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The Amnesty Programme and Political Stability in the Niger Delta; A Case Study Of The Impacts In Rivers State

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Abstract

Necessitating this research paper had been the discovery that the Niger Delta militants' disposition against the Federal government of Nigeria and the oil firms coupled with international pressures, compelled the Federal Government to grant amnesty to the Niger Delta Militants. The amnesty deal was a desperate effort by the Nigerian State to end the Niger Delta crisis, and thereby restore some dignity and pride to itself. Given this background, the research paper investigates the nature and character of the amnesty deal and examines the rationale behind it. The objective of this paper also, is the establishment of the relationship between amnesty and political stability, to determine whether amnesty is a better option for the resolution of conflict such as the Niger Delta conflict than force and litigation, it critically examines the impact of the amnesty program on the socio-economic growth of the region especially in Rivers State, it further systematically and objectively investigates the degree and conditions of acceptance of the amnesty program in the Niger Delta region and importantly proffer solutions that can help sustain and strengthen the amnesty programme in order for peace to reign specifically in the Niger Delta Region and by extension Nigeria.

Keywords: Amnesty program, political stability, Niger Delta

Introduction: Research reveals that since the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region, there has been spate of hostilities and armed conflicts between the State and the militants due to long period of neglect by the State and environmental degradation by multi-national oil companies. In other words, the region has been characterized by avoidable instability and development crisis. Government has introduced one interventionist plan or the other to assuage the people over the years of neglect and marginalization, yet peace and stability has eluded the people of the region. Militancy, kidnapping, hostage taking, political thuggery and common criminality were the order of the day, until the adoption of the amnesty

program in 2009. The statement of the problem should therefore, be the long period of neglect and marginalization by both government and multi-national oil companies, and the consequential development crisis and environmental devastation caused the region over the years.

Research Questions:

- ❖ Is there any significant relationship between amnesty and political stability in Nigeria?
- ❖ What was the primary goal of amnesty in the Niger-Delta Region?
- ❖ Is amnesty a better option for conflict resolution than force and litigation?

Research Objectives:

The objectives of this study will include:

1. The establishment of the relationship between amnesty and political stability.
2. To determine whether amnesty is a better option for the resolution of conflict such as the Niger Delta than force and litigation.
3. To critically examine the impact of the amnesty program on the socio-economic growth in the region especially in Rivers State.
4. To systematically and objectively investigate the degree and conditions of acceptance, of the amnesty program in the Niger Delta region.

Hypotheses to the Study:

In light of the above significance and objectives of the study, and for the purpose of drawing inferences and making valid conclusions about the study, the investigator therefore formulates the following hypotheses:

- ❖ There is a relationship between amnesty and political stability in the region.
- ❖ The primary goal of amnesty in the Niger-Delta region was to calm political hostilities and by extension foster political stability in the region.
- ❖ Amnesty is a better option for the resolution of conflict in the Niger Delta region, rather than force and litigation.
- ❖ Significantly, the neglect of the people, coupled with bad governance was the major cause of instability in the Niger-Delta Region

Conceptualizing Amnesty

.....Amnesty is as good as those who give it as for those who receive it. It has the admirable quality of bestowing mercy on both sides.. Victor Hugo in Sara McGahan, (2009).

Chambers Concise Dictionary (2012) defines amnesty as “a general pardon, especially for people convicted or accused of political crimes”. Invariably, Amnesty can be referred to as a period of time when people can admit to crimes, hand in weapons, etc in the knowledge that they will not be persecuted. Wikipedia (2014) defines it as a “pardon extended by government to a group or class of persons, usually for political offenses”. In criminal law,

amnesty is a sovereign act of oblivion or forgetfulness granted by a government, especially to a group of persons who are guilty of (usually political) crimes in the past. "It is usually conditional upon the group's return to obedience and duty within a prescribed period" (Britannica Concise Encyclopedia). American Heritage Dictionary puts it simply as a general pardon granted, especially for political offenses.

Amnesty is a pardon extended by the government to a group or class of persons usually for political offence, the act of a sovereign power officially forgiving certain classes of persons who are subject to trial but have not yet being convicted, (Hassan Tai Ejibunu; 2007).

