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KIDNAPPING IN THE NIGER DELTA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF NIGERIA FROM 2006 TO 2008

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Abstract
The Niger Delta region, which is the nation's highest source of wealth, has witnessed kidnapping uprisings from 2006 - 2008. What aroused the consciousness of the youths into kidnapping in the Niger Delta is embedded in the history of Nigeria. The study adopted frustration-aggression theory and human needs theory to unravel the reasons for kidnapping in the region. Thus, the study employed secondary source of data and contends that the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies (MNOCs) failed to honour the yields and aspirations of the Niger Delta people towards their region and resources. Angered by these developments, some youths of the region established armed groups, such as; the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), etc., and adopted kidnapping of foreign expatriates as one of their methods of responding to the Nigerian government and MNOCs deafness over their resources and the development of the region. Kidnapping was done in the region for three reasons, which are; (i) kidnapping for strategic bargaining and to force the region and its people back into the Nigerian system from which they had previously been expelled; (ii) kidnapping to force the MNOCs and their staff out of the region, albeit temporarily; and (iii) kidnapping for ransom to fund themselves, their families, and operations in the region. However, kidnapping by these armed groups had implications for national security, such as; loss of employment and lives, as well as restrictions on the movement of MNOCs personnel and citizens of Nigeria. It further led to economic shortfalls and annihilated the image of the nation. The study concludes that, due to the monetary outcome and benefits, these armed groups were not ready to abate kidnapping in the region.

Keywords: Niger Delta Region, Kidnapping, Multinational Oil Companies, National Security

Introduction

The Niger Delta region is the bulk of crude oil deposits in Nigeria and serves as the nation's livewire of sustainability (Asanebi, 2016), yet there is nothing to show for decades of oil exploitation and exploration by the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies (MNOC) in the region. Okonta and Douglas (2001) succinctly noted that:

> Slowly, but relentlessly, oil exploitation activities such as gas flaring, oil spillage, indiscriminate construction of canals, and waste dumping have brought the human ecosystem of the Niger Delta to the point of near collapse. The Niger Delta, due to oil exploitation activities, has become one of the most endangered human eco-systems in the world. The environment in the area is constantly on the boil.

Paradoxically, the region has been one of the most mismanaged and crisis-ridden in Nigeria since its independence in 1960 (Asanebi, 2014). Before oil was discovered in the region,

farming and fishing were the main sources of income for the locals, which was an occupation that every household took great satisfaction in doing. Following the commercial production of crude oil in 1958 and its discovery in Otuabagi community in the then-Oloibiri district, which is now part of the Ogbia local government area of present-day Bayelsa State in 1956, the people began confronting challenges that stemmed from environmental degradation brought about by oil exploitation and exploration in the region, making their farmlands, rivers, ponds, creeks, and rivulets unsuitable for agriculture. The effects of oil exploitation and exploration on the environment have resulted in the accumulation of poverty, economic losses, occupational displacement, and frustration among Niger Deltans.

The oil extracted from the Niger Delta region is the oxygen the Nigerian economy breathes to survive as a nation (Asanebi, et al., 2021). And yet this oil does not keep pace with growth and development in the region, as every ethnic group suffers from underdevelopment, marginalisation, and unemployment from the Nigerian government and the multinational oil companies.

To the Nigerian government (Niger Delta), oil is in the national interest of the nation, and its exploitation should not be disrupted. On the other end of the divide are the Niger Delta oil communities, who completely disagree with the position taken by the government. To the communities, oil is their God-given resource, and exploitation should have direct positive impacts on their lives and environment (Doder, 2012). This led the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) to pontificate that:

> Niger Delta wealth should be used to develop the Niger Delta region and not to oppress Niger Delta citizens (Extracted from Asanebi, 2014).

