian government headed by Shehu Shagari set up the Delta River Basin Development Authority (NDRBDA). The NDRBDA was meant to address environmental and ecological problems in the Niger Delta region. Regrettably, the agency failed due to lack of adequate funding for the project’s activities and because it was simply too broad a project to be properly carried out (Adegeye, 1982, p. 301). Subsequently following the failure of the NDRBDA, the government in 1982, established the Presidential Task Force on Niger Delta Development (PTFNDD) to formulate solutions to the region’s problems (Ahonsi, 2011, p. 25). This led to the Nigerian National Assembly in the

⁹ The Willink Commission was established by the British colonial government in 1958 to study and make recommendations on regional conflicts, on the eve of formal independence, with particular attention to the worries of the ethnic minorities, especially those of the Niger Delta region. The panel was headed by Sir Henry Willink, a former British health minister. The panel rejected the creation of a new state and that separation is not a remedy for the peoples’ troubles (Adaka Boro Centre, 1958).

same year to enact a revenue provisions requiring the allocation of 1.5 percent of oil profits of the Federation Account to tackle development problems of the Niger Delta (Akinyoade, 2018, p. 223). This mandate also failed, this time because the National Assembly failed to create an effective administrative agency to manage the fund.

Against this backdrop, in 1992, the Ibrahim Babangida administration based on the Belgore Commission report, set up the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) to replace the PIC (Omotola, 2007, pp. 73-74). OMPADEC was mandated to rehabilitate and develop the Oil Mineral producing Areas of Nigeria, endangered by ecological destruction and environmental pollution (Gabriel, 1999, p. 94). OMPADEC did not last for long due to corrupt practices by its administrators who embezzled the commission's huge fiscal allocations to satisfy private unauthorized purposes. As a result of internal corruption, the commission found itself saddled with large debts and riddled with monumental proportions of fraud. This pushed the Nigerian government to set up an Interim Management Board to reduce OMPADEC's task (Frynas, 2001, p. 34). Unfortunately, just like some many other initiatives, OMPADEC met its end in 1999, with a lot of unfinished projects (Omotala & Patrick, 2010, pp. 123-125). As a result of this mishap, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was established by an Act of Parliament in 2000 by the civilian government of Obasanjo to fill the gap left behind by the collapse of OMPADEC.

As an intervention agency, NDDC was tasked to boost sustainable development programs and promote peaceful communities in the region (Christmas, 2018, p. 72). The NDDC has fallen prey to corrupt autocracy and failed to produce the political behaviour necessary for a democratic society foundation (Steinmo, 2008, pp. 152-153). Despite these undertakings, only a few of the commission's projects have been realized as most of them have failed to obtain funding for their desired budgets (Christmas, 2018, p. 79; Jike, 2005, p. 159). Through these institutions, the Niger Delta people have experienced rising expectations, relative deprivation, and frustration. The result has engendered more aggression and violent conflicts among the people as well as the people against the state and its multinational alliance (Akinyoade, 2018, p. 223).

Against this background, acknowledging the restiveness and salient security conditions prevalent in the Niger Delta and the threat this persistent violence posed to national security, in September 2008, the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua established the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (MNDA) as a new hope for the region's developmental challenges (MNDA, 2013).

The MNDA was part of the federal government’s wider framework initiative to manage the conflict over feelings of alienation, dispossession, neglect, (Obi, 2010); environmental degradation (Babatunde, 2017; Uchennia, 2014); poverty (Ekpenyong, Aniefiok, Ukommi, & Obiahu, 2010); and unemployment (Kpae & Adishi, 2017) in the Niger Delta region. The MNDA is mandated to design and implement plans, programs and other initiatives intended at promoting the urgent development of the Niger Delta region (MNDA, 2013). During this period, the entire region was in full blown militancy. Amidst these agitations and militancy, a peace summit was convened in September 2008 to propose recommendations for quelling conflict in the region (Isidiho & Sabran, 2015; Onapajo & Moshood, 2016, p. 42). Sadly, the peace summit failed and still in September 2008, the government set up the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND / “The Committee”), to search for a holistic non-violent approach to address the deep-rooted unrest in the region (TCND, 2008, p. iv). TCND was mandated to review past reports including the 1958 Willinks Commission Report and present a summarization of these recommendations and their appropriate calls for government action (TCND, 2008, p. 10). The outcome of the Committee was the establishment of an Amnesty and DDR program in 2009 as the last carrot approach in the region (Onapajo & Moshood, 2016, pp. 42-43).

Table 2. 2: Periodization of State Policy response in the Niger Delta (1960-2009)

| Year | Initiative | Mandate | Why it failed |
|-------------|---|--|---|
| 1960-1966 | Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) | Facilitate agricultural development | Outbreak of Biafra Civil War |
| 1976 | River Basin and Development Authority Decree | Assist irrigation, fishing regulations and control pollution | Inconsistent mandate with objectives of 1958 Willink Commission |
| 1980 | Delta River Basin Development Authority (NDRBDA) | Address ecological and environmental concerns | Inadequate Funds |
| 1982 | Presidential Task Force on Niger Delta Development (PTFNDD) | Design development strategies | Corruption |

| | | | |
|-----------|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1982 | 1.5% Revenue Derivation | Tackle Development Problems | Bureaucratic Bottlenecks |
| 1992-1999 | Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) | Address ecological and environmental pollution | Corruption, Embezzlement and Fraud |
| 2000 | Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) | Promote sustainable development and peacebuilding | Corruption and non-strategic planning |
| 2008 | Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (MNDA) | Address development and infrastructural challenges | |
| 2009 | Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR Program (NDDA and DDR) | Promote peace and address security and development challenges | |

Source: Author’s compilation adapted from varied literature

2.2.2.2 Coercive “Stick” Approach

On the other hand, the government has employed coercive and lethal force to respond to the peaceful protest and agitations of the people. Since the 1970s, the state has continued to repress, intimidate, maim, and forcefully occupy the entire region through the use of state security apparatus like the military and Joint Task Force (JTF) also known as the “Operation restore Hope”, to continue the extraction and production of oil (Chiluwa, 2011, p. 199) The use of repression by the government, has heightened tensions and set the stage for the violent battles between militia groups and military troops in the region (Punch, 2017). The interventions of the government in the early stages of the conflict in the Niger Delta region were oppressive. For instance, Adaka Boro’s NDVF twelve-day revolution in the Niger Delta was met with brutal repression from the government. Boro together with members of his group were arrested by security forces and sentenced to death although with the outbreak of the Biafra war, they were

granted amnesty (Bourne, 2015, p. 7). Just like Boro, the military dealt with MOSOP's protest through the use of torture and inhuman treatment. Ken Saro-Wiwa together with other activists who protested against the environmental injustice, were arrested and sentenced to death. In 1995, he was hanged (Independent, 1995). Following these incidents, between 1998 and 1999, security forces and youth militia groups were involved in a number of armed clashes in the region. In 1999, the government deployed warships and more troops in the region to quell the violent protest by the youths. Military troops used force against militants and armed groups as people were severely beaten, tortured and arbitrarily detained (Human Rights Watch, 1999). This clash came as a result of a peaceful and unarmed demonstration by youth which took place in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State and Kaima and this later transformed to the Kaima Declaration of the IYC (Owonikoko, 2018, p. 124). In response to the demonstration, the military between late 1998 and early 1999 retaliated with a crackdown in Bayelsa and Delta states. This resulted in loss of lives and destruction of properties, tortures and massive violations of human rights (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

One horrible incident that resulted from this military deployment was the Odi massacre. On 20 November 1999, following the murder of seven Nigerian policemen, the military retaliation raided and wiped out the entire Ijaw community of Odi based on the pretence of hunting down militants and armed criminals "hiding" in Odi (Punch, 2017; Ukeje, 2011, pp. 89-90). Following this threat, a JTF was also established and deployed to the region to maintain law and order especially oil infrastructure platforms, pipelines and power installations in the communities (Owonikoko, 2018, p. 124). Owonikoko (2018) further argues that, the deployment of JFK in the region was not to provide security for the people in the Niger Delta. Rather, it was meant to provide security to multinational personnel and ensure a safe environment for production to continue. Between 2003 and 2005, the JTF was in a full-blown war with militant groups like NDV and NDPVF (Adeola, 2014). Extrajudicial killings by security forces amounted to about 3,100 in action in 2003 (ICG, 2006, p. 5). A later example of the government's stick approach came on 19 February 2005, when military troops attacked the town of Odioma, Bayelsa, shooting randomly, burning houses with petrol and raping women. This incident led to 17 people being killed including a two-year-old child and an elderly woman both burnt to death. According to the narrative of the forces, they were searching for militants (ICG, 2006, p. 6). In May 2009, a clash between the JTF and a group from MEND culminated in several deaths and damage of property (Smock, 2009).

Emeseh (2011) argue that, the Nigerian government has utilized legislation as a stick method to respond to the demands of the people. Laws like the 1967 Petroleum Decree signaled to the agitating groups the dangers of being punished by law through their illegal action (Fayemi et al., 2005, p. 55). Laws like the 1975 Anti-Sabotage Decree were enacted with the death penalty attached to them to prevent agitations (p. 55). The state's response to the 1990 Ogoni Bill of Rights launched by MOSOP was to pass the Treason and Treasonable Offenses Decree in May 1993. This law viewed the advocacy of minority rights from MOSOP as a treasonable act which is punishable by death. As a result, the military (policemen, soldiers and naval personnel) were deployed in the region to protect oil facilities against vandalization by protesters (Emeseh, 2011, p. 67). This political strategy has favoured resorting to extra-judicial and violent approaches to suppress legitimate demands and peaceful protest by minority groups and communities in the Niger Delta. The use of force to crush peaceful protest instead to seek to address the concerns being protested, certainly has worsened the fragile security landscape and relationships in the Niger Delta (Human Rights Watch, 1999). The government has over relied on stick/hard power than carrot/soft power. This is likely one of the reasons why several efforts to address the conflict have been futile. Inuwa (2017) argues that the human security and development aspects of the conflict were undermined, and securitization became a pivotal aspect. This portrays the nature and character of the Nigerian state, which will be discussed, in the following section.

2.2.3 An Explanation of the Nature and character of the Nigerian State

Oil has played a decisive role in Nigeria's political economy and its distribution has shaped the style and quality of governance, as well as the country's character (Watts, 2004). This section discusses some core distinctive features of the contemporary Nigerian state and how these have impacted on the general political space in the country.

Nigeria has a colonial heritage and the historical context is the foundation for the nature and character of the contemporary state. The Nigerian state is a colonial imposition and emerged not as a product of consensus among the constituent units. Rather, it was a forceful merger between nations and peoples of distinct culture and practices (Ayatse & Akuva, 2013, p. 181). The political governance structure was inherited from the colonial state (Akinwale, 2010). The state was created to foster the economic interests of the colonial masters, helping to ensure law and order and guarantee an environment that enabled the imperialists to increase their interests. This disposition of the state has laid the foundation of the deep-rooted ethno-cultural conflicts in the country (Aghedo & Osumah, 2015, p. 209).

A further important component of the Nigerian state is its various ethno-religious composition, which came as a result of colonialism. The current country is multi-ethnic and multilingual in nature and is composed of over 250 ethnic groups and about 400 languages (Mustapha, 2007). The country is made up of three key ethnic regions involving the Northern Region (Hausa-Fulani), the Western Region (Yoruba), and the Eastern Region (Igbo) with different needs, priorities and aspirations (Ejobowah, 2000, pp. 32-33; Mustapha, 2006, p. 5). One of the legacies of colonialism is the unequal geographical distribution and representation of these groups. This geographical composition has strategically advantaged the North over other ethnic groups due to its population size (Osha, 2007, p. 24). The north is comprised of Muslims while the south is made up of Christians (Akobo, 2016, p. 25). Thus, this has been the basis for the politics of the north-south divide.

The North-South divide can be linked to one of the machine-like characters of the Nigerian state which is its neopatrimonial nature. The neopatrimonial logic has penetrated the political system in the country and its functionality. The state uses the political game of patrimonial distribution and redistribution along regional, ethnic and, family lines (Bøås, 2011, pp. 116-117). Such institutions were created by colonial rule which changed the distribution of power and authority within communities. The colonial system of indirect rule destroyed the traditional institutions of Nigeria (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, 1948). Under this system, traditional chiefs were selected by colonial authorities (Ikime, 1968). This political culture has continued until date with the state-multinationals alliance choosing and rewarding certain communities over others. The approach has equally been adopted as the *modus operandi* by public officials and elites who frame the quest for the control of rents from oil and gas (Francis et al., 2011, p. 31). In such a disposition, there exists complex powerful and deep-rooted networks of patronage and political alliance among public officials and institutions. This has resulted in poor public service delivery. The neo-patrimonial nature of the state helps to secure political alliances. Employment opportunities and contract awards have become resources for personal or group advancement and does not benefit the public.

The Nigerian state is a very corrupt state. Corruption can be seen through the manipulation of tension and rigging of elections (Onapajo, Francis, & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015, p. 4). This is a political culture whereby tensions are triggered by office holders over public resources, creating a personalized uni-centric field for power relations (Francis et al., 2011, p. 59). Political actors are motivated by the incentive to manipulate elections to gain political office because such positions give them the power to control the resources in the Niger Delta. As such, alliances

and loyalties are established as means to access resources (Nwokolo & Aghedo, 2018, p. 326). The high stakes serve as incentives for rigging and election fraud, not only in Nigeria but in the Niger Delta (Carter Center, 1999). The power dynamics are very complex at federal, state and local state levels. At state level, elected governors possess huge economic and political power. Contracts and projects are awarded based on patrimonial lines. At times, governors favor some constituencies over others (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

The nature of the 2003 state and federal elections in Delta state was very fraudulent. Such conditions have resulted in electoral violence prevalent in different federal, state, and local government elections especially during 1999, 2003, and 2007 (Human Rights Watch, 2011). For instance, the 2003 elections were marred by several electoral malpractices as votes were rigged in Rivers, Delta, and Cross River states. The 2007 election was also characterized by fraud and many communities in the region did not participate in the presidential and state elections (National Democratic Institute, 2007, p. 3). Elections have become a focus for violence in the country (The Guardian, 2019; Aljazeera, 2019). Electoral violence has intensified conflict at all levels culminating in a vicious cycle of violent political competition and confrontation (Bello, 2015). It is reported that during the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections, armed youth groups were recruited by politicians to rig elections in their favour (The Economist, 2007). These youths were paid to attack political opponents (Human Rights Watch, 2003; Reliefweb, 2008). These politicians forged alliances with these armed groups. The country has been scored as one of the most corrupt countries in the world on the Corruption Perception Index according to Transparency International (Sahara Reporters, 2019; This Day, 2019; Transparency International, 2019). Key politicians and elite have taken advantage of the anarchic situation to profit economically by looting the region's wealth (Sahara Reporters, 2012). In 2011, the chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, revealed that 72% of former governors in Niger Delta were under investigation for corruption. Among them include: the Governors of Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Rivers and Abia states (BBC, 2011). Likewise, the former Minister for petroleum Ms. Diezani Alison-Madueke was accused and charged for corrupt practices (Africa News, 2018). The oil sector is very obscured and institutions in the country are not transparent and democratic. For example, actual figures on oil spending are not clear and are rarely published or communicated (Transparency International, 2019; USIP, 2018).

Equally, the Nigerian state is a rentier state. The oil sector has been plagued by various problems due to the rentier nature of the state. The economy is complexly entwined with the oil sector (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2012, p. 298). As such, any shock in the international commodities market

negatively impacts the reliant economy. A good example is the 2008 economic and financial crisis when the prices of crude oil dropped. This almost plunged the economy to its knees (Agbaeze, Udeh, & Onwuka, 2015, p. 3). A key characteristic of the Nigerian rentier state is the rentier elite dynamic (Omeje, 2006). Empirical evidence has shown that because Nigeria relies on external rents from oil and gas, the country is liable to poor governmental accountability, corruption, leadership power conflicts, and civil unrest etc. (Nwokolo & Aghedo, 2018, p. 325). The political landscape is composed of a dynamic of spoils politics where rentier elites struggle to acquire political power to access fiscal resources (Allen, 1999, p. 376). The state and its rentier elites are corrupt and promote political patronage, frame and manipulate decision making processes, institutions or structures that benefit their self-interest and priorities and that of their groups at the expense of non-elites and community interest (Nwokolo & Aghedo, 2018, p. 326). Besides, oil rents foster the foundation of increasing patronage networks and alliances, clientelism, assistencial distribution policies and hinders democratic institutions in Nigeria (Mähler, 2010, p. 7). In such situations, alliances are built on rewards. For instance, cases have been reported where the state in alliance with MNOCs usually employ traditional leaders who are financially persuaded to negotiate sustainable human development and human security. Also, militant leaders are given huge financial incentives by the governors in the Niger Delta states (Nwobueze, 2017, p. 26). Some multinationals reward local elites and youth groups through patronage to protect company interests and assets and put communities against each other (Obi, 2010, p. 490). Due to the over reliance on oil rents, the country is unable to diversify to other sectors of the economy and therefore is liable to extreme vulnerability (Mähler, 2010, p. 8). The claim is that resource wealth is linked to poor economic growth and affects other sectors like agriculture.

Another distinctive attribute of the state is its authoritarian nature. Just like its colonial predecessor, the state is an interventionist, repressive and exploitative state that relies on the deployment of force/coercion in the management of tension and conflicts in the country (Imoh-Itah, Amadi, & Akpan, 2016, p. 9). The state is a militarized state as its response to community agitation is seen through the heavy presence of soldiers, naval officers and ratings, mobile police patrol and several security agents deployed to quell social unrest (Ukeje, 2011, p. 83). The military is highly involved in civilian politics particularly oil, and this has made the Nigerian state more authoritarian than democratic (Amuwo, 2001). Ukeje (2011) argues that in the context of delegitimization of state power, the state response to threats of its authority and governance is through the use of hard instead of soft power. Political confrontations among the ruling elite is highly premised along ethno-regional and religious identities. The political system

of federalism which was adopted after independence as a symbol for national unity, failed due to an unequal distribution of power between different constituent units and groups. This has resulted in general frustration and unhappiness by the country's minority groups leading to different factions of insurgent groups (Aghedo & Osumah, 2015, pp. 209-210).

2.3 Conclusion

The chapter discussed the historical timeline (periodization) of oil conflict from precolonial, colonial and post-colonial states and how this has been an accelerator to the drivers of oil conflict and militia agitations in the Niger Delta. The chapter argues that the contemporary oil conflict is similar to the precolonial and colonial conflicts in slave trade and palm oil respectively. To critically analyze the political economy of the Amnesty and DDR program, an understanding of the origins, dynamics, state management policy and character of the state is critical. In this vein, I have shown that the post-colonial state inherited patterns of administration from the colonial state that left behind a legacy of disunity in the Nigerian political landscape. These patterns of power are what the contemporary state has replicated especially in the management of the conflict on the Niger Delta. The state policy response to the conflict has been based on the concept of divide and conquer as well as both carrot and stick strategies.

This confusing approach has been an impeding factor to peace, security and development of the Niger Delta. The chapter has unraveled and analyzed the evolving politics of oil and demonstrated an incisive analysis of the perennial problems of the contemporary state. Evidence revealed that oil is a misery and source of conflict for the local communities. Further discussion on the contemporary rentier state and the rent-seeking nature and interest of the state and the economy was presented. This rent-seeking interest is what has complicated the oil conflict in the Niger Delta. The chapter illustrates that the contradictions of a dysfunctional rentier-neopatrimonial nature of the state are the drivers of the conflict. Understanding the nature and character of the Nigerian state requires nuanced understanding of contemporary relationships which can only be understood within a historical context. As such, the nature and character of the Nigerian state will determine the kind of outcomes from institutions that were entrusted to implement the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR program.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF STATE AND NON-STATE INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

3 Introduction

Chapter Two focused on the historical underpinnings and previous state management approaches towards conflict in the Niger Delta as well as a presentation of the Nigerian political economy. Chapter Three builds on this argument by focusing on the role of institutions in the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR Programs, specifically on how institutions frame the implementation of these programs. In order to achieve this, the chapter adopts Cleaver's (2012) concept of institutional bricolage which states that "people consciously and unconsciously draw on existing social formulae (styles of thinking, models of cause and effect, social norms and sanctioned social roles and relationships) to patch or piece together institutions in response to changing situations" (p. 45). What emerges from these findings is that institutions have competing ideas, interests, values and preferences that either aid or stifle the implementation of the Amnesty and DDR programs. Competitions and alliances between institutions reflect the broader challenges faced by Nigeria such as the struggle for control over the production, use, and distribution of oil resources in the Niger Delta. In this chapter, we will look specifically at how the Amnesty and DDR programs were crafted and designed and how these institutions negotiate conflict, strike bargains, address formal and informal political settlements, and form and break alliances and coalitions in the Niger Delta. Ultimately, this chapter will begin to address the collapse of political settlements that have resulted in continued violent conflict in the Niger Delta.

This chapter contributes to the institutional debate without which we cannot understand the dynamics and complexities surrounding the Amnesty and DDR. Several scholars have conceptualized the Amnesty and DDR processes from the perspective of their successes and failures but in doing so, have generally failed to underscore how institutional assemblages interact and entangle in the structural programming of the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR initiatives. To date, most scholars on the subject have either ignored or not understood the centrality of institutions in interpreting the successes and failures of the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR programs.

3.1 Furthering Institutional Scholarship and Debates

In order to strengthen the debate on political economy, this thesis has adopted two significant scholarly concepts about institutions that provide better explanation and understanding of how amnesty and DDR institutions function. Before delving into the analysis of state and non-state institutions, it is important to develop a conceptual framework of what institutions are and the role they play in the Amnesty and DDR programs. Institutions are a nebulous but inarguably distinct entity comprised of many parts. Different economists view them as existing in several manifestations. Broadly speaking, economists view institutions as “governing structures” (Williamson, 1975) associated with the customs, standards and expected outcomes in a given societal framework (Nelson, 2008, p. 2). Rixen and Viola (2016) argue that political economy actors and agents create institutions in response to collective problems and claim that the use of institutions lowers transaction costs while simultaneously facilitating common interests (p. 7). Institutions are established as payoff structures for cooperation,¹⁰ and political and economic relationships are in this case, inherently institutionalized (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985, p. 227).

3.1.1 The Mainstream Debate

The first debate addressed in this chapter attempts to understand the internal functioning of public institutions. This debate is premised upon the mainstream perspective, which observes that institutions are formed through crafting principles that characterize robust institutions and that decision-making and other negotiations take place in mostly public platforms. Mainstream institutionalists hold the view that agency is seen through the lens of bounded rationality and believe that human behaviour is driven by incentives, rules and punishments. According to this view, the constant relations between these elements within institutions produce efficient resource management outcomes (Clever, 2012, p. 16).

Institutional analysis provides an examination of the relationship between political actors as objects and as agents of history (Steinmo & Thelen, 1992, p.10). In his discourse on historical institutionalism (HI), Steinmo (2008) identifies three types of institutional analysis in social science: rational choice, sociological institutionalism (SI) and historical institutionalism (HI). Those who are proponents of rational choice attempt to apply explanatory approaches as a

¹⁰Cooperation is not equivalent to harmony. Harmony necessitates an obvious recognition of interest whereas, cooperation only occurs in conflicting and complementary interest circumstances. In such circumstance, cooperation takes place when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985, p. 226).

strategy for analyzing human behavior in settings where interest and rules of the games are created (Gjevori, 2018, p. 33). Suffice to say that the adoption of institutional bricolage is significant in understanding the dynamics and complexities of institutions in peacebuilding. Institutional bricolage is not only key to explaining the significant institutional arrangements that are brokered but also serve as a lens through which we can explain and understand the complexity of institutional assemblage, ecological stress, historical factors, power relations, gender, access to other institutions and cultural repertoires embedded within communities (Gutu, Wong, & Kinati, 2014).

The analysis of the social context within which institutional arrangements are embedded is as important as the institutional crafting itself (Guru, 2018). This research will expose the diverse layers of institutions by examining the successes and failures of the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR programs. Rational choice scholars believe that humans are rational beings who calculate the costs and benefits of the choices they face, structuring their choices by following rules that result in the maximization of their own self-interests (Steinmo, 2008, p. 162). Rational choice institutionalists consider institutions to be a key element of their strategic context and view constraints as an imposition on self-interested behavior (Steinmo & Thelen, 1992, p.7).

Sociological institutionalists perceive human beings as principally social beings who are neither self-interested nor rational but exist primarily as “satisficers” who continually take actions. The assumption is that institutions structure the way people perceive their world, not just within the confines of self-interest and rule-following, but in so far as humans follow a “logic of appropriateness” (Steinmo, 2008, p. 162). This “logic of appropriateness” suggests that people focus first on their actions without considering the potential incentives they may get for engaging in such behaviour. As such, sociological institutionalism is built on the existence of institutions vested with agency (Gjevori, 2018, p. 33).

Building on the political economy approach, this research integrates historical perspectives in analysing and interpreting institutions. Historical institutionalism adopts both rational choice and sociological approaches and combines the ideas that human beings are both norm-abiding rule followers as well as self-interested rational actors. Sitting outside the narrow confines of rational and sociological motives, the historical institutionalist approach helps provide structure for political behaviour and outcomes irrespective of formal institutions, informal rules and other norms. The overarching scope of the “historical school” shapes who participates in certain decisions and simultaneously identifies what underlying factors dictate the strategic behaviour

of participants (Steinmo, 2008, pp. 150-159). This approach assumes that institutions provide the context in which political actors define their strategies and pursue their interest.

3.1.2 The Critical School

This research incorporates critical theoretical foundations that explain institutions in order to support the PE approach. The critical institutional approach examines how institutions dynamically negotiate relationships between people, natural resources, and society. The critical approach emphasizes the multi-scalar complexity of institutions entangled in daily social life, the creative human actions that shaped their historical formation, the linkages between formal, informal, traditional and modern arrangements, and the power relations that stir these connections (Cleaver & de Koning, 2015, p. 1). Building on the PE perspective, critical institutionalism (CI) argues that institutions are formed through the uneven patching together of old practices and accepted norms with new arrangements (Cleaver, 2012, p. x). This “patchwork” implies that institutions are adapted and often derived from other pre-existing arrangements and are not created for a specific reason. The critical school stresses the relevance of performance and adaptation through diverse scales for assessing challenges in public service delivery (i.e. national to local levels) (Jones, 2015, p. 65).

Critical institutionalism explores how Amnesty and DDR institutions are animated not only by people acting individually or collectively in relation to others, but also how these institutions are transformed by their physical and material environment. CI unmasks how different powers function to maintain Amnesty and DDR institutions in Nigeria and frames their participation, access and outcomes. In this vein, the complexity, uncertainty, institutional environment, centrality of power dynamics, nature of human action, and the issue of social justice are portrayed (Cleaver, 2012, p. 4).

These arrangements include the interaction between ecological and social systems; the diversity of livelihoods, resources and uses; the variability of actors and their practices within heterogeneous communities; multiple and overlapping scales, domains and timescales of interaction; the repeatedly obscure manner in which institutions work and power operates; and the variability of outcomes produced. Faced with such multiple complexities, there is need to combine the generation of rich, context specific accounts of institutional functioning with the identification of recurring patterns of governance and societal resource allocation (Cleaver, 2012, pp. 2-3).

To buttress the argument on institutions, the CI approach puts forward that bricolage is a very significant element in institutional functioning. CI views institutions as necessarily unequal in their functioning and influence, going as far as to say that they are at times “fuzzy” blends of significant practices, spreading and acting on numerous reasons (p. 45). Bricolage occurs when people deliberately or unintentionally build and reframe institutional arrangements based on the availability of materials and resources, despite the people’s initial purpose. As a result of this process, old arrangements are adjusted, and new ones are created (Clever & de Koning, 2015, p. 4).

Institutional bricolage is central to the Nigerian case as it elaborates on how norms are operationalized. It discusses institutional survival and change, and illustrates human agency and relations of power as well as the debate on institutional effectiveness (Clever & de Koning, 2015, p. 4). This paper argues that bricolage is needed to craft and design Amnesty and DDR institutions in the Niger Delta. This helps us to understand the interactions amongst people, assumes diversity, dynamism and complexity. The debate further reveals the importance of the several process and practices that go beyond social life and layers. This is where institutional arrangements are designed (Caine, 2014, pp. 228-229). However, with time, these layers of arrangements transform policy settings and patch together diverse sources of political and social framings of institutions (Marin & Bjørklund, 2015, p. 30).