It is the action of a government by which all persons or certain groups of persons who have committed a criminal offence usually of a political nature that threatens the sovereignty of the government are granted Immunity from prosecution. Examples of such offences are treason and sedition. Amnesty allows the government of a nation or state to "forget" criminal acts, usually before prosecution has occurred. Amnesty has traditionally been used as a political tool of compromise and reunion following a war. An act of amnesty is generally granted to a group of people who have committed crimes against the state, such as treason, rebellion, or desertion from the military. The history of amnesty dates back to 403 B.C. according to Greek and Roman law. One of the documented ones was the long-term civil war in Athens which was ended after a group dedicated to reuniting the city took over the government and arranged a general political amnesty. While contributing to the etymological basis of Amnesty, Brisibe A (2001) noted that:

The amnesty which was affected by loyalty oaths taken by all Athenians and only later made into law, the amnesty proclaimed the acts of both warring factions officially forgotten. The amnesty which was also known as the Act of Oblivion was specifically to heal the wounds resulting for the civil war between democrats and oligarchs, (Brisibe A. A. 2001).

The amnesty prevented the prosecution of those who were considered political enemies having supported the reign of the thirty. Athenians jurors were required to swear 'We will remember past offences no mora' The amnesty of 403 BC was passed by majority vote and affected almost everyone that participated in the war.

Conceptualizing Political Stability: Beyond the threat posed by the crisis in the Niger Delta to economic and political stability in Nigeria are its consequential effects on the development of oil production and supply in international market. The sharp drop in the nation's daily output from its peak of 2.6 million barrel per day (bpd) to 500,000 bpd in the mid-2009 and the dwindling oil price in the world market buttress the fact that issues at the root of the crisis have to be given paramount priority. Against this backdrop, an administrative approach to solving the crisis was made by President Musa Yar'Adua, christened "Amnesty Policy." It becomes an alarming approach that gains publicity in academic, media and the public.

As earlier noted and emphasized, Amnesty is a legislative or executive act by which a state restores those who may have been guilty of an offence against it to the positions of innocent people. It includes more than pardon, inasmuch as it obliterates all legal remembrance of the offense. Amnesty offer is a transversal approach towards addressing socioeconomic problems of the people. It was believed that by granting amnesty to the militants in the Niger Delta region, means of enhancing development-induced alliance between the government and the people in the oil-producing commodities could be realized. Such an alliance would defy initial threat status posed against the survival of Nigerian State. The subdued belligerent and eventual serenity would institute an environment for government to properly embark on capacity building policies and projects in the region, boost the revenue of the national government and eventually, have multiplier effects on international oil production and supply.

An amnesty for militants in the Niger Delta region was initiated by Nigerian former President Umaru Yar'Adua in July 2009 following regular outbreaks of violence from 2006-2009 culminating in a May 2009 military incursion by government troops into the Niger Delta's creeks, which left thousands displaced, (Daily Independent, February 9, 2009). Yar'Adua setup Presidential Committee on Amnesty for the Niger Delta Militants, chaired by Major General Godwin Abbe, which was to implement, in details, amnesty programme focused at disarmament and demobilization of militants in the oil-producing region. The programme, which started on August 6, 2009 and lasted for 60 days (October 4, 2009), was financed with billions of naira; accordingly, those who surrender their arms and enter into the rehabilitation program will receive 65, 000 naira (\$450) stipend per month. In explaining the goals of the programme within the context of challenges faced by the people of Niger Delta, Late President Yar'Adua noted that:

This administration understands the challenges of the Niger Delta region and the challenges people are facing and that is why from the beginning we made Niger Delta a top priority in our seven-point agenda. I want to say that the amnesty is not an end in itself but a means to an end. It is a means to peacefully and lovingly with brotherly understanding bring to an end all insurrection and misunderstanding between brothers. it is a means to bringing stable peace and security to the Niger Delta region. it is a means of making the two of us work together to ensure that our youths do not take up arms again.

The essence of amnesty is to bridge the unfriendly lacuna between the government and the people clamoring for environmental, political and cultural freedom. It intends to ensure that youths in the regions have meaningful lives through the programme, be trained and help in businesses, and those that have a flare for education attain that to his/her utmost level, which is a reversal of expectation and a significant change in strategy of resorting to violence and repression with maximum ferocity — an unmistakable footprint of blood, tear and sorrow. Thus, it trails towards youth capacity building through working together with the people by knowing their problems and laying down arms against the state. This was later followed by rehabilitation and re-integration.

When the programme was first announced by Late President Umar Musa Yar'Adua, it received antagonistic opinion not only from the Nigerian public, but also from the Western press as being another sham move by the government. In the work of Thomas Strouse (2009),

there had been skepticism in the beginning as to the sincerity of the proverbial olive branch dangled before the freedom fighters, usually referred to as militants'' Also, the threat of resistance confronted the success of the programme.

