

Review

Amnesty and human capital development agenda for the Niger Delta

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The Niger Delta of Nigeria has become increasingly famous due to massive oil deposits and escalation of violence in the region. The emergence of deadly militant groups embodied oil pipeline vandalism, hostage taking, massacre, and assassination. Unfortunately, the Nigerian government's top-down measures for alleviating the spate of violence in the region have not yielded desired results. This paper examines amnesty and human capital development agenda, using content analysis of relevant secondary data, with insights from the Habermasian Social Movement Theory and the Althusserian State Apparatus Theory. The paltry financial rewards granted to ex-militants are incomparable with huge amount of money they realised illegally. Thus, a resurgence of violence may occur in the region except the undesirable socio-economic situations that fuelled militancy are addressed. While amnesty is a good step towards peace building in the region, a holistic approach to human capital development must be taken to compliment it. Fundamentally, ex-militants' endorsement of the amnesty without proven records of improvement in the Niger Delta situation is inappropriate. Also, the Nigerian government's adoption of amnesty without ensuring accelerated empowerment within oil-endowed communities negates popular demands in the region. The amnesty programme should therefore be complemented by other innovative measures such as wide consultation with various stakeholders and inclusion of all youths in the training programmes that will cater for essential needs of the majority in the region.

Key words: Amnesty, empowerment, human capital, Niger Delta.

INTRODUCTION

A disconnection between the economic advantage of the Niger Delta and the quantum of resources disbursed for the development of the region has given rise to structural imbalances in Nigeria. Consequently, the Niger Delta of Nigeria is increasingly famous due to massive oil deposits and constant violence in the region. Estimates show that the Nigerian government generates over 90% of its revenue from the region, which is characterised by crisis of underdevelopment (Ikein, 2009). The region remains underdeveloped despite the huge revenue it provides for the privileged social class including the public figures, public servants and beneficiaries from multinational oil corporations. The Nigerian government and multinational corporations are principal beneficiaries of the massive oil deposits in the region, while the majority of the people there battle against squalor occasioned by exploitative oil exploration, environmental degradation, climate change, inadequate infrastructure, unemployment and poverty.

Actions taken to address this situation are diverse

ranging from the state-led efforts and identity-based social movements as well as intervention of the civil society including the family, schools and religious organisations. The question of human capital development is apparent in several attempts to address the crisis of underdevelopment in the region. Human capital refers to an aggregate of people's skills and knowledge in a society. It depends on the quality of education and constitutes the bedrock of development. Nigeria's human capital situation is, however, inadequate, hence the renewed interest on the issue in the amnesty granted to militants in the region. Does the amnesty include adequate plan for human capital development for the Niger Delta? How would ex-militants ensure peace and development in the region?

These questions are addressed through content analysis of relevant secondary data, especially scholarly publications on violence in the Niger Delta since the 1990s, with insights from the Habermasian Social Movement Theory (SMT) and the Althusserian State

Apparatus Theory (SAT). A major problem that appears intractable in Nigeria is escalation of violence especially as a result of the emergence of deadly militant groups in the Niger Delta since the 1990s. The most disturbing militant activities in the region include oil pipeline vandalism, hostage taking, massacre and assassination. The realisation of the need to seek redress for several years of neglect and marginalisation of resource-endowed communities of the Niger Delta fuels the growth of youth militancy and a new wave of social movement in Nigeria. Out of the thirty six states in Nigeria the Niger Delta communities spread across nine states with reliance on fishing and farming as their major sources of livelihoods. The communities are characterised by environmental degradation, chronic poverty and escalation of violence despite huge resources that the Federal Government of Nigeria generate from the region.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian government's military approach and other top down measures for alleviating the spate of violence in the region have not yielded desired results, hence the state adoption of amnesty to promote peace in the region. Several measures to promote peace and development in the region have failed until the adoption of amnesty, a relatively new strategy for peace building in the region. The amnesty programme was preceded by various measures such as the Ministry of the Niger Delta, Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, the Joint Military Task Force and the Niger Delta Development Commission. None of these measures has clearly demonstrated adequate plan for human capital development in the region. This paper therefore examines amnesty and human capital development agenda for the Niger Delta.