3.2 State-to-State Institutional Interaction

This section analyses how state institutions interacted to produce the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR program. It is significant to look at state institutions because they have legal mandates. State institutions are promulgated by their status as defined by parliament and it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that outcomes are delivered. Over the years, the Nigerian government set up a variety of state institutions to provide services and implement the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR program. These institutions included the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) that was meant to facilitate development initiatives in the region. Also, the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs (MNDA) was created to implement development programs; while the Ministry of Environment was to handle environmental challenges. Furthermore, the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND) was tasked to review previous reports on Niger Delta and make recommendations to the government. Just like the other institutions, the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta (OSAPND) was mandated to conceptualize, plan and implement the DDR; while the Office of the Special Adviser to the

President on Petroleum Matters (OSAPPM) was entrusted to address issues related to the redistribution of oil assets. Equally, the military was mandated to oversee security matters of the DDR process; and the Ministry of Health was to provide medical facilities for militants in demobilisation and reintegration camps. Likewise, the Ministry of Employment was tasked to set up the needed infrastructure for cluster employment initiatives; and the Ministry of Education was entrusted with designing and implementing educational and vocational training programs for ex-militants. This cluster of state institutions operates at federal, state and local levels and is directly connected to the corresponding definitive nature of these institutions involving economic, political, developmental, security, and social characteristics.

3.2.1 Institutions as “Rules of the Game”

Building on the PE approach, institutions are “the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interactions. In consequence, institutions structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social or economic” (North, 1990, p. 3; Ostrom et al., 2002). Institutions are rules that govern the behaviour of agents (DFID, 2004, p. 1). Agents are individuals and organizations pursuing particular interests, including the political elite; civil servants; political parties; local government; the judiciary; the military; faith groups; trade unions; civil society groups; the media; the private sector; academics; and donors (DFID, 2004, p. 1). The “rules of the game” provided by institutions are very often guided by self-interest. In other words, the constraints created by institutions are generally designed to maximize self-interest and these rules in themselves can become institutional frameworks. Such institutional constraints become the arenas in which human interaction takes place (North, 1990, p. 4) and define formal and informal rules (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 40). Formal rules are framed by the state, whereas informal norms “are a part of the heritage that we call culture” (North, 1990, p. 37).

In the case of Nigeria, old institutional rules have been adapted and new ones have been crafted to implement the Amnesty. The state institutions that were designed to implement the Amnesty and DDR programs interact with the larger economic and political system within which they are embedded and act as players of the game as they attempt to alter the varied institutional rules to benefit their members and coalitions (Hodgson, 2006, p. 9). In implementing the DDR, formal institutions formed networks where incentives were shared amongst political elites to maintain their affiliations. For instance, some of the networks were considered outcomes of

previous games for political elites and bureaucrats in order to deliberately form alliances and friendship links with other state officials and elites (Greif & Kingston, 2011, pp. 30-31).

In as much as coalitions and networks of patronage were solidified among these NDA and DDR institutions, the institutions equally encountered some defections related to the distribution of gains to compensate themselves (Greif & Kingston, 2011, p. 16). In this vein, individuals have shifted their position and try to change the rules because according to them, existing rules governing their interaction with other state officials are unsatisfactory. As such, these individuals calculate their expected costs and benefits from the institutional arrangements.

Considering the current structure of formal and informal rules, individuals from state institutions have taken advantage of the perceived opportunities related to the amnesty and DDR. This is the reason why some officials/elites have attempted to change the structure of formal rules and adjust previous informal rules which in effect restructure the constraints (North, 1990, p. 91). Informal rules and norms such as the culture of corruption to extract rents from the state have been able to thrive within state institutions (Martini, 2014, pp. 2-4). This is backed by the debate on the neopatrimonial nature of the Nigerian state where patrons secure the loyalty and support of clients by granting benefits from state resources. For instance, most institutions in Nigeria are controlled by sit-tight elites who don't want to give up power. These elites formalize laws to accumulate personal wealth and not to address concrete problems. In normal circumstances, the government's role is to set the rule of the game and provide oversight for those rules since governance is part of the problem in the region. Unfortunately, this is not the case as the government did not only set rules but also served as one of the implementers of the program. The argument is that the corrupt nature of state officials, could not allow state institutions to provide oversight to itself. Suffice to say, the rules together with the perception of the actors have influenced key elements in inhibiting and shaping the implementation of the NDA and DDR. This has led to the inefficiency of the program based on the informal rules that have obscured its success.

A growing body of literature considers the interaction of formal and informal institutions in implementing the NDA and DDR program. Within the institution as a rules framework, a clear distinction is made between formal rules created by the Nigerian State to implement the program and the informal rules that are produced by the individuals that run the institutions.

Decisions about policies linked to the implementation of the program are made by powerful politicians and their allies who are linked by informal, personal and clientelist networks that

co-exist with the formal state institutions (Martini, 2014, p. 2). The Nigerian government in coordinating the amnesty, adopted rules (institutions) which corresponded to the rules they were familiar with. Based on the rules paradigm, behavior is constrained not just by formal rules, but also by the informal rules existing in the Nigerian society. The explanation offered is that amnesty and DDR institutions were exogenous constraints (rules) that shaped the endogenous behaviors of the state implementers of the program. The institutional dynamics are pursued by the changing formal rules which have hindered a sustainable outcome of the program (Greif & Kingston, 2011, pp. 30-31).

Conflict in the Niger Delta has encouraged political elites to establish legal institutions that help to strengthen their interests (Engerman & Sokoloff, 2002). It is worth noting that by rent-seeking, the military, politicians, members of government and public officials in Nigeria have taken advantage of their positions to exploit state and private institutions as well as the entire economy for personal enrichment and power purposes (Amundsen, 2010, p. 13). The amnesty and DDR institutions were rules that were responses to the deteriorating environment in the Niger Delta and were determined by the interests of the political actors who made the rules (Hofmann & Schneckener, 2011, p. 3). In this regard, political powers (elites) selected rules (institutions) to generate distributional benefits of oil for themselves rather than for the people of the Niger Delta. Therefore, the institutions that emerged to manage the DDR program were framed based on the interests of the political elites, bureaucrats and government officials to act collectively to achieve their interest in oil in the Niger Delta.

3.2.2 Differential Power Distribution

Power dynamics is a significant factor in shaping not only the trajectories of the NDA and DDR program but also the form and functioning of state institutions that promoted or hindered the outcome of the program (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 12). From a PE stance, power is premised in institutionalized settings (Gjevori, 2018, p. 33). Power/authority is dominated by individuals who claim their rights through participation, shaping and negotiating over the control, distribution and use of resources. Hence, power is used by actors to mobilize and impact decision-making to their advantage. Power is further seen as an instrument and source of wealth that is crafted and utilized to pursue and safeguard outcomes to reward actors (Clever, 2012, p. 21).

In Nigeria, the political impact of oil wealth has been the centralization of power and the growth of a neo-patrimonial system of governance characterized by patronage and a rent-seeking

culture (Amundsen, 2010, p. 15). Indeed, due to the rentier nature of the economy, power is very centralized and personalized, and priorities are on the building of networks rather than of efficiency in implementing the program. Power calculations center around access and distribution of rents by the ruling elite and political class. For instance, in implementing the NDA and DDR program, more bureaucratic power was leveraged on OSAPND than other state institutions. This resulted in contestation and bargaining between the political class and ruling elite with competing claims over rights and resources in the region. The oil wealth has given the ruling elites both the incentives for controlling the state institutions of NDA and DDR (and accordingly the revenue), and the means to maintain control of the state (Amundsen, 2010, p. 15). The distribution of power is determined by the incentives that stem from institutional arrangements (J. Robinson, 2002, p. 510). In this way, the competing interest and conflict over the control and distribution of resources by state institutions shaped and influenced the DDR agenda (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 18).

An unequal balance of power exists among state institutions involved in the implementation of the program. This is seen in Nigeria, oil determines who benefits from what and who does not, or who participates in the program or not (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 13). Some institutions were given more status than others. For instance, an institution like the OSAPND exercises a very high and central level of power in the dynamic that exists between the Presidency and interaction with other state and non-state institutions. Also, some institutions like the NDDC and the military have utilized both legitimate and non-legitimate means to manipulate the institutions for their own interest. Various powerful actors inside and outside of the NDDC including NDDC Board members and staff, political elites, bureaucrats, contractors, consultants, and influential government officials have together formed a strong network that incentivizes them to behave at the detriment of the beneficiary communities (Akinyoade, 2018, p. 231). The military on its part has a vested interest in the status quo. Some military officials have used their institution to violate and thwart the rule of law and state institutions to accumulate rents for private benefits (Amundsen, 2010, p. 13). Because of the imbalance of power distribution, checks and balances within state institutions are obscured. Political elites and officials use informal rules as alternatives to operate in an environment of unaccountability, corruption, and clientelism. They bypass formal rules and maximize their own personal interests (North, 1990). Consequently, poor institutional practices have directly or indirectly incentivized poor performance and pervasive and socially undesirable outcomes for DDR projects for militants.

Research has produced a basic consensus on the key determinants and characteristics of state institutions in terms of the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals. This includes the processes that establish, sustain and transform these relationships over time in framing the NDA and DDR program. From a PE perspective, the distribution of power is connected to the interaction of political and economic processes in state institutions. In the case of the NDA and DDR, economic and political power within state institutions, political elites and the ruling class strengthen informal norms of political patronage to access and preserve power as well as gain political support (Martini, 2014, p. 8). Considering that the state is the central actor for oil revenues, it is to the state's institutional network that political elites, bureaucrats and state officials coalesce to distribute power among themselves to have easy access to oil rents. As such, given the rentier economy and the centrality of the state, ambitious state officials contested to control the rents by seeking strategic positions within the NDA and DDR state institutions. The interaction between state institutions shaped the choices for the operationalization of the programs. To gain some room for manoeuvre, patrons select those loyal to be part of the inner circle of state institutions entrusted to implement the program. This allows both patrons and their proteges to profit disproportionately from the opportunities created by oil wealth (Martini, 2014, pp. 2-4). Significantly, collective action is driven by rational individuals forming alliances with similar interests (Cleaver, 2012, p. 23). Government officials and elites use forms of both de facto and de jure power in the framing of the NDA and DDR (Bertocchi & Dimico, 2017, p. 322).

3.2.3 Formal Institutional Bargaining

The discourse on the role of state institutions in producing the outcome of the NDA and DDR program also centers around the dilemma that lies at the heart of institutional agreements (Ikenberry, 2003, p. 2). According to Young (1994) institutional bargaining is when natural resource institutions depend on interactive processes involving the interaction of different forces. The process is defined as the development of commonly accepted agreement. After the 1958 discovery of oil in the Niger Delta, the dominant question that Nigerian policy-makers have confronted over the decades is how to address the security challenges in the region that hinders oil exploration activities.

From a neo-liberal perspective, institutions are created to help solve collective action problems by minimizing the engagement problems and transaction costs that hinder cost-effective and mutually beneficial political exchange (Keohane, 1984). This research has shown that

institutions create a conducive and obvious political environment in which ruling elites achieve their interests. This implies that institutions can operate as instruments of political control and as such act as the weapons of coercion and redistribution among the state institutions (Ikenberry, 2003, p. 6). The result is a potential institutional bargain that lies at the heart of the relationship among state institutions.

Over the years, the government of Nigeria has pursued ambitious strategies that necessitated the use of an assemblage of state institutions to address the oil conflict in the Niger Delta. The efforts of previous governments to manage the conflict and address the development challenges in the Niger Delta produced weak and apparently bleak results (Reliefweb, 2017). These institutions were employed to manage the relations between the state and the people of the Niger Delta. Yet, despite the creation of these institutions, Nigeria has been reluctant to tie itself too firmly to these institutions and rules. (Ikenberry, 2003, p. 6). In 2009, the government put the NDA and DDR at the center of its peace designs in the region. State institutions were to play a distinct role in organizing security and providing mechanisms for dispute resolution and formal negotiations. It was against this backdrop that the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND/ “The Committee”) was set up in 2008 to bargain on appropriate calls for government action to achieve sustainable development, peace, human and environmental security in the Niger Delta region (TCND, 2008, p. 10). After the declaration of the NDA, the federal government started pushing for an array of new institutions--security, economic, political, developmental and social, and so on. New institutions were established due to the bargaining made with already existing institutions. The impact of the bargaining is the production of new institutions or major patching of old ones (Marin & Bjørklund, 2015, p. 26). In the process of this bargain, the leading new state institutions cooperate with already existing institutions to frame the implementation of the NDA and DDR program (Young, 1994, p. 82).

Despite the institutional bargaining process characterised by multiple institutions forming alliances to push for the implementation of the NDA and DDR, there has been some misgivings which have resulted in defections among these statutory institutions. The argument is that the process of bargaining between self-interested actors is driven by developing arrangements acceptable to many actors and with the goal to achieve mutual agreements rather than a majority through a form of integrative (or productive), rather than distributive (or positional) bargaining (Marin & Bjørklund, 2015, p. 30).

3.3 Non-state Driven Institutional Interlinkage

While the preceding section analyzed the interaction of state institutions, this section follows the same direction to explain how non-state institutions interact to address the amnesty concerns. Non-state institutions in this instance refers specifically to traditional structures, militia groups and informal networks, NGOs and CSOs at local and national levels.

3.3.1 Institutions as socially shared rules/traditional systems

It is important to note that the connection between non-state institutions are constructed from the belief systems of the Nigerian society (Rothstein, 2005, pp. 127-128). This implies that the design of the NDA and DDR institutions should not be regarded solely as an effect of the Nigerian society's historical and cultural legacy. On the contrary, it is possible to say that Nigeria's political history illustrates highly deliberate choices concerning the amnesty made by key politicians in the construction of amnesty institutions with the express purposes of shaping the belief systems of the people. Militia groups and networks have been key rhetoric in the struggle in the region. This is because they are networks that are embedded in the social structures of their community's daily life¹¹. They form an integral part of the social life of the communities they live in. They are very significant as they govern and control activities in these communities. Their relevance is partly because the government has failed in its role to protect its citizens and provide them with security. As such, militia groups and criminal networks in the region serve as alternative governments in this regard.

According to the belief systems in the region, manhood is defined by the social affiliations that one subscribes or belongs to¹². Thus, militancy is perceived as a social group which youth in the region affiliate with as a source of protection as well as to fight for their plight. As such, being a militant to them signifies the attainment of manhood¹³. However, becoming a militant demands they fulfil certain requirements. For example, the belief is that to be qualified militants they must be initiated into cultism. In cultism, there is hierarchy and respect for leaders. The leader's actions (good or bad) cannot be challenged and whoever challenges occultic hierarchy is eliminated. This is part of the reasons why ex-militants under Ateke Tom cannot challenge him as their "godfather" even though they are not satisfied with the N25,000 cut off from their initial N65,000 monthly amnesty stipend given to them by the government for fear of going

¹¹ Respondent 10, July 2018, Nigeria.

¹² Respondent 15, July 2018, Nigeria.

¹³ Respondent 06, July 2018, Nigeria.

against the rule and being killed¹⁴. Thus, as ascribed by the social beliefs of militancy, subordinates/followers must pay allegiance to their patrons (militant leaders) irrespective of their shortcomings.

Interestingly, Niger Delta communities do not interpret/perceive militia groups as gangs or criminals as the government and MNOCs present them. They are not seen as unofficial social networks, criminals or prohibited channels. Rather, for the communities, militants are looked upon as role models especially for young people who aspire to become militants¹⁵. Those who have joined militant groups have not only become prominent and influential in their communities but rich and as a result their immediate family members, relatives and friends look at them as a source of inspiration. They are eager to be successful or become rich just like the militants. For instance, several militants revealed that their motivation for becoming militants was because their brothers were militants and built houses from the proceeds of their militancy. The other reason is that they were unemployed, and militancy became a source of employment for them. Some of them disclosed that they wanted to be protected. Therefore, from a PE perspective, militancy becomes a lucrative business as it is a way of getting rich and prominent.

3.4 State and Non-State Institutional Exchange

This section presents the relationship between statutory and non-statutory institutions in shaping the implementation of the NDA and DDR program.

3.4.1 Institutional Bricolage

To analyze the interface between state and non-state institutions, this research makes use of institutional bricolage. Institutional bricolage is a post-institutionalist approach explaining the interaction between actors (defined as bricoleurs) and institutions focusing on the dynamics of institutional arrangements surrounding the implementation of the NDA and DDR (Gutu et al., 2014, p. 5). This approach views NDA and DDR institutions as constraining and enabling human agency because NDA and DDR institutions provided boundaries that diverse actors (state and non-state) within the context of the Niger Delta in turn, reshape (Cleaver, 2002). In implementing the NDA and DDR program, institutions working from diverse backgrounds were always reused, reworked or refashioned to perform new functions (Carstensen, 2017, p.

¹⁴ Respondent 09, July 2018, Nigeria.

¹⁵ Respondent 20, July 2018, Nigeria.

140). Also, modified arrangements of rules, practices, norms and relationships were given significance and power (Clever & de Koning, 2015, p. 4).

The DDR program was launched by the Nigerian government and implemented in collaboration with other non-state actors. This necessitated the bricolage process which was relevant in designing the programs. In this view, new arrangements were brokered to support collective peacebuilding in the region. Clever (2012, p. 4) argues that the interest of people to form collective alliances and arrangements involve the economic, emotional, moral and social reasoning driven by varied rationalities and world perspectives. This is the rationale why state and non-state policy makers were more interested to respond to circumstances of uncertainty surrounding the production of oil and the security concerns in the region (Carstensen, 2017, p. 140). Therefore bricolage was seen by the different actors as a combination of resources at hand to solve problems and look for opportunities in the region (Phillips & Tracey, 2007).

In addition, institutional design and local bricolage capacities were applied to operate the DDR. For example, there was the need for the participation of women. This was because of the role that women have traditionally played in their communities as champions for peace. During the rehabilitation phase of the program, a community-based women NGO like Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre (KKWDRC) used community women who are usually serving as wives, mothers and relatives to gang groups to rally young boys and men in gangs to drop their weapons and denounce violent activities (Okon, 2012). Niger Delta women were very significant actors in the NDA and DDR process as they were central in changing the trajectories of the Niger Delta.

Also, participation in the program was directly based on the authoritative resources of the actors involved in the peacebuilding process. Authoritative resources here relate to the influence, political position, wealth, and social network (Gutu et al., 2014, p. 12). For instance, KKWDRC was involved in the program because the institution had been engaging grassroots women and had equally been active in peace and stability initiatives in the region. Other non-state institutions like Academic Associates Peaceworks (AAPW) was invited to cooperate with the government based on their broad knowledge and social relations in the region. In addition, the Africa Centre for Corporate Responsibility (ACCR) was requested to carry out a conflict reconciliation and reconstruction program due to the standing relationship they had established with the affected communities and their accessibility to militia groups. Hence, through bricolage, state and non-state institutions became socially embedded and historically molded.

Against this backdrop, the use of bricolage portrayed the social context and dynamics of the hectic interaction between state and non-state NDA and DDR institutions with some implications for institutional influence. The key issues seen through the lens of bricolage between state and non-state institutions in shaping the amnesty process involve power relations, the individual agencies of institutions, gender and access to other institutions etc. (Haapala, Rautanen, White, Keskinen, & Olli, 2016, p. 1174). The framing of the amnesty by these actors depict power, politics, struggles and process of negotiation (Gutu et al., 2014, p. 12). Therefore, bricolage becomes an authoritative process and some actors (bricoleurs) during the implementation process, possessed more authoritative resources than others (Clever & de Koning, 2015, p. 4). For instance, institutions like the military; NDDC; Foundation for Ethnic Harmony in Nigeria (FEHN); Search for Common Grounds, and Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) among others were involved in the program based on either their official positions, kinship, economic wealth, or special knowledge.

Building on the above argument, militants that were interviewed for this study revealed that they reluctantly accepted the amnesty program. One of the primary reasons is the lack of trust in the government in view of previously failed governmental promises. Another reason is suspicion. They confirmed that they were not certain if the government had good intentions. One of them mentioned that they were afraid it was a way to get hold of them and put them in jail¹⁶.

A former top commander further explained that he did not accept amnesty at first because he thought it was a way for the government to take their fingerprints and put tracking devices on their bodies. However, when he saw how the first phase was conducted, he left the creeks and surrendered his weapons to security forces. In discussing about their nature of relationship with the military, the interviewed ex-militant commander asserted that the Nigerian military is a “business institution”¹⁷ because it has been heavily involved in the oil business, frequently pitting multinational companies against the local population of Niger Delta. Another ex-militant pointed out that “the Nigerian military is the most corrupt and criminal institution in the world.” This, respondent stated, is because military officers collaborate with criminal gangs in engaging in illegal activities. The interviewee reported that on some occasions military officers provide militants with top security information which is used to set up kidnappings, and oil theft. After the crime is completed, the spoils /booties are shared with the officers who provided the

¹⁶ Respondents 06 and 09, July 2018, Nigeria.

¹⁷ Respondent 07, July 2018, Nigeria.

classified information¹⁸. Thus, they see the military as a business institution that benefits from conflict in the region and would therefore see no reason to push for any genuine resolution. A genuine resolution will entail a loss of power, relevance and enrichment.

It is argued that human actions run and animate institutions (Cleaver, 2012, p. 4). In the Niger Delta, such exchanges have reproduced existing patterns of inequality. This may serve to shape and reinforce other differences. In particular, the disgruntlement of militia groups emanates from what they rationalized as deprivation. Also, with the prevalent inequality, many interviewees perceived the elites as responsible for poverty in the region. The state and MNOCs are equally perceived as influential bodies in the deprivation process by the militants and communities. Although the Nigerian government has produced guidelines for institutional development applicable within the DDR, the encounter between state and non-state actors has produced a gap between institutional design and reality (Haapala et al., 2016, p. 1174). Gaps exist in the implementation of the program and have led to institutional rearrangement. Some respondents stated that NGOs are very active. Part of the reason is the lack of trust regarding the capacity of the state to manage the DDR program. This has given NGOs more grounding in the region. The absence of the state has led many NGOs to prevail in the communities to adopt local bylaws for peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the region (Hassenforder, Ferrand,, Pittock, Daniell, & Barreteau, 2015, p. 1000).

Since 2009, local, regional CSOs have formed alliances geared towards addressing the crisis in the region. This network now involves a plethora of state and non-state institutions including NGOs, CSO and private sector players. Arrangements like conflicts reconciliation and reconstruction among communities draw on a network of stakeholders, interconnected through kinship and tensions. Such links were furthered by well-connected members of the community and extend up to the parliamentary and ministerial levels. These significant actors were institutional brokers of connection¹⁹.

3.4.2 Institutional Credibility

The ongoing research about institutional credibility is essential in our analysis of the interlinkages between state and non-state institutions that shaped the NDA and DDR program. Scholars like Snider (1996, p. 79) consider institutional credibility as the merging of the

¹⁸ Respondent 08, July 2018, Nigeria.

¹⁹ Respondent 29, July 2018, Nigeria.

functional²⁰ with the constitutional. More specifically, institutional credibility arises when formal and informal rules enhance an institutional environment where public administrators impartially protect people's property rights (Bittick, 2008, p. 372). Concerning the relationship between state and non-state institutions, Davis and North (1970) argue that in the institutional environment where key political, social and legal standard rules create the basis for production exchange and distribution and institutional arrangements as governance structure which operate at the level of individual transactions (pp. 5-6). Consequently, the interaction of state and non-state institutions, together with enforcement strategies i.e. government, makes up the institutional environment of Nigeria.

This thesis argues that institutional credibility applies to people's approval of the NDA and DDR institutions based on their perceptions of the institutions' accountability, representation, legitimacy, transparency, fairness and justice (Pero & Smith, 2008, p. 16). It is reported that many of the NDA and DDR institutions and public officials did not have credibility which created an incredible institutional environment. For instance, OSAPND has been criticized for operating along political partisan lines (This Day, 2017). Also, there have been alleged cases of corrupt practices by amnesty officials and some collaborators working with OSAPND, including accusations levelled against the Office's first two Special Advisers, Hon Kingsley Kuku and General Paul Boroh (Vanguard, 2018; PremiumTimes, 2018). The country exhibits strong executive control on petroleum regulations in a political environment where there are weak/minimal checks and balances (Gboyeya et al., 2011, p. 16).

The interaction of state and non-state institutions within the realm of the Niger Delta has given rise to a complex adaptive system in producing the DDR as an outcome (Bittick, 2008, p. 367). Nigerian politics suffers from many conflicts of interest between state and non-state institutions (Gboyeya et al., 2011). As such, compliance has been an enormous challenge in the implementation of the Amnesty and DDR programs.

Many of the service providers for the program, especially the military, did not have adequate capacity and experience in DDR matters. It should be noted that being a military employee does not necessarily mean they are trained to work on amnesty and DDR processes. The government did not recruit DDR experts to pre-train the military to get a broad knowledge on how to implement the program. Even though the military is linked to issues of DDR, what is required

²⁰ The term functional refers to the administration of public policies in a nation, which reflects the quality of a nation's overall public administration (Bittick, 2008, p. 373).

for amnesty is a specialty or some form of expertise which the military did not have. This has propelled the NDA and DDR and is one of the reasons why the rightful outcome has still not been met.

Besides, these institutions were not only weak but lack credibility and competence. One NGO staff member working in the Niger Delta noted that several non-state institutions that were contracted by OSAPND were incompetent and lacked skills in DDR implementation²¹. Sadly, the institutions selected by OSAPND to provide pilot training courses have been condemned by many in the Niger Delta community for not living up to their promised standards. One major example of this flaw is, as some critics have pointed out, that none of the institutions offered for the entrepreneurship trainings had any level of certification. They are unable to provide documents for their program graduates to enter the workforce with accreditation (ICHR, 2011, p. 20). Apart from the fact that some of the NGOs and Training centers lacked accreditation, it was revealed that they were also very fraudulent. For instance, it was reported that the NGO Search for Common Ground which was involved in the Agent for Change Program engaged in very corrupt practices during the process²². This is partly responsible for the slow rate of the implementation of the program, a trend that has instated corruption, lack of accountability and exploitation in the Niger Delta.

Most militants that participated in this study complained that they are unable to find or secure jobs even after completing their training. More than 75% of Niger Delta youths are unemployed and almost half of these youths are unemployable because they lack skills applicable to modern industry (Okonofua, 2016, p. 5). When interviewed in July 2017 in Abuja, an expert working in the Niger Delta attributed this unemployment issue to skills mismatch²³. He also pointed out that most institutions may not want to associate their corporate brands with the image of the ex-militants as they are profiled as having criminal backgrounds. This is in the wake of limited available jobs in the desired fields of study. The aviation companies are afraid to permit individuals with criminal backgrounds to fly their planes, fearing that in situations of discontent, these individuals run the risk of hijacking planes and putting the lives of passengers in danger²⁴.

Furthermore, appointing appropriate leaders to pursue collective goals and applying appropriate institutional and governance structures is very challenging (Pero & Smith, 2008, p. 16). There

²¹ Respondent 29, July 2018, Nigeria.

²² Respondent 28, July 2018, Nigeria.

²³ Respondent 25, July 2018, Nigeria.

²⁴ Ibid 25, July 2018, Nigeria.

is little or no monitoring and evaluation on decision making processes and in decision making outcomes related to NDA and DDR. There are no checks of processes put in place to mitigate the risk of fraud in the established institutions. Concerns have been raised about ghost beneficiaries for the program as well as participants not related to the program who have benefited from it (Vanguard, 2018). Likewise, money allocated for starting businesses for ex-militants (such as the purchase of agricultural equipment) have been syphoned off and embezzled by government officials and non-state officials running the program. Therefore, when state and non-state institutions interact, in the realm of the NDA and DDR, the rules of their various institutional environment shape their transactions and creates a complex order (Bittick, 2008, p. 381).

3.5 State, Non-State and International Collaboration

3.5.1 Complexities of NDA and DDR Institutions

The interactions between state, non-state and international institutions are very complex. This resonates with the revelation made by PE critical institutionalists to the effect that institutions are complex hubs (Cleaver, 2000, p. 362; Gramsci, 1980). Institutions both state and non-state, as well international institutions in Nigeria have formal and informal complexities. First, human beings are self-interested as they calculate their cost and benefits (Steinmo, 2008, p. 162). The institutions came with their own interests, agendas, traditions, orientations and experiences. This made it difficult to collapse to homogenous groups of decision-makers. Second, the complexity was due to incompatibility from multiple institutional logics²⁵ that existed between them (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011, p. 318). As such, there was no repertoire of strategies and structures that institutions could deploy to cope with multiple competing demands. For example, during the rehabilitation process different services were provided by different institutions (state, non-state and international). They all were pursuing their own agendas, without effective coordination. This is one of the reasons why the program was not well implemented.