For instance, Ateke Tom demanded the withdrawal of the Joint Task Force (JTF) troops from the restive region as a condition for surrendering his weapon while Tompolo demanded for an extension of the deadline by three months which was not conceded by the government.

However, the programme was claimed to be an historic movement towards peace and reconciliation by the Federal Government as most militants' leaders eventually accepted the programme as a means to peace, stability, togetherness and harmony, in spite of pessimistic and antagonistic views they commonly shared. Indeed, the new administrative approach, which prompted a declaration of ceasefire by the militants, yielded some tangible dividends; for example, vandalism of oil facilities, hostage taking, kidnapping and similar crimes in the region have significantly gone down, coupled with the nation's crude oil production which plummeted to about 1.2 million barrels per day and already close to 2 million bpd.

In general, approximately 15,000 militants accepted the amnesty offer. The arms and ammunitions surrendered by 22 militants in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, includes 95,970 rounds of assorted ammunition, 520 different categories of rifles and other weapons, rocket propelled grenades, 30 machine guns with NATO capacity, 76 hand grenades, 22 mortar bombs, 34 dynamites of 13kg capacity and 14 gunboats. Inclusive was weapons surrendered by Tompolo (the last militant to surrender). These include 14 AK47, 6 rocket propelled guns, 24 G3, 6 RPG bombs, 44 AGL bombs, heaps of dynamites and caps, tear gases, several hundred boxes and heap of other assorted weapons. On the rehabilitation and reintegration of the militants that accepted the amnesty offer, several government institutions like the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Petroleum Trust Development Fund (PTDF), and the Ministry of Niger Delta would be involved in the rehabilitation of militants.

The environment is not restricted here to mean only the physical land, creeks, swamps and rivers alone, but includes the cultural, social and economic environment of development in the oil producing areas in the Niger Delta. It means the total destruction of the means of livelihood of the people, their cultural, psychological and sociological bases of existence. (Thomas Strouse, 2010).

However, the insecurity that had threatened the nerve of the nation's economy does not come to an end with the euphoria of amnesty or that of former combatants laying down their arms unless the root causes of the crisis and the vagaries and vices against development of

the regions are adequately attended to. The deprivation and pervasive poverty of several communities, amidst large oil installations with cutting edge technology in the middle of vast bodies of water, fuelled the crisis in the first place. Corrupt practices of States' leaders, neglect by the government and subjective nature of oil companies kindles the light of the conflict.

Research Methodology: The various techniques which were adopted in carrying out this research are described in this chapter. They include Research Design, Population, Sample and Sampling technique, nature/sources of data collection, methods of data collection/instrumentation, data analysis techniques.

Research Design: The research design encompasses the methods and procedures employed to conduct a scientific research. It has also been defined as a systematic plan to study a scientific problem. The design of a study defines the type (whether descriptive, experimental etc); research questions; hypothesis; dependent and independent variables; methods of data collection; and method of analysis. The design adopted for this work is the descriptive/survey method. This research design as posited by Ali (1996) is a study that seeks to document and describe what exists or the present status of existence or absence of what is being investigated. This study assessed, observed and described internal security challenges and amnesty programme in Niger Delta, a study of impacts in Rivers State.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique: The population of this study consisted of three (3) Local Government Areas of Port Harcourt, Obio/Akpo and Eleme and questionnaires distributed on equal number of 60 each (180).

Simple Random sampling was used to select a sample of out of in Rivers State. Thus, the sample represented the entire population of Rivers State.

Nature/Sources of Data Collection: Generally, data for any specific research can be collected from two main sources; the primary and secondary sources. The primary data also referred to as raw data are data collected from the original source(s) in a controlled experiment. This includes the use of questionnaires, interviews, and observation methods in carrying out scientific research in the social sciences. The primary sources are also the first hand evidence left behind by the participants or observers at the time of the events or incidents. On the other hand, the secondary sources of data refer to data collected or obtained from the secondary sources which include; official reports, magazines, articles, internet, etc. The data employed in this work is of the nature of both the secondary and primary sources.

Methods of Data Collection/Instrumentation: Methods of data collection refers to the processes of gathering and measuring information on variables of interests in an established systematic fashion in order to enable the researcher answer related research questions, test hypothesis, and evaluate the research outcome. Accordingly, the data for this study was both of the primary and secondary nature and therefore questionnaires, personal interviews, document analysis amongst others were employed as means of obtaining data for the research work. The data was administered by the researcher with the support of two well

informed research assistants.copies of the questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the sample areas and were retrieved after a period of (3) three days.

