

Political Economy of Militancy and the Increase in Criminality in Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: A Retrospective View

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D.O.I: 10.56201/ijebm.v8.no3.2022.pg67.81

Abstract

Militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta has not only hindered Nigeria's socio-economic development and political stability, but also has created the conditions that altered existing social order in the area. This has increased instability, environmental devastation and disrupted social hierarchy in the area. The primary objective of the study was to establish the nexus between militancy and growth of criminality in Niger Delta and provide evidence of social class formation driven by proceeds of criminal activities. Political economy approach was utilized to explain capitalist relations, resource extraction and class conflict taking place in the area. It also identified the background to militancy and its metamorphosis from an agitation for socioeconomic justice to political economy construct. The study used the historical/descriptive research method with a sample population of 450 individuals drawn from the study population comprising the nine states in the Niger Delta. The study relied on primary and secondary data derived from semi structured questionnaires and text documents which were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis. The study revealed the relationship between militancy and criminality in the Niger Delta region. The study concluded that there is a nexus between militancy, criminality, and environmental devastation in Niger Delta. It also identified crude oil theft as a source of economic activity fueling criminality. The study made recommend the need to engage oil-bearing communities directly as stakeholders in the proceeds of accruals from oil and gas revenue and design a bottom-top development blueprint for the area.

Keywords: *Class Conflict; Criminality; Environmental Devastation; Militancy; Political Economy; Political Instability*

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria's economy has relied chiefly on revenue from sales of crude oil and natural gas and these resources for about sixty years. Crude oil was discovered commercially in 1956 at Oloibiri, present-day Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Within a short period, the country expanded its production capacity to become the seventh oil-producing country globally and among the most significant oil exporters in Africa, with proven oil reserves of over 39 billion barrels and natural gas reserves of more than 190 trillion cubic feet Onwuemenyi, (2016). Proceeds from the sale of the products between 1958 and 2019 were over US\$3.6 trillion, which translates to about ₦1,512 trillion using today's conversion rate of N420/\$1 as of June 2022 This Day Newspaper (2022). Paradoxically, such huge revenue failed to improve the living standards of the local population in the oil-producing communities but benefited a few elites, the government, and the oil multinationals. Indeed, oil exploration has brought severe environmental devastation, widespread pollution, and poverty to the people of the Niger Delta. This leads to a distorted socioeconomic lifestyle of the composition and structure of crude oil exploration and production, manifesting in the form of violence and numerous armed groups that besiege the region.

As government and oil companies make their fortunes through crude oil and gas earnings, the local populace suffers from destroying their natural sources of livelihood like fishing, farming, and traditional craft. Ojakorotu and Gilbert, (2010) opined that militancy and violence prevalent in the Niger Delta region are the direct results of mismanagement of proceeds by the Federal and State Governments concerning the welfare of the local population of the region. Between 1999 and 2016, a period characterized by democratic governance, militancy became an intractable problem in the region with its transmutation from a movement to emancipate the people to a means of livelihood for youths.

Okolie-Osemene (2015) states that these criminal activities make Nigeria lose between 100,000 – 200,000 barrels of crude oil per day. The implication is the gradual erosion of the value system and norms of communities in the Niger Delta. In the prevailing circumstance, youths in the region are susceptible to toe the path of militancy and become stakeholders in their communities and the region. Activities like kidnapping and sea piracy worsen the security and instability of the region and threaten Nigeria's oil production through a reduction in oil revenue.

This study sought to establish the nexus between militancy and criminality in the Niger Delta region. Activities like sea piracy and kidnapping emerged from the background of militant agitations. Braide (2013) asserts that the proceeds from these activities fund militant operations and are used to buy arms and supplies.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study revolves around the political economy, which is the bedrock of the relationship between resource allocation and the struggle and competition involved in the process. According to Keefer (2004), political economy explains how society allocates resources. It provides structures for the relationship among the population and the determinants of who gets what, how and when. The problem of the study arises from the distortion of the traditional economy of Niger Delta because of crude oil exploration and production in the region. This situation has been exacerbated by militancy and militancy-induced activities in the region like kidnapping, sea piracy and pipeline vandalization. There is a political economy in the Niger Delta region created by militancy, as seen in the above assertion. The locals are embracing these militancy-induced activities because they offer jobs and put food on their tables without formal jobs.