IDEOLOGICAL BASES OF MILITANCY AND AMNESTY IN NIGERIA

Militancy can be traced to the power of human agencies, while amnesty reflects the dynamics of state power in connection with definition and redefinition of criminality. The conception of amnesty is in line with the Nigerian Constitution. Section 175 of the Constitution stipulates that the president can grant pardon to any person concerned with or convicted of any offence. The concepts of amnesty and militancy introduce contradictions and negotiations in the balance of power between the state and some powerful groups in the state. Amnesty is an indication of criminality with a pardon for specific purposes depending on the situation in question. This could be derogatory later in life of those involved; it can even affect rate of development in the community.

The Nigerian context of amnesty cannot be understood in isolation because it is affected by several socio-economic and political factors. These factors are also relevant for an understanding of the human capital

development agenda for the Niger Delta. In light of the foregoing, the discourse is anchored on the Habermasian Social Movement Theory (SMT) and the Althusserian State Apparatus Theory (SAT) to provide a robust foundation for the explanation of social relations in amnesty and human capital development agenda for the Niger Delta. While the SMT provides a basis for an understanding of militancy in the context of a social movement, the SAT presents various strategies for the maintenance of social order in a state. The SMT focuses on collective actions as shown by major theorists including Castells, Touraine, Habermas and Melucci (Buechler, 1995).

Habermas is a German sociologist and a member of the Frankfurt circle. His discourse on the structural transformation of the public sphere contributed immensely to the refinement of the SMT in which he devoted attention to the interaction between the civil society and the state based on concern for legitimacy in the political system of a society (Staiger, 2009). The Habermasian SMT is widely acceptable in various scholarly communities. For Edwards (2009), Habermas' ideas have received considerable attention within social movement studies. The relevance of the Habermasian SMT was demonstrated by Tucker (2009) as shown in the following passage:

Theorists of social movements have not developed a sufficiently complex perspective of the role that ideology has in the dynamics of social movements...Habermas' theory of the autonomy of normative structures is useful to explain the independent role of ideology in determining the direction taken by social movements. Habermas' emphasis on the interrelationship between cultural traditions, consensus formation, epistemologies, and differentiated rationalization processes furnishes an alternative to the instrumentalist and ahistorical assumptions that often characterize theorists' treatment of ideology in social movements.

The main argument in the Habermasian SMT connects with Lockwood's assertion that contradiction between the core institutional order and the material substructure of a society gives rise to violence and change in a society (Liu, 2006). This theory is relevant for an understanding of the history of militancy in Nigeria. The history flows from several contradictions in the colonial and post-colonial structures of Nigeria. Specifically, the evolution of militancy in the Niger Delta progresses within contradictions between state elites and multinational oil companies on the one hand and the youths and their perceived opponents on the other hand. In the context of globalisation, weakening traditional identities open space for youths' movement along contradictory directions (Jeffrey and McDowell, 2004; Melucci, 1996). Practically, militancy in the Niger Delta is a function of local resistance against internal and external oppressions in

the region. Basically, it started as an ideology of repression against unequal allocation of resources but later fuelled the opportunity for personal aggrandizement.

In response to the rising space of militancy in the Niger Delta the Nigerian government deployed several apparatus to ensure social order. The state machineries such as the Police and the Armed Forces are constantly used to maintain social order in Nigeria (Otite, 2000). The principal security machineries deployed to restore order in the Niger Delta include mobile police and Joint Military Task Force (JIT). These machineries have confronted militant groups in their attempts to maintain peace in the region. This situation explains Louis Althusser's theory of state apparatus (SA) and Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony as a means of maintaining the state in the context of capitalism (Althusser, 1997; Gramsci, 1971). The Althusserian SAT has been in vogue since 1969; it reflects conditions under which people survive in a capitalist society (Wolf, 2004). Like Gramsci, Althusser focuses on the role of ideology in his description of forces and relations of production under capitalism. The theory sets a stage for an understanding of individuals' perception of their positions and apparatus that affect their perception within the political economy in the society.

The ideological conditions of capitalist class structures of production are always more or less a problem for capitalism and capitalists. The latter seek to shape and control them such that they provide the needed supports. However, they do so against contradictory social influences that can make politics and ideology undermine capitalism. He thus distinguished between two sets of apparatus, namely: the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The RSA comprises the state's institutions for sustaining capitalist class structures, while the ISA comprises basic social institutions such as the schools, the family, religious institutions and the mass media. The ISA ensures that members of the society are socialised in line with the mainstream culture of the society.