Theoretical Framework: Talcott Parsons in his work on structural functionalism was heavily influenced by Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, synthesizing much of their work into his action theory, which he based on the system- theoretical concept and the methodological principle of voluntary action. He held that “the social system is made up of the actions of individuals”. His starting point, accordingly, is the interaction between two individuals faced with a variety of choices about how they might act, choices that are influenced and constrained by a number of physical and social factors. Parsons determined that each individual has expectations of the other’s action and reaction to his own behaviour, and that these expectations would (if successful) be “derived” from the accepted norms and values of the society they inhabit. As Parsons himself emphasized, in a general context there would never exist any perfect “fit” between behaviours and norms, so such a relation is never complete or “perfect.”

Social norms were always problematic for Parsons, who never claimed (as has often been alleged) that social norms were generally accepted and agreed upon, should this prevent some kind of universal law. Whether social norms were accepted or not was for Parsons simply a historical question. As behaviours are repeated in more interactions, and these expectations are entrenched or institutionalized, a role is created. Parsons defines a “role” as the normatively-regulated participation “of a person in a concrete process of social interaction with specific, concrete role-partners.” Although any individual, theoretically, can fulfill any role, the individual is expected to conform to the norms governing the nature of the role they fulfill. Furthermore, one person can and does fulfill many different roles at the same time. In one sense, an individual can be seen to be a “composition” of the roles he inhabits. Certainly, today, when asked to describe themselves, most people would answer with reference to their societal roles.

Parsons later developed the idea of roles into collectivities of roles that complement each other in fulfilling functions for society. Some roles are bound up in institutions and social structures (economic, educational, legal and even gender-based). These are functional in the sense that they assist society in operating and fulfilling its functional needs so that society runs smoothly. Contrary to prevailing myth, Parsons never spoke about a society where there was no conflict or some kind of “perfect” equilibrium. A society’s cultural value-system was in the typical case never completely integrated, never static and most of the time, like in the case of the American society in a complex state of transformation relative to its historical point of departure. To reach a “perfect” equilibrium was not any serious theoretical question in Parsons analysis of social systems, indeed, the most dynamic societies had generally cultural systems with important inner tensions like the US and India. These tensions were (quite often) a source of their strength according to Parsons rather than the opposite. Parsons never thought about system-institutionalization and the level of strains (tensions, conflict) in the system as opposite forces per se.

The key processes for Parsons for system reproduction are socialization and social control. Socialization is important because it is the mechanism for transferring the accepted norms and values of society to the individuals within the system. Parsons never spoke about “perfect socialization”—in any society socialization was only partial and “incomplete” from an integral point of view. Parsons states that “this point is independent of the sense in which [the] individual is concretely autonomous or creative rather than ‘passive’ or ‘conforming’, for individuality and creativity, are to a considerable extent, phenomena of the institutionalization of expectations”, they are culturally constructed. Socialization is supported by the positive and negative sanctioning of role behaviours that do or do not meet these expectations. A punishment could be informal, like a snigger or gossip, or more formalized, through institutions such as prisons and mental homes. If these two processes were perfect, society would become static and unchanging, but in reality this is unlikely to occur for long. Parsons recognizes this, stating that he treats “the structure of the system as problematic and subject to change,” and that his concept of the tendency towards equilibrium “does not imply the empirical dominance of stability over change.” He does, however, believe that these changes occur in a relatively smooth way. Individuals in interaction with changing situations adapt through a process of “role bargaining.” Once the roles are established, they create norms that guide further action and are thus institutionalized, creating stability across social interactions. Where the adaptation process cannot adjust, due to sharp shocks or immediate radical change, structural dissolution occurs and either new structures (or therefore a new system) are formed, or society dies. This model of social change has been described as a “moving equilibrium,” and emphasises a desire for social order. Accordingly, a Talcot parson identifies four functions which social system performs and ultimately performed by all political systems, they include:

❖ **Adaptation:** This refers to the adaptation of the political system to varying and prevailing circumstances and the involvement of the diverse components within the system. Government meets the needs of the people through the creation of structures, formulation an implementation of policies and decisions as a political institution.

❖ **Pattern Maintenance:** Every political system has specific features and values that distinguish it from other political systems. It may also adopt a particular modus operandi that will suit its peculiarities and environmental needs. In discharging its functions, it ensures that these features are significantly retained and maintained overtime.

❖ **Integration:** The political system should ensure the integration of its component units into a dynamic unity for system role performance and coordinates the activities of other systems such as the economic and social systems that are relevant to its survival.

❖ **Goal Attainment:** It is the purposive effort by the political system to realize its set goals, which may be socio-economic, political, etc.