Thus, the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies failed to honour the yields and aspirations of the Niger Delta people towards their region and resources. Angered by these developments, some youths of the region established armed groups and adopted kidnapping of foreign expatriates as one of their methods of responding to the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies (MNOCs) deafness over their resources and the development of their region. While reminiscing on the above, the fulcrum of the study is to examine kidnapping in the Niger Delta region and its implications on the national security of Nigeria from 2006 to 2008. The study shall examine the Niger Delta region from the core Niger Delta. In 1958, Sir Henry Willink's commission set up by the British government saw the Niger Delta region as composed only of the three divisions, which are Ogoni, Degema, and Brass, together with Western Ijaw's (Willink, 1958). These three divisions and western Ijaw's are the core Niger Delta and they are found in the three States, which are; Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta State of Nigeria (Asanebi, 2016).

Conceptual Clarification

Kidnapping

Kidnapping is a global issue and no doubt a crime punishable by law in Nigeria and other global nations. The concept of kidnapping has witnessed an unprecedented riot of meaning, as scholars, security personnel, and public analysts have defined the term from their points of understanding and disciplines.

Kidnapping is the forceful abduction and captivity of a person or group of persons to an unknown destination against the person or group's wishes, typically to obtain a ransom or press home the demands of the kidnappers to the government of the nation or the organisation where the person or persons work. It can also be seen as the act of keeping someone confined through coercion in order for a ransom to be made for his or her release.

The following are forms of kidnapping operated in the region: (i) kidnapping for strategic bargaining and to force the region and its people back into the Nigerian system from which

they had previously been expelled; (ii) kidnapping to force the MNOCs and their staff out of the region, albeit temporarily; and (iii) kidnapping for ransom to fund themselves, their families, and operations in the region.

National Security

National security can be seen as all legitimate methods adopted by a sovereign nation in safeguarding its citizens, national assets, economy, and sovereignty. Asanebi and Otoo (2018) noted that national security is a by-product of good governance. It is the safety of territorial sovereignty as managed by the government and ruling elites of a state (Ibid.).

Theoretical Framework

The study effectively combines the frustration-aggression and human needs theories to unravel the reasons for kidnapping in the Niger Delta region. John Dollar, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears proposed frustration-aggression theory in 1939, and Neal Miller and Leonard Berkovits expanded on it in 1914 and 1969, respectively. According to the theory, violence is formed or induced when an individual is denied or prevented from achieving his or her life purpose or want (Dollar et al., 1939). Frustration, therefore, is the source of aggression.

Every human being has basic requirements that must be met in order for him or her to survive, and when these needs are denied or not met, the individual becomes agitated and restless. According to Burton (1997), chronic conflict is unavoidable when a person or group's basic needs for identity, security, recognition, or equitable participation in society are not met. The requirements of all individuals and groups must be considered in any decision-making process, since they can impact the views and values that individuals and groups place on them. Individuals or organisations are willing to go to any length to oppose authorities and systems in order to achieve their goals (Burton, 1997).

Though intended to be a blessing, the Niger Delta people's crude oil resource is progressively becoming a curse as a result of the region's and the people's ongoing struggles with extreme untold hardship, monumental poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, environmental degradation, etc. Kalama and Asanebi (2019) opined that the Niger Delta people have for so long craved to enjoy the proceeds of the oil deposit on their lands, but unfortunately, what they get in return is pollution and environmental damage caused by the activities of multinational oil companies (MNOCs). The activities of the MNOCs and the Nigerian government, through various laws and regulations enacted, have denied and prohibited the people from achieving their aspirations and fundamental necessities by accessing and utilising their resources for the benefit of themselves and their region.

Thus, the frustration-aggression and human needs theories are appropriate in this study due to the MNOCs and Nigerian government long years of neglect, marginalisation, underdevelopment, monumental poverty, environmental degradation, and so on in the Niger Delta region, resulting in frustration and massive aggression from Niger Deltans towards the MNOCs and their workers. Kidnapping was one of the ways Niger Delta youths in various established groups exhibited their hostility in response to the discontent instilled in them by the MNOCs and the Nigerian government. Kidnapping did not just obliterate the image of the region and Nigeria as a whole; it became a nightmare for the MNOCs personnel and, unfortunately, for Nigeria's security forces, whose responsibilities were to defend the lives and property of Nigerians and also defend the sovereignty of the nation, as many of them fell to the bullets of these armed Niger Delta groups in discharging their duties.