As a result of the inability of the Nigerian government to quell violence and resolve the problem of nation building, Nigeria is among the most volatile countries in the world (Better World Campaign, 2008; The US Department of State, 2008). The US Department of State has warned Americans of the risks in Nigeria, stating that over 44 foreigners in multinational oil-companies in the Niger Delta have been kidnapped from off-shore and land-based oil facilities, residential compounds and public roadways since January 2008. It specifically directs their attention to violence in Lagos and the Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers. Guseh and Oritsejafor (2007) lend credence to Nigeria's volatile situation:

The country has experienced numerous military coups and counter coups and has survived a secessionist civil war. The attainment of political independence does not seem to have transformed

the state because the indigenous elites that replaced the colonial administrators have failed to implement policies to move the country forward politically and economically. The indigenous elites inherited a state that was not designed to cater to the needs of the Nigerian people; yet these elites were content with the political structures designed by the colonialists.

Nigeria's heterogeneity is constantly manipulated by elites (traditional, religious and political) in their race for the control of the state resources. Ikein (2009; 541) recalls that:

Since its creation, Nigeria has a performance record as a beacon of hope for the rest of Africa for she effectively utilized its sovereign rights and the power inherent in her strategic resources to liberate sister African States under the yoke of colonial bondage to gain flag independence. The country's success in liberation movements in Africa was essentially fueled and leveraged by oil power. The same oil power and influence could be replicated for the economic liberation of Africa in the 21st century. Indeed, oil has been the Black Gold of the 20th century and it has the same promise to be the gold treasure to the world in the 21st century and Nigeria is the kingpin on the African axis of oil and global power in the 21st century (Ikein, 2009).

These have produced renewed interests in local resistance and two forms of nationalism (modern and traditional nationalism). The former is promoted by a few members of the educated elite while the latter is supported by ethnic traditionalists and royal symbolism (Otite, 2000). Examples of the new elite that emerged in the process of challenging the legitimacy of Nigeria and struggling against the state are members of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and other popular militant groups in the oil producing communities. These elite groups have criticized multinational oil companies for constant environmental destruction and breaking up of their communities. A major argument of one Ogoni leader (Ken Saro Wiwa) against Shell is that the environmental damage that caused the destruction of the Ogoni people was an act of genocide (Ibeanu, 2006). Saro Wiwa led many protests until Shell was forced to pull out of the Ogoni community in 1993. This was the event that prepared the ground for the sudden arrest and the judicial murder of Saro Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists/leaders by the Abacha military government in November 1995. The implications of the state execution of the MOSOP executive were described by Amnesty International (2005) as follows:

Ten years after the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the struggle for justice for the people in the Niger Delta continues. The execution of writer and human rights

campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other activists, (the 'Ogoni nine') on 10 November, 1995, raised a storm of outrage across the world. Their deaths highlighted the suffering of the Ogoni people in the oil-rich delta of the Niger river. The Nigerian government was widely denounced and the oil company Shell condemned for its ambiguous and belated interventions... Ken Saro-Wiwa fought for an end to the environmental damage that was turning his homeland into what he described as a 'wasteland', endangering the people's health and livelihoods. Today oil spills still blacken the land and pollute the waterways. Hundreds of gas flares burn day and night, filling the sky with soot and fumes.

However, following the murder, the nature of agitation in the Niger Delta has radically shifted from being a platform for peaceful protests to a stage of guerilla warfare due to the matrix of the multinational oil companies and the Nigerian government's attempts to undermine the power of youth in the oil producing communities.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AMNESTY FOR MILITANTS IN NIGERIA

The political economy tradition is rooted in Marxist historical materialism and it holds that any form of exchange inherent in human nature depends on the production and distribution of surplus value (Pereira, 2009). The political aspect of this approach is rooted in the issue of power, which differs according to structures of control in a society. The evolution of amnesty for militants in the Niger Delta is occasioned by incessant violence and colossal wastage of oil resources in the region. It is a radical shift in attempts to address the crisis of underdevelopment in Nigeria. While extant official measures to ensure peace for development in the Niger Delta were largely coercive, amnesty was highly persuasive. Official attempts to manage the social movement for the recognition of the need to develop the Niger Delta resulted in the death of Isaac Adaka Boro and the creation of mid-western region in the 1960s, followed by environmental degradation and neglect of the agricultural sector in the Niger Delta since the 1970s. In light of this situation, the Niger Delta has witnessed an upsurge in identity-based social movements in the 1990s especially with the popularity of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP), which was under the leadership of Ken Saro Wiwa and other key members, who were murdered in 1995 by the Nigerian military government.