Structural Functionalism therefore maintains that rules, norms and other behaviours of individuals and groups are connected in such a way as to support

each other and present solutions to the functioning imperialism of the system maintenance, Nna Johnson (2002 and 2004: 141).

Defleur states that “functionalism emphasizes equilibrium. People who use this perspective see groups and society within an organic perspective; that is, as a system made up of interdependent parts and tending toward stability”. If conflict arises, it is seen either, as abnormal or as a means by which temporary strains between elements is being reduced in a move toward greater equilibrium.

The Niger Delta militants’ disposition against the Federal government of Nigeria and the oil firms coupled with international pressures, compelled the Federal Government to grant amnesty to the Niger Delta Militants, (Sabella O., and Abidde; 2009).

Also, Sabella O (2009) noted that:

A major concern of a deeply troubled and divided society is how to bring about healing of historic wrongs and fashion out a present and a future devoid of such wrongs, Aaron & Dawari, (2010).

In the same vein, the central objective of the United Nations is how to make the world a better place to live in through the instrumentality of peace without war and conflict. The assumption is that a society anchored on peace and stability is already on its way to development. Healing of historic wrongs is the function of a reconciliatory mechanism which will involve the production of evidence by the offender. Here, Aaron and Dawari (ibid) provide a method of settlement and said “the traditional justice mechanism for dealing with perpetrators of such wrongs has been the criminal trial approach or retributive justice system”. This method requires that formal rules of evidence, procedure and due process will ensure fair hearing for the defendant, including the need for proof of evidence beyond reasonable doubt, Garkawe, (2006). The objective of the traditional justice delivery system is to specify punishment for the offender and compensate the offended to serve as a deterrent to would-be offenders, Aaron and Dawari, (op cit).

In spite of the universal claim of the strength of the traditional criminal justice system, it is still trailed by some inherent problems. One of the problems with this method is that sometimes, real offenders are left off the hook for want of evidence. It is so because the traditional system relies on the evidence before it in delivering judgment. Whereby the persecutor is unable to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt, even when the offense was committed by the accused, will be discharged and acquitted, particularly in a society with discredited criminal justice delivery, Aaron and Dawari. Another difficulty is that the traditional criminal justice system adopts scientific method. Scientific method entails that evidence must be empirical and verifiable, and not based on faith or revelation. This makes it difficult to convict offenders that were not caught in the act or offenses committed using some supernatural means. It is worse when offenses are committed in the service of the

state, which in some cases may have aided in the destruction of incriminating evidence, Aaron and Dawari, (op cit).

Against this background of weaknesses inherent in the traditional criminal trial approach, most nations of Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe opt for the 'Restorative Justice' mechanism, Aaron and Dawari (op cit). Restorative Justice, also called reparative justice is an approach to justice that focuses on the needs of the victims and the offenders, as well as the involved community, instead of satisfying abstract legal principles or punishing the offenders (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amnesty>). In this system, victims will take an active role in the process, while offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, to repair the harm they have done, this will involve both the victim and the offender, and focus on their needs. It provides help for the offender in order to avoid future offenses (Wikipedia).

Accordingly, Aaron and Dawari (op cit), posit that it was within the context of the restorative justice mechanism that the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions with attendant amnesty offers in Africa are to be situated. It is against this background that the remaining part of this chapter will be discussing amnesty and political stability.

Data Analysis Techniques: The method of data analysis refers to systematic scientific procedures and techniques for the analysis or evaluation of data obtained in the course of the research. In the social sciences, the research design determines the method for the scientific analysis of data collected by the researcher. The research questions were answered with simple percentage was used to analyze the data gathered and the results of the analysis were based on higher percentage value.

Reliability and Validity of Research Instrument: Reliability is the ability of a research instrument (s) to produce the same response to a question and also allows for a replication of the same response to a question. Carmines and Zeller (1997) defined it as the extent to which research instruments yield the same results on repeated trials. According to Amara and Amaechi (2010), the term 'reliability' refers to the degree of consistency with which an instrument measures what it claims to measure. On the other hand, the term 'validity' refers to the degree of accuracy with which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. James P. Key (1997), defined validity as the quality of being valid and rigorous. Validity is used to validate the result or outcome of a research study. Accordingly, content and face validity was adopted to determine the validity of the instrument. The instruments of data collection and analysis for this research work have been validated as been reliable to measure the variable (s) under investigation.