The Niger Delta armed youths involved in kidnapping and other illegal businesses in the region saw the security forces as collaborators with the Nigerian government and MNOCs, who would go to any length to prevent and denied them access to their God-given resources on their ancestral lands; thus, terminating their lives was a must to access their resources and

execute smoothly the kidnapping of MNOCs workers for ransom (which was a source of revenue for their operations, themselves, and their families), to chase multinational oil companies away from the region, and for strategic bargaining with the federal government of Nigeria in addressing the issues of the region.

Motives behind Kidnapping in the Niger Delta Region

What aroused the consciousness of the youths towards crime, such as kidnapping in the Niger Delta, is embedded in the history of the Nigerian nation. Before gaining independence, each region made use of its own resources to develop and provide for its needs: the East used yam and kola nuts, the West used cocoa, and the North used maize, yam, and groundnut. No regulations limiting the areas or their resources were passed during this era; instead, all of the resources were completely utilised for the development of the territories from which they were drawn. Soon after the region's crude oil was discovered in 1956 and began to be produced commercially in 1958, the Nigerian government passed several laws shortly after gaining independence in 1960. These included the Petroleum Act of 1969 and 1991, the National Waterways Decree of 1997, and the Land Use Act of 1978 and 1993. These decrees and laws restricted the Niger Delta people from accessing their God-given resources and utilising the resources for the development of their region (Asanebi, 2014).

Furthermore, prolonged periods of marginalisation, oil exploitation and exploration, environmental degradation, and under-development of the Niger Delta region, among other things, prompted Major Jasper Isaac Adaka Boro, a prominent son of the region, to establish the Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) on January 25, 1966, to fight for the region's rights.

Major Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro identified political and socio-economic distress in the region as the source of his discontent. He concisely noted that the Niger Delta region has been ravaged as a result of large-scale oil exploration and exploitation since 1958, when commercial output began to be exported. Nigeria has generated well over 17 trillion dollars in revenue, yet despite this enormous figure, there is no evidence of progress in the area. Oloibiri is now a ghost town in the best sense of the term, a carcass discarded even by the hounds who stripped her naked in the first place. On February 16, 1966, Isaac Adaka Boro and his NDVS troops declared the succession from the Nigerian state and held it for a period of twelve days until the Nigerian federal troops defeated them. On August 4, 1967, the military government of General Yakubu Gowon granted a state pardon to Isaac Adaka Boro and other members of the NDVS who had been arrested by the military government of General Aguiyi Ironsi for treasonable felonies. Isaac Adaka Boro passed away in 1968 while fighting for the Nigerian government during the civil war in Nigeria. Years after Isaac Adaka Boro's death, Kenule Beeson Saro-wiwa, popularly known as Ken Saro-wiwa, another prominent son of the region, was aroused by the ecological damage to Ogoni land and the Niger Delta region (Asanebi, 2014; Mbeke-Ekanem, 2000).

Ken Saro-wiwa was dissatisfied with the ecological harm caused by the international oil firms operating in the region and the Nigerian government's exploration and exploitation of Ogoni land and the Niger Delta region as a whole. In 1992, he and other renowned Ogoni natives founded the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and brought their cause to the United Nations in New York. The growing popularity of MOSOP and Ken Saro-wiwa both domestically and internationally unnerved General Sani Abacha's administration.

The then-General Sani Abacha regime saw Ken Saro-wiwa and MOSOP as threats and needed to silence them quickly. Ken Saro-Wiwa and a few MOSOP leaders were accused of murder in 1994. He was arrested alongside other MOSOP leaders on May 21, 1994, and was sentenced to death by hanging with eight other MOSOP leaders. The death of Ken Saro-wiwa and eight prominent MOSOP leaders attracted international concern and outcry; it was a total

grave of miscarriage of justice, a black day for the black man, and a true situation of a rogue leader in the most populous black nation (Mbeke-Ekanem, 2000).

