



### ABSTRACT

The paper emphasizes the threat of Ethnic Militia to Democracy and Security in Nigeria. The survey research method was used for this work and the population consists of the entire staff of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) with staff strength of 150

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## HREAT OF ETHNIC MILITIA TO DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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### Introduction

Presently in Nigeria the formation of ethnic and religious groups has completely taken over the stage and also has played a noticeable role with sociopolitical interactions of the Nigerian state. The scenario of this ethnic militia has posed itself to be a threat to Nigerian democracy and security, spanning from the north, East, and South of the Nigerian state. In the Northern state, the exertion of Boko Haram sect which has destroyed millions of lives in the region cannot be ignored. The Obatse cult activities in Nasarawa state in North Central Nigeria is likely going to be out of control. Taking it to the East, the frequent kidnapping by the bad men/criminals remains dangerous in that region. In the South-South area, the activities of Niger Delta militants who in spite of the



amnesty offered to them, is still not steady. For these reason the environment still remained threatened day by day. One of the major challenges that have constrained development in Nigeria is superiority, power of ethnic militia, which is now a threat to democracy and security of the country and also eclipsed to nation for over a decade now. The lasting presence of violence expressed between these groups who feel excluded and unimportant from existing power structures on one hand and central authority on the other hand have seriously affected not only peace and security but also undermined and weakened the countries national development. Also, the violent conflicts with security personnel and the deliberate destruction of public properties by both ethnic militia and insurgency seriously undermines the safety of lives and properties of the people, and infuse fear and sense of insecurity on the majority. These negativity influences the development of the Nigerian state.

employees, 120 persons were selected using the Simple Random Sampling (SRS) technique. The major instrument that was used for this study was the structured questionnaire in a five-liked scale. In analyzing the data collected for the purpose of carrying out this research, the statistical tool correlation (PPC) and the statistics was used. In conclusion, the work has shown that ethnic militia, particularly Niger Delta emerged as expressions of sub-nationalism arising from the weakness and inability of the Nigerian states to resolve perceived marginalization by some sections of the society.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Militia, Democracy, Security, Threat, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).



Among the most critical and violent of this new brand of released political farces of which many have thought of as “resurgence”, is the intractable phenomenon of ethnic nationality/identity movements. Presently in Nigeria, this development has over shadowed and taken on the form of ethnic militia movements ostensibly standing in for and seeking to protect their different ethnic interests in a country in which the state is to a large extent perceived as unconcerned to the needs of the ethnic nationalities in the country. The most important and well pronounced among these militias include the plethora of the Niger Delta militias such as the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), the Niger Delta volunteer force, the chikoko movement. Other new and more pronounced militias include the Niger Delta militants, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Arewa People’s Congress (APC), without any question, the move towards ethnic national self-determination, in whatever form it clearly shows itself, is the maximum challenge facing the security of the Nigeria nation from the 1990s onwards. The densely populated slums of Lagos, Warri, Port Harcourt, Aba, Onitsha Kaduna and Kano, militant groups sporadically unleash extreme violence on civil society as well as on the symbols of governmental authority (Okechukwu, 2000). The weight of the killing of many people by these militant groups is better imagined than experienced. Agitating youths boldly overrun state security squads, ransack police stations and overtakes the streets for days. An order or law that requires people to be indoors are inflicted from time to time while embattled governmental authorities resort to shoot-on-sight orders to quell riots and restore order in the volatile Nigerian urban communities. The sudden increase in the ethnic militias ironically seems to be what unifies Nigerians against the excesses of the state after many years of pernicious rule. Generally, Nigerian do not have faith in their government, they lack the rule of law and a



sense of being oppressed. Common to these militant groups are the attributes of the uncritical use of violence, a preponderance of youth membership, ethnic identity affiliations, and movements of a basically pronounced and well-known nature and pressing change over the status quo such as the calls for a sovereign national conference or a national conference as the case may be. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to unravel the interesting fact of ethnic militias and its threats to democracy and Nigerian security.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

The constant cases of insecurity in the Niger Delta has been a source of concern as it has taken a negative tool on the corporate existence of Nigeria. Cases of militancy have long ago divided the country along ethnic lines and this does not urgur well for the cultural and social development of our country especially as regards to democracy. The cases of insecurity caused by these menace has resulted to the decline of the productivity of the country and has equally put democracy in a grave risk as it has continued to crumble the country's economic status.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study is to examine the perception of the public on the threat of ethnic militia to democracy and security in Nigeria. Other specific objectives include:

1. To evaluate the level of public awareness of ethnic militia as a threat to democracy.
2. To examine the relationship between ethnic militia and democracy.
3. To examine the effect of ethnic militia on socio-economic development of Nigeria.