In addition, coexisting institutional logics have created opportunities to enterprising actors in the Niger Delta (Martin, Currie, Weaver, Finn, & McDonald, 2017, p. 103). These actors constrain and facilitate agency (Steinmo & Thelen, 1992, p. 7). Intrinsically, such logics that frame the NDA and DDR have opened opportunities for actors to resist, reinterpret or make

²⁵ Institutional logics are overarching sets of principles that prescribe “how to interpret organizational reality, what constitutes appropriate behaviour, and how to succeed” (Greif & Kingston, 2011, p. 318)

judicious use of institutional rules. Consequently, the diverse institutional forces not only compete for dominance, but also often interact and coexist. This negatively affects the nature and behavior of several DDR institutions and individuals (Martin et al., 2017, p. 104). The logic in the Niger Delta is nested within diverse layers of resource use and power distribution. A possible argument is that, the dynamics of a crowded political economy of oil in the region has not only driven the looting of resources but has created avenues for competing claims over entitlement, distribution and use. These complex layers partly drive the fragility of institutions and heterogeneity.

Young (1982, p. 278) a renowned scholar on global institutions argues that institutions are “human artefacts,” social systems serving to address problems with coordination and cooperation among groups of human beings. Both the institutions and the problems themselves are the result of regular human behaviour and activities. The key feature of these “human artefacts” type institutions is the conjunction of convergent expectations and recognized patterns of behaviour or practice. Data from field research revealed that many institutions came with their own orientation and wanted to control the agenda setting²⁶. It is reported that MNOCs did not want the government of Nigeria to embark on an amnesty program. Rather, MNOCs wanted negotiation with militia groups rather than implementing an amnesty program which to them is costlier²⁷. Implementing an amnesty program requires a lot of technical and financial resources which at the time was a very expensive approach. Also, amnesty implies the need for development in terms of infrastructure and transport. Looking at the nature and terrain of the region, this according to MNOCs at the time was a very expensive approach. Irrespective of claims from the MNOCs to the contrary, the Nigerian government went ahead and granted amnesty. This created a conflictual relationship among the parties. If there is such a conflict it connotes one to raise a question whether the Amnesty and DDR approach was a rightful one or was it just considered to be the best methodology for practical reasons to ameliorate the challenge?

The complexity is broadened by the centrality of authority and the unity of national, regional and local elites. This intricacy of the function of institutions is reinforced by the different local arrangements and interventions of the amnesty and DDR and their connection to the lives of the people in the Niger Delta. It is important to note that the predominant position of leaders and local elites in shaping actions reveal that the use of authoritative resources help institutions

²⁶ Respondent 36, July 2018, Nigeria.

²⁷ Ibid, 36, July 2018, Nigeria.

to function. There is therefore the need to understand the relationship between Niger Delta communities, the government, MNOCs and other stakeholders. (Cleaver, 2012, pp. 1-3). While creating a complex environment from program implementation, these complex institutions equally complemented each other.

3.5.2 Complementarity of NDA and DDR Institutions

One characteristic of the amnesty program was the complementarity of various institutions. This involved the hybridization of both formal and informal institutions. Institutional complementarity refers to a situation of interdependence among institutions (Büthe & Mattli, 2011). Three different types were evident in the DDR institutions. First, institutions with similar resources blended together and adopt similar strategies or institutional solutions to varied actions. For instance, political elites in Nigeria applied the same ideologies (rules) they used to address religious conflicts to the oil conflict (political-economic) in the Niger Delta. The second aspect is that, one institution complements for the deficiencies of others. This is a form of opposed institutional logic. For example, a well-functioning free market requires a strong state. The third form is linked to the logic of synergy from an economic perspective (Crouch, et al., 2005, pp. 359-360).

Considering that the DDR is a very broad development and security program, its implementation requires different specialized resources, knowledge and technical experts (both human and financial). Against this background, political-economic and social institutions of capital-labour, vocational training and education, governance, security and social protection form a coherent whole (Terhorst, 2009, p. 50). These institutions were heavily involved in the DDR phase. At the rehabilitation centres, several service providers gave assistance ranging from security, mental health, conflict reconciliation, skills training, career fairs, entrepreneurship orientation, and sports among others²⁸. Also, other institutions were involved in working with the communities to build resilient communities, empower women and youth as well as implement peacebuilding and development projects²⁹.

The core assumption for a mixture/blend of institutions is to enhance economic performance (Crouch, et al., 2005, p. 363). Unfortunately, this was not the most important concern for the actors. Actors were rather more concerned with the incentives they will generate from the

²⁸ Respondent 22, July 2018, Nigeria.

²⁹ Ibid 22, July 2018, Nigeria.

process. Part of their incentive was to loot resources and ensure the effective flow of oil. To this extent, NDA and DDR actors rationally neglected the economic aspect of the program and pursued other targets such as social stability and security³⁰. Their actions were incentivized by institutional rules of the game, where they manipulated rules for implementation to reward their private and public interests (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, pp. 45-46).

Complementarity also opened spaces for cooperation and competition amongst each other. With regard to cooperation, the international community contributed immensely to the implementation of the amnesty program. They assisted in the design of development and stability programs. International bodies like the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) were actively involved in providing technical support. This was done through various consultations which accelerated the declaration of the amnesty. The UNDP assisted in the formulation and provision of the “Strategic and Operational Plan for the DDR”, which clearly outlined the vision and operations of the amnesty program. In addition, foreign governments and institutions including the United States and the United Kingdom, the European Union and The World Bank together with other international partners were very instrumental to improve governance and capacity of institutions. An estimated fund of \$3 billion was given by key development partners as their commitment to the program (Francis et al. 2011, p. 10). Additionally, competition entailed that various institutions were to be controlled by different elites with different interests, and with their own orientations (ideas) as to which institutions must be patched up to enhance bricolage (Sehring, 2009, p. 61-63). This created contingencies and constraints since the NDA and DDR institutional complementarity was impartial. Furthermore, these institutions displayed power dynamics (Foucault, 1983). Not all the institutions were given equal status in the process. Thus, deflections arose in relation to power among statutory, non-statutory and international institutions. While some were very authoritative and influential, others were very limited as corruption obstructed their functioning. This resulted in endemic tensions and inconsistencies in social arrangements that necessitated constant readjustments (Cleaver, 2001). This ultimately defined the poor outcome of the program.

A development expert working in the Niger Delta argued that in the case of NDA, complementarity of institutions was not partial. This is because the designers of the program did not conceive the program as taking place on “the ground” and “bottom-up”³¹. Also, a

³⁰ Respondent 26, July 2018, Nigeria.

³¹ Respondent 19, July 2018, Nigeria.

militant reported that the state in collaboration with MNOCs were the key players in the process³². This gave them more leverage and capacity to impose certain rules to other actors like CSOs, NGOs, militia groups, and other national and international development partners. It is therefore relevant to recognize the inherent influence of the most powerful actors and their implications on the behaviours of others (Pearlman & Cunningham, 2012). The conflict that centres on such power dynamics illustrates that actors had a similar goal (i.e. DDR implementation) but, their traditions, orientations, agendas and experiences vary. This likely contributed to the poor implementation of the program.

Even though NDA and DDR institutions are similar, and sometimes compensate each other's deficiencies as well as act as a synergy, there was limited access order within institutions. This inherently limits the implementation of the program.

3.5.3 Limited Access Order in NDA and DDR Institutions

This research will employ the framework of limited access order (LAO). The significance of looking at this concept is to understand the implementation of the amnesty and the frenzied relation between state, non-state and international institutions. The framework is premised on the view that today most developing countries use limited access order to address the issue of violence. They do so by conceding political elite's privileged control over parts of the economy, each getting some share of the rents (North, Wallis, Webb, & Weingast, 2011, p. 1). Proponents of the concept believe that the use of political system will create and allocate rents, arising from arrangements such as government contracts, land rights, monopolies on business activities, and entry to restricted job markets (North et al., 2011, p. 1).

Limited access order practices in countries dominated by either a single party or dominant party, requires limiting access and competition. Such is evident in Nigeria. Although Nigeria practices a multiparty system, the political turf is owned by two core political parties: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC) (AllAfrica, 2018). For almost a decade, the PDP had been the dominant party that ran the "show" and controlled the state. However, at the 2015 elections, the tides turned against PDP and APC emerged as the ruling party (BBC, 2015; Independent, 2015). In such a dispensation, the party is conjoined or conflated to the state. Of the country's rentier-neopatrimonial nature, there is little or no separation between the presidency and other branches of government such as the legislature, the executive and the

³² Respondent 06, July 2018, Nigeria.

judiciary (Gberevbie, 2014, p. 143). Because of this exertion of power, there is a limited access of resources to other groups in the Nigerian society (Foucault, 1983).

The APC as the dominant party, distributes resources to party members. Members and political elites in the dominant party are incentivized or allowed to make and loot rents (Maniavibes, 2019). This implies they are expected to control the subordinates down the chain of command and restrict access to their members. In Nigeria, the system allows the elites to get more resources (Amundsen, 2012). The coalition of elites use their power to collectively extract rents from the rest of the population. These rents are then used to hold the coalition together (Van Besouw, Ansink, & Van Bavel, 2015, p. 2). However, once they acquire resources, they are expected to limit access to other non-party members. In avertedly, they are limiting violence. For instance, currently as the dominant party, the APC controls the state, the institutions of the state and its members etc. Leaders of these institutions are allowed more access to resources than others. In this vein, once the leaders of the state institutions get access, they are tasked by the party that violence doesn't erupt. They are also tasked not to give access to others. This justifies why the elites are very rich and have subordinates. Bayard (1993) describe this scenario as patron-client relation. Therefore, the role of institutions is to both limit access and to be controlled by dominant elites, who criminalize, undermine the state and accumulate resources through corruption. Personal ties and networks of patronage are built through shadows resulting to shadow state and shadow economies (Schneider, 2014). These networks serve as the source of inclusion and exclusion. Bayard (1993) calls this the politics of the belly.

In a limited access society, powerful individuals are provided with an incentive to be peaceful-ranging from extortion and corrupt payoffs to land rent, natural resource royalties, and monopoly profit (North, Wallis, Webb, & Weingast, 2007, p. 3). They have incentives to restrain the violence, because outbreaks of violence reduce their rents (North et al., pp. 1-2). In the case of the Niger Delta, militant commanders are paid off by the state and MNOCs to constraint violence from their subordinates. The commanders have formed cluster networks/coalition with the government and MNOCs (Agbiboa & Maiangwa, 2012). For this coalition to work, militant commanders are rewarded (given so-called carrots) to prevent disorder (North, 2012, p. 7). A military officer noted that the government had to maintain close collaboration and alliance with militant commanders because if it does not, the government stands to lose due to the sophisticated nature of militancy in the region³³. The exchange between

³³ Respondent 04, July 2018, Abuja Nigeria.

the state, MNOCs and militant commanders requires the creation of incentives for the latter to peacefully compete rather than fight (North et al., 2009, p.18; Schultze-Kraft, 2017, p. 616).

Apart from the commanders, local elites such as chiefs and community leaders are given rents by regional and local elites. Their mandate is also to keep violence low. As such, the complaints of the foot soldiers (militants) in what they rationalized as deprivation and exclusion becomes inconsequential³⁴³⁵³⁶³⁷³⁸. The reason being that they no longer have the capacity for violence. The local elites benefit out of such hybrid collaboration. The government and MNOCs likewise benefit because when there is violence, the government and MNOCs are under threat as disorder reduces their rents (North et al., 2007, p. 8). This part of the game is played by the agency of actors that animate the various institutions (Cleaver, 2012, p. 4). Similarly, both state officials and MNOCs rely on personnel connections or on institutions of government to support their contracts. Viable alliances such as joint ventures have been established between MNOCs and the government (Amadi, Henriksen, & Germiso, 2006, p. 58).

In addition, the acceptance of amnesty by youth militia implies limiting access to resources. Nevertheless, the amnesty process was done as a way of constraining violence by granting unconditional pardons to people who had been labelled for decades as insurgents, and criminals and so on, and limiting them from accessing resources. Suffice to say that as institutions compete to secure resources, some open spaces while others dwindle, limiting space. Democratic institutions open space for everyone to participate in resource use, distribution and power. A traditional leader in one of the villages in the Niger Delta revealed that during the implementation of the amnesty and DDR, traditional leaders were left out.³⁹

Besides, data from field research revealed that, the first two processes (disarmament and demobilization) were carried out solely by state-run institutions particularly the military. In other parts of the world, DDR programs have been carried out in cooperation and collaboration with both state, and non-state institutions. However, in the case of the Niger Delta, CSOs, local institutions, NGOs and international institutions were left out⁴⁰. Yet, during the reintegration phase, these other institutions were integrated into the process. The state is offering some

³⁴ Respondent 05, July 2018, Nigeria.

³⁵ Respondent 06, July 2018, Nigeria.

³⁶ Respondent 07, July 2018, Nigeria.

³⁷ Respondent 08, July 2018, Nigeria.

³⁸ Respondent 09, July 2018, Nigeria.

³⁹ Respondent 15, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁴⁰ Ibid 15, July 2018, Nigeria.

arguments regarding this. One dominant assumption why the first two stages were implemented solely by the government is the fact that it is the responsibility of the government to provide security to its citizens. So, owning the process is part of the government's mandate of providing security to the citizens⁴¹. A second argument raised by a military official is that security matters are highly technical and mechanic. This implies that very few people or institutions are skilled in DDR processes. As a result, it remained the preserve of state institutions, in particular the military⁴². This justifies why other institutions are found at the margins of reintegration. It is easier to do humanitarian assistance or to provide humanitarian aid. NGOs are known for providing humanitarian assistance. This implies they deal with capacity building and empowerment programs and resourcing the former rebels⁴³. One security officer mentioned that by limiting access to other institutions during the disarmament and demobilization phases, the Nigerian government wanted to sustain or consolidate its power because amnesty has the propensity to weaken the power, capacity or expose the state. He further highlighted that government has always done things that help to consolidate, maintain and sustain its power. This has constantly created perpetual conflict with the international community whose interest was to ensure the interest of the combatants were addressed. Also, based on the suspicion that involving too many credible international institutions will turn off the depth of corruption, they decided to leave out these institutions. The officer noted that corruption is very exclusionary. Hence, the government could not allow other institutions who have got more powers to come and control the whole show⁴⁴.

Lamenting over the issue of exclusion and corruption in enforcing the program, a CSO worker indicated that some NGOs became neopatrimonial. He noted that NGOs formed alliances with government elites because they wanted to be granted contracts⁴⁵. This implies that for NGOs and CSOs to get contracts, they must please the patrons or elites of government institutions especially the OSAPND, NDDC and MNDA. The fact that their relationship and partnership is on patrimonial basis widens the infectious disease of corruption. Consequently, this tended to affect the entire regime of institutions, their delivery, services and the overall outcome of the NDA and DDR program.

⁴¹ Respondent 27, July 2018, Nigeria.

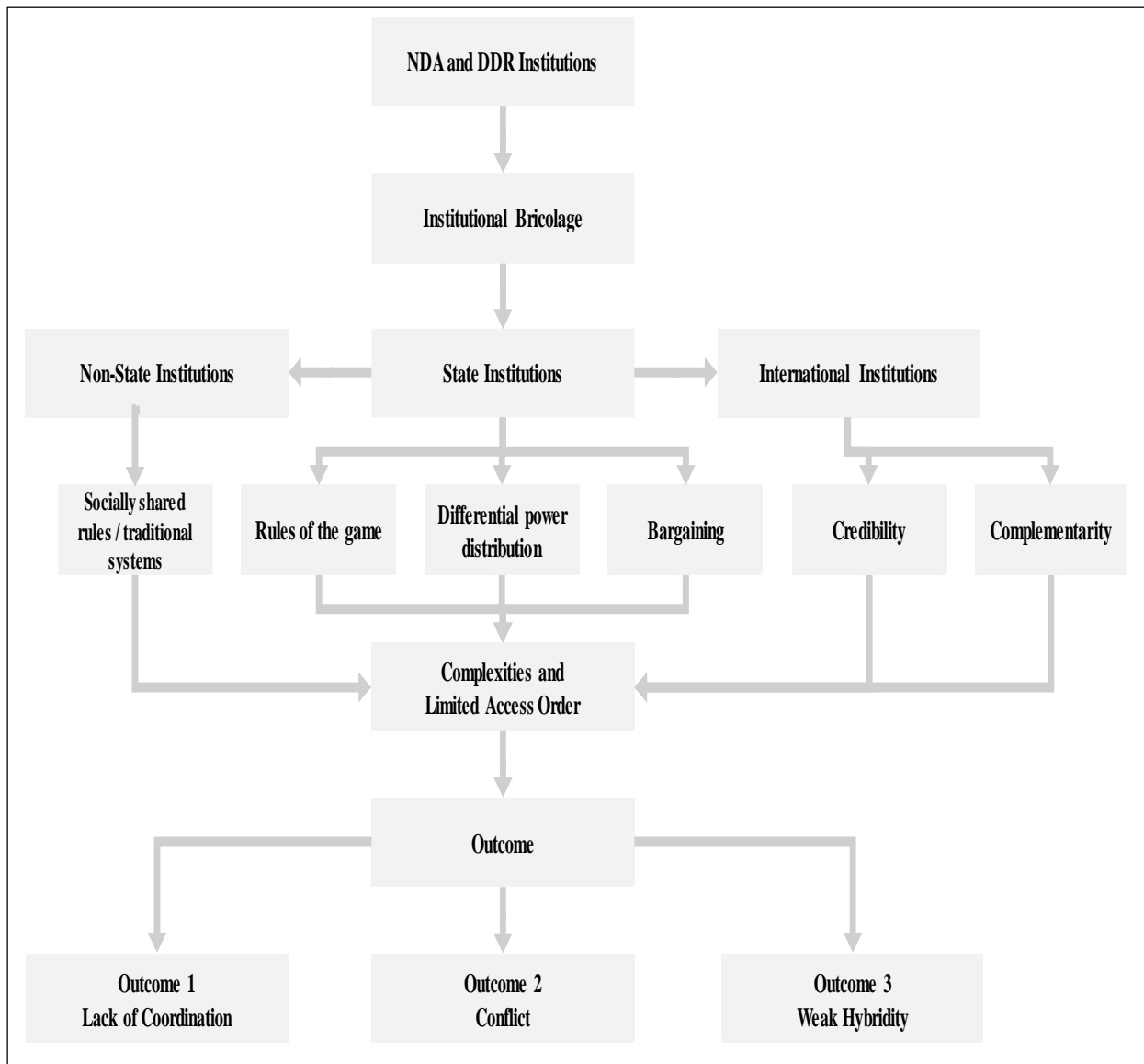
⁴² Respondent 24, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁴³ Ibid 24, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁴⁴ Respondent 13, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁴⁵ Ibid 13, July 2018, Nigeria.

Figure 3. 1: State, Non-State and International Institutions



Source: Author's Compilation

3.6 Implications of Statutory, Non-Statutory and International Institutions to NDA and DDR

This section addresses the effects of institutional exchanges on the outcome of the NDA and DDR.

3.6.1 Lack of Coordination

In any institutional setting, coordination is very crucial. Coordination was a challenging aspect in the interrelation among NDA and DDR institutions. There was no emphasis on clearly defined roles and responsibilities by the different institutions involved in the execution of NDA and DDR programs. Roles shape actors and institutions and help to overcome the broad and complex challenges of institutions (Boella & Van der Torre , 2006). Collective action could only be achieved with some sort of arrangement and coordination, as obligations are better attained with exchange (Provis, 2004). During the implementing of the DDR process, genuine coordination among institutions was absent. In fact, institutions ended up competing and fighting among each other in order to have a fair share of control of the program instead of coordinating program activities⁴⁶. One of the primordial reasons for lack of coordination is related to lack of trust among the different NDA and DDR institutions.

Trust acts as a positive option to outcome attainment among imperfect competition and the usurped end goals of institutions (Osifo, 2013, p. 153). Yet, there was mistrust and misgivings among the service providers during the rehabilitation phase of the program. This worsened the situation as it was difficult to keep the differentiated functions and structures in line with the overall purpose of the program ⁴⁷ . Similarly, inadequate information flow, cooperation/collaboration and integration among the various institutions contributed to the whole saga. Lack of coordination between institutions infringes on controlling interdependence that leads to conflation and poor development outcomes in the region. Thus, it affected the capacity and performance of institutions to effectively enforce the program.

Respondents were unanimous that, there was little or no monitoring and evaluation by the designers of the project⁴⁸. For this reason, there was a multiplicity of institutions doing different things without proper guidance. At the Obubra Rehabilitation Camp for example, various

⁴⁶ Respondent 25, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁴⁷ Ibid 25, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁴⁸ Respondent 02, July 2018, Nigeria.

service providers were pursuing their own agendas without coordination of their activities. Part of the argument is connected to the issue of corruption which characterized the entire implementation process. Data from field research indicated that widespread corruption characterized the implementation process. With such practices, it was obvious that the delivery and performance of the project could not be attained. As a result, the program was poorly and properly executed.

3.6.2 Exacerbation of Conflict

It is certain that in any environment where activities/projects are carried out haphazardly, with little or no coordination and supervision, tensions increase among actors. In the case of the Niger Delta, the complexities of institutions in particular: their orientations, interests, agendas, experiences, and traditions, heightened the already tensed environment. The power dynamics, coupled with the fluid alliances and networks that were established, had an impact on the negative outcome of the program. In post conflict settings, institutions are expected to boost peace and security processes and ensure that support and interventions do not contribute to the exacerbation of the risk of armed conflict (Sida, 2016). Unfortunately, the actions of the NDA and DDR, instead escalated the already fragile setting. Also, the governments, multilateral and bilateral agencies, civil society organizations (at both the national and the international level), are expected to actively lead and manage peacebuilding processes to ensure long-term sustainability (Peacebuilding Initiative, 2007). In as much as the NDA and DDR institutions were created, they were even more fragile than the people they were trying to help. Most of the institutions were weak. They lacked legitimacy and credibility and did not have the capacity to govern transparently and accountably (Sharma, 2009). Besides, the rentier-neopatrimonial character of institutions made them more fragile. State institutions for instance, had no concrete commitments and incentives for accountability, as well as check and balances. They instead limited entry into the process and created rents for the political elites (North, 2012). In settings where institutional interventions are not well coordinated, conflict does not only exacerbate but continues. Thus, the poor implementation of the program is likely one of the reasons for the reemergence of militancy in 2015.

3.6.3 Weak Hybridized Institutions

Apart from the fact that institutions were fluid and fragile, their interactions to produce the NDA and DDR played down on the weaknesses of hybrid institutions. This research adopts the

definition of hybridity as the ‘blending⁴⁹ and layering⁵⁰’ of institutions (Polzer, Meyer, Höllerer, & Seiwald, 2017, p. 71). This involves the integration of multiple institutions to solve the problem in the Niger Delta region. It can be argued that the agency of different actors affected the way DDR projects were executed in the region and negatively impacted the bricolage of institutions (Skelcher & Smith, 2015, p. 437).

Accordingly, the interactional regularities of institutions, their iterative rationalities and competitive or coercive institutional interactions made the whole process of the implementation of the DDR complex (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012, p. 8). This complexity of the NDA and DDR institutions instead of properly blending, opened doors for potential conflicts as actors competed, and superseded each other (Greenwood et al., 2011). This stemmed from the fact that the strategic alliance of different institutions to produce DDR in the Niger Delta lacked coping strategies to deal with complexities and potential conflicts as a result of their various practices and logics (Polzer et al., 2017, p. 71). According to Battilana and Lee (Battilana & Lee, 2014, p. 397), the activities, structures and processes of hybrid institutions that combine multiple institutional forms deviate from socially legitimate templates for animating, and thus face implementation challenges. Resultantly, this hindered amnesty designers and implementers to deal with different institutionalized demands even through compartmentalization (Fossestøl, Breit, Andreassen, & Klemsdal, 2015, p. 292).

It is important to emphasize that institutions cannot stand alone as they must cooperate and/or form alliances to meet up the diverse constraints they face. As such, it was relevant to have an assemblage or multidimensional character of institutions to operationalize the NDA and DDR. For such to happen, implementation could only work through bricolage with a synergy of different institutions working together. It is for this reason that different layers of institutions come together to ensure a successful DDR is a success in the region. However, for this to be done, there is need for the right assortment of institutions and a proper co-existence (Thornton et al., 2012).

Equally, for goals to be achieved, there is the need for a strong hybrid of institutions. This necessitates a thickly institutionalized environment with binding rules and contracts among

⁴⁹ blending refers to hybridity as an “amalgamate” with original components that are no longer discernible (Polzer et al., 2017, p. 71)

⁵⁰ layering conceptualizes hybridity in a way that the various elements, or clusters thereof, are added on top of, or alongside, each other (Ibid, 2017, p. 71)

institution. Sadly, the cooperation between state, non-state and international institutions had some sort of limited entry together with flawed rules and arrangements (Polzer et al., 2017, p. 71). It produced weak hybrid institutions. The institutions, and their interaction has reproduced existing patterns of inequality and served to shape and reinforce other differences. This points to the fact that the conjoining of institutions was not the right bricolage (Gutu et al., 2014, p. 9).

As much as Cleaver (2012) sees the importance of having a bricolage of institutions, it is not enough to have an assemblage of different layers. What is more significant in such settings are issues of coordination, cooperation, partnership credibility. This was not the case in the Niger Delta. The blurred nature of politics, and limited access into the process, resulted in poor service delivery and made the blending and layering of DDR institutions weak and ineffective (Jones, 2015, p. 67).

3.7 Conclusion

The study looked at how institutions interact in post conflict amnesty settings and how the DDR process was carried out. I discussed the different layers of institutional dynamics and complexities by using Cleaver's institutional bricolage framework which states that for effective conflict management mechanisms to be obtained institutions must be coordinated. This could be state, non-state institutions and/or international institutions. In analyzing the patterns of interactions between the institutions involved in the amnesty process, the chapter presents a context where conflict is negotiated; where bargains are struck; where formal and informal political settlements, alliances and coalitions are made and broken; and where politics collapses, and violent conflict can break out. In everyday politics, institutions are contested, shaped, implemented, avoided, undermined or amended, and contingency, critical junctures and windows of opportunity disturb old patterns or open up new possibilities. Crucially, this is where different players use different forms and degrees of both de jure and de facto power (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 10). The analysis further revealed the economic incentives of institutions. It examined both material and non-material incentives that are generated in institutions which has been part of the rules of the alliances and analyses how based on perceived incentives, actors act and interact.

After examining the five levels of institutional interrelations; the paper analyzed the implications for the amnesty and DDR process in the Niger Delta. With data generated from field work, the study makes three main observations: First, that the NDA and DDR institutions, institutionalized conflict, driven by serious disgruntlement, lack of trust in the government and

lack of trust in the institutions themselves. This implies that when institutions are in conflict, conflict might worsen. Second, powerful rent-seeking activities and patrimonial political practices were consistent with most of the institutions. Many of the institutions were motivated by power, their own interest and incentives and they were pursuing their own personal agendas. These factors are attributed to the possible shortcomings of the amnesty program. Lastly, the institutions that were involved in the process were not the rightful institutions to deal with amnesty issues. Also, hybridized institutions (formal and informal institutions) in this case do not work together due to constant defections and competition among them. Data also revealed that state institutions do not work better together than informal institutions because they are haphazardly coordinated. However, informal institutions (non-state, international etc.) to an extent work better than state institutions because they deliver more and are a little more transparent/credible than state institutions.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCEPTUALISING INTERESTS AND INCENTIVES IN THE FRAMING OF THE NIGER DELTA AMNESTY AND DDR PROGRAM

4 Introduction

While the previous chapter examined the institutions adopted by the state and non-state actors to meet the development challenges in the Niger Delta, this chapter advances various arguments that embody the roles of vested interests in the conflict in the Niger Delta. The study adopts the Political Economy Analysis (PEA) approach and analyses the role of different actors/agents involved in conflict, their contested interests, and their capacities for defending or challenging the status quo. PEA attempts to understand the reasons why self-interested and utility maximizing actors in the Niger Delta will constantly and certainly respond to incentive frameworks. This implies that individuals will react to the incentives represented in institutions in consistent and predictable ways. Thus, actors may intentionally or unintentionally frame and push for their interests within the groups they find themselves in.

The major questions in this chapter are: who are these key actors, what drives their various behaviors and how these translate to broad-based outcomes (amnesty and DDR) and/or engage in narrow clientelist actions in the Niger Delta? The fundamental idea is that to understand the amnesty and DDR program, there is the need to first understand the actors, their agency and the politics that shapes the conflict. PEA explains how in addressing conflict and diverse interests, political constraints and behaviors influence economic policies and outcomes. The term “interest” in this case refers to an underlying driver of behavior and outcomes. Interest can be instrumental, rational, and/or self-interest. Vested interests have been a binding constraint on policy reform in Nigeria where oil revenues are at the center of patronage systems. In this case, the study will illustrate how individual and group interests, and institutional incentives interact to push for conflict as well as produce pro or anti peace outcomes in the Niger Delta. The research further discusses different incentive frameworks in which actors in the Niger Delta channel their interests.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part provides a vivid description of the different actors involved in the Niger Delta Conflict and the factors that motivate their behavior. The second part analyses the heterogeneous interests of these actors, their agency and behavior and how this impacts on the shifting networks of relationships and interactions in the Niger Delta resulting to an economy of conflict. The last part is the chapter conclusion.