1.1.1 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examines the political economy of militancy and criminality in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria from 2006-2016. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the role of militancy in the criminality in the Niger Delta, which has led to changes in the social status of militants.
2. Determine the socioeconomic, environmental, and political impact of militancy -induced activities in the Niger Delta and the implications for Nigeria's economy and stability.

1.1.2 Research Questions

1. What is the role of militancy and the criminality in the Niger Delta, which has led to changes in the social status of militants?
2. What is the socioeconomic, environmental, and political impact of militancy-induced activities on the Niger Delta and the implications for Nigeria's economy and stability?

1.1.3 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the three states of the Niger Delta: Bayelsa, Delta, and Edo. Three Local Government Areas from each of the three states were chosen as the study's sample population. Bayelsa: Southern Ijaw, Nembe and Brass; Delta: Warri South, Patani and Bomadi; Edo: Akoko-Edo, Owan West and Uhumwode;

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework –

The Political Economy Approach - This study adopts the political economy approach with a theoretical focus on Marxism. The concept of political economy arose from the realization that the political processes and the social relationships it creates have a deep connection to the economic system of any given society. Thus Drazen (2000) citing Friedrich Engels defined political economy as the science of the law governs the production and exchange of material means of subsistence in human society. Therefore, political economy is essentially a historical science. It deals with material which is historical and constantly changing.

The above definition defines political economy in terms of how production and consumption, under different historical conditions, are organized in society and how society's resources are distributed. A similar definition by Keefer (2004) explained that the concept of political economy was broad and encompassing as it is an aggregation of all material relationships in human societies, including politics, culture, economy, and religion, which collectively determine the allocation of resources in the society.

According to Roseberry (1988), the political economy approach essentially seeks to understand the relationships of power and political influences on the economy. This approach arose in the 19th Century emergence of the Industrial Revolution, which brought drastic social changes and dislocation accompanied by economic advancement and significant wealth and power inequality. The approach studies the relationship between individuals, society, markets, and the state. It also draws from the notion of the ability of an individual to make choices for themselves.

In the view of Williams (2014), the political economy answers questions in a society, such as how political leaders are chosen and how they are held accountable in any given society. It also examines how policies are made, which policies are selected, why, and which interests shape the policy-making process. Political economy also answers to who gains or losses from the policies made in the society. She defines *political economy* as a study of how a society is managed and

governed, especially regarding the policy-making processes, distribution of resources and mechanisms for selecting political leadership.

The relevance of the political economy theory is evident given that the theory makes it attainable to analyze the political economy of militancy and informal oil economy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The political-economic approach deals with class formation, capital accumulation and exploitation, which results in inevitable class conflict. The Niger Delta provides an example of the metamorphosis of militants hitherto seen as victims of the repressive economic system represented by Nigeria's corrupt oil economy to a class of influential power brokers who have created an alternative economic system can be seen as class mobility. This transformation from militant leaders fighting in the hinterland creeks to business entrepreneurs, politicians, community leaders and traditional rulers is evidence of a nascent social class that challenges the region's established hierarchy and social order.

This phenomenon is also evidence of the fundamental basis of the political economy approach, which is premised on the interdependence of the political and economic dynamics which shape human societies. It explores critical questions like how and why militant leaders replaced agitations for social justice and political marginalization with quest to accumulate wealth through kidnapping, sea piracy and pipeline vandalization?

2.1.1 Militancy

Militancy is commonly applied to all forms of armed and aggressive resistance to achieve set objectives by individuals or a group. According to Maier (2002), militancy could be defined extremist and radical activities, often confrontational, violent, and bellicose. In most cases, militancy has political objectives but can also have economic, social, cultural, and religious goals. Throughout history, militancy has been adopted by people who resisted ideas and policies, those who suffered persecution and marginalization, and those who confronted authorities. Though militancy can be used to achieve positive goals, it can have destructive effects that negatively affect society's peaceful co-existence. As Juergensmeyer (2003) observed, militancy usually starts as a peaceful or docile resistance but often degenerates into violence when this form of resistance is forcefully met or crushed. When militancy is resisted, its activities become radicalized and violent, underlining its aggressive methods to achieve set objectives. According to D'Arcy (2007), certain elements are common to all forms of militancy, which he outlined as follows:

1. Militancy is essentially motivated by grievance. It is not a recreational activity, but an act motivated mainly by a desire to protest against something of interest, press demands for change or institute a formal protest. Therefore, militancy is a form of political protest.
2. Militancy is adversarial, and the opposing sides do not treat each other as allies or partners but as adversaries who must be confronted through struggles to accept a party's views.
3. Also, militancy is confrontational and does not seek to avoid conflict but to initiate conflict and use it to force a compromise and negotiation.
4. Lastly, militancy is collectively carried out as a group activity and is not seen as an individual activity except in rare cases of protests by individuals employing militant tactics.