The murder of the MOSOP leaders coupled with mounting socio-economic malaise in the Niger Delta created an atmosphere for the emergence of a new wave of militancy characterised by mass destruction of lives and properties and hostility against the Nigerian government. Studies have shown that activities of the

militants adversely affected the Nigerian economy. An installed capacity of Nigeria's oil sector declined from 3.2 million barrels of crude per day (mbpd) to 1.3 mbpd in 2008 and it fluctuated between 800,000 bpd and 1.2 mbpd until June 2009 (Essien, 2008). The amnesty was politically motivated as the Nigerian government used it to demonstrate its interest in promoting peace and development in the region. A major motivation for the use of amnesty in the management of oil-driven militancy in Nigeria is the belief that peace rather than violence is a necessary condition for sustainable development. However, the amnesty is exclusive; it targets only militants without consideration for the victims of militancy and hostage taking in the region. According to Economic Confidential (2009), the amnesty has ushered in the cessation of arms conflict, the wanton destruction of lives and properties and other forms of criminality in the region with recorded improvement in the economic sector and the barrel of crude oil jumping to 1.84 million per day from 1.3 million barrels within the space of time.

THE LINK BETWEEN AMNESTY AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Human capital development is one of the seven points' agenda for the Vision 2020 designed by Yar' Adua, the president of Nigeria, who died in February 2010. The agenda include infrastructure, security, food supply, housing, employment and wealth creation. The late president granted amnesty to militants of the Niger Delta to create an atmosphere for lasting peace in the region. It is believed that the development of human capital is also necessary for the maintenance of peace in the region. On 16th June 2009, the president held a consultative meeting with the Governors of the Niger Delta to deliberate on the need for amnesty and disarmament of militants in the Niger Delta. The president also consulted the Council of State on 25th June 2009 to solicit further support for the proposed amnesty. These actions were followed by a nationwide broadcast on 25th June 2009, thereby encouraging all militants to embrace amnesty by denouncing militancy and surrendering their arms and ammunitions in preparation to meet training needs of the registered ex-militants.

Based on unanimous endorsement of the programme, the Presidential Panel on Amnesty and Disarmament of Militants in the Niger Delta was inaugurated with Godwin Osagie Abbe (Rtd Major General) as its chairperson. As a result, the amnesty agenda was divided into three broad phases. The first phase deals with disarmament and demobilisation of militants, while the second and third phases accommodate rehabilitation and integration of ex-militants. The first phase has been implemented. As at 15th October 2009, about 15,260 militants have accepted amnesty and surrendered various types and quantities of arms and ammunition including

communication gadgets, bullet-proof jackets, tear gas, rifles and cartridges (Abbe, 2009). Arrangements made for the implantation of the second and third phases include issuance of identification cards, identification of skills acquisition/training needs, deployment to various rehabilitation centres, payments of stipends/feeding allowances. Four Rehabilitation Centres (two each in Aluu, Rivers State and Agbarho, Delta State) have been prepared to meet training needs of the registered ex-militants. These rehabilitation centres have capacity for 3,000 persons and as a result of this an attempt has been made to rehabilitate ex-militants in batches. Each batch is expected to spend four weeks in the rehabilitation programme, which entails reorientation, counseling and moral/spiritual regeneration of the ex-militants.

As argued by functionaries in the Ministry of Niger Delta, a survey of the career aspiration of the ex-militants shows a wide preference for about ten (10) sectors ranging from Oil/Gas, Maritime Services, Fabrication and Welding Technology, Exploration and Production and Processing Engineering. The projected duration of training ranges from 3 - 18 months and after their completion of training the ex-militants could chose between wage employment or self-employment. They could also decide to return to school for further education and be trained up to the university level at public expense through programmes to be organised and administered by the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs. A standard form to be completed by the ex-militants has been jointly designed by relevant agencies including the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Association of Nigeria (SMEDAN for standardization).