Ken Saro-Wiwa, predicting and echoing his view in the court, stated succinctly that the agenda is being set at this trial, and whether the peaceful ways I favour will prevail depends on what the oppressor decides and what signal it sends out to the ethnic groups of the Niger Delta and the awaiting general public. In my innocence of the false charges, in my letter of conviction, I call upon the Ogoni ethnic group and other ethnic groups of the Niger Delta and all the oppressed ethnic nationalities of Nigeria to stand up now and fight fearlessly and peacefully for their rights. History is on their side, and God is on their side (Mbeke-Ekanem, 2000).

Thus, the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the eight MOSOP leaders and the Niger Delta unresolved issues aroused many youths of the region to take their destinies into their own hands since the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies operating in the region are collaborators and partners in crime in defrauding the people of their resources, destinies and creating environmental problems for the region. These youths established different armed groups, such as the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Bini Oru of Furopa (BOF), Niger Delta Strike Force (NDSF), Coalition for Militant Action (COMA), Asawana Deadly Force of the Niger Delta (ADFND), Joint Revolution Council (JRC), Adaka Boro Marine Commanders (ABMC), and the Niger Delta Red Squad (NDRS), etc., to press home the demand of the region to the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies operating in the region. Security in the area exacerbated as a result of the youths using sophisticated weapons and ammunition against the Nigerian government and multinational oil companies (MNOCs) due to their failure to meet the demands of the people. After all other peaceful means of bringing the Nigerian government and MNOC attention to the region problems failed, these disgruntled youths from various groups in the area became violently and fearlessly agitated. They believe that kidnapping was one of the fastest ways to achieve their objectives. These gangs primarily terrorise MNOCs employees, and the proceeds that they received from kidnapping provides for themselves, families and operations in the region.

Kidnapping in the Niger Delta Region

Kidnapping was uncommon and quiet in the area before 1999. The growing discontent with the laws and policies of the Nigerian government, as well as MNOC's operations and activities with the region and its resources, gave rise to this illegal crime. The armed groups in the region kidnapped MNOCs employees for the following reasons: (i) kidnapping for strategic bargaining and to force the region and its people back into the Nigerian system from which they had previously been expelled; (ii) kidnapping to force the MNOCs and their staff out of the region, albeit temporarily. This was confirmed by Alhaji Asari Dokubo, the leader of the NDPVF:

> We asked them to leave our land, but they refused and sided with the Nigerian military, believing that the Army would protect them. The foreign oil workers should leave our land peacefully and come back peacefully when we might have resolved our differences with the government (Daily Independence, July 18, 2007).

(iii) Kidnapping for ransom to fund themselves, families, and operations in the region. In 2006, there were numerous worrisome kidnappings in the region. Unfortunately, kidnapping in the region has become a typical occurrence. By the terminus of 2006, a large number of kidnapping cases had occurred, and ransoms had been paid to the kidnappers in the region. This was also confirmed by Ibaba (2008) in December 2006, a total of 24 incidents involving

118 kidnappings were recorded in the region. The table below captures some of the kidnapping incidents in the region from 2006 to 2008.

Synopsis of Kidnapping in the Niger Delta Region (2006 to 2008)

Date	Action	MNOC	Reason	Outcome
11th January, 2006	Kidnapping of four Shell workers from an offshore platform	Shell offshore E.A oilfield	For ransom purpose	Niger Delta armed youths released four MNOCs workers on January 30, 2006, after ransom was paid and threatened new waves of attacks
13th February, 2006	Kidnapping of nine Willbross workers	Willbross	Unconditional release of Asari Dokubo by Niger Delta armed groups	Nine MNOCs workers were released by NDPVF on February 18, 2006; nine kidnapped oil workers
11th March 2006	Kidnapping of three Saipem workers	Saipem	For ransom purpose	Three oil workers were released on March 12, 2006 by Niger Delta armed youths after ransom was paid
2nd June 2006	Kidnapping of eight Olsen Energy workers	Olsen Energy	For ransom purpose	Released by Niger Delta armed youth's days later after ransom was paid
3rd October 2006	Kidnapping of fourteen Exxon Mobile workers	Exxon Mobile	Unconditional release of Asari Dokubo	Eight oil workers were released on October 21, 2006 by Niger Delta armed groups
7th December 2006	Kidnapping of four Saipem workers	Saipem	For ransom purpose	Released 12 days after the ransom was paid
25th January 2007	Kidnapping of nine Shell workers	Shell	For ransom purpose	Released after ransom was paid on February 4, 2007
1st May 2007	Kidnapping of six Saipem workers	Saipem	Strategy bargain with MNOCs	Released a few days later by MEND
3rd May 2007	Kidnapping of eight Shell workers	Shell	MEND stated they intended to destroy the vessel and not kidnapping the MNOC workers	Released the next day by MEND
25th May 2007	Kidnapping of ten Hydrodive workers	Hydrodive	For strategy bargaining. MEND claimed responsibility	They were released after 19 days by MEND unharmed