In general, and based on these evident characteristics above, militancy is a widespread activity and a choice created when peaceful means of protest and resistance are exhausted. The desire to make the other side accept their demands push the militants to a confrontational fringe from where violence and conflicts become inevitable. Globally, militant groups have proliferated as people struggle over economic, cultural, social, religious, and political goals. The structure of most militant groups is amorphous, but some have become formal (Douglas, et al. 2003). They also pointed out

that many militant groups end up branded terrorist groups when their methods and tactics include activities like kidnapping, bombings, and arson. In their view, militant groups become more radicalized when confronted by their adversaries, especially the state using hardline methods and clampdowns to force them to submission. This is what makes them go underground and become more formidable.

Militancy is an outcome of societal differences in opinion and goals, which can be addressed using the right tools of compromise and negotiations, but which can degenerate if poorly handled or addressed, as the case in the Niger Delta used in this study shows. In outright criminality and economic sabotage.

Apart from the large-scale oil theft, a more dangerous aspect is kidnapping for ransom and sea piracy which threatens the region's stability, disrupts economic activities in the waterways and provides a ready excuse for the invasion of communities by the military and other security agents. Okolie-Osemene (2015) explained that militancy in its present form in the Niger Delta is a cover for criminality, stating that kidnap gangs and armed robbers all claim to be militants in the prevailing circumstance.

Similarly, Umoru (2017) linked militancy to an upsurge in violence, political instability, and economic sabotage in the Niger Delta. In his opinion, militants have both ideological and economic motives in their movements but can interchange or pursue both motives concurrently depending on prevailing situations. Therefore, they release frequent press statements containing their ideological demands, which border on social justice, whereas they also extract resources through the same means to fund their attacks. For example, they will destroy a pipeline to disrupt production and siphon illegal oil bunkering products.

Andrew and Etuka, (2016) further assert that militancy in the Niger Delta has gone through three significant stages, each borne out of the dynamics of the Nigerian state. In the early stage following the discovery of oil in the 1960s, militancy was ideological, political, and economical, with the key objective of addressing marginalization and giving the people of the Niger Delta more access to the rich oil resource in their region.

Their struggles were peaceful and forceful, culminating in seceding in 1966, led by Major Isaac Adaka Boro. The federal government successfully crushed this revolt. However, it only succeeded in pushing militancy underground. It prepared it for the second stage, which sprang up in the early 1990s, led by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) under Ken Saro-Wiwa. This stage of militancy adopted peaceful methods like sit-ins and rallies but became radicalized as the government applied maximum force on them. This nurtured the armed militancy of the 2000s, which saw a wave of the targeted bombing of oil infrastructure, kidnapping, bank robberies and pipeline vandalization. This stage also saw the massive deployment of the security agencies to pacify the region.

Invariably, there is inter-connectivity between the goal of achieving social justice and the economic motives of survival by the militants. The issue of militancy and Niger Delta stability was also examined by Onwuemenyi (2016), who identified the underlying causes of growing insecurity in the region. His central argument is that militancy is dependent on the proceeds of criminal and illegal activities like sea piracy, kidnapping, and artisanal oil refining. Also, as more ex-militant leaders become legitimate power brokers, they can influence policymakers and those in government to soft-pedal on actions and policies that negatively affect artisanal oil refining in their communities. In some cases, these operations are directly or indirectly controlled by ex-militant leaders themselves.

2.1.2: Oil and Militancy in the Niger Delta

Several scholars have taken an interest in the informal oil economy, as evident in the Niger Delta region. Most of their work focused on the issues of how this economy is taking shape and affecting the Nigerian economy with the enormous losses in the oil industry. For example, Olorok (2012) explained that the informal oil economy is an outcome of desperation brought about by neglect of the oil-rich region. It was only a time for the region to take the initiative in extracting their resources which the federal government and oil companies had controlled. This economy exists as an alternative to poverty and helplessness, which is prevalent in the region. Also, Umoru (2017) blamed the oil industry's corruption and the local population's total alienation for being behind militancy and the informal oil economy. He argues that the informal oil economy was inevitable because the people in the region were gaining knowledge on how to extract the oil in their land and only saw an opportunity that the youths seized.