4.1 Mapping Actor Network Analysis in the Niger Delta Conflict

This section identifies key actors and their interaction in the Niger Delta conflict. The study uses the stakeholder analysis, which indicates various dimensions of conflict and violence in the Niger Delta. The analysis portrays the connection/interaction of the dimensions of conflict and the diverse actors. This connection provides the basis for the complexity of the conflicts in the region (Ebiede, 2017, p. 5). However, this paper pays attention mainly to the conflicts related to oil revenue control and allocation, the distribution of power between various interest groups in the region, and their ability to affect the process through power and/or leadership. The key actors in the oil conflict in the Niger Delta are: i) the Nigerian Government, ii) the Oil Communities, and iii) Multinational Oil Companies. These actors are all interested in the exploration of oil and the incentives/rents that accrue from it. Yet, there exists a shift in their actions depending on their position of influence during the production and allocation of profit that are generated from oil exploration.

Understanding the actors in the Niger Delta requires us to pay close attention to the diverse nature of conflict in the region. This involves a broad variety of actors within one structure. These players are rationally calculating, utility maximizing individuals or groups who will consistently seek to maximize the benefits that accrue from policy or bargaining opportunities they face (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 41). Their interests are often channeled through political considerations which could be in the interest to policymakers to stay longer in power; to get rich by accumulating oil rents; to prevent political opponents from gaining power, and to reward favors/patronage to their allies by preventing improvement in the property rights of workers or competitors and broad-based public goods and positive outcomes (Beuran, Raballand, & Kapoor, 2011, p. 1).

4.1.1 The Nigerian Government

The Nigerian government as a state actor is comprised of a vertical three tier administrative structure including the Federal Government (FG), State Governments (SG) and Local Governments (LG). Power and resources are distributed among the three tiers. The three tiers are made of political leaders, bureaucrats, government officials and workers, elites and government agencies.

According to the Nigerian constitution, (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria [Promulgation] Decree 1999) the federal government (FG) owns all minerals, oil, and gas in

Nigeria, and thus has supremacy over the oil in the Niger Delta. The Nigerian government, through the NNPC, holds 55% to 60% of the production interest in this primary field. The question on the ownership of oil can be dated back to the colonial era when the colonial government in 1946 promulgated the Mineral Ordinance, which states as follows:

The entire property and control of all minerals and mineral oil, in, under, or upon any land in Nigeria, and of all rivers, streams and watercourses throughout Nigeria, is and shall be vested in the Crown (The Guardian, 2001, p. 12).

At independence in 1960, the right of ownership and control of oil resources was granted to the FG. This implies that the legitimacy of the oil sector as well as land resources are owned by the FG. Such is reflected in the laws and decrees that the state has put in place to control the governing of the oil sector. The most prominent include: The Oil Pipeline Decree of 1956; the Petroleum Decree No. 51 of 1969 (as enshrined in Sections 40(3), 42(3), 44(3) of the 1979, 1989, 1999 Constitutions respectively), the Offshore Oil Revenue Decree No. 9 of 1971, the Land Use Decree of 1978, the Title Land (Vesting) Decree No. 52 of 1993 and the National Inland Waterways Authority Decree No. 13 of 1997. (Human Rights Watch, 1999, p. 69; World Bank, 2008, p. 12). The Federal Government also controls the management and collection of taxes charged from oil exploitation activities. It collects most of the taxes irrespective of the fact that states and local governments have the right to exercise control of the revenues. Distribution of resources is done through the principle of equality between sub-national units. Such principles have boosted the demand for the establishment of states, as this is a way for different underrepresented interest groups to access revenues that accrue from the production of oil and gas. Since the military era in Nigeria, there has been no concrete change in the revenue allocation formula where the FG was allocated 48.5%, States 24%, local governments 20% and special funds 7.5 % (NDDC, 2006, p. 52). Yet, the government distributes Federal allocations between states including 40% equally shared among states, 30% equivalent to the state's population, 10% in terms of Land mass and terrain, 10% on social development factors, and 10 % for internal revenue efforts. The Niger Delta states are allocated 13% of oil revenues derived from their land. Local governments take 35% of the Value Added Tax (VAT) Pool in addition to 20.6% of the Federation Account (Gboyega et al., 2011, pp. 12-13).

The oil distribution question in Nigeria is essential in understanding the disastrous politics of imperial oil. Over the years, the derivation revenues have dropped affecting revenues designated for the region. In fact, Watts asserts that there has been a process of radical fiscal

centralism where oil- states which comprised of ethnic minorities have lost while non-oil producing ethnic majorities have gained through corruption (Watts, 2008, p. 12).

In fact, Ikelegbe (2005) argues that by decrees, oil and gas became owned by the federal government and progressively, the regions entitlements by way of derivation-based allocation declined from 50% to a mere 1.5% in 1984 and later 3% in 1999 (p. 214).

The major changes in oil revenue derivation for the Niger Delta region is shown in the table below:

Table 4. 1: Oil Revenue Allocation to Niger Delta States from 1982 to 2019

| Year(s) | Percentage Allocated |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1982 | 1.5% |
| 1992 | 3% |
| 1995 | 13% |
| 1999-2002 | 15% |
| 2007 to present | 13% |

Source: Author’s compilation

Also, the Federal Government has created public institutions to manage the oil sector and address the regions development challenges. The most significant of these agencies include the Ministry of Petroleum Resources with NNPC as the channel through which oil rents gets to the FG, NDDC and MND. The Government uses these established agencies to accumulate oil revenues that accrue from the Niger Delta. The Nigerian Government is very reliant on the oil rents from the region as this is the main source of government revenue for the survival of the economy. Unfortunately, the character of the government has not been able to influence economic growth and development in the region.

This is linked to the argument that political powerful elites in Nigeria often do not allow implementation of sustainable programs and strong institutions/structures because they might not maximize incentives for them (Beuran et al., 2011, p. 2). Thus, political leaders, bureaucrats and elites would push for short-term programs or weak structures to thrive leading to constrained support for sustained economic growth, unsatisfactory decrease in poverty, and continued high levels of corruption and poor governance in the Niger Delta.

Also, the state governments are second level of governmental actors in the Niger Delta. Most of these states were established to manage ethnic agitations (Ebiede, 2017, p. 11). Ethnicity places a very decisive role in the oil conflict in the Niger Delta. This has created space for different ethnic groups within the Niger Delta and other dominant ethnic groups within Nigeria (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo) to shape their interests within the oil economy. In this case, a constant conflict and contestation of power is pushed by a synergy of ethnic groups. Political elites often exploit such scenarios particularly during elections to achieve their individual/group and economic benefits (Agbiboa, 2015). Ethnic group leaders use the space of state governments to push for an increase in oil derivation, and political representation at the Federal level. Unfortunately, the Federal system is a broken system. The checks and balances between different branches of government systems do not work very well. This is partly because the state and local governments are 100% dependent on the Federal government. The bureaucracy is an intricate patronage system that is corrupt and opens doors for an upward mobility for the middle class in the country.

4.1.2 Oil Communities

Oil communities in the Niger Delta are very significant actors in the conflict over resource control in the region. They are hosts and extractive spaces for the MNOCs who extract and export crude oil (Oluwaniyi, 2011). It is important to emphasize that oil communities are made of diverse actors and heterogeneous interests. They involve youth, militant and criminal groups, almost 40 ethnic groups (see page 41) elders, chiefs, women, children, civil society Organizations, churches and NGOs etc. (NDDC, 2006, p. 53).

Authors like Obi, (Obi, 2003) have attributed the conflict from the perspective of poverty, disempowerment, ethnicity, marginalization and injustice and so on, which lie at the heart of production and reproduction of violent dynamics of conflict. Other discourses mention the widespread unemployment rate among the youth, environmental pollution and damage caused by extraction. This has damaged the farmlands of the communities and directly affects their livelihoods, economic and social development of the entire region (Eweje, 2007, p. 220). The argument raised by these debates is that communities have felt deprived and marginalized by the extractive activities of the government and MNOCs. According to literature this has motivated local communities to turn against the multinationals and the FG. In affirmation to the above argument, Obi and Rustad (2011) argue that the feeling of neglect is what has created a sense of frustration and alienation among these communities who think they do not benefit from

the resources generated from their land. They further argue that the aggrieved communities claim that oil production in their communities has not generated any development outcomes. Hence, concerns have been raised relating to the centralization of oil wealth and the regional inequalities it causes, the low political inclusion and representation of the communities in resource decision making processes as well as environmental degradation and pollution caused by the exploration activities of MNOCs (pp. 1-2). According to Ikelegbe (2001), advocacy and campaigns by CSOs and protest by communities demanding justice has constantly been ignored and/or met with very repressive measures from the state and the military represented by the Joint Task Force (JTF) in the region. Communities in most cases react negatively towards expressing their grievances and discontent (Obi, 2003). Therefore, community grievances have later transformed into armed violence and militancy in the region.

Despite the benefits that is derived from oil wealth, Oil communities are marred by abject poverty and widespread underdevelopment (Osah & Amakihe, 2014). In the past, traditional rulers and members of Community Development Committees (CDCs) in the region were the people that defended and conveyed the interest of their communities. Also, they were tasked to negotiate with MNOCs and government agencies that represented the oil industry (Ebiede, 2017, p. 13). However, with the emergence of militancy, youth groups in communities have questioned the intensions and capacity of chiefs, traditional rulers and elders of communities. They have become the powerful and significant actors contesting against the state and MNOCs over oil benefits. Ikelegbe argues (2001) that, the economic gains from the oil economy does not trickle down to the communities. To him, anger and frustration started to develop in the region, which encouraged the creation and mobilization by civil groups and violent activities by dissatisfied youths. This scenario transformed the oil communities in their relationship with the state and MNOCs. The opinion of exclusion and demands for justice went beyond the community to ethnic groups, states and the region as a whole. Hence, this transformation resulted in the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) (pp. 440-441).

Oil communities also witnessed inter and intra community contestations among groups and interests. This layer of competing interest is motivated by the control and distribution of political power and policymaking bodies in communities for example the election of Governors, local government heads, chiefs and traditional rulers. This contestation is also influenced by the rents they seek to accumulate from such strategic positions (Ebiede, 2017, p. 13). Unfortunately,

the conflicting interests have produced negative development outcomes and have hindered genuine peacebuilding initiatives in these communities that remain challenging till date.

4.1.3 Multinational Oil Companies (MNOCs)

Just like the government and oil communities, MNOCs play a significant role in Nigeria’s political economy. They are the key actors in the exploration and production of oil in the Niger Delta. MNOCs are involved in both Onshore and offshore fields in the Niger Delta region. Seventeen giant oil and gas production fields are located offshore (Uzoma et al., 2015, p. 71).They contribute greatly to the federal government’s revenue as they mainly govern crude oil business in the Niger Delta. They provide 65% of the budget funds for the country (Ibenegbu, 2018). There are 18 international oil companies operating in Nigeria. The most critical players in the Niger Delta are represented by Shell Petroleum Development Corporation from USA; Chevron from USA; Exxon Mobil from USA; Texaco from USA; Royal Dutch Shell (RDS) from Netherlands; Agip from Italy, Elf from France; Addax Petroleum and Nexen Inc from China, with varied levels of involvement and interaction with the host communities (Environmental Justice Atlas, 2018; Ibenegbu, 2018). These oil corporations account for an estimated 95% of Nigeria’s crude oil production (NIPC, 2018; World Bank, 2008). They produce a minimum of two million barrels of oil a day (Eweje, 2007, p. 222). Shell for instance began operation in 1958 in Ogoniland with the Nigerian government. Shell is Nigeria’s largest oil producer and generates more than 10% of Shell’s total exploration and production profits (Eweje, 2007, p. 222).

Oil production in Nigeria is primarily through Joint Ventures (JV) or Production Sharing Contracts (PSC) between the government represented by NNPC and a number of MNOCs. The government through NNPC, controls seven joint venture partnerships with these MNOCs. NNPC accounts for more than 50% of oil production and over 40% of gas supply (NIPC, 2018). The six joint ventures connecting foreign owned oil companies are represented on the table below:

Table 4. 2: State-Multinational Joint Ventures in Nigeria

| Name of Oil Corporation | Description of Operation |
|-------------------------|--|
| SPDC | A joint venture controlled by Shell accounts for more than 40% of Nigeria’s total oil production (899,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 1997) from more than eighty oil fields. The |

| | |
|---|--|
| | joint venture involves NNPC (55%), Shell (30%), Elf (10%) and Agip (5%) and operates largely onshore on dry land or in the mangrove swamp (NNPC, 2018). |
| Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) | A joint venture between NNPC (60%) and Chevron (40%) previously has been the second largest producer (about 400,000 bpd), with fields located in the Warri region west of the Niger river and offshore in shallow water. It is reported to aim to increase production to 600,000 bpd.17 (NNPC, 2018). |
| Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU) | A joint venture between NNPC (60%) and Mobil (40%) runs in shallow water off Akwa Ibom state in the southeastern delta and averaged production of 632,000 bpd in 1997, making it the second largest producer, as against 543,000 bpd in 1996. Mobil also holds a 50% interest in a Production Sharing Contract for a deep-water block further offshore and is reported to plan to increase output to 900,000 bpd by 2000. Oil industry sources reveal that Mobil is likely to overtake Shell as the largest producer in Nigeria within the next five years, if current trends continue (NNPC, 2018). |
| Nigerian Agip Oil Company Limited (NAOC) | A joint venture operated by Agip and owned by NNPC (60%), Agip (20%) and Phillips Petroleum (20%) produces 150,000 bpd mostly from small onshore fields. (Uzoma et al., 2015, p. 72) |
| Elf Petroleum Nigeria Limited (EPNL) | A joint venture between NNPC (60%) and Elf (40%) produced about 125,000 bpd during 1997, both on and offshore. Elf and Mobil are in dispute over operational control |

| | |
|--|--|
| | of an offshore field with a production capacity of 90,000 bpd (NNPC, 2018). |
| Texaco Overseas Petroleum Company of Nigeria Unlimited (TOPCON) | A joint venture operated by Texaco and owned by NNPC (60%), Texaco (20%) and Chevron (20%) currently produces about 60,000 bpd from five offshore fields (NNPC, 2018). |

Source: Author's compilation

Also, there are “more than 300 oil fields, 284 wells, 7,000 kilometers of pipelines, 10 export terminals, 275 flow stations, 10 gas plants, 4 refineries (three of which are situated in Warri, Port Harcourt I and II, and Kaduna), and a massive liquefied natural gas project (in Bonny and Brass)” (Watts, 2006, p. 109; 2008, p. 11). Research has revealed that MNOCs are the agents behind the degradation and pollution of the environment in the region (Human Rights Watch, 1999). This is caused by their unsustainable extractive activities.

Besides, MNOCs continuously construct artificial channels in oil communities as part of their activities to explore, extract and transport crude oil and gas. The impact has been disastrous to the communities especially with the increase in industrial waste released during Oil related activities. Often, the waste is channeled into farmlands and water bodies, resulting in loss of vegetation, agricultural productivity, marine and wild lives, that has historically sustained lives, and movement of the population in the region (Adeola, 2014; Akaruese, 2018, p. 361). Furthermore, the extractive activities of MNOCs have destroyed the fishing and farming economy of the Delta people. Decades of oil spills and gas flaring have caused soil degradation, water contamination, pollution, deforestation, destruction of ecosystem/habitat and loss of biodiversity (Clark, et al., 2000, pp. 5-8). Statistics from the Department of Petroleum Resources indicate that multinationals including Shell, Chevron, Eni, ExxonMobil and Total, and the Nigerian state oil company, NNPC between 1976 and 1996, recorded approximately 4,835 incidents resulted in the spillage of at least 2,446,322 barrels of oil (102.7 million U.S. gallons), which polluted the environment (Human Rights Watch, 1999, p. 55). The Spillage is caused on the one hand by the fact that many oilfields pipelines and flowlines are old and subject to corrosion. This has increased the chances of pollutions and leakage (Oviasuyi & Uwadiae, 2010, p. 113).

Apart from oil spills, gas flares are another hazardous activity of MNOCs that destroy the environment (Scholz, 2017). It is reported that an average of 75% of total gas production in Nigeria is flared, and about 95% of the “associated gas” which is produced as a by-product of crude oil extraction from reservoirs in which oil and gas are mixed (Human Rights Watch, 1999, pp. 65-66). Gas flaring has contributed to the emission of greenhouse gases and almost half of this is done by Shell. The effect of these activities on the region’s environment, which is a source of living for the people, is very alarming and has been part of the drivers of the discontent by the people and their communities (Akinyemi, Nwaokocha, & Adesanya, 2012, pp. 518-519). All these have contributed to the kind of interaction that exists between MNOCS and oil producing communities since the discovery of crude oil in the region.

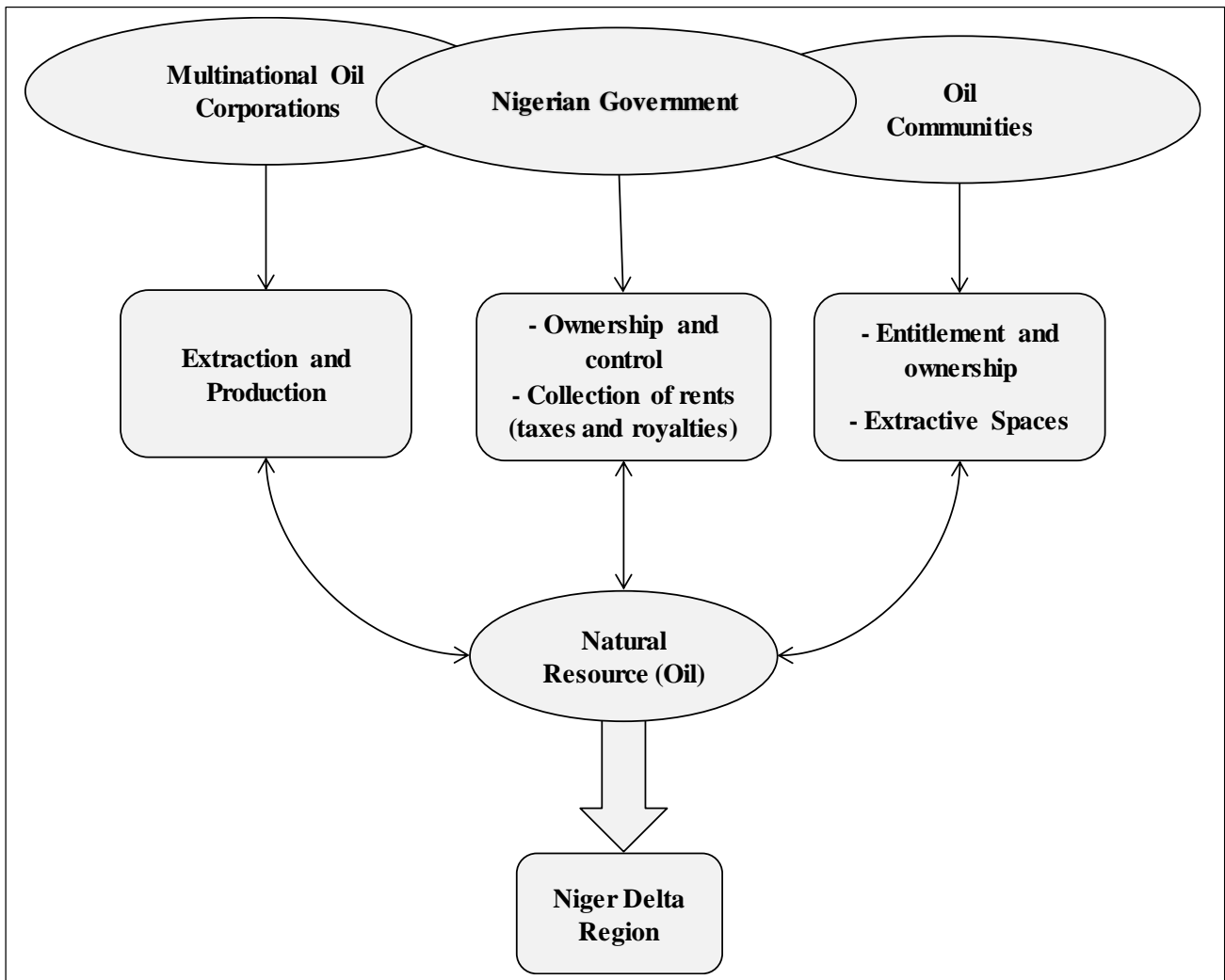
A prominent argument that runs through literature is that oil companies in the Niger Delta are mostly interested in making profits (Moruku, 2012). Their actions are capitalistic, as the surplus that is gained from the production of oil does not stay in the communities where extraction takes place rather; it is transported to their home countries for investment. Consequently, this has created profound mistrust as MNOCs are perceived by oil communities as capitalistic and opportunistic. They are not accepted in their communities as their actions do not mean well for them (Moruku, 2012, p. 898). The result of such relationship is that oil communities have engaged in hostile actions against MNOCs, shutting down oil operations facilities, kidnapping foreign oil workers, oil theft and armed militancy by youth in the community as a form of protest. Ebiede (2017, p. 13) argues that militancy has strengthened the relationship between the MNOCs and the Nigerian government as the latter provided the former with state security forces to suppress the agitations in their various communities of operation.

In addition, debates over the years have focused on the nature of MNOCs Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Niger Delta. It has been reported that for more than two decades, Oil companies have not respected international best practices and rules such as laws and norms of the communities in conducting business in the region. International environmental laws and CSR among others have not been applicable. Such non-compliance policy has caused deprivation and massive youth unemployment in the region (Nwosu, 2017, p. 47). However, following international outcry, MNOCs recently have established CSR projects to initiate social capital and establish cordial relationship with the communities. Unfortunately, critics have slammed the projects for their limited outcomes in the communities as well as being part of the drivers of conflict among communities in the region (Ebiede, 2017, p. 13).

Over the years, MNOCs have borne the burden of brutal communal agitation. In recent times, the people have realized how much is taken from their communities by the oil companies and very little is given back. Some scholars have highlighted the resentment of inequality and negligence among the people of Niger Delta towards the government and MNOCs that has resulted into recurrent and volatile confrontations. As such, the communities have adopted different approaches to push their demands for what they rationalize as justice. The approach over the years has transformed from mere resistance to out blown violence. This has resulted not only to loss of lives and property on both sides but has had a negative brunt upon the country's economy (Eweje, 2007, p. 224). Subsequently, many companies were forced to abandon operations and drilling activities.

Evidence has shown that the MNOCs have played a crucial role in the power dynamics surrounding oil in the Niger Delta. Elaborating on this assumption, Akinyoade (2018) asserts that their connection with oil communities is characterized by divisiveness. MNOCs use the divide and rule strategy as part of their interest /goal in conducting business in the communities where they explore and produce oil. They have been accused of funding and perpetrating systematic abuse of power, resources and corrupt practices. Suffice to say their actions encouraged greed and the desire to satisfy needs among the different actors, hence mobilizing their conflicting resources and capacities. The divide and rule strategy created a platform where different communities compete to create winners and losers. For instance, as a means to quench the tensions in the region, MNOCs have been reported of paying off influential local actors such as local community chiefs, leaders and traditional rulers (Akinyoade, 2018, p. 237). These local actors are awarded oil contracts and are tasked by MNOCs to protect and secure oil-drilling facilities from theft, destruction and piracy by community gangs, criminal groups and militants etc. (World Bank, 2008, p. 26). At times, the distribution of such incentives is done through corrupt means as well as exclusionary measures. Such actions further exacerbate conflict among communities, gang/criminal members and result to intra and inter-community struggles. The action of rewarding a few while excluding others has put different community groups at logger heads particularly the youth against their traditional rulers who work in collaboration with MNOCs to exploit them.

Figure 4. 1: Niger Delta Conflict: Actor Network Analysis



Source: Author's compilation

4.2 Contested Interests: Actors, Encounters and Entanglements in the Niger Delta

Conflicts arise from conflicting interests, which become incompatible. In Nigeria, interest plays a key role in the resource conflicts in the Niger Delta region. The wealth of the country has become a curse because of the many conflicting interests (Collier & Hoeffler, 2005). Contending behaviors have facilitated the survival of conflicts due to the deep-rooted and complex attitudes, behaviors of actors and situations that seem to be opaque to the management strategies in the region (Freitas, 2015). As a result, actors with competing interests engage in aggressive and violent disputes over rent seeking and the extraction and trade of primary commodities like oil and gas. Such economic incentives of actors in the Niger Delta who depend heavily on black and gray markets that operate outside and at the expense of legal and formal economic activity of the state are predatory (Ballentine & Nitzschke, 2005). This implies that the various actors focus on the deliberate and systematic use of violence to acquire access, control trade and exploit labor (pp. 2-3). The dependence on primary commodity exports in the Niger Delta have increased competition as well as the link between natural resources and conflict (Bannon & Collier, 2003, p. 2). Thus, natural resources in the region have allowed opportunistic and capitalistic actors to crowd out ideological leaders. Heavy dependence on oil serves the country's national income as well as non-tax revenue for state and MNOCs who dominate the Niger Delta where rents are generated (Collier & Hoeffler, 2005, pp. 626-627). The scenario in the Niger Delta is surrounded by contending behaviors where different actors satisfy their egoistic tendencies. The major conflict centers around the haves/powerful (represented by the Nigerian Government, its bureaucrats, officials, politicians, elites, military and MNOCs etc.) who accumulate rents, live in affluence and make all the decisions concerning the control, management and distribution and management of oil wealth and the have-nots/powerless (represented by the Niger Delta population, communities, peasantry, women, youth, CSOs, and NGOs etc.) who on their part protest, take up arms and demand for resource control and entitlement of land ownership. The various layers of competing interests among actors in the Niger Delta entangled over access, ownership, and entitlement of resources in the region will be analyzed below.

4.2.1 Powerful Versus Powerless Encounters

The resource contention between the powerful and the powerless in the Niger Delta allows us an understanding of how environment impacts on human behavior, attitude, agendas, agency and fuels actor's violent expression, and agitation (Freitas, 2015). In the Niger Delta, both the powerful and the powerless have not changed their cognitive thoughts and attitudes towards

another as such; this has led to the reoccurrence of conflict over several decades. For instance, there is a disparity in the income gap between the rich and the poor as the rents generated by the oil industry is controlled by the powerful represented by elites, and politicians. Besides, 80% of the oil and gas wealth benefits just about 4% of the entire population (Mähler, 2010, p. 14). A growing literature reveals that, the behavioral patterns of the elites is to accumulate wealth and get rich at the detriment of the poor communities where crude oil and gas deposits are found (Omeje, 2006-2007, p. 46). Ifedi and Anyu (2011) argue that the interest of the powerful rich ruling elites, government officials and politicians is to grip control and ownership over the petrol dollar. This to them has impoverished communities and triggered negative development outcomes (p.76). The actions of the powerful elites and ruling officials driven by their interest and the incentive structures in which they manipulate is not pro-poor and does not generate broad-based public goods for the affected communities (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014, p. 12).

The interests of the rich elites and politicians are conveyed through political considerations such as the interest to policymakers to stay longer in power in order to get more access to power that will enable control and manage oil rents; to get rich by accumulating oil wealth; to prevent political opponents from gaining power, and to reward favors/patronage to their allies by preventing improvement in the property rights of workers or competitors (Beuran et al., 2011, p. 1).

The powerless represented by the affected communities, groups and their leaders are more interested in the contestations over power and authority over of land ownership, resource control and distribution. The powerless desire to be involved in contests over access to oil, inclusion in oil decision-making matters, as well as to be represented at high-level political positions at the Federal level. These contentions have been causes of violent resistance and conflict in the Niger Delta. However, in recent times, the interest of local groups has further pushed towards infrastructural development, employment opportunities, accountability and environmental justice (Ahonsi, 2011, pp. 28-23). These interest groups demand greater corporate social responsibility from MNOCs who have made their environment stagnant and unbearable to live, as well as pushing the federal government to force multinationals to compensate the communities for the huge environmental neglect and damage. This is one of the pivotal reasons why there exist local resistances against the Nigerian government-MNOCs alliance in the Niger Delta. In this regard, there exist several interest groups within and among communities and their local leaders against the tactical alliances of the state and multinationals. There are those who serve as loyal opposition to oil companies and the Nigerian Government

in return for favor and patronage. There exist others who are requesting to be paid for the damages and rewards for oil wealth from multinationals, and others who undermine the legitimacy of the Nigerian Government and the multinationals, thereby seeking full control over oil and their lands (Engel, 2005, p. 205).