			and announced a few days after their kidnapping that the hostages were to be executed	
20th October 2007	Kidnapping of seven Shell workers	Shell	For ransom purpose	Released two days by Niger Delta armed youths
26th October 2007	Kidnapping of seven Saipem workers	Saipem	For strategic bargaining	Released by MEND on October 30, 2007
13th May 2008	Kidnapping of thirteen Chevron workers	Chevron	For ransom purpose	Released after ransom was paid on June 25, 2008
23rd May 2008	Kidnapping of two Lonestar workers	Lonestar	For ransom purpose	Released after ransom was paid by Lonestar the next month
19th June 2008	Kidnapping of one Shell worker	Shell	For strategic bargaining	The attack on the Bonga oilfield in the Niger Delta, owned by Royal Dutch Shell, was attributed to MEND. Following Mr. Jack Stone's kidnapping, the organisation issued a warning about additional attacks. After a few days, MEND freed him
24th July 2008	Kidnapping of twelve Shell workers	Shell	For ransom purpose	Some were released the next day after being kidnapped, and the remaining were released next week on Monday after being kidnapped by the armed youths
25th July 2008	Kidnapping of three Damas Oil and Marine Services workers	Damas Oil and Marine Services	For ransom purpose	Released after ransom was paid a few days after kidnapping
9th September 2008	Kidnapping of twenty nine Shell workers	Shell	For strategic bargaining	Released the next year by MEND

Source: Osaghea, et al (2007), Wikipedia and Author field work (2014).

Many people fled the region as MNOCs workers were kidnapped at flow stations, offshore and onshore, residential houses, camps, rivers, and oceans in the region. Asanebi (2014) noted that foreign countries, such as the United States of America, Britain, and the Philippines, etc., requested their citizens depart the Niger Delta region and Nigeria at large due to the spread of kidnapping that has exacerbated security. Kidnapping became insalubrious for the MNOCs workers in the region. From 2006 to 2008, kidnapping became a lucrative and persistent activity of Niger Delta armed groups in the region.

As a result of the armed groups activities in the area, which have increased insecurity, continuously threatened lives, destroyed oil facilities, and resulted in low oil production that has caused significant economic losses, Shell, one of the MNOCs operating in the area, was forced to fire roughly 3500 employees in 2007. Due to the Niger Delta armed groups inability to approach Nigeria's president and minister of petroleum, employees mostly foreign of MNOCs are more vulnerable to danger and kidnapping in the region.

As time went on, following the Nigerian government's swift and unconditional release of Alhaji Asari Dokubo, the leader of the NDPVF and a pivotal figure in the Niger Delta conflict, MNOCs and the Nigerian government began to believe that these armed groups would stop kidnapping MNOCS workers in the region, but that was not the case. After being freed on June 14, 2007, by the Nigerian government, Alhaji Asari Dokubo denounced and addressed the issue of kidnapping.

He pontificates that:

> We must condemn kidnapping in all its ramifications; if we want people to do justice to us, we must do justice to others. The people we are kidnapping against their will—is it justice? They are businessmen. They called them to come and do business anywhere (Dokuba, 2007).