Oil changed the region's social dynamics and economic fundamentals, bringing unprecedented disruptions in the people's way of life. As oil became the mainstay of the region's economy, it displaced the traditional political economy as it forced the people out of their farming and fishing activities without creating alternatives. The destruction of the traditional economy of the Niger Delta led to an increase in the number of youths ready to engage in militancy and participates in the illegal informal oil economy.

Studies by Ekanem (2017) and Esosa (2016) revealed that the informal oil economy provides much-needed income to militants and other criminals who participate directly or indirectly and benefit from its proceeds. They dismissed the notion that the informal oil economy is a creation of the communities. However, they attributed it to a competitive political economy where the locals struggle with established cartels to benefit from their natural resources. Thus, there is a strong correlation between militancy and the informal oil economy in their views. They asserted that there is a mutually beneficial relationship between the two, which is pervasive in the region. They attributed militancy to poorly conceived Government policies implemented haphazardly and the deliberate alienation of the people by an oil industry which colluded with the government from the onset to shortchange the region.

Against this background, the emergence of militancy was an apparent reaction to the faulty structure of the oil economy built on the region's natural resources. For example, Ibaba (2005) described how the initial peaceful approaches of the people did not yield the desired Government response. The government preferred to treat the non-violence of the region's people with levity. The establishment of the Willinks Commission in 1958 to address the numerous issues raised by the region, especially regarding oil revenue sharing and environmental challenges, was the first of several government intervention programs for the region. Nevertheless, the Commission failed to make far-reaching decisions apart from recommending the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), which came into being in 1960. Unfortunately, the NDDDB failed to fulfill its mandate of developing the Niger Delta region but was used by the same government to distribute political patronage.

Edigin and Okonmah (2010) offered an insight into the basis for militancy in the region. They concluded that the docile agitations of the people were perceived as weakness by the government, which deployed force to disperse peaceful protests and sit-ins. They enumerated how the military and the police were extensively used to pacify Ogoniland between 1992 and 1994 and Odi and Choba in 1999. These operations resulted in the deaths of several thousands of people under the pretext of internal security and maintaining public order. In each case, disproportionate use of force displaced entire communities, destroyed their means of livelihood, and further hardened their resolve to confront the government. The oil companies played despicable roles in these crises, further compounding the situation.

They concluded that oil companies only concentrated on building access roads to their installations without extending the same to the people of the host communities. This segregation extends to the provision of electricity, health facilities and water supply, which are present in their oil installations but are non-existent in the communities. According to Ikelegbe (2006), this oil economy was fundamentally structured to benefit the Nigerian state represented by the elites and the oil companies who extracted the natural resources. In this political economy arrangement, the host communities played no key roles other than bearing the natural resources. Their failure to achieve development through peaceful means stoked the anger of the people, particularly the youths.

For the people of the oil-producing communities, their options were limited in the oil economy. Douglas, et al. (2003) blames the emergence of militancy and the formation of militant groups on decades of alienation, creating a hopeless and helpless scenario for youths of the region. According to them, there was nothing in oil-bearing communities to show that the government had any excellent intention to develop them. Instead, there was environmental devastation, the complete absence of social infrastructure and the use of force to quell any protest by the people.

Rather than spread development and wealth, oil has mostly underdeveloped the Niger Delta, devastated their environment and destroyed the people's livelihood, forcing them to embrace militancy. It is crucial to distinguish between individuals who can be referred to as militants and those who choose to hide under the cloak of militancy to engage in pure criminal activities which are not aimed at achieving anything for the more extensive interests of the Niger Delta region. These criminals do not represent any agitation for the region. Many of them are not from the region but were attracted by the proceeds they will make from criminal activities like oil theft, kidnapping, and sea piracy.