Engel further identifies three major interest groups among the local communities: the conservatives, elites or moderates; the radicalized youth, peasantry and women and; finally, the vigilantes (p. 206). There also exists multi-dimensional competing interests within these groups relating to the tactics, leadership, and objectives in their resistance against the government and multinationals over the control and entitlement of oil rents. For instance, disputes often exist between traditional authorities and militant groups like MOSOP, where traditional leaders were perceived as loyal and aids to the rich politicians and elites and multinationals that control the rents. MOSOP believed these leaders formed tactical alliances with both the rich and powerful elites and the oil companies to seek and benefit from oil resources (Ebiede, 2017, p. 13). Thus, different militant groups (MOSOP, Ijaw Youth Council, CSOs, NGOs etc.) all formed strong alliances and connections to challenge the legitimacy of the state and multinationals in the region (Engel, 2005, pp. 206-207).

The youth have mobilized especially those who joined militant groups and have provided counter narratives to the legitimacy of the government. Communities have strongly mobilized especially the youth and militants who play the role of victims of crude oil production which has not only deprived them but has also been looted by the rich and non-Niger Delta communities. This has given them the legitimacy to resist the control of the rich /powerful and economic magnets like the elites, government and MNOCs. Coupled with this is the interest of the poor to gain international recognition as ethnic minorities resisting overarching exploitation of natural resources. The militants have pushed their legitimacy by creating a booming underground economy for themselves as a means to satisfy their interests. The underground economy is established around a complex cycle of oil-theft, arms proliferation and hostage taking (Ahonsi, 2011, p. 29).

A glaring dimension of interests is the use of militancy as an option by the poor communities to destroy not only the legitimacy of the powerful, but also to destabilize their economic desires and interests as well. As a counter tactic for challenging the status quo by armed militants, the rich and political elites in Nigeria have used laws and corrupt schemes in the oil industry that has hindered the flow of rental income so that they do not trickle down to the local people. The

several laws and decrees passed by the Federal government claiming total possession of all land and resources is seen by the people as an injunction by the rich and powerful against them, which can only be reversed through violence since the rich cannot dialogue with them. Some of these legal texts include the Petroleum Act of 1969, the Land Use Act of 1978 and more recently Decree No. 13 of 1996 vesting legitimate rights and authority over resource ownership in the Federal government (Tantua & Kamruzzaman, 2016, p. 2).

4.2.2 Elitists Entanglements

The contestation in Nigeria's Niger Delta is not limited to competition between groups with varying interests but also to groups with similar or the same socio-political and economic interests as the powerful elite. The elite are commonly referred to as the "political or ruling elites that comprises of both elected and non-elected officials, economic elites and traditional rulers who exercise influence on policy making and execution" (Adeosun, Norafidah, & Zengeni, 2016, p. 303). They are groups with excellent access to resources or capacities, a feature that distinguishes them from other (non-elite) members of society (Kifordu, 2011, p. 20). In Nigeria, elites are actors with vast disproportionate control over resources (Khan, 2012, p. 361), occupying key positions and relations through power networks (Azeez & Ibukunoluwa, 2015, p. 303). Elites dominate the sectors of the economy that are not under the control of MONOCs and their governments, command key positions and make decisions at all levels of government (Attah, 2013, p. 73). They are a selected and small group of people in Nigeria with power and strong influence on the public, yet their role played in the Niger Delta conflict and management outweighs their number (Vergara, 2013, p. 32). Unfortunately, the leadership of these minority elites does not benefit the masses and communities in the Niger Delta (Adeosun et al., 2016, p. 305). The dominant elites in Nigeria include "senior government and civil service officials, political (party) leaders and 'godfathers', influential businessmen, retired military officers, Nigerian and international oil industry bosses, and community chiefs, various leaders of militia groups in the Niger Delta and civil society and social movement leaders. These groups challenge in totally different ways, the traditional and predatory but dynamic and fluid political processes (whether overt or covert) of negotiation, compromise, bargaining, accommodation and coalition and networking-building among powerful groups of state and non-state actors (Schultze-Kraft, 2013, P. 7-9). At the core of power in Nigeria and the violent contestations in the Niger Delta are the entanglements among key national elites, their international petro-capitalist allies and contending Niger Delta militia groups that shape diverse interests solely focused on the entitlement of oil rents organisations (Laws, 2012; Di John & Putzel, 2009).

In the case of the Niger Delta, there are two types of elites, those who are originally from the region and those who are from other parts of the country (non-elites). Whether Niger Delta elites or non-elites, they are all national, regional and local elites, composed of educated and non-educated rich people who either emerged from humble peasant or working-class backgrounds (Attah, 2013, p. 73). They have enriched themselves through greed, bribery, corruption, and frame practices in government and in the oil business instead of addressing the abject poverty, environmental degradation, and socio-economic injustices that plague the region. The competing claims are evident in the actual power that dwells with those who control the high point of the economy to evade the political class. Since the Nigerian economy is controlled by MONCs and backed by their home governments who conduct business in the Niger Delta, both elites compete for the position of “comprador” for MNOCs (Attah, 2013, p. 73). The contention among the influential in Nigeria in their interaction in the oil rich Niger Delta is driven by elites whose interests are either to defeat their opponents or look for ways to impede the other and/or remain in power. The common feature between both groups is that, they control and manipulate the masses and people in the Niger Delta region to satisfy their economic incentives. To this end, sometimes by distorting information and public opinion region (Tonwe, Ojo, & Aghedo, 2011). The tussle between the Niger Delta elites and non-elites usually centers on acquiring wealth and its attendant’s power. In their clash over political spoils, these elites challenge each other for political positions in order to benefit from the politics that is linked to the control of resources and the distribution of oil revenue from the Niger Delta region (p. 59).

The oil revenue distribution question is very central in the encounters between elites. There are four major procedures in which oil revenue is distributed in Nigeria. They include the federal account (rents assigned directly by the federal state), a state derivation principle (the right of each state to a percentage of the taxes that its inhabitants are expected to have contributed to the federal treasury), the Federation Account (or States Joint Account) which distributes revenue to the states on the basis of need, population and other criteria, and a Special Grants Account (notably monies allocated directly for the Niger Delta, for instance through NDDC) (Watts, 2007, p. 642; Watts, 2008, p. 12). Just like non-elites, Niger Delta elites who ascend to power and control state governments are more interested in monopolizing the access to power and wealth. The Niger Delta elites use their strategic positions to manipulate and exploit their own people and promote private interests by aligning personal interests with the various state objectives of the groups (Omilusi, 2015, p. 133). For instance, Niger Delta elites have associated their interests into the oil revenue distribution question where communities demand

an increase of 25% derivation to all oil states. They have complained about losses and economic injustice their states as ethnic minority get while non-oil ethnic majorities have gained by foul means (Watts, 2007, p. 642). These competing claims are very evident during the allocation of state budgets at the National Assembly. However, the Federal Centre has only increased the derivation to 13% refusing to meet the regions' demands and to balance the outcry of resource control. The oil revenue distribution question has enforced enormous power and wealth at the level of state governors becoming "Godfathers" (Watts, 2007, p. 642).

Internally, political elites build legitimacy through elections, and to some extent, through the delivery of services and development struggles (Engel, 2005, p. 205). Political elites, state officials, the ruling class and hegemonic groups and interests of the political patrons are to sponsor candidates during elections that will represent and defend their interests in the oil revenue distribution question. As such, clientelist in exchange for economic favors give political offers. These clientelist and patrimonial behaviors have weakened political structures and made institutions dysfunctional, as the systems do not represent pro-poor interest, but that of political godfathers (Oyebode, 2014, p. 139). In such dispensations, certain people are meant for public offices and certain families and lineages are vested with power, which gives them unbridled authority, and access to oil rents in the Niger Delta. It is argued that the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Corporation is part of a clientelist electoral contract because the former president Olusegun Obasanjo needed the votes of the people of the Niger Delta during the presidential elections (Engel, 2005, p. 205).

The rise of powerful gubernatorial elections in Nigeria has further complicated matters as Governors have been vested with much power and influence on resources (Watts, 2007, p. 650). They control state budgets as well as appoint members to civilian positions. Gubernatorial elections are usually complex and contested as most politicians and elites and their godfathers reinforced the services of thugs, militias and cult groups to militate for them. For instance, in oil states, politicians have been supported financially and with arms by ethnic militia groups such as NDV and NDPVF. These political thugs distribute votes and intimidate voters as in the 2003 scandalously corrupt and violent elections. In relation to electoral political thuggery, some corrupt high-ranking politicians and disruptive military officials have provided arms to NDV and NDPVF and financed these groups with oil money from the region to harass other candidates (their opponents) and their supporters (Bøås, 2011, p. 119). A good example is Peter Odili the then Governor of River State who deployed NDV and NDPVF for his campaign and

re-election in the 2003 gubernatorial elections. Yet after winning with 98%, he, along with other patrons distanced themselves from their former thugs (Bøås, 2011, p. 120).

The extreme proportion of clashes between armed and cult groups coordinated by diverse political opponents, has promoted the circulation of small arms and light weapons as well as the emergence of militancy in the Niger Delta. This political behavior that surrounds the Niger Delta, home to oil revenue for the country, has increased the intense fragility of Nigeria's oil economy (Watts, 2007, p. 637). On the one hand, this has opened avenues for politicians to largely steal wealth earmarked for the region, and on the other hand created economic opportunities/incentives for the thugs/armed groups they deployed as well as empowered other groups like MEND. It is assumed that political grievances by armed groups against their former political sponsors/patrons who have failed to deliver promises of money, employment and education has encouraged youth in the region to form militia groups (Bøås, 2011, p. 121). To scholars like Oluwaniyi (2011), militancy is a creation of the competing interest by high-ranking politicians and elites in Nigeria struggling to maintain power and control of oil resources in the Niger Delta. Unfortunately, this has transformed the political landscape of the region as viable youth militias groups have emerged vying and demanding for equal distribution of oil wealth (Amaraegebu, 2011, p. 209). The result is that militias and armed groups have subsequently formed alliances and networks of state patronage. These groups are often involved in illegal economic activities such as oil theft, kidnapping, hostage taking of oil workers and asking for ransom (Ogundiya, 2009, p. 31). MEND in 2006, was responsible for 19 attacks on foreign oil operations that accounted for a 30% reduction in oil revenue (Watts, 2007, p. 647).

Critical to the elite struggle is the escalation of ethnic rivalry promoted by political leaders eager to shape profitable political and economic advantages and influence for themselves. This is rooted in the hegemony of powerful northern and southern political interests. While Niger Delta elites are mounting political pressure for the revenue distribution process and a greater share of the oil wealth, non-elites, especially Northerners want a permanent grip in the oil industry. It is argued that the ethnic divide was enhanced by the British colonial masters who had cautioned the Hausa-Fulani (Northerners) never to leave political power as it would guarantee them a strong grip over Niger Delta resources (Chidiebere, 2016, p. 29). With a firm control over the Federal government, Northerners have bypassed every Niger Delta state authority to control oil rents. Being the ethnic majority, Northern elites have appropriated power in Nigeria since independence with just brief passages of some Southern elites like Olusegun Obasanjo

described as “friendly to the North” and Goodluck Johnathan (Fenske & Zurimendi , 2017, p. 9).

The dispute between Niger Delta elites and non-elites was further exacerbated during Obasanjo’s regime. Many elites strongly opposed his conflict management strategies that were initiated in the region especially the fact that he instrumentalized coercion and violence. Coupled with the circumstance where he wanted to change the constitution to run for a third term, many Niger Delta elites vehemently opposed his bid. This led to open clashes between Niger Delta elites and Obasanjo who was backed by Northern elites who saw his presidency as a means of remaining in firm control of oil resources (Idemudia, 2009, p. 18). Consequently, prominent elites of Niger Delta were arrested, notably the former president of the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) Asari Dokubo, and Chief Alamiyeseigha of Bayelsa State and many others (Watts, 2007, p. 646).

Elites play very relevant roles in the development of their society and initiate processes that transform them. Regrettably, the elites in the Niger Delta have not been able to encourage positive development outcomes in the region irrespective of the fact that the Niger Delta elites are the ones who understand the plight of their communities and should have encouraged long-term sustainable solutions to the problems that confront the region. (Adeosun et al., 2016, p. 308). Rather, they have complicated the problems of the region and pursued economic interests at the expense of secure and stable Niger Delta (Amaraegebu, 2011, p. 209).

4.2.3 Intra and Inter Community Contestations

The struggles among the poor communities in the Niger Delta are a common form of competition that is usually witnessed through intra-communal conflicts (often involves actors belonging to the same communities) and inter-communal conflicts (encompassing conflicts between different/opposing communities). Intra communal struggles often arise over claims to traditional authority within communities, or new power-brokers emerge to challenge traditional chief. At times, intra communal conflicts take the form of fights between community members and groups over entitlement to MNOCs payments and oil distribution. For instance, there has been several instances where the youths have challenged the powers of traditional leaders in dealing with compensation payments resulting in violence. For example, the case of Nembe (World Bank, 2008, p. 36). The inter communal level is characterized by disputes over boundaries where oil wells and installations are located. Communities fight over land ownership as it is usually customary rather than registered. Also, local vigilantes’ groups are

requested to defend community interest in terms of jobs, and benefits from oil which often cause clashes among communities (World Bank, 2008, p. 36-37). These contentions between members of the same communities and opposing communities arise due to disputes over land and the contest to hold leadership positions in their various communities. Land conflicts are very common among communities as they fight over ownership of ancestral land as well as land used for fishing and farming. These encounters also surround tensions over land that MNOC's exploration and production of crude oil takes place (Ebiede, 2017, p. 15). The conflict had redefined interactions, solidarity, integration and relations among the poor in the Niger Delta (Folami, 2017, p. 4).

The control of power has also been a major reason for the conflicting interests between members of the same community and/or different communities or ethnic groups. This is related to the control of oil wealth that is found in most of the local communities where the poor live. The encounters between poor communities center around the local rivalry to control oil resources and the benefits that these communities get from the corporate practices of the MNOCs. This is often the key factor over the contention for power as everyone one wants to be part of the rents that accrue from oil exploration activities in their communities. There have been reported cases where poor communities have witnessed very violent clashes related to the compensations given to them by foreign oil companies due to the unsustainable activities such as gas flaring and oil spillage from uncovered oil pipelines like those of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC). In such scenarios, members of the community often find themselves competing over the compensations paid by MNOCs. For instance, communities have challenged their leaders for receiving compensations from oil companies at the expense of their interests (Ebiede, 2017, pp. 15-16).

In addition, ethnicity has come into play in the claims over the oil resources and the distribution of political opportunities. Inter-ethnic conflicts develop over panic over political participation, rights and control of local budgets/funds (World Bank, 2008). For example, conflicts between the Ijaw and Itsekiri over issues of ethnicity related to distribution of candidates to benefit from the NDA and DDR program Also, inter-ethnic tensions usually take the form of claims of entitlement of rights and privileges by ethnic majority groups in the region. In an interview with community members of the Niger Delta, it was consistent that communities where oil operations, production, drilling, exploration takes place, claim they are more entitled to the resources and it is their rights in this regard to get more benefits from the resource distribution

than other communities⁵¹. These communities consider themselves, as dominant ethnic oil communities as such should receive more privileges than others. Other communities with less extractive activities equally feel they should be compensated just like the others. Such claims of entitlement have worsened community relations as well as relationship among ethnic minorities in the region⁵². Pertinent are the feuds between the Itsekiri and the Ijaws as well as the Itsekiri and the Urhobo communities in Warri, Delta state who are struggling for the limited political space available for them to occupy (Kalejaiye & Alliyu, 2013, p. 254). This has really affected the socio-economic and political landscape in the Niger Delta characterized by gross inequalities. Such claims have resulted in new groupings where ethnic groups demand to have equal access to the rents that accrue from crude oil production (Dibua, 2005, p. 6). This is manifested at the local, state government and Federal level.

The manipulative character of elites/politicians and MNOCs further heightens the politics of intra and inter communal strife where communities in the heart of poverty revolt against each other. The elite dimension in the socio-economic and socio-political problems in the feud has impacted on the political economy of the country. In some cases, powerful political elites stay behind the scenes teleguiding and manipulating policy and actions. They exploit the poor to revolt against each other and defend their economic and egocentric political interests (Okeke, 2014, p. 324). Also, MNOCs usually reward communities they consider obedient and cooperative while those they consider difficult usually get nothing. Moreover, elites/politicians distribute favors and oil wealth based on their relationship with the communities. This has been a nursing ground for the competition that takes place in these communities and their neighbors (Ifedi & Anyu, 2011).

4.2.4 MNOCs and Niger Delta Communities' Confrontations

The conflict in the Niger Delta can be captured from the perspective of the clash of interests between MNOCs and local communities involved in some form of encounters (Imobighe, 2004, p. 101). These groups include: oil multinationals who are perceived as the most powerful and richest corporations in the world, local communities and social movements such as NGOs, CSOs, and faith-based organizations who have been active in advocating for the rights of the indigenous people (Imobighe, 2004, pp. 101-103). It is important to note that both multinationals and poor communities in the Niger Delta region have different, undeniably

⁵¹ Respondents 10 and 21, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁵² Respondents 11, 15 and 20, July 2018, Nigeria.

conflicting interests, priorities and needs (Ebegbulem, Ekpe, & Adejumo, 2013, p. 281). Although the interests of these two actors differ hugely, they mainly converge on the importance of oil and its associated wealth. In this regard, there is a growing consensus in literature that the interest of multinationals is purely business (oil extraction) and to make profit (profit maximization) (Idemudia, 2014, p. 192). The tensions inherent in the region are partly connected to the nature of the core business activities of MNOCs. This limits the incentive and undermines development and peace in the region. This view substantiates the argument of Ebegbulem et al. (2013) as they claim that multinationals are more interested in maximizing profit. Their primary concern is to explore and produce crude oil profitably. They further argue that MNOCs are not interested in pushing for genuine development in the region. Unfortunately, this has continued to increase poverty in the region. On the other hand, the interest of the local communities is based on the discourse of entitlement on the question of land ownership and wealth distribution (p. 281). This argument was very coherent from interviews conducted with local community members in the region. Many community members that were interviewed gave reasons as justification for their claims of entitlement. One of such is the belief that land to them is ancestral⁵³. Their rationalization of land is socially embedded in their cultural belief systems and this heightens their claim for entitlement and ownership⁵⁴. Moreover, their personal perspective is that their communal land hosts oil activities of MNOCs and as such they should be entitled to control not only the land and its resources but the wealth that it generates⁵⁵. A further argument raised is that the distribution of wealth in the region has been unjust⁵⁶. Some elders and traditional leaders perceive the different laws adopted by the government (which grants the latter all legal rights of all land and resources in the country) as depriving them of what they are entitled to⁵⁷. Their perceptions of such laws is that they have been created to take away their right to make decisions about the activities on their land; and strip the oil rights of all communities in the region (Ako, 2009, p. 296). Regarding this, communities in the Niger Delta in the past have complained about being marginalized as minority ethnic groups. They felt deprived of social and economic infrastructure from the MNOCs that operate in their communities (Eweje, 2007, p. 220). This has resulted in community resistance and tensions between poor communities and MNOCs.

⁵³ Respondent 15, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁵⁴ Respondents 11 and 21, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁵⁵ Respondent 21, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁵⁶ Respondent 29, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁵⁷ Respondents 10 and 15, July 2018, Nigeria.

Local communities, supported by MEND, have continued their opposition to those exploitative policies. They demand a full clean-up of local waterways and territories, a more equitable distribution of oil revenues and broader compensation for ecological damage. (Environmental Justice Atlas, 2018). Also, pressure has been mounted by CSOs, NGOs and the international community concerning the abuse of the environment by oil multinationals in the region. Concerns have been raised and multinationals have been accused of depriving the poor people in the Niger Delta the right to a sustainable environment (Okonkwo & Etemire , 2017, p. 45). Responding to allegations made by CSOs and the international community regarding the unsustainable use of oil activities to both the environment and the people of the Niger Delta, MNOCs claim that since the government receives all the taxes and royalties, it is the responsibility of the government to develop the oil communities (Clark, et al., 2000, p. 12). Furthermore, the responses of oil corporations have been met with contradictions. Their strategies have been to take advantage of the fragile political environment including weak laws and tax enforcement systems in Nigeria to avoid damages and inadequate CSR practices in the region (Clark, et al., 2000, p. 12). They have failed to compensate and clean up polluted environments. Apart from the lack of compensation and clean ups, MNOCs have adopted over the years the divide and rule strategies to flame intra and inter communal squabbles via differential treatments of communities (including: Eleme-Okrika conflict, the Itsekiri-Ijaw conflict, the Itsekiri-Urhobo conflict and the Ijaw-Ilaje conflict) as well as the use of outright repression and violent acts to quench down protest in communities (Clark, et al., 2000, pp. 12-17).

The relationship between MNOCs and local communities is very complex, and this has impacted on the various levels of their exchange. This complexity is further complicated by the use of the military by MNOCs to address local resistance and tension in the region. The military has played a very decisive role in the politics of oil conflict in the Niger Delta region. The Nigerian military is a strategic actor in the capital accumulation process of the country's ailing economy and is part of the government and MNOCs alliance (Agbese, 1990, p. 299). Their role in the conflict does not only portray the complexities but the contradictory alliances among actors. Just like government officials, politicians, elites and militia groups, the military has profited immensely from the oil wealth in the region. The military has been at the center of power and politics in Nigeria, involving itself in the socio-economic dynamics and politics of oil production, exploration and distribution in the Niger Delta (Onuoha, 2016, pp. 28-30). The military emerged as a key actor into the politics of oil during the period of the oil boom in Nigeria. During the era of the military rule, the military had full control over the Nigerian

economy. At this time the army was heavily involved in oil politics, some of its personnel hauling in enormous salaries and officers departing from the service with huge bank accounts (Akindele, 1993, p. 68). Various previous governments, both military and civilian, expropriated oil rents in the region to secure their control to power and to pursue their anti-populist agendas (Adeola, 2014, p. 9).

Intrinsic to the conflicting perceptions of the military, it has created a culture of violence in which force and repression have been legitimized as instruments of governance (Agbese, 1990, p. 299). A good example is the Odi massacre where, on November 20th, 1999, following the murder of seven policemen, military retaliation raided and wiped out the entire community of Odi (Punch, 2017). This scenario culminated in lasting confrontations between the Military and resistant youth as well as militant groups like MEND in the region. Amidst this stalemate between the military and resistant youth and militant groups, a Joint Task Force (JTF) was established to maintain law and order in the entire region. However, the JTF has been deployed to quench peaceful protests and resistance in the Niger Delta further complicating the conflict resulting to a wanton destruction of lives and property (Smock, 2009). In view of the above argument, it can be observed that the modes of operation and frequent intervention of the Nigerian military in civilian politics has disrupted the democratic process and prevented democratic culture from taking root in Nigeria, thereby preventing the nation's stabilization (Ikpe, 2000, p. 146). Accordingly, it is the nature of the military to violate formal rules, such as constitutional laws, as means to destabilize power and the voice of the people. This political strategy has favored resorting to extra-judicial and violent approaches to suppress legitimate demands and peaceful protest by minority groups and communities in the Niger Delta (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Military involvement in the political economy of oil has resulted in the instatement of many economic policies that accelerated civil discontentment and resistance among ethnic minorities and a number of civil society groups, notably the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) (Adeola, 2014, p. 11). The military incursion has instrumentalized the politics of ethnicity and tribalism to polarize the political landscape for their selfish political ends. This has created a favorable economic environment for them to loot resources in the Niger Delta region (Onuoha, 2016, p. 26).

In addition, the interaction between oil multinationals and local communities in the Niger Delta has been based on patrimonial lines. Corrupt practices have characterized business dealings and relationships. Corruption at national and regional level has equally exerted a maximum influence at the local level. This feeds down into every community in the region, where oil

money flows into the hands of local elites in the same way as it does to national elites (Human Rights Watch, 1999, p. 96). For instance, there have been instances where oil company contractors have reported that MNOCs engage in bribe and corrupt practices. At times they award contracts to traditional leaders and in turn request for their own commission/percentage. They also bribe the leaders to support them and accommodate their unsustainable activities of oil production in the communities including environmental pollution. The interest of the local elites/local chiefs is to accept such offers and accumulate wealth for themselves (Human Rights Watch, 1999, p. 97).

The role and impact of the multinational oil companies on local communities in Nigeria's Niger Delta region is very significant particularly through their agency and behavior. The relationship between local communities and MNOCs is built in a way that MNOCs create rents for local elites and restrict entry for others. As such, local leaders are expected to show their support for MNOCs and ensure that violence is reduced. They act as intermediaries between MNOCs and their entire communities in times of crisis. It has been argued that these local elites who benefit from the rents, are more interested in the operations of MNOCs and do not care if the interest/needs of other members are met. Some authors (Agbiboa & Maiangwa, 2012, pp. 117-119) have argued that, the exclusion of other members of the community has compelled them to resent not only the MNOCs but their local intermediaries. Those with limited access because of the tactical alliances of local elites and MNOCs, become discontented over their restricted entry to benefit from oil wealth. As a form of protest, they sabotage oil pipelines and commit other criminal activities. Data from the field revealed that, the excluded community members like militants, gangs and criminal groups, rationalize protest to get their voices heard, draw attention and equally benefit from the oil economy⁵⁸. Therefore, protest becomes lucrative for them. This argument is premised from the fact that communities where oil production takes place, perceive themselves as victims. This is because they see the collusion between MNOCs and the Federal Government who benefit from oil as exclusionary⁵⁹. Thus, there are a diverse level of conflictual encounters in the region.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter examined the social interactions, misunderstandings and battles over resource control, ownership, entitlement and distribution. It showed how relationships are challenged

⁵⁸ Respondent 18, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁵⁹ Ibid 18, July 2018, Nigeria.

through various forms of resistance by the people in the Niger Delta, and how dominated communities in the Niger Delta challenge representations that play upon and legitimize marginalization. The chapter analyzed how local communities challenged structures of power and actions that destroy their communities. It illustrated the multi-complex dimensions of power and contradictions inherent in the encounters between the Federal Government, MNOCs and Oil Communities. The encounters involve the coming together of conflicting claims, interests, agency, narratives and counter-narratives about the control and ownership of oil. The connection between actors, their interests, correlations, capacities, resources, strategies as well as their incentives to continue the exploitation and control of oil rents has been analyzed. The various discourses of conflicting interest and social entanglements has been detailed alongside explanations of how networks of patronage between the government, MNOCs and Oil communities are negotiated and defected. Thus (re)shaping the conflict within time and space. Finally, it analyzed the divergent perspectives and positionalities of the actors and demonstrated how these contested encounters in the Niger Delta re (frame) actors' actions and behaviors. The chapter claims that self-interested and utility maximizing actors in the Niger Delta will constantly and certainly respond to incentive frameworks. The impact of all this upon broad-based outcomes in the region such as the Amnesty and DDR program will be analyzed in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NIGER DELTA AMNESTY, DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

5 Introduction

This chapter examines the implementation of the Niger Delta Amnesty and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NDA and DDR) and the extent to which it is an holistic and integrated peacebuilding initiative. The chapter argues that the politics of how the NDA and DDR program was conceived/formulated, negotiated/arranged on, planned and implemented/operationalized, has significant implications on the overall outcome of the program. Therefore, to understand the program, it is imperative to present an analysis of the politics behind the conceptualization, negotiation, planning and implementation. The chapter provides a detailed analysis of the Amnesty and DDR program from the perspective of the minimalist and maximalist approach to peacebuilding. The first section reviews the amnesty practice. The second section analyses the politics of conceptualization, while the next section discusses the art of the negotiation process. The fourth section offers a critical account on the implementation of the DDR program. The final section presents some consideration by way of a conclusion.

5.1 Amnesty: A Peacebuilding Practice

Globally, amnesty initiatives and laws have been approved and used by many state actors and non-state actors as a contribution towards the maintenance of global peace and security. Imperatively, amnesty has been used as a strategy to enhance global, regional, national and local/community-based peacebuilding. Amnesties are generally peace negotiations and activities of bilateral and/or multilateral working groups on burning issues of conflict including arms control, and regional security. They are usually passed by laws, which are voted by the parliament or result from decrees with the effect of law either following a political change or following serious disorder or war particularly civil wars and armed conflicts (United Nations, 2014).