But by the time Alhaji Asari Dokubo spoke up, kidnapping had become deeply ingrained in the area as these armed groups used it as a means of drawing attention to the MNOCs and the Nigerian government to address the issues in the Niger Delta and to raise money for their families, operations, and themselves. Other factors, such as insiders and informants from the MNOCs, security leakage, collaboration from unpatriotic Nigerian security personnel, ransom negotiators, covetousness, and the struggle for regional self-determination and environmental degradation, among others, have contributed to the region's difficulty in abating kidnapping.

In an interview concerning the difficulties in curbing kidnapping in the region, Alhaji Asari Dokubo (2007) stated that it has gone beyond an individual to mitigate kidnapping in the region overnight because ransoms (monies) from the kidnapping have nourished the mouths of the individuals involved, as anytime a foreigner (MNOCs worker) is sighted, he or she is kidnapped, and if the kidnappers see a non-foreigner, they might kidnap the person for the ransom. The region suffered significant setbacks as a result of the lack of tranquility resulting from the kidnapping.

Implications of Kidnapping to the National Security of Nigeria

One of the main responsibilities of a sovereign state is to protect its national security. A state can only flourish when its citizens may pursue their goals in life in a peaceful atmosphere and there is no threat to their security from external or internal sources. Nigeria was impacted by rampant kidnapping activities in the region, which made everything else secondary. From 2006 to 2008, kidnappings in the Niger Delta posed a serious threat to Nigeria's national security. Because there was no assurance of security, foreign visitors and investors were afraid to visit and invest in Nigeria. Kidnappers continue to defy the efficacy of the nation's primary duties, which are the safety and security of lives and property in Nigeria.

Additionally, numerous businesses were shut down from 2006 to 2008 as a result of kidnapping and deadly attacks on MNOCs installations both onshore and offshore. This significantly decreased the amount of Nigerian revenue that came into the federation account from the region. Many people in the country lost their jobs as a result of kidnapping. Sardonically, kidnappings in the region stunted security and development, thereby leaving the region vulnerable to several attacks by armed Niger Delta groups. Nigeria's image was annihilated abroad, and kidnappers became a nightmare to the MNOCs workers and the security forces of Nigeria (military and paramilitary), whose jobs were to protect the lives and property of Nigerians and also to defend the sovereignty of the nation, as many of them fell to the bullets of the kidnappers in discharging their duties in Nigeria. The Niger Delta armed groups involved in kidnapping saw the security forces as collaborators with the Nigerian government and MNOCs; thus, terminating their lives was a must to access their resources and execute smoothly the kidnapping of MNOCs workers for ransom, to chase multinational oil companies away from the region, and for strategic bargaining with the federal government of Nigeria in addressing the issues of the region.

Kidnapping led to the displacement of MNOCs camps and residences, the loss of lives and property, and the restriction of the movement of MNOCs workers and Nigerians in the region. Public safety was not guaranteed for MNOCs workers (foreign and indigenous) and citizens of Nigeria.

Conclusion

The foregoing discourse has examined kidnapping in the Niger Delta and its implication on the national security of Nigeria from 2006 to 2008. The failure of the Nigerian government and the MNOCs operating in the region to address the issues in the region gave birth to kidnapping. The Niger Delta region, which holds the bulk of the crude oil deposits in Nigeria, witnessed uprisings of kidnapping of MNOCs workers that drastically affected the national security of the region and the nation from 2006 to 2008. Kidnappings in the region resulted in the loss of employment and lives, as well as restrictions on the movement of MNOCs personnel and citizens of Nigeria.

The outcome of the kidnapping was disastrous to the economy and annihilated the image of the nation. Due to the monetary outcome and benefits, these armed groups were not ready to abate kidnapping in the region. Kidnapping became a great business involving the following: a few bad eggs of MNOCs workers and indigenous people of MNOCs host communities who leaked information to these armed groups; a few Niger Delta communities who make available their lands to kidnappers as camps and concealed information from security personnel in carrying out their duties in the region; negotiators who are sometimes elite of the region; corrupt security personnel who breached security information to the kidnappers; and Niger Delta armed groups that adopted kidnapping as a means to enrich themselves, their families, and fund their operations; and as a method to agitate for Niger Delta region and development from MNOCs and the Nigerian government.

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