2..1.3: Identified Gaps in the Literature

Emerging from reviewed Literature in the study, the root cause of militancy in the Niger Delta was identified as the failure of different palliative measures by successive governments to alleviate the suffering of the local population. Notably, the various programs failed to address poverty and youth unemployment, creating fertile conditions for militancy to thrive in the region. Existing Literature clearly described the operating mechanisms of the political economy created by militancy by explaining how crude oil theft became entrenched in the communities providing badly needed jobs and wealth in the hands of individuals.

The missing gap is the process of changes in social status which highlights the social transformation of these individuals who engage in criminal activities such as kidnapping, pipeline vandalism and crude oil theft. Individuals who control wealth derived from this criminality and violence, use them to influence decisions and dominate positions in their communities, and in the process, distort existing social order and hierarchy. They erode traditional authorities and become dominant figures creating new centers of power and influence, worsening the region's instability.

3.0: Methodology

Data for this study were primarily drawn using interviews and focus group discussions on gathering relevant information. Aspects of the research problem from which the data were drawn include investigating how militancy is connected to the informal oil economy, particularly its role in activities like illegal oil bunkering, sea piracy, pipeline vandalization and kidnapping. The interviews and focus group discussions identified those who are stakeholders like ex-militants, militants, community leaders, youth leaders etc. and asked them questions on how militancy came into existence in the Niger Delta, the key actors who engage in militancy, those who benefit from militancy and the underlying causes of artisanal oil refining which is the foundation of the informal oil economy. Questions also explored if militancy has transformed some individuals into wealthy and

influential personalities in the region who have attained higher social status to become a new social class.

3.1 Data Sources

Interview sessions were carried out in three states of Niger Delta and the interviewees comprised of three traditional rulers, three youth leaders and three women leaders drawn from each selected local government area.

Table 1. Local Government Areas that Participated in the Study

S/NO	State	Local Government Areas
1	Bayelsa	Southern Ijaw, Nembe, Brass
2	Delta	Warri South, Patani, Bomadi
3	Edo	Akoko-Edo, Owan West, Uhumwode

3.1.1 Research and Analysis

The influence and control exerted by the ex-militant leaders make them dominant and give them the leverage to determine distribution of resources and positions in their communities. The wealth is gotten from illegal oil bunkering among others which gives them recognition in the region.

Table 2: Distribution of Activities associated with Militancy and Criminality in Sample LGAs

State	Local Government Area	Evidence of Informal Oil Economy		
		Kidnapping	Pipeline vandalism	Crude oil theft
Bayelsa	Southern Ijaw		√	√
	Nembe	√		√
	Brass	√	√	√
Delta	Warri South	√	√	√
	Patani	√	√	√
	Bomadi		√	√
Edo	Akoko Edo	√		
	Owan West	√		
	Uhumwode		√	√

Source: Field Work Data (2021)

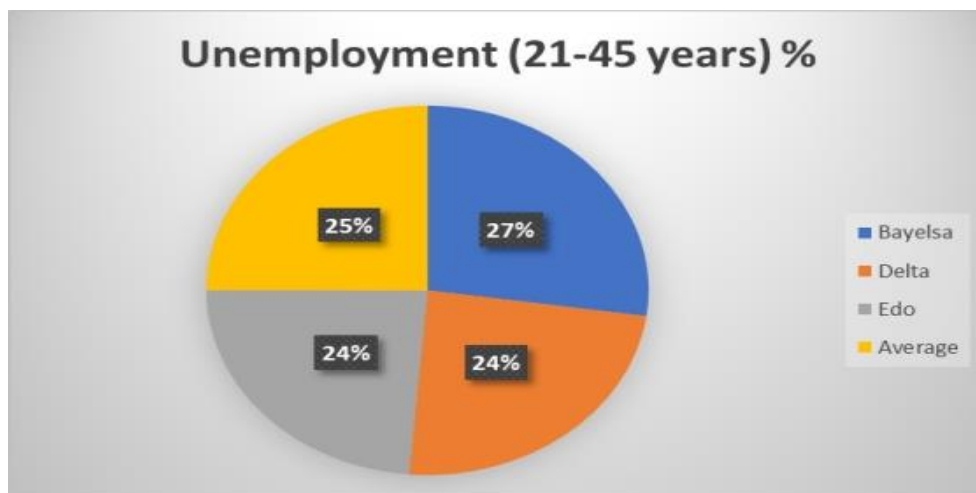


Figure 1: Youth Unemployment in Niger Delta States (2020 Figures)

Baseline: National Youth Unemployment Average for 2020 is 35.2% Source: National Bureau of Statistics Report (2020)