Amnesty is a Greek word, “Amnestia” which means to forget (Bourdon, 2011). This implies that the legislature allows for the removal of legally punishable acts or eliminates any sentence upon individuals or groups which otherwise would have been punishable. Some of the global characteristics of amnesties are that, they are usually separate laws voted by parliament. In addition, such laws are retroactive because they only apply to acts committed before they are

passed. As a result, amnesties always have a restricted time frame validity to be implemented. In this regard, amnesties offer the elimination of any penalty when they come into existence after a sentence has been imposed or at the termination of public proceedings. Granting amnesty entails putting an end to all forms of private and public prosecution (Agbibo, 2015, p. 400). This is polemic to see perpetrators of deadly crimes go unpunished and victims then feel an additional sense of victimization because the instigators and perpetrators cannot be brought to justice.

Bourdon (2011) illustrates this and argues that:

“When a law of amnesty follows a period of grave civil unrest or armed clashes, it may simply wipe out crimes which international law sees as “universal”. When that happens, the amnesty law is “justified” by the need to re-establish peace on the one hand or national reconciliation on the other. In other words, the law of amnesty does tend to ensure the silencing of those victims who have suffered crimes which a priori have done the worst damage to a national community or to the international community of nations. From that paradoxical nature, many contradictions arise. How can a deed be made unpunishable when it would seem on its face to be precisely the one that most demands punishment?”

However, the elimination of a legally punishable act does not imply that the amnestied action may not still lead and or require in certain situations to pay damages to victims (Indianization of victims).

Several amnesty programs have taken place in different parts of the world including in Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Often, these programs have a common feature with the amnesty covering the DDR phases of the process. However, there exist some differences in the application and implementation of the amnesty in particular state contexts. In 1970 for instance, amnesty was granted in Latin America particularly in Argentina and Chile to crimes that were considered worst against humanity. Additionally, in Uruguay in 1986, an amnesty program was passed, which declared an expiration of the state’s punitive authority, granting amnesty to acts of oppression committed by the Uruguay military and police officers from 1973-1975. This was the era of dictatorship and/or authoritarianism in the country. In 1987, this amnesty was followed by a law of Due obedience that allowed junior officers to escape legal justice. Just like in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, Brazil, on 28 August 1979

granted an amnesty program. This allowed the military leadership to remove punishment on crimes committed during the era of authoritarian rule in the country (Bourdon, 2011).

In other parts of the world such as the Balkan countries, internationally sponsored weapons amnesty programs were carried out. The Amnesty was a 45 days' program sponsored by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to break the "gun culture" prevalent in the Balkans (New Europe Brussels Team, 2003). The amnesty was aimed at collecting illegal weapons and to remove penalties for crimes committed. In Albania, an amnesty was applied to disarm militants.

In this vein, illegal weapons such as guns, rockets launchers and mortars in the possession of the local population during the years of ethnic struggles, which brought Albania to the brink of civil war in 2001, were collected. In addition, in Afghanistan, an amnesty that incorporated a DDR was very pivotal in dismantling the forces of Ismail Khan and his opponents in Western Afghanistan in August 2003. This was a voluntary DDR program and was led by the United Nations Development Program and Japan. The program demobilized soldiers of existing military units and disarmed them of heavy weapons (UN, 2003, p. 327).

Furthermore, in Africa (Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Nigeria), several amnesties and DDR programs were implemented and were used as neoliberal peacebuilding processes. These programs involved signing agreements for combatants in armed conflicts to surrender their arms and weapons, demilitarize and reintegrate them into society. In Angola for example, a DDR program for ex-combatants was initiated after three decades of civil war. This was a political process which was built on mutual trust, followed by a peace accord in 2002 known as the Luena Memorandum of Understanding (LMU) (Andersen, 2011, p. 2). Additionally, in Liberia, after fourteen years of civil war and thirteen attempted peace agreements and intervention by the Economic Community of West African States Military Observer Group (ECOMOG), a comprehensive peace agreement was signed in Accra, Ghana in 2003. As a result, amnesty programs were granted to perpetrators of crimes and ex-combatants. Finally, on October 31, 2004, the amnesty was completed. It included a DDR program of over 101,496 combatants and their associates who were disarmed and demobilized (Jaye, 2009, p. 5). A similar process took place in Sierra Leone where there was an extensive DDR process with the enactment of the 2011 Abuja Protocols. The process disarmed 76,000 combatants including 6000 children (Sesay & Suma, 2009, p. 4). In South Africa, a "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" (TRC) was initiated to ensure negotiations between the apartheid

government and the Liberation movements. As a result, perpetrators of grave crimes during the apartheid period were granted amnesty and forgiven and were immune from legal actions. However, new challenges in countries such as in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Libya, and the Great Lakes region have emerged, coupled with the volatility reluctance of the militias to disarm. Militants remain a threat to stability, with insecurity spreading to other neighboring countries.

On 25 June 2009 in Nigeria, pursuant to section 175 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria, late President Yar'Adua granted "amnesty and unconditional pardon to all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in the commission of offences associated with militant activities in the Niger Delta" (The Conversation, 2017). Militants were expected to willingly and readily hand over all illegal equipment, weapons and arms in their possession and renounce militancy in all its forms (Austine & Sunday, 2013, p. 132). The Government promised that it would "institute programs to assist in disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and provision of reintegration assistance to the militants". (Ebiede, 2017, p. 20). This according to the government would improve security stabilization in the region and guarantee medium and long-term development (Sahara Reporters, 2009). The declaration was to take effect from 6 August 2009 to 4 October 2009 and armed militants were given a period of sixty days to accept the amnesty and register for the DDR program. Under the terms of the proclamation, militants who give up all weapons and demobilized would not be prosecuted and would be given incentives. These benefits involve: formal education and vocational training at home and abroad, start-up of entrepreneurial projects as well as a monthly stipend of USD400 (The Conversation, 2017).

5.2 The NDA and DDR Program and the Politics of conceptualization

The formulation process of the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR Program was informed by conflicting conceptual positionalities and understandings of the conflict, which resulted in security and stability versus development agendas for the program (Inuwa, 2017, pp. 168-169). This relates to the interests of different actors in relation to their perceptions and understanding of the conflict in terms of security and development. The conceptualization process and the development perspective and comprehension of the conflict can be dated to the 2008 report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (Ako & Omiunu, 2013, p. 96; Ibaba & Ikelegbe, 2010, p. 219). The Committee recognized that the frustration and discontent that have fueled tensions and violent conflict in the region is deep-seated in development and infrastructural neglect (MEND, 2009, pp. 6-7). This implies that the Niger Delta's development concerns were

primordial to the TCND. At the core of the worsening development and security challenges in the Niger Delta was the governance deficit which the Committee equally identified. Against this backdrop, the Amnesty and DDR program was interpreted and conceptualized from a development, security and stability response program as TCND took into account Nigeria's stability and the Niger Delta's place as a coastal frontier within the Gulf of Guinea security architecture (TCND, 2008, p. 48). The observations of the TCND were clear: the conflict in the Niger Delta was not only related to issues of governance but also as the result of rentierism and neopatrimonialism that lay at the fore of the community neglect, sparking deep discontentment, community agitation, resistance movements, and ultimately rampant criminality (Onapajo & Moshood, 2016, pp. 42-43). As a result, as part of the initiative to aid the government in solving the above-mentioned problems, the TCND made the following recommendations: to increase oil revenue allocation to the Niger Delta to 25% in order to fund infrastructural and human development projects; negotiate amnesty for all militants and create a DDR plan to encourage the negotiation, planning and implementation process; initiate an open trail and unconditional release of MEND's leaders Henry Okah; and address environmental challenges among others (TCND, 2008, p. 3). It should be noted that the most central suggestion of the TCND was the comprehensive implementation of Amnesty and DDR program that respected the basic principles of neoliberal peacebuilding standards as prescribed by the United Nations in the Integrated DDR standards (Joab-Peterside, Porter, & Watts, 2012, p. 11; Molly, 2011, p. 111).

Although the report of the TCND saw the need for a maximalist approach to peacebuilding which entailed addressing both the development and security questions in the conceptualization, design and implementation of the program, the Nigerian government was more interested in a minimalist approach which conceived, the program as a security and stability project and undermined the development aspects⁶⁰. At the core of this lies the Nigerian government's concerns about the deteriorating security and stability issues posed by militancy with an unfavorable impact on the production and exploration of crude oil from the region (Mohammed et al., 2014, p. 87). Connected with the fact that insecurity and instability in the region had a huge impact on the country's economy which depends mostly on the rents from crude oil. The security agenda informed the conceptualization process of the program (Oluwaniyi, 2011, p. 14). Members of the Nigerian security architecture saw militancy from a security sector perspective as a threat to national security and pressed for an Amnesty and DDR program that prioritized security over development with limited consideration to the fundamental human

⁶⁰ Respondent 26, July 2018, Nigeria.

security and development issues that led to the conflict (Inuwa, 2017, p. 72). During the heart of the strife, a policy report was submitted to the Late President Umaru Yar'Adua indicating that it was crucial to grant amnesty and implement a DDR program to the Niger Delta militants as a strategic approach to end militancy and youth violence which had made the region a hot spot⁶¹. Inuwa (2017) further reported that a preparatory meeting was held with Ateke Tom, the militant commander of the NDV with the main objective to suggest to the government to grant amnesty to the militants who were willing to lay down their arms and in return, the government would compensate him and his associates. Unfortunately, the strategy to grant amnesty to the militants was not well received by the National Security Adviser (NSA). Nevertheless, the suggestion was later coined as a disarmament agenda by the then Chief of Defense Staff and proposed to the government (p. 171).

Obi (2014) argues that the primary concern of the state was to address the burning security stabilization crisis in the region. He further noted that in its widest frustration, the government instituted an Amnesty and DDR program which was not aimed at restoring sustainable peace but to get rid of the “disruptive militant elements” from the globalized production of oil in the Niger Delta (p. 250). In their day-to-day operations, the militants had created an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity. The insecurity created by militant activities, costs the economy 4 to 8 billion USD worth of oil (Ibaba, 2008, p. 20). The fragile stability of Niger Delta and the general insecurity that increased fear of the unknown gripped the hearts of the state-multinational alliance and therefore pushed for a security response (Ikelegbe, 2010, p. 40). The capacity of the militants and the sophisticated arms and weapons in their possession was a main concern for the booming petro-business which had an immediate effect on the national economy and the political elites (Obi, 2014, p. 252).

In fact, this analysis is echoed by Obi, who asserts that:

‘the PAP has been less of a DDR programme and more of a political project by a dominant Nigerian elite coalition (comprising top-level state executives, members of their political networks, politically connected retired and serving military and security officials, government officials, traditional rulers and top-level private sector executives) intent on maintaining dominant power relations and preserving the conditions for

⁶¹ Respondent 03, July 2018, Nigeria.

optimal extraction of oil—the fiscal basis of its power, wealth and hegemony’ (Obi, 2014, p. 250-251).

Besides, the rentier-neoprimonial nature and character of the Nigerian state as well as its interests shaped the conceptualization process. The violence and chaos in the region that later transformed into out blown militancy, led to hostage taking, kidnapping, destruction of oil installations and pipelines and hindered socio-economic activities in the local communities (Duru & Ogonnaya, 2012, p. 163). This made the region ungovernable and a big threat to oil production, security, unity and territorial integrity of the Nigerian state. Thus, the government was pressured by these circumstances to first address issues that could be detrimental to its interests and nature, in this case oil rents and the general stability and security that surrounds oil operations (Alumuna, Ofoegbu, & Edet, 2017, p. 49429). Also, the stability and security of their allies, was instrumental in shaping the conceptualization of the Program. A respondent noted that both the government and the multinationals had immediate interest to maintain stability in the region. However, their interest was more of political stability for economic benefits⁶².

The program was formulated as a one-shop for all activities associated to initiating peace in the restive region (Okonofua, 2016, p. 3). Inuwa (2017) asserts that the program brought in some sort of vagueness connected to the main purposes, procedures, methods and expected impact of the program. One challenge with the one-dimensional vested formulation of the program is that it failed to appropriately envision and/or construct likely menaces within the disarmament and demobilisation of ex-militants, because ex-militants can exploit the increasing political opportunities in place and rearm themselves (Alden 2002, p.34). Additionally, those who were not involved in the DDR program could sponsor and recruit former militants to commit violent acts (Mehlum, Moene, & Ragner, 2002, p. 448). For instance, this was exactly what happened with the emergence of the militant group the “Niger Delta Avengers” in 2016. The vagueness and uncertainty intensified by the state’s inability to contain strategies for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the amnesty (Oluwaniyi, 2011, p. 20). The entire process was motivated as a security response to security conditions in the Niger Delta at the time (Agbibo, 2015, p. 400). It was the dire interest of President Yar’Adua and his government to reduce fundamentally the violence that was taking place and buy peace by getting the militants to lay down their weapons (Eke, 2014, p. 751). The process was specifically focused on armed groups

⁶² Respondent 02, July 2018, Nigeria.

in the region renouncing violence and adhering to a government sponsored DDR program (Obi, 2014, p. 250).

In the view of Okonofua (2014), the government's minimalist or narrow solution to buy off militants undermined the more devastating structural conditions that encouraged and continues to strengthen, poverty, unemployment and violence (Ushie, 2013, p.33). Furthermore, the conceptualization politics failed to tackle the wider socio-economic grievances (News24, 2017). These involve the lack of social development in local oil communities, environmental degradation, and the exclusion of local communities from the governance of oil production in the Niger Delta region (The Conversation, 2017). The agenda did not include the possibility to address political and economic conditions that promote cultural systems that connects militants to cults and the political state which have also been part of the drivers of conflict (Okonofua, 2014).

Adopting a minimalist strategy in conceiving the program, undermines a developmental approach to addressing the concerns of the people by providing them with socio-economic and infrastructural development (Duru & Ogbonnaya, 2012, pp. 167-168). This is an example of a resource curse where, the behavior and action of the government and its officials is driven by the vested interests to depend solely on oil rents and royalties from oil and lacking to conceive programs for the socio-economic development of the Niger Delta people (Birks & Sinclair, 1984). Oil profit strengthens the coalition between the government and its corporate allies to focus on containment of the conflict (Okonofua, 2016, p. 2). It is assumed that members of the Nigerian State Security Architecture in their formulation, did not have a broad understanding of the complex relationship between development, conflict and security and thus failed to effectively blend both security and development or the securitization of development and the developmentalization of security (Inuwa, 2017, p. 172).

From an international perspective, the philosophy behind the formulation of the program was to respond to international pressure to address attack on global oil market stability caused by militia activities in the Niger Delta (Molly, 2011). A respondent revealed that the country wanted to project its international image as a country that respects the liberal ideas of good governance through the resolution of the problem by responding to the governance and security challenges in the region⁶³.

⁶³ Respondent 39, July 2018, Nigeria.

5.3 NDA and DDR Program and the Art of Negotiation

Concerning the negotiation process, empirical evidence showed that the Nigerian Government did not initiate any genuine and formal discussion aimed at reaching an agreement with the affected communities or by using the military to conquer the militants as it is usually the case with the UN Integrated Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS)⁶⁴. In fact, the government virtually owned the entire process as it was in charge of the planning, execution and outcome of the program (Oluwaniyi, 2011, p. 21). The process was void of negotiated dialogue and agreement between the conflicting parties (the Nigerian State/MNOCs coalition versus the Militants/Communities)(Schultze-Kraft, 2018a). According to the accounts of some militants that were interviewed for this study, informal agreement and dialogue was held behind the door meetings, their leaders briefed them on what was discussed and agreed⁶⁵. One of the militant leaders revealed that, they were the main arm of negotiation between the government/MNOCs and the boys they command. He asserted that they were invited in a closed-door meeting where an amnesty was proposed to them and their boys. However, due to the nature of the Nigerian government and its officials who never keep to their promises, these leaders did not trust the government. Nevertheless, having been convinced by the government who indicated its good fate and willingness to improve on the situation in the region and promised to compensate the top leaders and their boys if they drop down their weapons and accept amnesty, they decided to give a try to the proposal. He further indicated that their main interest and that of their communities has always been to get access to oil rents and environmental justice which was discussed during the informal peace deal between them and the government. Accordingly, their interest was aligned with the government's interest and willingness to change the trajectories of their communities⁶⁶. A report from Reuters (Reuters, 2009) also indicated that the government was ready to grant amnesty to the militants if they agreed to lay down their weapons, but the key militant group dismissed the offer as mere words. MEND for instance rejected the offer because "it is ambiguous, dictatorial and has not been tested in a test tube" or a "well-defined" amnesty program negotiated by both sides (Reuters, 2009).

⁶⁴ Respondent 12, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁶⁵ Respondents 05, 06, 09, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁶⁶ Respondent 08, July 2018, Nigeria.

It is important to note that one of the key recommendations of the TCND was the need for the government to negotiate amnesty for all militants, create a credible and authoritative agency and process comprising of international negotiators to plan, implement and monitor the Niger Delta DDR program at regional, state and local government levels as well as ensure ceasefire and withdrawal of forces from the region (MEND, 2009, pp. 6-7). These recommendations formed the basis on which the Nigerian Government negotiated with armed militant groups in the Niger Delta. To drive this dialogue, the Government formed the Niger Delta Peace and Reconciliation Committee (NDPRC), headed by Senator David Brigidi (Etekpe, 2013, p. 103). The NDPRC had a series of extensive dialogues with all armed groups in the Niger Delta, with committee members accessing the creeks to negotiate with armed groups. The Committee assured the militants that the Nigerian Government was deeply committed to the development of the region (Ebiede, 2017, p. 20). Unfortunately, due to the neopatrimonial nature of the government, it did not effectively follow all the aspects of the TCND report. However, Inuwa (2017) argues that the negotiation was based on a stakeholder matrix approach because discussions were only made with selected prominent militant leaders based on their influence and interest in the struggle over the control of resources (p. 170). This includes top militant leaders of MEND, NDPVF and NDV. These prominent militant leaders have been profiled as notorious with great potentials to commit violence and sabotage oil facilities with negative outcomes on oil production and revenue (Council on Foreign Relations, 2007). They were classified under a cluster of Group A and B. Group A was represented by leaders profiled in terms of high power, high interest and high credibility while those in Group B comprised of a cluster of low power, low interest and low credibility. The government's interest was mostly to dialogue with those with high risk to the security of the state as well as oil operations in the region. In this sense, Group A was given more priority given their influence in the communities as well as the militant and youth groups they control (Inuwa, 2017, pp. 177-178).

Essentially, key figures like Asari Dokubo of NDPVF, Ateke Tom of NDV, Government Ekpemupolo aka Tompolo, and others rejected the gesture of the government. For Asari Dokubo, the Amnesty and DDR program is a means to destroy the genuine struggle of freedom fighters. To him, only convicted criminals require a presidential pardon, thus Niger Delta fighters were not criminals to be granted amnesty (Eke, 2015, p. 755). Others like Ateke Tom who was the brain behind the deadly destruction of the Okuru-Ama community sponsored by the Rivers State Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), from the onset was skeptical about the program because he saw the amnesty as a plot to bring militants out of the creeks. Nevertheless, insistent assurances brought Ateke Tom to the negotiation table with President Yar'Adua on

October 1, 2009, where he later submitted his arms and accepted the peace deal (The Guardian, 2009).

In addition, a traditional elder in one of the communities in the Niger Delta identified his dissatisfaction on the type of negotiation that took place between the government and some selected top militant leaders. He noted that elders were never invited during the dialogue and no one even knew when this was brokered. To him, the government gave prominence to militant leaders instead of introducing an inclusive dialogue where all stakeholders including traditional rulers, youth, women, militants, MNOCs, CSOs and NGOs would have been invited for a genuine discussion finding sustainable solutions to the problems of the region. All of these actors have been affected in one way or the other or have been in the past key actors in the management of the conflict. Secretly negotiating with a faction of the community i.e. the militants illustrates the manipulative nature and bad intention of the Nigerian government and its allies⁶⁷.

A military official at the National Defense College in Abuja⁶⁸ accounted that there was no negotiation between the conflicting parties. He said, the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR Program is a home-grown program and the Nigerian government did not want to involve external actors for strategic reasons which has been discussed in chapter three.

According to a Niger Delta expert⁶⁹, the multinationals suggested to the Nigerian government to negotiate with the militants instead of granting amnesty and implementing a DDR program for two main reasons. Firstly, for security and safety concerns. Security in terms of human security as well as the security of the pipelines and the general safety for expatriates working in their companies considering the violence and instability and security that characterized the region. The state of insecurity in the region, the coordinated and sustained violent attacks on oil facilities and MNOCs workers has turned the region into one of the most unsafe places in the world. Negotiating with the perpetrators of violence was crucial because militant activities had affected the production of oil which is a major profit for the multinationals and the economy. Secondly, granting amnesty to militants would be very expensive for both the government and the multinationals due to the nature and topography of the region made of mangrove forest, fresh water swamp, seasonal flooding, creeks and streams which would be expensive to develop.

⁶⁷ Respondent 20, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁶⁸ Respondent 13, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁶⁹ Respondent 18, July 2018, Nigeria.

Therefore, negotiating with armed militants would have meant compensating those considered as high threat rather than engaging in a very expensive development program like the DDR⁷⁰.

Discussions were characterized by informal rules of the game through corruption and patronage networks where, the government and its allies, provided financial incentives to top militant warlords perceived as obstacles to peace in the oil-rich but violent region, owing to their inclination for politics of disorder as a means to convince them to come out from the creeks as well as buy them off from the disruption of oil and gas production which threatened the national economy. The Federal government paid \$40 million for 12 months to Asari Dokubo, Ateke Tom, Ebikabowei “Boyloaf” Victor Ben and Ekpumopolo to secure the country’s oil (Joab-Peterside et al., 2012, pp. 11-12). For example, Ateke Tom received N560 million, Ebikabowei “Boyloaf” Victor Ben got N560 million, Ekpumopolo N3.6 billion and Asari Dokubo N1.44 billion as cash payments for oil protection contracts (Eke, 2015, p. 757). The impact of this cash to buy peace deal is reflected in the life of affluence and wealth in the oil sector which these former militant commanders enjoy. Agbibo (2015, p. 387) describes this as a strategy of gilded pacification where the government targeted at buying off militants and re-establishing oil and gas production in the Niger Delta without addressing the complexed causes of conflict in the region. However, this has ushered a new phase in the relationships between the government and “creek dwellers” (Eke, 2015, p. 754).

Also, as part of the consultations, the government proposed a constructive engagement with leaders of militant groups. This gave a green light for such leaders to create their own private security agencies that would be hired to secure oil pipelines and other installations on a multi-billion-naira contract agreement (Sayne, 2013, pp. 4-5). Such a strategy was meant to divert the interest of militant leaders whose wealth and income came from ransom taking, kidnapping, oil theft, oil pipeline vandalization, assassinations, piracy, and political patronage (Onapajo & Moshood, 2016, p. 44). As a result, this would serve as an alternative, legitimate and legal way to get wealth and income rather than the illegal activities they carried in order to acquire wealth. Presumably, the government is convinced since most leaders have been drivers of violence on oil pipelines and installations, they would serve as safeguards to protect these facilities and stop such criminal activities⁷¹. Part of the motivation for constructive engagement is to give militant leaders access to economic opportunities as part of the reintegration process, which is usually not evident in most DDR processes (Torjesen, 2013, p. 3). Many scholars have hugely criticized

⁷⁰ Ibid 18, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁷¹ Respondent 22, July 2018, Nigeria.

the strategy, while some see it to create a peaceful and conducive environment for oil exploitation and to make profits (Omeje, 2004, p. 425).

President Yar'Adua on 16th June 2009, convened a consultative meeting with the Governors of the Niger Delta to consider and put in place an amnesty and DDR for militants in the region. The Council of State on 25th June 2009 was equally consulted to request further support for the need of an amnesty. These actions were followed by a nationwide broadcast on 25th June 2009, which urged all militants to accept amnesty, reject militancy and surrender their arms and ammunitions in preparation to meet training needs of the registered ex-militants (Akinwale, 2010, p. 204). The government did not involve militants in formal negotiation and agreement, rather, the consultations were at the top level of the Federal Government and included the Niger Delta elites, elders, high-level government officials and the militant leaders who were more self-interested and concerned with the incentives they will get from the program. Unfortunately, their foot soldiers are dissatisfied and feel cheated by the government (Nwobueze & Inokoba, 2017, p. 32).

The Nigerian Government rather than to employ bottom-up and top-down approaches in the process of negotiating the Amnesty and DDR program in the Niger Delta, chose to employ a “top-down” approach to the underlying causes of violence in the region⁷². In this vein, one could argue that the program was not inclusive because it excluded other crucial actors whose role was central to the management of the conflict in the region⁷³. The communities where militant activities were carried out were completely left out in the process. This has affected the outcome of the program because a sustainable peacebuilding approach would entail an inclusive dialogue with all the stakeholders, not only leaders of groups (Joab-Peterside et al., 2012). It was a surrender without negotiated agreements or attempts to address the grievances of the militants and the entire communities of the Niger Delta. It implies that the government has not learnt lessons from previous interventionist strategies that failed to deliver because they were established as top-down approaches (Nwobueze & Inokoba, 2017, p. 32).

A CSO worker asserts that the negotiation process portrayed the insincere nature of the government⁷⁴. While the government was engaging in informal agreements with militants and convincing them to lay down their arms, at the same time, the government was planning a widespread military expansion in the region by increasing the number of checkpoints, mounting

⁷² Respondent 14, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁷³ Ibid 14, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁷⁴ Respondent 29, July 2018, Nigeria.

electronic surveillance systems in many communities and purchased sophisticated weaponry in the region (Schultze-Kraft, 2017, p. 618). The process was presented as a victor's benevolence. The government pronounced it and employed carrot-and-stick strategies to make the militants accept it (Albert, 2015). Some scholars have argued that the Nigerian government pushed for peacebuilding (i.e. the role of the amnesty policy) ahead of a peacemaking process (i.e. negotiation or mediation) (Nwobueze & Inokoba, 2017, pp. 29-30). Thus, the conditions and terms of the amnesty and DDR were determined by the government without negotiating with the various militant groups, and their communities.

However, after concerted backdoor consultations and meetings with militant leaders, a ceasefire agreement was eventually achieved with handshakes between late President Musa Yar'Adua and some significant Niger Delta warlords in Abuja. The agreement ended the violent militancy in the region and subsequently laid the foundations for the implementation of the DDR program (Oluwaniyi, 2014).

5.4 NDA and DDR: The Practice of Planning

The Presidential Panel on Amnesty and Disarmament (PPAD) of militants in the Niger Delta was established on 5 May 2009 (Sahara Reporters, 2009). The PPAD set out the terms, procedures, and processes to grant amnesty to the militants. These guidelines were accepted by the government after consulting the National Council of State(NCS) (Sahara Reporters, 2009).The panel was led by the then Minister of Defense Major General Goodwin Abbe, a native from the Niger Delta (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010, p. 13). The panel comprised of 18 members. To facilitate its work, the committee designated seven additional members with four of them as serving senior military officers and a retired colonel. Members of the key committee were selected from strategic government institutions, members of the 7 Niger Delta affected states, and representatives of the Nigerian Security Sector (including the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), Nigerian Inspector General of Police (NIGP), and an Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIGP) as well as representatives from the State Security Service (SSS) (Inuwa, 2017, p. 185). The PPAD tasked with the mandate to specify the terms, procedures, and processes of an amnesty to Niger Delta militants (I. Udoh, 2013, pp. 66-67).

The planning process also entailed providing the necessary logistics to document and collect fingerprints of militants who have surrendered their weapons⁷⁵. The Planning Committee was

⁷⁵ Respondent 13, July 2018, Nigeria.

to ensure the release of Henry Okah (MEND's leader) who was under prosecution and guarantee that only crimes committed before the end of the program were to be pardoned unconditionally and crimes committed after October 4, 2009, which was the end date for militants to submit arms were supposed to be punished under the law (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010, p. 13).

Deeper analysis portrays that the planning process of the Amnesty and DDR program was non-inclusive, poorly planned and fraudulently implemented to the detriment of the people and communities of the Niger Delta (Ushie, 2013, p. 35-36). The process was too militarized and thus, deliberately excludes other key actors like the MNOCs, local governments, home-based NGOs, and community-based organizations (CBOs) who had been engaged in the Niger Delta conflict for a very long time⁷⁶. It is instructive to note that the status plan was only limited to government officials, MNOCs and their governments whereas, the key actors that were concerned were not well informed. This explains why there was a strong hesitation on the part of the militant leaders because, to them, the deal was launched without their consultation (Eke, 2015, p. 755).