Result

Section-1

Table-1. Distribution Of Questionnaire

Local Government	Numb. Distributed	Number Returned	% Total
PortHarcourt	60	52	32.7
Obio/Akpo	60	54	33.96

Eleme	60	53	33.33
TOTAL	180	159	85.33

The above Table shows that 180 questionnaires were distributed to respondents with the view to bringing out necessary information on amnesty and political stability in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, with focus on Rivers State. The table indicates that three local government areas (sample areas) were selected and questionnaires distributed on equal number of 60 each (180). The table further reveals that out of 180 questionnaires distributed, 159 were filled and returned, representing 85.33%. Random sampling was adopted to obtain data from the sample areas mentioned.

Social Demographic Distribution of Respondents
Table-2: Showing Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	No. Of Respondents	Percentage %
Male	90	56.60
Female	69	43.39
Total	159	100%

The above table indicates that 90 respondents representing 56.60% are male, while 69 respondents, representing 43.39% are female.

Table-3: Showing Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Number Of Respondents	Percentage %
18-30	30	18.86
31-45	54	33.96
46 And Above	75	47.16
Total	159	100%

The above Table indicates that 30 respondents, which represent 18.86%, are between the ages of 18 and 30 years, while 54 respondents, representing 33.96% are between the ages of 31 and 45 years, and 75 respondents, representing 47.16% are 46 years and above. The reason for showing the age distribution is to show that a high proportion of the respondents (combined 129 respondents, representing 81.12%) are mature men and women that are informed about the goings on in the society.

Table-4: Showing Marital status of Respondents:

Marital Status	No. Of Respondents	Percentage %
Single	62	38.99
Married	97	61.00
Total	159	100%

From the above, it shows that 62 respondents, representing 38.99% are single, while 97 respondents, representing 61% are married. Viewed from this distribution, the significance is that 61% of the respondents are people with socio-economic and political responsibilities.

The above statement is misleading if we stop there. It would appear as if the single have no socio-economic and political responsibility in the society, they have but, the degree is lesser and limited when viewed from the cultural background of the society.

Table-5: Showing Educational Qualifications of Respondents:

Educational Qualification	Number Of Respondents	Percentage %
Primary	10	6.28
Secondary	18	11.32
Nce/Nd/Hnd	25	15.72
B.Sc/B. Ed	50	31.44
M.Sc	40	25.15
Ph. D.	16	10.06
Total	159	100%

The above Table shows the educational qualifications of the respondents. 10 respondents, representing 6.28% are primary school leavers. 18, representing 11.32% of the respondents are SSCE holders. NCE/ND/HND holders are 25, representing 15.72% of the respondents. 50 (31.44%) respondents are B.Sc. and B.Ed. degree holders. M.Sc degree holders are 40 respondents, representing 25.15% and 16 respondents, representing 10.06% are PhD holders.

Table-6: Showing Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	Number Of Respondents	Percentage %
Unemployed	45	28.30%
Farmer	25	15.72%
Self-Employed	41	25.78%
Civil Servant	48	30.18%
Total	159	100%

The above Table shows the occupational distribution of the respondents in the area of study. 45 respondents, representing 28.30% are unemployed individuals; 25 respondents are farmers, representing 15.72%; self- employed respondents are 41 or 25.78%, while civil servants are 48 respondents or 30.18%.

Section-2:

Data Analysis of Hypotheses (HI)

Table- 7: Is there a relationship between amnesty and political stability?

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	109	68.55
No	50	31.44
Total	159	100

The Table above represents two broad opinions about whether amnesty has a relationship with political stability. Based on the data above, 109 respondents, representing 68.55% said yes, while 50 respondents, representing 31.44% answered no. Therefore, amnesty has significant relationship with political stability.

Table- 8: Can amnesty bring political stability in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria?

Options	Number Of Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	109	68.55
No	50	31.44
Total	159	100

From the above Table, it can be deduced that 109 (68.55%) respondents claimed that amnesty can bring political stability in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. On the hand, 50 (31.44%) respondents opposed the idea. Thus, amnesty can bring about political stability in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

Table-9: Did amnesty offer to the Niger Delta militants bring political stability in the Region?

Options	Number Of Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	105	66.03
No	54	33.96
Total	159	100%

The Table above indicates that amnesty to the Niger Delta militants has brought political stability to the region. This is represented by the opinion of 105 (66.03%) respondents saying Yes. However, 54 respondents, representing 33.96% objected by saying no.

Table-10: Given the failure of the interventionist programs of past governments, did amnesty program achieve its primary goal in the Niger Delta?

OPTIONS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE %
Yes	105	66.03%
No	54	33.96%
Total	159	100%

The above data shows that amnesty program succeeded where past interventionist programs of government failed. This is the judgment 105 (66.03%) respondents who said Yes, as opposed to 54 (33.96%) respondents that said no.