4. To examine the effect of ethnic militia on the development of democracy in Nigeria.
5. To investigate the major factors contributing to insecurity in Nigeria.
6. To determine the relationship between ethnic militancy and insecurity in Nigeria.
7. To recommend possible solution to ethnic militia in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the effect of ethnic militia on socio-economic development of Nigeria?
2. What is the effect of ethnic militia on the development of democracy in Nigeria?
3. What are the major factors contributing to insecurity in Nigeria?
4. What is the relationship between ethnic militia and insecurity in Nigeria?
5. What are the possible solutions to ethnic militia in Nigeria?

### **Research Hypothesis**

$H_0$ : Ethnic militia does not affect Nigeria's democracy.

$H_1$ : Ethnic militia affects Nigeria's democracy.

$H_0$ : There is no relationship between ethnic militia and insecurity in Nigeria.

$H_1$ : There is a relationship between ethnic militia and insecurity in Nigeria.

### **Significances of the Study**

The study would greatly benefit the Nigerian populace, government at all levels and politicians as it would go a long way of unveiling the consequences of ethnic militia on our nascent democracy and security.



The study would also proffer solutions to ethnic militia in Nigeria. It would also be of immense importance to students, researchers, and scholars who are interested in carrying out further research on this subject matter.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study will be restricted to the examination of people's perception of ethnic militia and its threat to democracy and security in Nigeria using a case study of the Niger Delta militants. The work will specify on the entire staff of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Lagos. The study covers socio-political developments in Nigeria dating back to the formative period to the point sub-nationalism manifestation become appropriated by militant ethnic organization. The focus of the comparative study is that of the Boko Haram insurgency. Access to information was naturally difficult, given the nature of the subject of study.

### **Research Design**

The survey research method will be used for this study. This was considered appropriate because survey design generally can be used to effectively investigate problems in realistic settings. The survey techniques will also allow the researcher to examine several variables and use multi-variety statistics to analyse data.

### **Definition of term**

**Ethnic militia:** Are organized violence-oriented groups populated by diverse elements, cutting across different age strata, but drawing membership exclusively from an ethnic group and established to promote and protect the interests of an ethnic group. Ethnic militias are extreme form of ethnic agitation for self-determination and occur



when the group assumes militant posture. They serve as a social pressure group designed influence the structure of power to the advantage of and all attention to the deteriorating material condition or political deprivation and perceived marginalization of their group or social environment.

**Militants:** One having or showing a desire or willingness to use strong extreme, and sometimes forceful methods to achieve.

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

In Nigeria, ethnic and religious groups have taken the centre stage and play prominent roles in the dynamics of governance of the Nigerian state. Ethnic, socio-political formations like the Ohaneze Ndigbo, Arewa consultative forum and the Afenifere are the most visible on the political arena. These groups have a penetrating influence. They, particularly at the youth level, are called ethnic militias, though the agenda and activities of these groups, i.e the militias and the ethnic socio-political groups may not necessarily be related. The most prominent of the ethnic militias include Oodua people's congress, Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Movement for the Sovereign state of Biafra (MASSOB), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Arewa People's Congress (APC) and religious militia groups in Northern Nigeria. As already stated, these movements, seeking to protect and advance different ethnic interests, are now contesting not just the political space and democratic dividends, but also resource control as part of the liberation of the political environment. (Agbu .O. 2002). These groups, who claim to represent ethnic and regional interests, adopt diverse strategies which include violence and criminality/criminally motivated actions in the conduct of their activities.