The structure and staffing of PAPC was made up of a majority of state security officials and this clearly shows that the program prioritized security stabilization over human capital development challenges in region (Akinwale, 2010, p. 206). A Niger Delta scholar posits that even though PAPC was composed of state security officials, they were not knowledgeable about DDR and its implementation as they were not experts in the field. This shows that the planning processes did not completely take into consideration the recommendations of TCND to set up a reliable and independent DDR institution that will oversee the planning and implementation of the program⁷⁷. The planning committee embodies the Nigerian version of a DDR institution, whereas, creating an independent legal institution would have allowed for qualified and knowledgeable experts to lead the establishment who would have been able to strategically plan a well-coordinated, inclusive, and sustainable DDR program rather than the planning characterized by non-experts in the field⁷⁸.

In November 2009 PAPC was subdivided into five committees. This came because of the recognized challenges and delays in implementing all the clauses of the post-Amnesty plan. Just like other institutions in the country, PAPC and its members also engaged in some corrupt

⁷⁶ Respondent 31, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁷⁷ Respondent 38, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁷⁸ Ibid 38, July 2018, Nigeria.

practices (Inuwa, 2017, pp. 187-189). The different committees that were set up were criticized for alleged fraud and embezzlement. As a result of the allegation of fraud and mismanagement by the PAPC, the head of the Committee General Abba was sacked, and the committee was dissolved by President Jonathan who took office after the death of his Predecessor. Some authors have argued that terminating the committee was kind of a score that President Goodluck Jonathan wanted to settle with the Northern political elites who had challenged his ascension to power (Inuwa, 2017, pp. 187-189). Following this circumstance, a widespread violent protest was organized by ex-militants in and around Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Yenagoa and Bayelsa State. The protest came because of frustrations which centered around them not receiving their monthly amnesty stipends which was promised to them as well as not being included on the list of training opportunities⁷⁹. Part of the factors that hindered the process was the illness and death of President Yar'Adua.

A panel of eight people in January 2010, chaired by reputable Ijaw Civil Society actors, public personalities and ex-militants of subcommittees of the PAPC, presented a critical look at the preliminary plan of the program. It was realized that a huge amount of money was budgeted as charges for consultants involved in training and reorientation (Abazie-Humphrey, 2014, p. 4). The group also noted that psychological counselling was not relevant as vulnerable groups such as women who had lost husbands, children who had lost their parents and homes and internally displaced young people were not included in the program (Folami, 2016, p.2). This is even though they were the ones who were the most traumatized and affected by the armed conflict and militancy. The process was marred by inadequacies in terms of the content of the training which only reflected fields related to trade and agriculture. These training provisions did not consider the inclusion of ex-militants in prestigious sectors such as the oil and gas industry (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010, p. 15).

In addition, the planning committee did not ensure the regular payment of allowance to ex-militants. Address issues related to inequalities in the payment among ex militant leaders and their soldiers. There was also limited access to rehabilitation training and employment and there was an unwillingness to resolve the political struggles between the people of the region. Yet, there was interest in setting up more institutions with politically motivated staffing in charge of

⁷⁹ Ibid 38, July 2018, Nigeria.

the design, coordination and implementation of the program irrespective of the fact that everyone was pursuing their own separate agenda⁸⁰.

While amnesty has encouraged alternative conflict resolution approaches and stabilization of the Niger Delta, its planning and implementation is unsatisfactory and not able to prevent sustained latent armed conflict in the region (Agbiboa, 2015, p. 390).

5.5 The Implementation Process of the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR Program

The Amnesty program is a part of the Federal government's determination and desire to address the agitations and violence in the Niger Delta region, with the aim of disarming, rehabilitating and reintegrating militants into their communities as a means to tackle the challenges facing the region (Touitou & Ojunta, 2016, p. 85). After due consultation with the Council of States and accepting the recommendations of the PPAD, on 25 June 2009, the Late President of Nigeria declared amnesty to the Niger Delta militants (Sahara Reporters, 2009). The proclamation laid the foundation for the establishment of the Post-Amnesty Program (PAP) in October 2009. Following this, the Government appointed a Special Adviser on the Niger Delta and PAP Chairman to lead the implementation of the amnesty and DDR (Ebiede, 2017, p. 20). The President granted unconditional pardon to all persons who have directly or indirectly involved in militancy in the region. In his speech, he noted that

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

The implementation of the amnesty was carried out in three predominant phases including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The objectives and deliverables of the program were as follows: (1) A disarmament phase to take place between 6 August 2009 and 4 October 2009 and to include the collection of biometric data; (2) A demobilization and rehabilitation phase to last six to 12 months and to include the provision of, among other things, counselling and career guidance for the participants; (3) A reintegration phase to last up to five years and

⁸⁰ Respondent 33, July 2018, Nigeria.

to include the provision of, among other things, occupational training and microcredits for the participants (Agbiboa, 2015, p. 401).

5.5.1 The Disarmament Phase

Disarmament⁸¹ of armed militants was the first phase of the implementation. During this period, the militants accepted the offer and began coming out of hiding to surrender their arms and ammunition to the government through the peace committee set up to coordinate the program (Touitou & Ojunta, 2016, p. 85). It was a 60 days process that started from 6 August to 4 October with the collection of arms and ammunitions. Militants were required to present themselves at the designated centers, drop their arms and ammunitions, take an oath of renunciation of armed violence and receive presidential and unconditional pardon and then proceed to register for rehabilitation and reintegration (Agbiboa, 2015, p. 401). During this period, about 26,000 male and 133 female militants surrendered their weapons and registered in the program (I. Udoh, 2013, p. 67). It was reported that a total of “287,445 rounds of ammunition, 3,155 magazines, 1,090 dynamite caps, 763 explosives, and 18 gun boats, communication gadgets, bullet-proof vests, and tear gas equipment” were handed over by the militants (Ebiede, 2017, p. 20; I. Udoh, 2013). The military oversaw the collection and destruction of the weapons that were surrendered by the militants⁸². It was revealed that during the first phase of the disarmament, approximately 26,358 ex-militants accepted the Amnesty offer (first phase – 20,192 militants representing those that accepted the offer on or before 4th October 2009, while during the second phase of the Amnesty Program that took place in November 2010, 6,616 militants accepted the offer post 4 October 2009 (Austine & Sunday, 2013, p. 133). Six Niger Delta states including Edo, Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom and Cross River had selected centers to submit the arms and ammunitions and register militants (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010, p. 13).

A Niger Delta scholar argued that even though several arms and ammunitions were submitted by armed militants, there was no audit to verify if there was complete disarmament in the region. He also noted that in normal UNIDDR practice, when arms and weapons are submitted, they are classified, registered and investigation is made on routes through which the arms were possessed in order to prevent further arms circulation in the region. The scholar claimed that

⁸¹ According to the UN (2014, p. 25), disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programs.

⁸² Respondent 04, July 2018, Nigeria.

after disarming the militants, there were supposed to be a public destruction of the weapons collected. Unfortunately, none of these procedures were ensured or took place because to him, the interest of the government was security stabilization to allow the proper flow of oil. This to him, raises a huge problem as recent events and incidents portray that the region is still in possession of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs)⁸³. The submission of arms and ammunitions by armed militants marked the reduction of violence and militant activities including attacks on oil facilities, kidnapping, and hostage-taking, and the increase in oil production (Akinwale, 2010).

The collection of arms from militants was done in different categories. The central category that the government recommended was the disposition of arms by group leaders and their members, based on one man, one weapon, to the JTF members in the creeks where they surrendered (Oluwaniyi , 2011, p. 20). Oluwaniyi (2011) further accounted that the number of militants that presumably handed in arms was more than the total number of weapons disposed. He equally noted that his empirical data revealed that the figures of total beneficiaries exceeded the number of genuine militants as those who joined the program were motivated by the incentives they were provided. Elaborating on the general conduct of the disarmament process and the number of weapons handed in, Austin and Sunday (Austine & Sunday, 2013) as well accounted that the 1,798 rifles, 1981 different types of guns, 70 RPGs, 159 Pistols, one spear and six cannons that were submitted to the military are definitely very low as compared to the 26,358 militants that registered for the amnesty program (p.134).

Indeed, the Bayelsa state government led by Timpre Sylvia, ran the second category of the disarmament. This was done publicly with a live broadcast by the media on how militants were disarmed. During this phase, prominent militant camp groups like Ebikabowei Victor Ben's (aka Boyloaf) group, merged in Yenagoa in where the disarmament took place. These groups handed in about 95,970 live ammunition, 520 rifles, and 14 gunboats during this phase (Oluwaniyi, 2011, p. 21). Camp groups were required to drop the weapons in their communities and spaces of operation. The disarmed ex-militants were later sent in batches for reorientation that lasted for at least four weeks. At the end of the reorientation, they selected a skill area in which they would receive three to eighteen months of training during the reintegration phase (I. Udoh, 2013, p. 67).

⁸³ Respondent 01, July 2018, Nigeria.

A central argument that runs through literature is that militants kept the most sophisticated weapons and only surrendered a small portion of the arms in their possession because of the mistrust in the government's genuine commitment to the amnesty offer (Agbibo, 2015, p. 401).

5.5.2 The Demobilisation Phase

The second phase of the DDR program was the demobilization⁸⁴ of ex-militants which took place at Obubra, Cross River State (Ebiede, 2017, p. 20). This phase ended on 24 September 2011. This was characterized by different activities such as verification and documentation, transformational training, peacebuilding and conflict resolution training, counselling and career guidance, wellness assessment, reintegration classification and education and vocational placement (Austine & Sunday, 2013, p. 133). This process involved biometric data capturing, certification of eligibility for benefits, allocations of cards, receipts of reinsertion allowances, and preparation for full demobilisation⁸⁵. Also, ex-militants were also reoriented, and prepared for the next phase of the program that is reintegration. Official records from the PAP revealed that 23,358 ex-militants were successfully demobilized between June 2010 and December 2011 (Joab-Peterside et al, 2012, p. 11). Further account from the Special Adviser of the Amnesty Program, recorded that between June 2010 and May 2011, 15,434 people had participated in the training program offered (Agbibo, 2015, pp. 401-402).

Akinwale (2010) argued that some rehabilitation centers were offered for the second stage of demobilization which was designed to meet training needs of the ex-militants. Due to logistical challenges to take in the total number of ex-militants at once in the camp, trainings were given in batches. Ex-militants were divided into groups due to the capacity of the centers. An NGO that participated in the process recounted that each batch would spend four weeks in the rehabilitation program and during this period, they had re-orientation, counseling and moral/Spiritual regeneration sessions⁸⁶. The head of the NGO that was involved in conflict transformation process observed that, the demobilization process was done in a haphazard manner. He further noted that there was little or no coordination as there were several service providers with everyone running their own show. According to him, the needs and interests of

⁸⁴ Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion (United Nations, 2014, p. 25).

⁸⁵ Respondents 09 and 06, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁸⁶ Respondent 14, July 2018, Nigeria.

the demobilized ex-militants were not the priority, it was all about organizations competing among each other to get more contracts from OSAPND. In discussing how business was conducted at the centers, he revealed that there was no amount of professionalism as many service providers in the camp were contracted along partisan and neopatrimonial lines. He also indicated that participants were not classified according to groups and needs i.e. age, sex and education etc. No separate logistics were made for ex-militants that were less than 18 years as young boys and girls were all mixed together. He described the demobilization camp as a “devils’ workshop”⁸⁷. Talking about the demobilization process, an NGO worker that took part in the demobilization phase, indicated that one of the major challenges of the program was miscommunication between the trainers at the camp and the ex-militants. According to her accounts, many militants were unable to understand the different trainers especially international experts that were brought in as they could neither understand their accent nor the advanced English that was spoken to them. She further noted that if proper classification of militants were done, it would have been discovered that a huge majority of ex-militants were uneducated. Therefore, it was important to bring local trainers who could speak the language of the militant⁸⁸.

Ex-militants identified 10 sectors of career aspirations including Oil/Gas, maritime services, Fabrication and welding Technology, Exploration and Production and Processing Engineering. Others indicated interest to go back to school to further their education (Abazie-Humphrey, 2014, p. 2). Just after the two weeks demobilization at Obubra, the names of ex-militants were submitted to the OSAPND and arrangements were made to start with the reintegration process (Oluwaniyi, 2014, p. 44).

5.5.3 The Reintegration Phase

Reintegration⁸⁹ of militants happens to be the most significant phase of the DDR process as its implementation shapes the type of peace outcome. Reintegration is critical in helping ex-militants, victims of violence, and communities affected by such violence return to normal and productive lives (Oluwaniyi, 2018, p. 8). It equally entails the empowerment of ex-militants

⁸⁷ Respondent 29, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁸⁸ Respondent 31, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁸⁹ Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility and often necessitates long-term external assistance (United Nations, 2014, p. 25).

through socio- economic and political development. Ex-militants were selected by various training institutions based on their field of interest. (Oluwaniyi, 2011, p. 44). The reintegration phase involved re-insertion, reconciliation, rehabilitation and resettlement involving skill acquisition, job placement and micro-finance support for small scale businesses (Akpan & Ering, 2010, p. 147). To ensure that ex-militants receive an income while pursuing their educational and vocational training, the government decided to put them on a month stipend of N65, 000 equivalent to UDS400 (Agbiboa, 2015, p. 402; Osah, 2016). Six reintegration camps were planned in the Amnesty Roadmap. Unfortunately, out of the 6 selected camps, only the Obubra camp was functional (Akpan & Ering, 2010, pp. 147-148; I. Udoh, 2013). Due to logistical challenges for the camp to accommodate all the ex-militants at once, ex-militants were divided into batches as the camp could only host 1000-1500 participants at a time (Akpan & Ering, 2010, pp. 147-148). However, due to incidents where some ex-militants left the training camps and harassed the local community, the size of the batches were further reduced to 600 to better manage the participants (Davidheiser & Nyiayaana, 2011, p. 56). The first phase of the process was the reorientation and rehabilitation of ex-militants while the second phase was training sessions on intensive non-violence transformation and took a minimum of 14 days per batch (Akpan & Ering, 2010, pp. 147-148).

Ex-militants were given the opportunity to get vocational training and further their education. These trainings were to empower the transformed militants for employment opportunities in the labor market (Agbiboa, 2015). Those who undertook vocational training, were trained in fields like agriculture, agro allied processing, transportation, cold-room management, information and communication technology, maritime services, building and construction professionals, oil and gas, and environment and sanitation management. Ex-militants whose interests were to continue their studies were given the opportunity to pursue their education in disciplines such as law, political science, business management, mass communication, international relations, public administration, medicine, engineering, applied sciences, building and construction, and information and communications technology (Ebiede, 2017, p. 21).

By December 2011, 7556 ex-militants were placed in skills acquisition training centers in 33 training locations within Nigeria. They were trained both at home and abroad. Some of the foreign countries where ex-militants were enrolled included South Africa, The United States, Russia, Israel, Poland, India, Cyprus, Ghana, United Arab Emirates, the Philippines, Malaysia, Trinidad and Tobago, France, Italy, and United kingdom etc. (Ushie, 2013, p. 34; Punch, 2018). According to official accounts from the Amnesty office, 17,323 ex-militants have been trained

and it was envisaged that by the end of 2018, 12,677 ex-militants were supposed to complete their training (Ebiede, 2017, p. 22). One of the officials interviewed for this study argued that such positive figures indicate that the training element of the program have had an impact on human capacity development in the Niger Delta. He further highlighted that those who so far have been trained have secured employment in various vocational activities⁹⁰. A recent report from the government states that, the program succeeded to fully reintegrate over 13,000 ex-militants into the society (Sowole, 2019). Yet, the position of some ex-militants that were interviewed, contradicts the views of the state as some of them complained that they have not gone for training. Those who completed their vocational training and education also reported they were not able to find jobs⁹¹. Additionally, the few who managed to get jobs, got employed only on a temporary basis. Fields such as commercial piloting, marine technology, pipeline welding, underwater welding, ocean diving, crane operations, oil drilling, automobile technology, fish farming and entrepreneurship, where some ex-militants completed training are fields where it has proven difficult to gain employment opportunities⁹². This is one of the challenges which relates to the perspective of a Niger Delta scholar who argued that the training component comprised of “skills mismatch”. To him, ex-militants were not given appropriate orientation on the job market and the fields that are easily employable during the career fair sessions at the Obubra camp. This is connected to the nature and character of the type of institutions that were contracted by the government to provide services, as they were more interested about their agendas, priorities and interest and not that of the ex-militants⁹³. However, according to the narratives of the ex-militants, they continue to survive through their engagement in illegitimate economic activities as educational and vocational training has not succeeded to integrate them into long-term employment in different sectors of the economy⁹⁴. A few of the ex-militants that showed interest in the entrepreneurial sector, have not been able to start up their own small scale businesses or engage in the sector because money that was budgeted to finance and buy their start-up material was either misappropriated or embezzled by government officials, the elites and those who ran the program⁹⁵. Corruption characterized the entire content of the reintegration process of the program. Initially at the conception of the program, the government had projected that the entire NDA and DDR program would cost approximately USD 361 million. However, in 2011, the yearly budget for the program was

⁹⁰ Respondent 16, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁹¹ Respondents 05 and 08, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁹² Respondents 06 and 08, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁹³ Respondent 40, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁹⁴ Respondents 07 and 09, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁹⁵ Respondents 06 and 08, July 2018, Nigeria.

increased. This change of tides was driven by the administration of President Goodluck that initiated a more extensive educational program for ex-militants and other beneficiaries (Ebiede, 2017, p. 22). Below is a projection of the yearly budget of the program.

Table 5. 1: NDA and DDR Program Budget Allocation (2009-2018)

| Year | Amount budgeted in USD |
|------|------------------------|
| 2009 | 141 million |
| 2011 | 532 million |
| 2012 | 479 million |
| 2013 | 428 million |
| 2014 | 408 million |
| 2015 | 379 million |
| 2016 | 281 million |
| 2017 | 213 million |
| 2018 | 213 million |

Source: Author’s compilation from varied sources

The new Special Adviser of the Amnesty Program (SAAP) Prof. Charles Dokubo, on 13 March 2018, established a committee led by Prof. Ayibaemi Spiff to review operations of the Amnesty program. In their findings, the Committee found out that out of the five vocation/reintegration centers the OSAPND was to construct, only two were completed in Ondo and Bayelsa states and even these two were still not operational. Possible reasons include the inability of the Amnesty Office to pay the total amount of contracts; lack of proper supervision and demand for variations by some contractors (OSAPND, 2019). Furthermore, the Committee discovered that out of the 30,000 beneficiaries of the program, 11,297 ex-militants are still to get vocational or formal educational placements (OSAPND, 2019; Vanguard, 2019). Following the outrageous invoices that the office received to pay outstanding tuition fees and stipends for students, the Committee in its investigation revealed that out of 1,061 beneficiaries for the educational programs for the 2017/2018 academic year, only 314 existed on the OSAPND’s database (OSAPND, 2019). Thus, such corrupt practices have had a negative impact on the outcome of the project.

5.6 Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR Process: A Shift from a Neoliberal Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) Principles to a Neopatrimonial DDR Practice

The early 1990s saw a shift in peacekeeping spearheaded by the UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's 'An Agenda for Peace' with DDR becoming a predominant concern in this respect (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). DDR programs have been carried out as a part of internationally mandated peacebuilding operations responding to civil war or some other form of intrastate violence (Schulhofer-Wohl & Sambanis, 2010). Traditionally, DDR operates as part of a broader peace process that includes other socioeconomic, political, and security reforms (United Nations, 2014, p. 24). In such circumstances, the key aim of the DDR process is to contribute to security and stability in post conflict settings so that recovery and development can start (UNDDR Resource Centre, 2005). This implies that planning, design, and implementation programs are expected to be within the wider recovery and development framework (Steenken, 2017, p. 16). These interventions have been championed by the UN particularly the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) and the World Bank, together with other international donors and multilateral agencies to secure the peace in the aftermath of war (Muggah, 2005, p. 239; Rufer, 2005, p. 7). These institutions place emphasis on establishing liberal values such as the protection of individual rights, rule of law, a free market economy and democracy as well as building a liberal state in war-torn societies (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2007; Paris, 1997, p. 4). Hence, DDR programs are an integral part of a global project of neoliberal peacebuilding to promote the consolidation and stabilization of fragile ceasefire and peace agreements with the goal to ensure human rights, the establishment of democratic institutions and a market economy as preconditions for a sustainable liberal peace (Paris, 2004, p. 152; Rufer, 2005). To ensure the effective implementation of DDR, the UN in December 2006 introduced standardized templates and comprehensive best practices for DDR articulated as the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) (Muggah, 2005, p. 244). The IDDRS provides direction and guidance to actors preparing, implementing and supporting DDR programs (United Nations, 2014, p. 13). Against this backdrop, there are five overarching principles that guide the UN approach to DDR including: people centered; flexible, transparent and accountable; nationally owned; integrated; and well planned (United Nations, 2014, p. 26). I argue that the IDDRS serves as guiding principles for the neoliberal peace doctrines. In this vein, using the above five principles, this section will look at the extent to which the DDR process in the Niger Delta comply in relation to the UN principles as defined in the IDDRS. The objective is to show the contractions of the

DDR process in the Niger Delta with the government shifting positions from a neoliberal IDDRS doctrine to a neopatrimonial DDR practice.

5.6.1 From a people centered approach to a patron-client driven approach

According to the IDDRS, DDR is expected to be people centered. This approach emphasizes an all-inclusive DDR process void of discrimination in terms of gender, age, religion, ethnicity and political affiliation (United Nations, 2014, p. 26). The people centered approach stresses the importance of respect of human rights and humanitarian law in implementing DDR programs (Berdal & Ucko, 2013). Neoliberal values such as equality and fairness are key in the process. It places priority on the needs of the participants and beneficiaries and with a focus on sensitive individual case handling (based on gender, age and physical abilities) instead of a group approach (Molly, 2011, p. 119). In the case of the Niger Delta, the DDR process was government driven from a patron-client perspective (Okonofua, 2016, p. 5). The argument is that the primary objective of the state at the time was not governance but security as it wanted to quickly disarm the militants and allow the control of oil. This pushed a narrow elite of varied interests who for years have benefited from the rentier state to influence the status quo (Molly, 2011, p. 119). Also, the government was pressured by the demands of the international community particularly oil capitalist partners to respond to the disruption on the world oil market stability perpetrated by militia activities in the Niger Delta (Tantua & Kamruzzaman, 2016, pp. 2-3). The government however picked and chose what was easy at the time to be achieved. The interest was to quickly disarm the militants and allow the production of oil. Commenting on the conduct of the DDR process at Obubra camp, an NGO expert in the Niger Delta whose organization was part of the service providers, highlighted that the needs of beneficiaries were not provided on an individual basis, instead, the beneficiaries were all put under one cluster (group). The program was gender insensitive as women, men and children were all kept in the same camp and the process was haphazardly done because of the urgency to achieve short-term conflict reduction to allow a stabilization the region (Ikelegbe, 2010, p. 72). Furthermore, data from the field work showed that the issue of human security was far-fetched in the process. Thus, implementing the program from a patron-client practice creates challenges to evaluate the prospect of the program and even the level of engagement.

5.6.2 From a flexible, transparent and accountable doctrine to a non-transparent and unaccountable DDR process

Within the context of international standards of transparency and accountability and IDDRS, the program implementers are expected to promote and observe the liberal culture of accountability and transparency in information as well as financial matters to ensure proper efficiency (United Nations, 2014, pp. 27-28). Implementers are expected to be accountable to partners, beneficiaries and participants. However, such values are absent and obscured in Nigeria due to the high level of corruption that permeates the political, economic and social spheres particularly the oil industry in the country (Itodo & O'Regan, 2018). In implementing the DDR in the Niger Delta, the government of Nigeria has shown a high level of adaptability to shifting circumstances. Compliance to the IDDRS standard was obscured, as the programs were not adapted to fit the region's needs. In other words, they did not suit the realities on the ground to address fragile situations in the region⁹⁶. A holistic analysis of both the conflict and security dynamics were neglected as concerns were more focused on security dynamics. In addition, proper reporting of the process was absent as media presence was highly restricted by the state and its elites, with very little monitoring and evaluation⁹⁷. Observation from the field revealed that information was distorted at the bottom levels. Ex-militants did not really understand the meaning of amnesty. Their interpretation of the program was more economic. This shows that they were not properly educated. This gap in communication is due to the fact there was no inclusive dialogue including all parties. Agreements were brokered mostly between top commanders and the government and the ex-militants were only informed by their commander on the outcome⁹⁸. In this regard, they had no role to play in the process. The entire process was characterized by a high degree of corruption related to the misappropriation of funds for the program (Ikelegbe & Onokerhoraye, 2016, p. 12). There were extensive payments and patronage involved in the process as well as fake contracts awarded to non-accredited institutions (Oluwaniyi, 2011, p. 51). The fact that political patronage and material benefits were offered through the award of fake contracts to non-accredited institutions by various (in) formal actors also contributed to obscure the prospects of the program to effectively deliver (Tantua & Kamruzzaman, 2016, p. 9). Such behaviors provided the avenue for the state and its elites along with petro-capitalist allies to still maintain their monopoly over oil governance, and for some 'militia leaders' to bargain and negotiate with the authority often motivated by self-

⁹⁶ Respondent 37, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁹⁷ Respondent 14, July 2018, Nigeria.

⁹⁸ Respondents 06, 07, 09, July 2018, Nigeria.

interest (Barma, 2012; Folami, 2016, p. 6; Schultze-Kraft, 2017, p. 619). It indicates that the Nigerian state prioritized the state, its institutions, and state elites, more than people in the Niger Delta (Richmond, 2005, p. 215). Given the above, to adhere fully to such a principle would have meant that corruption would be minimized and checked. Since the state is built on patronage, curtailing transparency and accountability would ensure that checks and balances are avoided (Ugwuanyi, Nworji, & Oruebuor, 2015, p. 15). Thus, such an approach does not only portray the agency of the state but highlights the existence and functioning of various patronage and clientele networks among state, MNOCs and militia leaders. This has created fragility in the program and is possibly the reason why the program has not fully delivered its outcome.

5.6.3 Nationally Owned

Looking through the lens of IDDRS guidelines, implies genuine national ownership that includes the participation of a wide range of state and non-state actors at the national, regional, and local levels, involving NGOs and CSOs (UNSC, 2006, pp. 9-10). Although the Niger Delta process was nationally owned, it was government driven therefore community involvement and engagement was very superficial (Donais, 2009; Jerve, 2002). The process left out non-state actors and the government insisted on minimum foreign interference right to the point of rejecting observation or relevant expert support (Molly, 2011, p. 122). Whereas, the IDDRS lists inclusive national framework (bringing together a broad spectrum as society to include the former militias, government, civil society, private sector, as well as regional and international guarantors of the peace process) as key to positive outcomes (UN IAWG on DDR, 2006). Against this background, post-liberal peacebuilding, does not only place the responsibility on the government but on the broader community, which should be included and allowed to provide input at all stages of the process (UN IAWG on DDR, 2006). As mentioned earlier, the state embraced the first two phases i.e. disarmament and demobilization and brought in NGOs and CSOs during the reintegration process. The process failed to include the local. National ownership in the Nigerian context was in theory (i.e. neoliberal) but, the kind of ownership that took place in practice was patrimonial (Karbo, 2012, p. 4). This is possibly why the government refers to the program as home grown (OSAPND, 2019). A full representation of all actors in the process would have been detrimental to the states neopatrimonial character as this would have implied opening access to other groups to gain access to the resources as well as ensured accountability (North et al., 2011, p. 9). Using such a strategy undermined critical levels of initiation and strategy, which led to an unsustainable application of the concepts (Mackuliaková,

2013). Thus, there was need to shift position to ensure that the full engagement of national actors in the planning, design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation is limited access to certain groups.

In addition, the DDR is essentially a top-down project and contributes to a wider project of securing legitimate control of forces from above which is key to neoliberal forms of power and governability (Muggah, 2008, pp. 2-3). The method reinforced the influence and control of the national elites deviating the goals of the program and the outcome of the process (Martin & Moser, 2012). The potential lack of political will of the Nigerian government to include local voices in peacebuilding and inclination of the elites to pursue self-interest and the needs of their allies and political objectives has limited the program's success (Van Brabant, 2010). This relates to the reason why after the disarmament and demobilization stages, the reintegration phase took a while to start (Oluwaniyi, 2018, p. 11). The nationally owned process in Nigeria remains on the level of government/elite ownership instead of being emancipatory and enabling a wider participation (Paris, 2002; Thiessen, 2011, p. 121). The government failed to apply the program the way in which it has been prescribed by the IDDRS. This is because, a neoprimonial approach was more suitable for the government because it worked as a political tool from the top which inherently was contradictory to the neoliberal practices of a DDR program. Bending the rules in implementing the DDR from a clientele perspective allows the state to leverage more control over the process and failed in delivering a longer-term reduction of violence (Ikoh & Ukpog, 2013, p. 146). Hence, these representations show the paradox that the DDR process in the Niger Delta co-opted practices that were unfit for the realities on the ground as well as its practical success are contradictory. All these have increased in complexity as new threats and circumstances emerge.