TABLE -11: What option would you have used to resolve conflict in the Niger Delta?

Options	No Of Respondents	Percentage %
Force	40	25.15
Litigation	28	17.61
Amnesty	91	57.23

Total	159	100%
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From the above data, it can be deduced that force and litigation are not better options for conflict resolutions. For instance, 91 respondents, representing 57.23% voted for amnesty as a better option for conflict resolution. 40 (25.15) respondents voted for force, while 28 respondents, representing 17.61% opted for litigation.

Table-12: Would you support militancy as a political tool for the socio-economic and politically marginalized people of the Niger Delta?

Options	No Of Respondents	Percentage %
Yes	116	72.96%
No	43	27.04%
Total	159	100%

The Table above reveals that militancy, as it were, is not after all, without support by the majority. Its support for use in stemmed from the fact that it is the last option for the socio-economic and politically marginalized. Out of 159 respondents, 116 representing 72.96% .

Political Stability and Counting the Gains of the Amnesty Programme in the Niger-Delta Region

At the wake of 2009, militancy in the Niger Delta had reached its apogee and had virtually crippled Nigeria’s economy. Investment inflow to the upstream sub-sector of the oil industry had dwindled drastically. The frequency of hostage taking and violation of oil facilities had reached a frightening dimension. Invariably, foreign investors felt that since Nigeria’s capacity as Africa’s highest crude oil producer had been threatened, Angola and Ghana and South Africa were preferred as investment destinations to Nigeria. Intense militancy reduced Shell Petroleum Development Company’s production drop from one million bpd to about 250,000 bpd. Other oil majors such as ExxonMobil, TotalFina Elf, and Nigerian Agip Oil Coy also experienced heightened violation of their facilities. Apart from sabotage, oil siphon oil siphoning rackets and kidnappings Oil workers unions often embarked on strike to protest to protest insecure working environment or the release of kidnapped workers. In 2008 alone, it was estimated that Nigeria lost over 3 trillion Naira as a result of militancy in the Niger Delta.

Accordingly, the late President of Nigeria, the AlhajiUmaru Musa Yar’Adua on June 25, 2009, proclaimed and granted unconditional amnesty to combatants in the Niger Delta. The principal terms of the amnesty included the willingness and readiness of militants to surrender their arms, unconditionally, renounce militancy and sign an undertaking to this effect. In return, the government pledged its commitment to institute programmes to assist the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant militants.

In Nigeria, the hitherto popular trend whereby certificate was seen as a meal ticket is no longer in vogue. This is largely due to massive unemployment. There are three categories of unemployed people: those who have no marketable skills and talents even at the rudimentary level. The second category comprises people who are educated but have no

skills that can fit with the dynamics of the economy. This has resulted in a mismatch between the educational system and the economy. While the economy is not funding the educational system adequately, the products of the system cannot function effectively in any sector of the economy. The third category consists of people who have skills that are needed by the economy but most of the real sectors of the economy are moribund hence such skilled workers are often unemployed or at best underemployed. With the passage of time, unemployment poses a grave and growing danger to the stability of Nigeria.

For the past couple of years, the unemployment scenario has been worsened by the global economic recession. Under these turbulent times, a successful economic development strategy must focus on improving the skills of the workforce, especially the task of raising a formidable army of intermediate manpower, reduce the cost of doing business through the massive provision of infrastructure, entrenching a favourable tax regime and utilizing the distinctive advantage at the disposal of the State to compete and thrive within the context of the global economy. Again, the system should have built-in checks to ensure that it is running in the right direction. As Winston Churchill rightly said "However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results" It does appear that getting the strategy right is the most crucial component in any policy implementation process. There is a critical perspective of the Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta scholars and analysts have inadvertently omitted namely the Sustainability component of the programme. SD is a pattern of resources use, which seeks to meet human needs of the present, but also for generations to come. As popularized by the Brundtland Commission, SD is defined as development that "*meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*"

In fact, 'sustainability' was employed to describe an economy "in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems." Translated into human capacity building, sustainability is taken to mean endowing people with skills, abilities and competences capable of manipulating economic processes and at the same time providing a mechanism for employing such skilled manpower to increase productivity.

In Nigeria, one of the programmes that need built-in sustainability criteria is the Amnesty Programme of the Federal Government. I am now convinced beyond any reasonable doubt that the Kingsley Kuku administered Amnesty Programme, AP, has created tremendous impact in terms of training Niger Delta youths and enhancing their capacities for a re-engineered economy in the Region and by extension Nigeria. I have clear evidence that more than any programme, the AP has been the most aggressive in terms of human capacity building in all its ramifications.