Figure 1: shows average youth unemployment in the three states in 2020 which is compared to the national youth unemployment average for 2020. Compared to the baseline data available on national youth unemployment average was 37.1%, the three states covered in this study had an average of 35.2% youth employment rate which is 1.9% lower than the national average. This is in a region which provides about 90% of foreign exchange revenue of the country and is endowed with huge oil and gas resources. The high rate of youth unemployment in the Niger Delta makes it inevitable for them to seek for alternative means of livelihood

To show the impact of the high youth unemployment on Nigeria’s economy, Chart 2: Clashes Recorded Between Security Agencies and Militants (Jan – Dec. 2017).

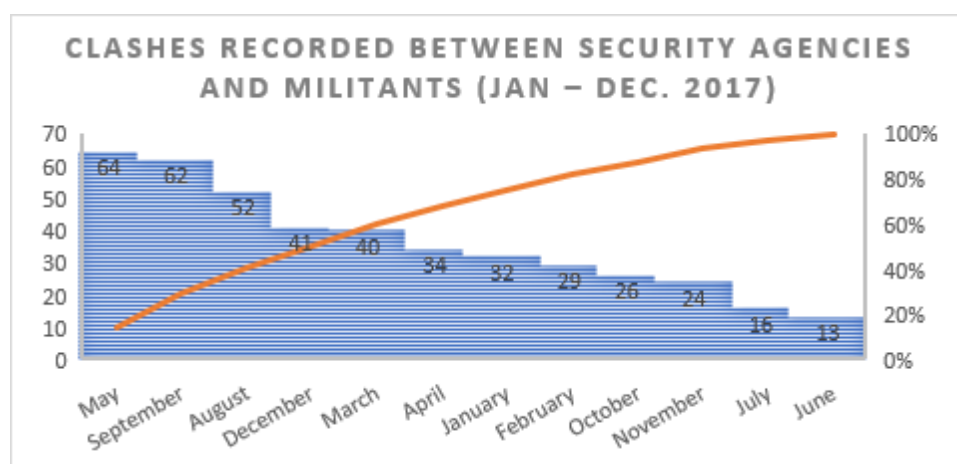


Figure 2: Clashes Recorded Between Security Agencies and Militant (Jan-Dec, 2017)

Sources: Task Force (Operation Delta Safe); Nigerian Navy; NSCDC

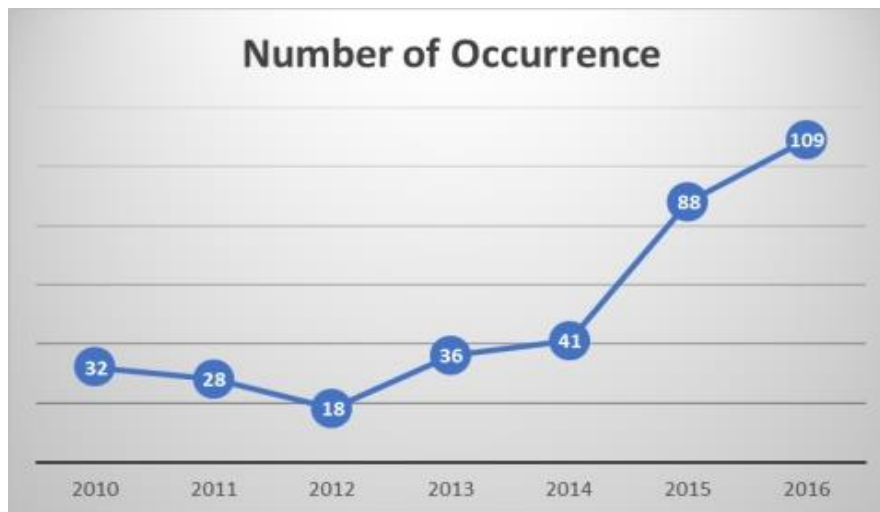


Figure 3: Blowouts, Vandalization and Ruptures in The Niger Delta Region of Nigeria (2010-2016)

Figures 2-3 show evidence of a growing oil economy and increased activities in illegal artisanal oil refining leading to criminal activities like sea piracy, pipeline vandalization and illegal oil bunkering.

Research Question 1: What is the role of militancy in the criminality in the Niger Delta, which has led to changes in the social status of militants?