5.6.4 From an Integrated IDDRS Norm to a non-integrated approach

A core focus of international intervention of DDR is to enhance maximum collaborations of multifaceted interventions which could address the complexities that exist in most post-conflict settings (Molly, 2011, p. 123; World Bank, 2018). This means the program needs to be coherent, inclusive and should emphasize on programs related to recovery and the rule of law (United Nations, 2014, pp. 29-30). Emphasis is placed on institutional; sectorial, chronological; national and regional integration. Concerning institutional integration, there was not much evidence, which showed that the entrusted amnesty institutions worked in an integrated manner, although there was some sort of bricolage among those institutions. It was realized that many of the

institutions came with their agendas, priorities, and views on how the program should be implemented. Instead of working in synergy to complement each other, the institutions finally end up competing among themselves creating a more fragile and complex environment⁹⁹. In addition, many of the institutions lacked the capacity to carry out the reintegration process. Official accounts have noted that the program was solely funded by the Nigerian government¹⁰⁰. One justification for self-funding as noted by some state officials was to restrict the influence of international donors, which usually come with their agendas, priorities and doctrines imposed on the state. As such, the state did not want any funding that would come with conditions¹⁰¹. Thus, they preferred to fund the program and run it from a patrimonial perspective. Proper integration would ensure short-term security stabilization as well as long-term recovery so that development can begin (Martin & Moser, 2012). The Niger Delta case was rather contradictory, and it gave more preference to security stabilization than long-term recovery and development¹⁰². Also, at the national and regional level, integration was more top-down instead of a blend of both top-down and bottom-up approach (Campbell, 2011, p. 39). No consultations were made with local communities. In fact, local chiefs and elders were completely sidelined in the entire process¹⁰³. Relating to the issues of reintegration, the program left the communities and ex-militias even more economically disintegrated as many of them were unable to get jobs in their various fields of training and also because of the program's incentive structure (Ebiede, 2018, pp. 113-114). Although the program helped to end overt violence and established basic security and order, the integrated approach would have broken the command and control structures of militias. Instead, they were given more legitimacy, and this could be a future potential spoiler (de Vries & Wiegink, 2011, pp. 39-41). An integrated approach would have contributed to restore public security, law and order in the region (Berdal & Ucko, 2013).

5.6.5 From a well-planned IDDRS to a haphazard DDR

The guidelines of the IDDRS requires that DDR is well planned to guarantee quality in the delivery of services. The DDR process in the Niger Delta was conducted in a fractured way, resulting from poor coordination (Sayne, 2013, p. 4). Just like in Mozambique, in certain respects in the Niger Delta DDR, there was an element of competition between implementing actors that often seemed to prelude coordination (Alden, 2002, p. 348). The process requires

⁹⁹ Respondent 038, July 2018, Nigeria.

¹⁰⁰ Respondents 17, 027, July 2018, Nigeria.

¹⁰¹ Respondent 27, July 2018, Nigeria.

¹⁰² Respondent 22, July 2018, Nigeria.

¹⁰³ Respondents 10, 11, 15, 20, 21, July 2018, Nigeria.

prioritizing on issues related to safety; security; coordination; assessment, monitoring and evaluation; information and sensitization; and a transition and exit strategy (United Nations, 2014, p. 30). As of today, the state is still groping with the challenges of an exit strategy for the program due to poor timely planning and budgeting on reintegration from the very beginning of the DDR process (Financial Times, 2016). Coupled with this was the barriers to early integration, prioritization and a systematic way of impact assessment resulting in a poor planning process surrounding the economic, social/psychosocial, and political and security reintegration of ex-combatant (UN, 2014, p. 158). That is why any attempt to exit the program has been met with violent attacks by ex-militants (Africa News, 2016; Reuters, 2017).

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter offered a critical reflection on the Amnesty and DDR program established in 2009 by the Nigerian Government. It examined the successes and failures of the program as a peacebuilding strategy. Empirical evidence showed that it was conceived, negotiated, planned and implemented as a minimalist (security stabilization) approach instead of a maximalist (integrated development and security stabilization) approach. Empirical evidence further shows that it was not an integrated initiative as it excluded certain factions of the Niger Delta community such as children, women, other community members and the international community who have been affected in one way or the other by the conflict. Both data and literature revealed that the program did not address the wider socio-economic grievances. These include the lack of social development in local oil communities, environmental pollution and the exclusion of local communities from the governance of oil production in the Niger Delta region. Thus, the initiative was a top-down approach. This is part of the reason for the reemergence of violence in the region in 2016 by new armed groups. The nature of conceptualization, negotiation, planning and implementation determined the possible limitations and impact of the program. Finally, an analysis of the socio-political contradictions that undermined the effectiveness and credibility of the program was discussed. This analysis is situated within the political economy framework.

CHAPTER SIX

GENERAL CONCLUSION

6 Introduction

The key objective of this chapter is to show the validity of the research question or rather, the extent to which the research has achieved its aim of answering the principal research question. The chapter underlines the theoretical and empirical contributions in the field of political economy and DDR, the theoretical and empirical literature on the Niger Delta conflict, peacebuilding as well as elements of political economy such as interest, institutions and incentives and the Nigerian state. Furthermore, the chapter illuminates key relevant and significant concerns and potential areas of future research on the Niger Delta. The first part of the chapter discusses and answers the principal research question of the dissertation as well as the primary empirical findings connected to the research question. The second part summarizes the theoretical and empirical contributions of the dissertation while the last part concludes by proposing some key aspects that would be significant for further research in the Niger Delta.

6.1 Main Research Questions and Empirical Findings

This thesis is an analytical case study that critically interrogates the extent to which the 2009 Federal Government Amnesty and DDR program in the Niger Delta has been implemented as a political economy approach. The main research question for this thesis was: ‘how has the political economy shaped the implementation of the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR Program and its prospect for sustainable peace in the region? Specifically, how have elements of political economy such as interests, incentives and institutions helped or hindered the peacebuilding goal of the Amnesty Program?’

In this vein, empirical evidence revealed that the program was guided by varying agendas, perspectives, priorities, and perceptions of the conditions of conflict which resulted in security versus development agendas for the NDA and DDR program (Inuwa, 2017, p. 288). A maximalist DDR approach was proposed by the TCND to the government. The TCND maximalist DDR perspective was believed to concurrently tackle the fundamental security problem of the region within a wider socio-economic transformation context (Inuwa, 2017, p. 288). From a maximalist perspective, “the objective of the DDR process is to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict environments so that recovery and development can begin” (Steenken, 2017, p. 21). A maximalist DDR ensures that national capacity is built to facilitate the reintegration of ex-combatants and support communities receiving ex-combatants to work

for their peaceful and sustainable reintegration (Jennings, 2008, p. 6). Nevertheless, the NDA and DDR program was designed and implemented as a minimalist over a maximalist agenda. The minimalist approach was a short-term agenda that focused on the security stabilization of the ex-militants instead of a maximalist approach that envisioned a holistic long-term security stabilization and development of the region. This was not an oversight, rather, the political economy framework influenced the approach of the government to choose a minimalist strategy over a maximalist. Basically, political economy elements such as interests, institutions and incentives influenced the strategies that were deployed for minimalist over maximalist strategies. Research evidence and empirical literature showed that the use of a short-term agenda rather than a long-term and sustainable implementation of the DDR program can be analyzed from the lens of the internal political economy of the militias and from the perspective of the wider political economy of the Nigerian State.

From the perspective of the internal political economy of the youth militia groups, I argue that the behavior and activities of armed militants disrupting oil production in the Niger Delta sparked the government to opt for a minimalist short-term approach. The demands of the militias competing fiercely to control and distribute oil assets, and emancipating for environmental justice, and infrastructural development pressured the government to respond with a quick fix minimalist approach (Imongan & kelegbe, 2016, p. 63). It is this internal political economy among the militia groups where militia youth continued to harass and abduct expatriate workers and even citizens in the Niger Delta region precipitated the government to seek a minimalist agenda which dealt with security stabilization of the region. In addition, the findings observed that the core cause of the conflict is the deprivation of the poor communities who are not benefiting from the dividends of oil proceeds. The desire to control resources transformed into feelings of deprivation, frustration and discontent of the poor communities and militant youth. This hastened tensions that resulted in out blown violence and militancy in the entire region (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004, pp. 564-565). This led to wanton destruction of lives and properties with a very negative implications on the oil sector and the country's economy (Osagie, Funmilayo, Adegoke, & Ezeani, 2010, p. 84). Thus, the magnitude of antagonistic events, motives, purposes, behaviors, and impulses of the internal PE of militias compelled the government to choose a minimalist approach which would deal with the immediate security and stability concerns of the region.

In a similar vein, the wider political economy of the Nigerian State motivated the government's option for a minimalist DDR over a maximalist strategy. Evidence has shown that a core

characteristic of the wider political economy of the Nigerian State is its rent seeking nature where institutions are fragmented and the few (composed of the ruling class and governing elites) reap the benefits of resource abundance at the expense of others (Elsenhans, 1984; Yates, 1996). As a rentier state, governing elites make policy decisions and build institutional arrangements in and around the oil sector (Barma, 2014, p. 257). The wider political economy of Nigeria is comprised of political elites who have access to the oil economy and revenue in the absence of institutional checks and balances on their accountability. The rentier seeking behavior of the elites is predatory to the entire economy as rents are generated and distributed via patronage networks (Auty, 2010, p. 412). A rent seeking state is characterized by a disproportionate or inequitable distribution of resources whether abundance or scarcity. This is appropriate with the disaggregating rentier effect on how governments generate and distribute resource rents (Barma, 2014, pp. 257-258). Such is evident in the wider political economy of the Nigerian State where rent seeking features prevail with disproportionate distribution of resources over equitable distribution of resources.

Moreover, evidence from this case study revealed that in a rentier state like Nigeria, the generation and distribution of resources is very exclusive. This is buttressed by North et al. (2011) who have discussed issues of how natural states or low access order societies (LAOs) have their violence capacity 'dispersed among government organizations, such as police, secret security, and branches of the military, each with a way to extract rents through corruption or monopolies' (p.12). This is connected to Fukuyama's (2014) variation between liberal democratic and patrimonial orders where natural states access to organizations is limited to elite groups and the capability to use violence is dispersed among a number of elites that form a dominant coalition that lies on personal relationships and limits the access of others to both public and private institutions (Schultze-Kraft, 2018b, p. 481-482). The political economy analysis gives a deeper appreciation of how the State Security institution in limited order societies engage in economic and political activities in order to survive from the impact of economic downturn. Findings showed that in implementing the NDA and DDR, the Nigerian state used monopolies and deployed some institutions like the army, police and JTF to suppress dissent by the militias. Looking at the wider political economy of the Nigerian State, it is apparent that the rent seeking nature will not allow access to other members of the society. This implies that the rentier nature of the state overshadows the sustainable distribution of resources which is not the core interest of the state. As such, it is unexpected for the state to engage in equitable distribution of resources across different constituencies. Such a stance must have pressured the government to engage a minimalist approach.

From an empirical perspective, the minimalist NDA and DDR approach helped to restore stability and safety in the region. It succeeded to end tensions and violence between the militants and the Nigerian security forces (Imongan & Kelegbe, 2016, p. 63). Hence, the decline and reduction of illegal militant activities like oil theft and kidnapping of oil workers. Also, this short-term approach enabled the country's economy to gradually get back on its feet as the country immediately witnessed an increase in oil prices. Evidence showed that before the declaration of the NDA and DDR program, crude production drastically declined from 2.6 million barrels per day to 700,000 barrels per day. However, with the kickoff of the program, oil production increased from 1.9 to 2.4 barrel per day in 2013 and between 2014 to 2015, there was a rise from 2.6 to 2.7 barrel per day respectively (Vanguard, 2016). This is an indication that the program achieved its goal of stabilizing the security conditions in the region.

Despite the acclaimed successes, further evidence revealed that the program did not completely deal with the command and control structures of the militants such that the capacity for ex-militants and warlords to remobilize in the future would be possible. The approach taken strengthened and increased the potential for ex-militant leaders to become legitimate, more powerful and even enter a new class of elites in the general political landscape of the country. Results also show that the command and control structures of the militias are undamaged because the government's interest at the time was to pay off top commanders to subdue violence. A possible reason is that the government was driven by its firefighting to pacify the ex-militants/rebels and disrupt rebellion. Also, oil production was central as the state was more concerned with engaging rebels to allow the flow of oil as the rentier nature of the state was at stake. Thus, a new form of government-warlords/ex-commanders alliance was established, and the latter became new billionaires in the economy. Another possible reason why the command and control structures were not broken is because from a minimalist perspective, the state was interested to silence the guns.

In addition, empirical findings clearly state that the use of a minimalist agenda did not completely break bad habits and dismantle the violent culture in the region. Due to this failure, other groups have been able to restructure. Evidence that the program failed to break the culture of violence from ex-militants can be seen in the relapse of violence and militancy in 2016 with the emergence of a new militia group the "Niger Delta Avengers" (Allafrica, 2018; BBC, 2016; The Economist, 2016). The group is responsible for the recent oil pipeline disruption in the Niger Delta region. In such a dispensation sustainable implementation of the program will be hampered. I argue that the stakes were too high for the government to risk using a maximalist

approach. The rationale is that it was going to open access to the country's resources and as a result, it would not only weaken the state's monopoly and power but bring an end to corruption. Thus, by the state's character which is rentier- neopatrimonial, this would have worked against the state's interest. As a result, the DDR minimalist strategy brought about negative effects upon the implementation of the program. The implication of the collusion of the pressures and the short-term response has led to an unsustainable program. Consequently, there is every indication that the peace might not be sustainable. Although it is now relative, yet the peace is explosive.

6.2 Theoretical and Empirical Contribution

A pivotal significance of this dissertation is the broader contributions to several ongoing scholarly debates and research fields in the political economy of peacebuilding and Amnesty and DDR programs. First, this dissertation contributes to the debate on the political economy of peacebuilding in Africa (Paris, 2002; Pugh et al., 2008; Salih, 2009). Against this backdrop, the study contributes to the discussion on how political economy particularly, its elements, such as interests, incentives and institutions have shaped the implementation of the Niger Delta Amnesty and DDR program as a peacebuilding project and the prospect for sustainable peace in the region. Empirical evidence has shown that many of the practitioner and scholarly literature reviewing Amnesty and DDR programs as peacebuilding processes have only superficially touched upon the issue of political economy (Jennings, 2008; 2009; Munive, 2014; Spear, 2008). However, this contributes to a broader and more complex relationship between political economy and the Amnesty and DDR in the Niger Delta as an architecture of peacebuilding. Specifically, looking at the role of elements of political economy like interests, incentives and institutions in framing the conceptualisation, design and implementation of the NDA and DDR program and the prospect for sustainable peace in the region. The study emphasizes the need to theorize the agency of diverse actors, the institutions and structures in which they operate as well as the incentives both actors and institutions create for themselves in every peacebuilding setting (Hudson & Leftwich, 2014).

As such, in relation to the discourse on interest, evidence shows that actors in the Niger Delta are rational beings who make rational decisions whether to engage in violence or seek peace based on the perceived costs and benefits and expected outcomes of these different courses of action (North, 1990; Varshney, 2003). Actors' interests influence opportunity costs for renewed rebellion, either through repression or by offering alternative channels for expressing

opposition (Walter, 2004). The findings illustrate that strategic interests shaped the government, MNOCs and militias actions in the Niger Delta region. This shows how the interests and influence of different groups as well as their power is exerted within institutions. This perspective is used to elaborate on the incentives that elites gain for making decisions in different institutions. In the Niger Delta region, personal interest is aligned with group interests. The research also provides a deep understanding of how power is contested and the ways in which wealth in Nigeria is distributed (Udoh & Chijioke, 2017). This is very key to effective policy implementation as political economy was used to conceive, design and implement the DDR program as a means to address the conflicts in the Niger Delta (Gerring, 2007).

Sollenberg (2012) argues that oil rents produce certain incentive structures for economic and political preferences and behavior in Nigeria. Findings further show that oil produces incentives for rent-seeking behaviour and distributional conflict- a scramble for rents among elites which under certain conditions may increase the probability of conflict (Ostrom et al., 2002). Also, empirical evidence reveals that NDA and DDR institutions acted as instruments of accumulation. It revealed that economic processes produce wealth and thereby influence how political choices are made in the country (Selby, 2008). This illuminates our understanding of the motivations of the actors involved in the Amnesty and DDR program (Djournessi, 2009). Both institutions and their actors/operators operated as spoilers of the NDA and DDR program as the government does not adhere fully to international standards of implementing a DDR program although it was framed as neoliberal peacebuilding strategy (Molly, 2011, p. 111). This obstructs and threatens the effective implementation of the program. Some state and non-state actors running the NDA and DDR institutions acted as inside spoilers as they do not want to jeopardize the benefits they have already secured from the program. It revealed that in a country like Nigeria where few institutions regulate government behaviour, an abundance of oil allows for escalating competitive rent-seeking behaviour between elites and militia groups (Mähler, 2010, pp. 7-8; Ogonna & Ebimobewe, 2013, p. 214). Thus, this dissertation claims that these elements of political economy (interests, incentives and institutions) should not be ignored in peacebuilding environments.

A second major contribution of this dissertation relates to the field in DDR. This research is anchored on how DDR programs are conceptualized, designed and implemented. Evidence from the Niger Delta DDR has been supported and reinforced by theoretical perspectives of scholars like (Berdal & Ucko, 2009; 2013; de Vries & Wiegink, 2011; Muggah, 2005; Munive, 2013). These findings represent contributions to several ongoing theoretical debates. First, that

Amnesty and DDR programs are a global project of neoliberalization (Doyle, 1986; Mac Ginty, 2006; Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015; Tom, 2017). This dissertation links critical literature on neoliberal peacebuilding to study in the Niger Delta particularly one that examines the DDR program. The paradigmatic shift in conflict resolution, supported by several UN documents such as the UNIDDRS is consistent with the taking shape of a liberal peace agenda. This dissertation contributes to the theoretical debate that the NDA and DDR program was inspired and framed from a neoliberal perspective that is dominant in peacebuilding operations (Richmond, 2009). Liberals believe that peace is achieved through political, economic and social liberalization (Lidén, Mac Ginty, & Richmond, 2009; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2007). Therefore, the DDR program is a reproduction of the neoliberal peacebuilding.

The study validates this theoretical thesis which shows how economic relationships are significant and highlights the ways liberalization programs have the tendency to benefit leaders by giving them the avenues to strengthen their grip of power at the expense of the entire society (Taylor, 2009). The case of Nigeria illustrates that the NDA and DDR peacebuilding has reinforced the existing political culture by re-establishing the 'Big Man' in Nigeria (Kalu, Yacob-Haliso, & Falola, 2018). Political leaders in Nigeria rule through patronage and personalized power although they are advocating for liberalization (Taylor, 2009, p. 169). Empirical evidence has indicated that although the DDR were framed as a neoliberal peacebuilding strategy, the program was implemented in a way that undermines the consolidation of peace in the region just like the cases in Kosovo, Bosnia or East Timor or Cambodia (Newman et al., 2009). Hence, the Niger Delta case suggests that the neoliberal peace approach might not be the right ingredient that will bring about sustainable peace because it neglects social needs, fails to incorporate local voices and exacerbates the challenges of underdevelopment (Richmond, 2010; 2011).

In addition to the qualitative evidence, this study argues that DDR is part of the neoliberal peace doctrine that installs state legitimate monopoly of violence because a modern state according to Weber (1978) is supposed to have a monopoly of violence and DDR is in line with that. This is because the objective is to restore peace and ensure that the instruments of violence is not retrieved from combatants as they undermine the security of the state. Despite the years that the program has been implemented, the Nigerian government is still groping with the challenge of fragility instead of stability in the region. Findings show that neoliberal DDR did not viably construct a stable region although it somehow reduced violence in the region.

Furthermore, the DDR was implemented as a short-term neoliberal peacebuilding strategy and not a strategy for ensuring long-term peace (Paris, 1997). The neoliberal DDR promotes hugely the absence of local connection (Talentino, 2010). The approach paid little attention to local voices, to ownership, or equitably distribute incentives across the whole society even though, building local authority is recognized in the peacebuilding process (Mac Ginty, 2008). The Nigerian government ignores significant socioeconomic needs, and by doing so reinforces inequalities that helps to prevent political participation and instil social division. The peace in the Niger Delta was a top-down approach instead of a bottom-up approach (Mac Ginty, 2010). The Nigerian government ignored local tenets of peacebuilding which constitute the indigenous traditions, institutions and mechanisms for peacebuilding and instead chose to import a neoliberal (international) peace model (such as the amnesty program and DDR) and apply it to a local context (the Niger Delta) as a solution to overarching problems (Richmond, 2009). Lederach (1997) stresses the critical importance of addressing a conflict within its specific situational context. People within a conflict milieu should be treated as a vital resource not recipients. What the example from Nigeria illustrates is that the application of a neoliberal peacebuilding approach was not well suited to tackle socio-economic grievances and instead became part of the factors that influence the re-emergence of violence in early 2016 (Pugh, 2011; Tantua & Kamruzzaman, 2016). In the Niger Delta, subjugation rather than emancipation continues to be injected into the politics of peacebuilding (Doyle, 1986). A detailed investigation of the Nigerian political economy suggests that peacebuilding in the Niger Delta is for the most part interest-driven (Eriksson & Kostic, 2013, p. 18). This is indicative for another important aspect that becomes evident that neoliberal peacebuilding in Nigeria has not promoted the democratic institutions and norms it advocates for, yet it promotes the shared interests of the African political elites and external free market entrepreneurs (Mac Ginty, 2010). The Niger Delta is rife with contradictions and this becomes a critique of neoliberal thinking and peacebuilding.

This relates to the literature surrounding the privilege predatory elites (Collier, 2000; Collier & Hoeffler, 2000; 2005; Dunn & Shaw, 2001; Newman et al., 2009, p. 159). This contributes to the theoretical debate on neopatrimonialism in Africa (Bach & Gazibo, 2012; Bayart, 1993; Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Erdmann & Engel, 2006). The practice of neopatrimonialism in most African states is seen through the vertical distribution of resources that has given rise to patron-client networks based around an individual or party (Kalu et al., 2018, p. 29). The discussion on neopatrimonialism in Nigeria, shows a growing gap between the rich and poor not only in the Niger Delta but the entire polity (Bøås, 2001, p. 700). Findings show that leaders,

and ruling elites adjust agreements to their personal preferences with little concern for accountability. This results to an outcome completely opposite of what is intended (Talentino, 2010). In Nigeria, political elites want to stay longer in office so that they can distribute resources and, if possible, retain resources for their personal interest and use (Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, & Morrow, 2003, p. 24).

In addition to the theoretical contribution, this dissertation confirmed that Nigeria is a neopatrimonial state that suffers from the rentier-curse (Birks & Sinclair, 1984; Holsinger, 1986; Omeje, 2006). To gain more leverage on the claim of rentier-curse, findings indicate that elements of rentier-neopatrimonial politics informed the entire DDR process. The rentier nature and the neopatrimonial character of the Nigerian state played out through the whole DDR process and this was manifested in the design and implementation of the program. In describing the way the program was implemented, Inuwa (2017) asserts that there is nowhere in the world where DDR programs were conceived, designed and implemented from a neopatrimonial approach like Nigeria. This assertion is supported by findings from empirical analysis that the rentier state was about to collapse as sources of patronage was decreasing and the honey pot (i.e. oil) was being depleted (Obi, 2010, p. 490). At this point, the incentive was to grant amnesty and stabilize the region so that optimum oil production could be restored. The empirical investigation also considers that patronage was used to reward the militants. For instance, top commanders were given huge oil contracts as incentives for accepting amnesty. The state also accepted to extend the patronage to top militia commanders especially those they believed have the capacity to perpetrate violence and threaten the political survival and legitimacy of the state. These top commanders have now become part of the elite club in Nigeria. In fact, Schultze-Kraft (2017) argues that the Amnesty and DDR represented a renegotiation of the prevailing political settlement geared at protecting the economic and political interests of the federal and regional elites, whom now also included a group of powerful militant leaders and not an illustration of peacebuilding (p. 621). To strengthen the debate on neopatrimonialism, further evidence suggest that it affects policy making, especially the DDR program, and is responsible for the misuse of the program's budget. The process was characterized by spending. This is seen in the way the DDR was implemented as it was one of the most extravagant programs. In this vein, elites use the program as means for extravagance and accumulation. The program was characterized by sending people abroad for studies whereas there are accredited universities, colleges and vocational institutions in Nigeria that could train and award degrees and certificates. Also, there were many instances where officials of the amnesty Office flew abroad in the pretext of monitoring and evaluation. It has developed the capacity of being able to divert

the resources of the program for private and lucrative gain, undermining the successful implementation of the DDR program (Cromwell & Chintedza, 2005, p. 103). The implementation of the DDR program fosters the phenomenon that Morris (2003) and Hyden (2006) describe as ‘economies of affection’ where the usage of patron-client networks based on kin, community and other affinities were indispensable in the entire process. Suffice to say that the neopatrimonial approach contradicts the neoliberal peace in the Niger Delta. This is because the economy was more at stake for the government and elites than the peacebuilding itself. Although, the program was adopted as a neoliberal peace, patrimonialism was significant in its design and implementation. A holistic approach would have entailed that the program benefited the entire society and not the elite. Unfortunately, the program was very exclusive as it neglected significant groups in the region. This is indicative that neopatrimonialism shaped the program.

Overall, evidence provides support for my argument that neoliberal and neopatrimonial practices perhaps undermined the entire DDR process in the Niger Delta region, even though it recorded some successes in reducing crime and violence in the region. In other words, given that by using neopatrimonial and neoliberal doctrines, the DDR program has not actually worked out because they are essentially top-down approaches (Bollen, 1993; Duffield, 1999; Richmond, 2010). As a result, the deal was not emancipatory, and it failed to address welfare and social justice and instead favored microeconomics (Fukuyama, 1989; Tom, 2017, p. 83). In using a neoliberal and neopatrimonial practices, investigations illustrated patterns of alliance building and networks and breaking common in conflict and peacebuilding with the example of Nigeria’s Niger Delta region. It showed how during the implementation of the NDA and DDR, tactical alliances and synergies were brokered. However, clashes of interest, agendas, priorities etc. also led to the defection/split of such alliances.

6.3 Potential Concerns for Future Research

This dissertation offers some insights that can contribute to further scholarship on the economy of violence. It would be important to further investigate the future patterns of violence and agitations in the Niger Delta. Although the neoliberal-neopatrimonial DDR successfully sustained stability in the short-term, it would be significant to further research on how short-term policies could shape subsequent political and violent behaviour. The way incentives were distributed in the program has produced some sort of latent positive consequences in terms of future remobilisation of violence in the region. Taking into cognizance the way the elements of

political economy such as interests, institutions and incentives play out in the Niger Delta. DDR ultimately resulted in a situation whereby the dividend for peace went to the top ex-militant commanders. This was at the expense of the ex-militants and the entire community and could spark up another spectre of grievance resulting in a relapse of violence. This scenario may mobilize a new phase of grievance against settled top commanders who have been co-opted into the local, state and subnational level of the neopatrimonial state. There is a potential conflict that will erupt between former allies (ex-militants and their former commanders) rather than between the ex-militants and the government. A new conflict may emerge, and this could be dissatisfied ex-militants who are not only frustrated about the outcome of the program but, are unhappy with the behaviour of their former commanders who have robbed them of their legitimacy. There is a high probability that discontent ex-militants will remobilize and push their violence, hostilities and aggression towards their former leaders and no longer the government and MNOCs. For instance, there was a consensus among ex-militants that the government had good intention for the amnesty and DDR however, their commanders are the ones who have marred such moves. They argued and regretted why they trusted their commanders in the first place and have realised that their commanders were more interested in the incentives they will get and did not represent their group interests. Those who fought for justice were not compensated. Rather, family members and girlfriends were the one compensated and selected for the program. Given that the Niger Delta has suffered from protracted violence that contributed to the fragmentation of the socioeconomic, security, and political structures of the country, it would be possible to acquire more analytical leverage for understanding post-conflict mobilization process. There is great need for future research to focus on the internal politics of ex-militants and their command and control structures after the end of fighting. As such, it would be useful to undertake further study to look at what the outcome of violence will look like in the future. It would be interesting to see who will the violence be directed towards? Is the future pattern of violence likely to be directed against the state or the former top commanders who are have now taken the dividends of peace as against the militants and the community? What is the likely future of violence? Is there likely to be an organized violence against the state as we have seen before or will it take a different dimension? Thus, there is the necessity to advance further study in post-conflict violence in the Niger Delta region.

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