The quality of human capital in Nigeria is presently low. Nigeria's human capital is underdeveloped as it ranked 151 out of 177 countries listed in the 2004 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is based on income per person, life expectancy, literacy and school enrolment (Upadhyay, 1994). In this regard, Nigeria's performance however remains poor. Nigeria is still ranked among the world's 30 least developed countries and this despite the country's rich endowment with natural and human resources. A major consequence of low Human Development in Nigeria is brain drain, which is not commensurate with brain gain. The correlates of brain drain were described by Oyesiku (2009) as follows:

Let us now examine the particular case of Nigeria's lost generation and determine the reasons why Nigeria has suffered the perils and pain of brain drain. The key factors are civil strife, political instability, and economic problems such as capital flight, unemployment and poverty...During the oil boom of the 1970s, Nigeria joined OPEC and billion of dollars flowed into Nigeria. However, corruption and graft squandered the wealth and the Federal

Government soon became the center of political struggle...Nigeria re-achieved democracy in 1999 when it elected Olusegun Obasanjo as the new President ending almost thirty years of military rule...Umaru Musa Yar' Adua, of the People's Democratic Party, came into power in the general election of 2007. These political, social and economic events have resulted in incredible pain from brain drain and the full impact places further development in Nigeria at peril.

Nigeria's position has gone down to 158 out of 177 countries examined in HDI for 2005 and 2008 respectively; it is presently among the twenty countries with the lowest development index (UNDP, 2008; UNDP, 2005). An estimated 70.0% of Nigerians live below the poverty line in 2008, compared with 27.2% in 1980, 43.6% in 1985 and 42.8% in 1992 (The Central Intelligence Agency, 2008). Also, Nigeria occupies 57th position out of 95 countries in the Human Poverty Index; it has a record of relatively high social inequity with a Gini-coefficient value of 50.6, and a high score (122nd of 144) gender-specific discrimination in the Gender Development Index (UNDP, 2005). The background of poor socio-economic development, poverty and illiteracy has been linked to the low status of youths in Nigeria (Aina, 2007). Expectedly, it is projected that the amnesty programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) would contribute towards improving the above situation. The FGN has established various training centres for ex-militants in the Niger Delta. Prior to the adoption of amnesty programme in Nigeria, the major controversies in the country include many ethnic movements and calls for "National Conference" to resolve the crisis of underdevelopment (Mustapha, 1998; Nnoli, 1998).

The impact of the amnesty programme on human capital development has not been established but some factors that can hinder its contributions to the development have been found. Considering the huge benefits that ex-militants derive from their activities, post amnesty strategies such as vocational skills development and employment creation may not be sufficient to eradicate militancy in the Niger Delta. According to Collier and Hoeffler (2005), "Case studies as well as cross-country studies suggest that countries with an abundance of natural resources are more prone to violent conflict." These scholars specifically cited the case of the Niger Delta as shown below:

...in the Delta region of Nigeria, large-scale organized crime is "bunkering" (i.e., stealing) oil from pipelines to the scale of around \$1 billion per year, selling it in East Asia. There is obviously scope for this massive criminal activity to link with the political secessionists of the Delta region. Resources can motivate conflict, especially in the form of secessions. Secessionists not only claim ownership

of the resources, they also claim that the national authorities are misusing the money--that it is being embezzled by distant elites. Perhaps the best defense against such secessionist pressures is to make the secessionists look greedy. To achieve this, national governments should probably link resource revenues to some basic social service such as primary education (Collier and Hoeffler, 2005).

The above illustration fits well with the situation that warrants an adoption of amnesty as a precondition for the development of the Niger Delta. It is believed that amnesty would create opportunities for youths to channel their energies for positively rewarding productive activities. However, the "resource curse" thesis with an assumption that resource-endowed communities are prone to violence and underdevelopment negates the motivation for the adoption of amnesty. It is noteworthy that human capital development could transcend amnesty. Experiences of several countries with abundant resources and remarkable records of socio-economic development are instructive for Nigeria. Typical examples of resource-endowed peaceful countries include Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Canada, Australia, the USA and the United Kingdom. The relatively peaceful Norwegian society had relied on raw materials export and combined economic growth with an egalitarian distribution of income long before its discovery of petroleum (Cappelen and Mjøset, 2009). This case dispels the logic of resource curse, which currently spreads across Nigeria.