The first question made by this study is whether militancy and militancy-induced activities like artisanal oil refining, which are the main components of the informal oil economy, have led to the emergence of a new social class whose source of wealth and power can be attributed to Militancy. The evidence to validate this question is derived from an investigation into the status of ex-militant leaders who once were confined to the creeks. As shown in Table 4.6, these individuals have transformed into wealthy power brokers whose influence has political, economic, cultural, and social dimensions in the Niger Delta region. The responses in chart 4.1 and chart 4.2 is a validation of the research question one, given that the mean scores of the responses show that over 70% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the question made in the study. Those who accept the emergence of a new social class created by the informal oil economy and Militancy believe that these individuals are interested in their business and how to advance their political interests, not the wider region's interests.

Research Question 2: What is the socioeconomic, environmental, and political impact of militancy-induced activities on the Niger Delta and the implications for Nigeria's economy and stability?

However, the increased number of artisanal oil refineries destroyed is also an indication of the increased proliferation of the business, which means that more artisanal oil refineries are in existence, hence increasing the possibility of more destruction of the refineries by security agencies.

The charts confirm the growth of militancy-induced activities aligned with the informal oil economy, indicating the increased impact on the region's social, political, and economic well-being and Nigeria's oil-based economy.

The chart shows responses to the question of if militancy and militancy-induced activities are solutions to the problems faced by the Niger Delta region. These problems are poverty, unemployment, environmental devastation, and political instability. 23% of respondents strongly agreed, alongside 21% who agreed that Militancy is the solution to resolving Niger Delta problems. This is in contrast with 48% and 8% who strongly disagreed and disagreed with the position that militancy and militancy-induced activities are solutions to the region's problems. They believe that Militancy compounds the problems of the Niger Delta because it creates violence and distorts the socioeconomic stability of the region. They also cite that Militancy benefits a few individuals rather than the general welfare of the people.

Those who support Militancy as a solution to Niger Delta problems argue that Militancy is the only method of agitation that forces the government and oil companies to negotiate. The cumulative 48% and 8% who broadly disagree with Militancy as the suitable method to solve Niger Delta problems show a higher figure than the 23% and 21% who positively agree that these methods are suitable for bringing solutions to the region.

4.1.1 Results of Focus Group Discussions held in five locations in nine selected Local Government Areas in the Niger Delta.

Question 1: what are the underlying factors that brought Militancy and militancy-induced activities to the Niger Delta?

The responses to the question indicated that 89% of participants blame marginalization for Militancy and militancy-induced activities, 4% did not agree, and 7% said they do not know. For economic reasons, 78% of participants agree it is the driving force, while 4% and 18% gave negative responses, while 18% said they do not know. Of other factors, 66% of participants attributed Militancy and militancy-induced activities to factors beyond marginalization and economic reasons. 29% did not attribute these activities to other factors, and 5% gave no response in the discussions.

Question 2: Has Militancy achieved more for the Niger Delta than non-violent methods?

Focus Group participants' responses to this question indicated that 48% believe Militancy has achieved more for the Niger Delta than non-violent methods. In comparison, 28% and 22% of respondents answered "No" and "Do not know" as responses that most participants accept that Militancy has achieved more than trying other methods like peaceful protests, sit-ins, rallies, and non-violent agitations.

Question 3: Has Militancy and armed agitations achieved any significant benefit for the region?

Across the nine states, average responses by interviewees indicate that 66% positively acknowledge that Militancy and armed agitations have achieved significant benefits for the Niger Delta, and 23% do not support this view. There were 10% of the interviewees responded, "Do not know." Bayelsa and Delta states had the highest figures of 82% and 81%, respectively, who believe in Militancy and armed agitations, while Edo state had the lowest figure of 48% in support. Edo State also had the highest figure of those against Militancy with 41% of interviewees. In contrast, Bayelsa, and Delta States had the most diminutive figures of those against Militancy and armed agitations to achieve significant benefits for the region.

4.0 Discussion of Findings

The government has failed to create jobs for the teeming youths of the Niger Delta; hence they have taken to the task of creating jobs for themselves in the informal oil economy. The security agencies appear to have concluded they stand to make a fortune protecting this emerging political economy rather than destroying it. They also act in a manner that seems to accept that what the Nigerian economy loses daily to crude oil thieves and artisanal oil refiners is a small price to keep the region in a state of relative calm. Officially, 2010 recorded 32 such incidences and 28 in 2011, further declining to 18 in 2012. By 2013, 35 incidences were reported increasing to 41 by 2014.