## **Literature Review**

There is little doubt, that there is some linkage between democratization, thno-nationalism and violence in divided societies that are going through political and economic transitions; the controversy remains however, whether this relationship is positive or negative; in its manifestation, in regard to national unity or democratic consolidation. The literature is replete with instances of situations in which democratization and the opening up of the democratic space have led to incidences of low intensity conflicts and undesired tensions (Akwetey, 1996: 103; Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996: 8; Hameso, 1997: 7; Wippman, 1998). Akwetey (1996) for instance, drew attention to the nature of the democratization process in Africa in the light of the resurgence of ethno-political violence during transitions to democracy. He cited Ghana's experiences in 1981 and 1994, when violence resurged under elected civilian regimes. According to Hameso (1997), issues of ethnicity and self agenda today. For Africa, the salience of ethnicity ought to be seen in relation to its historical and political experience which corresponded to highly centralized and authoritarian (often, military) regimes that professed to avoid the divisiveness of ethnic diversity; which was really nothing but a mask for ethnic domination.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Concept of Ethnic Militia in Nigeria**

Duverger, M. (1976) noted that the militia groups vary significantly from regular armies, because members of these militia groups remain civilians without military culture. Furthermore, they may be obliged to meet and train regularly and be ready to hold themselves at the disposition of their leaders. They are never mobilized on a permanent basis and also not maintained full time by their organization.



Moreover, he noted that two categories are distinguishable among the militia, namely, those who may be referred to as a kind of “active army”, who are ever ready for confrontation and others who are described more or less like “reserve”. Furthermore, he observed the military character of the militia appear not only in its composition but also in its structure, which is usually “based on very small groups which build up into pyramids to form larger and larger units (Duverger, 1976). An ethnic militia movement can be described as an extreme form of ethnic agitation for self-determination as various ethnic groups assume militant postures and gradually metamorphose into militia groups which rely on ethnic identity and purport to act as machinery through which the desires of the people are actualized. The common characteristics of these ethnically inspired groups are the resort to violence, a preponderance of youth membership, an ethnic identity affiliation. From the foregoing explanations and definitions an ethnic militia can be described as youth organization formed for the struggle against deprivation and marginalization which have transformed into violent militant youth some of who, have also changed their objectives from struggles for ethnic desires into criminal activities.

### **Ethnic Militias in the Niger Delta**

The emergence and growth of militia groups in contemporary Nigeria can be traced to the internal contradictions in the Nigerian political economy. First, is the nature of the Nigerian state which has been a violent one has striven to maintain control and dominance of the society through violent approaches. Militia groups became visible in the country in the 1990’s when the Nigerian state was in distress under callous military dictatorship, particularly during the Babagida and Abacha regimes. One of the consequences of the character of these regimes was the rise of militia groups (Adejumobi, 2002). The other



dimension to the rise of militia groups under the Babangida and Abacha regimes was the marginalization and social deprivation, particularly of the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta region. The response of the government to the Niger Delta crisis has been the marginalization of the region to keep at bay restive youth and other groups to ensure the free flow of oil to the Nigerian state. This has led to the emergence of several militant youths while the existing non-violent groups have resorted to violence as a challenge to brutality occasioned by the presence of military personnels in the region. The objective of these militant groups is to challenge the violent posture of the state and highlight the marginalization and deprivation that characterized the Niger Delta region. The above context has led to the emergence and growth of militia groups in the Niger-Delta region. Between 1990 and 1999, not less than twenty-four ethnic based minority right groups emerged in the region with radical postures. These include the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Chikoko Ijaw National Congress, Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Ijaw Peace Movement (IPM), Isoko National Youth Movement (INYM), and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). Others that emerged after 1999 include Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) and Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF). None of these groups, at their inception, had violent inclinations as their objectives. The prevailing circumstance forced these formations into violence some of which have degenerated into criminal activities. The nature and character of the Nigerian state, failure and lack of political leadership and political institutions, the struggle for power and unfair or unequal economic relations among ethnic nationalities are some of the factors that have prompted the emergence of ethnic militia groups in the Nigerian state and the Niger-Delta region in particular. The resolve is to resist the deprivation, social injustice, marginalization,



neglect, and seeming insecurity of the people through whatever means including the formation of the underground organizations.