"Niger Delta youths have inundated the training institutes in Ghana, South Africa, the Philippines, Russia, Ukraine, India and so many countries around the world" (Obadina, T. 1999). Soon, the Niger Delta will produce lots of pipeline and Under-water Welders, Pilots, Boat Builders, Seafarers, Marine Engineers and ICT gurus among others. The most critical question then would be: Where are we going to get these skilled youths either gainfully

employed or enable them employ themselves to deliver value for and enhance productivity? This question has become all the more necessary because most of the hitherto existing industries in the Niger Delta such as the Aluminum Smelting Company at IkotAbasi, scores of Industries such as Michelin, WaterGlass Boat building Company, West African Glass Industries, Pabód Breweries, the Cement Company at Okpella, National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria, NAFCON, to mention just a few, have either gone underground or driven out of the country by the excessively high operational costs due largely to the absence of needed infrastructure. Perhaps, the only industries that would provide a short-term buffer are the Liquefied Natural Gas Companies, the Refineries — which at present are operating at less than desirable capacity, aggravated by policy flip-flops, failed privatization attempts, worsened by the empire building tendencies of the privileged few.

From the aforementioned scenario, what should occupy the mind of the Federal Government is to revamp some of the moribund industries, revitalize ailing ones and build new industries that are capable of creating jobs for the skilled youths. Indeed, the Niger Delta people has to pursue entrepreneurial capitalism and urgently too. In economic sustainability, the key building blocks are information, integration, and participation and inter-dependence. It is a process which advocates the development of all aspects of human life affecting sustenance, which involves the acquisition of skills, employment generation and sustaining the productive capacities of industries. Absence of entrepreneurial capitalism is one of the broken bridges we need to reconstruct, for that is the gap between Nigeria's enormous natural endowments and development.

Conclusion: Following the trend of the argument canvassed here and the survey carried out by the researchers to test the hypotheses through the administration of questionnaires and samples drawn from respondents, we conclude that there is a relationship between the amnesty programme and political stability in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. We also conclude that amnesty is a better option for the resolution of Niger Delta conflict than force and litigation. Furthermore, we conclude that amnesty achieved its primary goal of peace and stability in the region to a reasonable extent.

Recommendations: Aside from expanding knowledge on the existing literature, works like this are for future application as a reference point and a guidepost. We, therefore, recommend as follows:

1. The adoption of amnesty for the resolution of conflict arising from political marginalization of the people, socio-economic deprivation and environmental degradation in a troubled and divided society, instead of force and litigation. This is because; the use of force and litigation was futile and did not yield the needed peace and stability for development to thrive in the Niger Delta region, until the adoption of amnesty. However, no matter how successful the amnesty has been, government should not see it as an end itself but a means to an end. We also recommend that derivation principles be well entrenched in our constitution, so that the question of resource control is finally settled. This will help to stop the creation of non-viable states and local governments. We further recommend that

government at whatever level must provide for its citizenry, as provided for in the constitution, without selective application. Although, government has made some institutional and financial provisions for the development of the region, works

2. We also recommend that derivation principles be well entrenched in our constitution, so that the question of resource control is finally settled. This will help to stop the creation of non-viable states and local governments.

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4. Although government has made some institutional and financial provisions for the development of the region, works and actions geared towards the development of the region should be stepped up to convince the region of government's sincerity.

5. Very importantly, government must provide job opportunities for the ex-militants who have undergone vocational and skills acquisition, and loan for those who want to be self-employed at the end of the amnesty program in 2015. This will help in no small way to keep them busy and not to create a vacuum, for fear of going back to the creeks.

6. Government must have the political will to compel the Multinational Oil Companies and other Transnational Companies doing business in the region to adopt world best practices to protect the people and the environment.

7. Multinational Oil Companies and other Transnational Companies doing business in the region should try as much as possible to allocate certain percentage of ownership to their host communities. This is because, the corporate social responsibility of these companies appears to be inadequate and some times, absent in their host communities. This will bring about community policing by host communities and reduce, if not eliminate, the incidence of vandalization of facilities and disruption of operations by would be militants.

8. Urgent steps should be taken to upgrade and standardize the environment that has been degraded by activities of these companies.

9. The United Nations Environmental Protection (TJNEP) report on Ogoni land and other such places should be implemented without further delay

10. Government should not allow genuine agitation like the Niger Delta to snowball into conflict again, because the cost will be regrettable.

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