A total of 88 incidences were recorded in 2015 and 109 in 2016, corresponding to the growth trend between 2013 and 2016 in the informal oil economy-related activities. These increases are further evidence of the growth of this economic model because incidences like pipeline blowouts suggest increased feed-stock available to artisanal oil refiners for production and increased illegal oil bunkering activities. This translates to environmental damage to the fragile ecosystem, pollution, and loss of Nigeria's oil revenue. It also clearly shows the link between militancy-induced activities and economic loss to Nigeria's economy and the emergence of an informal oil economy.

Focus Group Discussions and interviews in Brass LGAs revealed that these militant groups protect an emerging informal oil economy by covering those who engage in these activities with their arms. With the guise of fighting for social justice and economic deprivation, they are driven by economic motives to earn a living and, on many occasions, have needed to engage security agencies in fatal skirmishes to protect their economic interests.

In Brass Local Government Bayelsa State, a group of respondents revealed the synergy between ex-militant leaders and current militants as one of the reasons for the relative peace in their community. They think the ex-militant leaders are a class of "rich, connected and feared" individuals who can take decisions on behalf of their communities regardless of existing traditional authority. They also asserted that this class of individuals is known to own choice properties in major cities in the country and palatial homes in their communities.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1: Conclusions

At inception, Militancy was a political ideal with economic dimensions. The agitations were focused on demands allowing the Niger Delta to exercise a fair amount of control over its oil resources. By contrast, the new wave of Militancy that arose after the Presidential Amnesty program portrays a different set of objectives which centre on economic survival at all costs rather than political and social justice goals. Evidence shows that militant groups use agitations to engage in illegal and criminal activities like kidnapping for ransom and sea piracy.

Sea piracy and kidnapping for ransom have made the entire region unsafe and unstable. The waterways of the region, which are usually the only means to get around the oil-rich communities, have become operational areas for militants and sea pirates. Beyond these, the influx of migrants to the region looking for jobs in the informal oil economy has disrupted social cohesion in the communities and unraveled the social fabric of the Niger Delta society. As wealth created from illegal activities ends up in the wrong hands, sustaining social order in the communities becomes difficult.

5.1.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. At the root of the problems in the Niger Delta is the relationship between the oil-bearing host communities and the oil companies. Evidence in this study shows that in each community, two different worlds exist side by side. On the one hand, the oil companies live in very comfortable, fortified living quarters, whereas the local communities lack basic amenities like potable water, power, and healthcare facilities. There is a need to create a legal framework for the government to make the provision of these facilities' compulsory in host communities before any oil company commences production. This will go beyond the current practice of signing an inconsequential memorandum of understanding (MOU) flouted by the oil companies, which is behind regional conflicts.
2. The development planning process in the Niger Delta must shift from Federal- level policies to state, local and community-level policies. Currently, policies in the Niger Delta are formulated outside the region by government bureaucrats without local input. This study showed that this was the main reason these policies failed. They are distant, detached, elitist and unsuitable to the needs of the people. In place of this, the region needs policies endorsed by the local citizens directly affected. And not policies such as the abandoned Niger Delta Regional Development Master plan adopted in 2006. Decades of Elitist development planning have only created Militancy and impoverished the people.
3. The current practice by government and oil companies to negotiate with groups who brand themselves as "Elders" and "Opinion leaders" has become discredited and ineffective. In its place, community-led engagements are more direct, open and will help build trust between the government, Oil companies and local people. Most elites of the region have become compromised, and some evidence shows they are benefiting from the crisis and violence in the Niger Delta, which indicates why the cycle continues unabated.
4. Affirmative action should be implemented in the Nigerian oil industry. For example, the allocation of oil blocks should be reformed to reserve a proportion for the host communities. Also, companies should engage the people in management and professional levels beyond the current practice of employing them as low-level staff.
5. Lastly, the study reveals the complex web of complicity, which tend to point out high-level collusion between specific influential individuals, groups and security agencies, enabling the informal oil economy to thrive. The evidence-backed this was gathered from the fieldwork and interview granted under cover during the research. This criminal collusion with Militancy is the cause of the intractable violence in the Niger Delta.

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