SHORTCOMINGS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AMNESTY

The amnesty has been faulted due to its poor implementation. Some dissidents argue that the time slated for amnesty is inadequate to allow for meaningful development. Requests made for an extension of the amnesty has not been approved and it is claimed that the programme was rushed to prevent possible disruption of the Under-17 World Cup tournament, which was played in Nigeria (Ojo, 2009). Anecdotal evidence shows that many ex-militants have become restive due to delay in payments of their entitlements and poor implementation of the amnesty agenda. The provision of amnesty negates the fundamental reason for the growth of militancy. Some of them openly confessed that they have their Plan B, which is, returning back to the creeks and resuming militancy. The issue of resource control has not been addressed; this issue is a major reason for militancy, as militants largely declared at the early stage of their struggle. The Federal Government of Nigeria has not increased the percentage of resources allocation (13%) to the Niger Delta, despite several agitations in that regard. More fundamentally, it appears that the Nigerian government does not recognise skills possessed by ex-militants. The Federal Government has been warned against poor funding of the post-amnesty

programme for the Niger Delta ex-militants (Azeez, 2009).

Beyond agitation for resource control, militants became criminal entrepreneurs deriving huge financial rewards from violence in various ways including bunkering and hostage taking. The paltry financial rewards granted to militants during amnesty are incomparable with huge amount of money that accrues to them during illegal oil bunkering, hostage taking and other violent activities. The monthly stipend of ₦20,000.00 (\$132.45) and ₦1,500.00 (\$9.93) daily feeding allowance per person as well as the promise of vocational training in the ongoing rehabilitation of militants appear to negate the already established militants' identities and alternative routes to upward social mobility in the Nigerian society. In light of the above, a resurgence of violence is likely to occur in the Niger Delta after the amnesty except the undesirable socio-economic situations that fuelled militancy are addressed. In realisation of the foregoing, the goal of the amnesty may not be realised due to many reasons such as the political economy of oil exploration and continued crisis of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta. Thus, the appropriateness of the strategy for implementation of the amnesty can be questioned. The expected benefits of the amnesty cannot stop the culture of plunder and exploitation of communities in the Niger Delta.

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions can be drawn from the discourse on amnesty and human capital development agenda for the Niger Delta. It has been demonstrated that amnesty positively contributes towards peace building in the Niger Delta, although it has some negative connotations for ex-militants. The amnesty is followed by human capital development agenda with state interest in vocational training and employment generation. However, militants' endorsement of the amnesty without proven records of improvement in situations of the Niger Delta is inappropriate, although such action can be described as a support for the state-led human capital development agenda and a sacrifice for peace in the region.

Militants' surrender of their weapons for paltry sums and relatively low status vocational training questions their original motivation for indulgence in violence especially since the socio-economic situation in the Niger Delta has not improved significantly. Similarly, the Nigerian government's adoption of amnesty without ensuring accelerated empowerment of all communities in the Niger Delta casts some doubts on the state interest in human capital development for the region.

It is therefore recommended that amnesty should be complemented by other innovative measures such as wide consultation with various stakeholders and inclusion of all youths in the training programmes that will cater to essential needs of the majority in the Niger Delta.

Essentially, the need for sustainable peace in the Niger Delta would be achieved if the living standards of the majority of people in the region drastically improve. A lasting solution to the intractable violence in the Niger Delta can be found within the context of youth agency, traditional logic of equity and redemption of the state. Infrastructural development is a critical factor and it must be a driving force for peace making efforts in the region. Rapid transformation of the Niger Delta is likely to motivate the ex-militants to maintain peace and contribute towards the development of the region.

The success of peace making initiatives in the Niger Delta communities will be guaranteed if the unequal exchange relationships that place the region in a disadvantaged position are balanced. In this regard, the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies should unanimously agree to put the Niger Delta at the centre of their priorities. Furthermore, there is a need for private-public partnership to reinforce the implementation of human capital development agenda for the Niger Delta. Emphasis should be placed on the provision of modern technological facilities and social welfare package that can transform the region from its present situation to an industrial area. The hide out of ex-militants should be opened up and replaced with attractive development projects such as broad streets, tarred road, regular lights, modern schools and centers for information and communication technology. Also, the political economy of underdevelopment in Nigeria should be revamped to accommodate an effective management of resources through forward and backward linkages. This process must be anchored on a good-quality institutional framework. An efficient institutional framework of development and effective management of resources can counteract rent seeking activities, which have been building structural imbalances that fuel militancy in the Niger Delta.

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