### **Major Factors Contributing to Increase in Ethnic Militia/Insecurity**

Diverse explanations have been put forward for the growth in the number of ethnic militia groups in Nigeria. Babawale (2001) conceives of the emergence of militia groups as being due to imperfection in Nigeria's federal system. He observes that the emergence is due to the manipulation of ethnicity by the governing elite across the various geo-political zones. Danjuma (2002) argues that the formation and activities of ethnic militias are traceable to neglect by government or a perception of such neglect on the part of many ethnic nationalities in the country and suggests: -

1. Neglect by government or even perceived neglect can be capitalized on by opposing groups to whip-up ethnic sentiments which invariably results in communal conflicts. It is this neglect or perception of it, which has resulted in the creation of the Niger-Delta militants., Egbesu-Boys, Bakassi-Boys, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and the Arewa People's congress among others. The military, during their subjugation of this country, did a lot of havoc to us. All disrupted, the Nigerian labour congress was disrupted, the ASUU proscribed, NBA, NMA and so on and so forth. So there were no platform for social interaction and unity continued to elude us. So we looked inward, like is said, into our ethnic nationalities and we decided that, okay, let us have these social platforms like the Ijaw National Congress, the Igbo People's congress: In a similar note Fawehinmi (2000) mentioned the emergence and proliferation of ethnic militia group on perceived injustice, deprivation and marginalization of some ethnic nationalities and contended that the ethnic militant organizations



arose in Nigeria because of perceived injustice, perceived exclusion of various forms, such as political injustice, ethnic marginalization and economic exclusion in terms of access to social services. He further elaborated that these organizations are products of several reasons, several areas of misgovernance of our country. OPC came into being as a result of the dastardly, illegal and immoral scuttling of the June 12 (1993) election. In the North, APC is in the lime light because of the masses of the North are ignored by their leaders (who) are not able to improve the quality of life of the people or rather the poor people. In the East and therefore the Bakassi Boys emerged. Then the Egbesu Boys situation is even more depressing, because they come from the Niger – Delta and 98 percent of our resources are derived from the Niger-Delta. And when they cried for succor, the federal government gave them bullets, when they asked for education, food on the table, the federal government met them with bullets. So the Egbesu Boys said, No, - enough is enough. Thus, it is arguable that the collapse of most institutions, inter-ethnic inequity has stimulated the political elite of the various ethnic nationalities to promote and encourage new organizations that, would promote interests of those ethnic nationalities. In doing this, these groups have drawn strength from the new global recognition of ethnic self-determination as an intergral part of the promotion of global human rights (Amuta, 2000).

2. A second factor in the emergence and proliferation of ethnic militia groups is the collapse of the state institutions established for the protection of life and property, particularly the Nigerian police force. Fawehinmi identified the failure of security agencies as a major consequence for the rise of the militia phenomenon in Nigeria. He opined that the abysmal failure of the security agencies of Nigeria has contributed to the strength and social acceptability of



the ethnic militia organizations in various parts of the country. The inability of the police to provide security compelled the public to transfer the confidence that should have been reposed in the police to the ethnic militia who have proved, in some cases, to be more reliable and effective in checking the menace of armed robbers in local communities.

3. The third factor in the emergence and proliferation of ethnic militia groups can be seen as a symptom of what Bangura (1999) referred to as “an extraordinary youth crisis”. This crisis has its offshoot in the growth and increase in the nation’s youth, as a consequence of the nation’s rapid population growth. This situation has been heightened by the collapse of the educational system, the construction of opportunities in the formal job sector and the relegation of most of the nation’s youth to existence in very harsh conditions, ether from a difficult informal sector or from the night mare of an overcrowded job markets.

### **The Effects of Ethnic Militia on Social Economic Development**

It is right to state here that, the activities of the ethnic militias in Nigeria have no positive effect rather it posed a lot of negative effect on our development. Some of these negative impacts are shown below.

- (a) **Volatile investment climate:** This is one of the negative effects of ethnic militias and insurgency in Nigeria. In Nigeria, threat to life, loss of life and act of aggression especially from militias like the Niger- Delta, the Ombatse, and insurgents like the Boko Haram, sect has already scared some foreign investors coming in the country and it is very bad for a nation that is striving to meet the vision 2020.



- (b) **Instability:** Another negative impact of ethnic militias and insurgents activities on Nigerian development is that renegades among them have been engaged in subversive activities against the state which is capable of destabilizing the political process. For instance some renegades have been used by politicians as thugs, assassins, and kidnappers to deal with their political opponents.
- (c) **Destructions of life's and property:** Another negative effect of ethnic militia groups and insurgent's activities is the deliberate vandalization and destruction public utilities such as oil pipelines, electrical installations, telecommunications equipment etc for example, in May 2013, militia group in Nasarawa state destroyed a police station and killed a number of police officers. The destruction of these public utilities, especially the disruption of electricity and telecommunication negatively impacts on the development process in the affected areas.
- (d) **Drift towards disintegration:** Equally, the violent activities or militia groups and insurgents, which instill fear and insecurity among the citizenry discourage the people from active participation in political activities such as rallies and campaigns, for fear of being attacked, kidnapped or killed.

### **Effect of Insecurity Situation and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria**

After sixty years of nationhood Nigeria still ranks among the poorest countries in the world, also ranks low in all socio-economic indicators such as life expectancy, death rate, access to water, poverty rate, mortality rate, and crime rate, and still carries the tag of a developing economy. Nigeria is a classic illustration of an oxymoron, a poor country in the midst of abundant human and natural resources. This



scenario has contributed to security challenges that have bedeviled the country since independence till now with grave consequences for socio-economic development. There is no nation that can achieve socio-economic development in an environment of socio-and physical insecurity. The increasing challenge of insecurity in Nigeria has also been linked to failure of leadership to deliver good governance, and secure the welfare of persons on the principles of freedom, equity, and justice. The ruling elites in Nigeria in both the military and democratic dispensation are dependent, parasitic, and very corrupt in nature, and mal-administration (Ali, 2013).

### **Democracy and National Security**

The word “demos” referring to people, has as its specific context people living in a community. Democracy is a means to achieve good governance, never an end in itself. What is important is to put human beings living in communities at the heart of the process, particularly women, children, physically challenged persons and other vulnerable groups in the society. We associate counting votes with democracy but there are so many ways to structure a voting system which can lead to very different outcomes. Democracy should always be structured to facilitate good governance, never to make it harder. Notwithstanding the crisis of global capitalism, many governments have bailed out industries in order to save the jobs of their citizens. Election campaigns in such countries are centred on how to improve the economy with a view to guaranteeing the security and the welfare of the populace. But in Nigeria, most members of the political class, for want of ideas, deliberately set out to engage in divide et imperia tactics and to promote backward ideas like zoning, religious ethnicity and other primordial agenda.



However, it is my submission that the country cannot guarantee law and order unless the labour movement and other progressive forces are prepared to wage a battle which will ensure that the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good and that “ suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the described are provided for all citizens. See section 16(2) of the constitutions”. Furthermore, the Nigerian government should be made to comply fully with its national and international legal obligations to uphold the economic, social and cultural rights of citizens, in order to ensure security through the crucial protection of human rights and the rule of law. The government must demonstrate the commitment in deed and not merely in words to respect the rights and freedoms of citizens and to promote their welfare. In particular, the government should re-commit itself to the achievement of the millennium development goals as a means of addressing under development and preventing the marginalization of many in the country. There is also the need for a strong and effective mechanism within the National Assembly to oversee executive action, including when they vote on the budget and monitor its implementation, to ensure that a balance is struck between national security, human security and individual freedoms, and to avert any threats to democracy.

### **Effects of ethnic militia on political development and ethnic militia groups and criminality in the Niger- Delta**

The ft and the illegal trading in refined petroleum products and crude oil: - started on a small scale in the 1980’s. It has graduated from amateurs who utilize crude methods in the extraction of refined



petroleum products and crude oil from the distribution pipelines of the MNGS to advanced technology to tap refined petroleum products and crude with the aid of sophisticated communications equipment and transportation means across creeks, rivers and rivulets. It has become large and extensive in scale since the late 1990's. Aerial survey and patrol of the creeks and waters of rivers and Bayelsa states revealed a large number of boats and barges involved in the illegal bunkering. The refined petroleum products and crude oil are transported through ships and barges and sold in the high sea. The crude oil is sold at very low prices, when the price per barrel was 26 USD, as at 2003, it was sold for 7 SUD. By 2004, it was sold at about 15 USD per barrel (Oduniyi, 2003). There is also the involvement of the community and ethnic militia in the illegal economy, some of which control the waterways and creeks. It is assumed and claimed that the illegal trading is undertaken by rival and well armed ethnic based militia groups. However, there was no such organized militia when the illegal trading began in the 1980's. When militia became active in the Niger-Delta in the 1990's, they were engaged in violently compelled benefits from MNC's. However, when they began to be involved in the illegal theft and trade in refined petroleum products and crude oil, they were merely foot soldiers to big time bunkers. Oil barons form militia groups to enrich them and import also weapons to arm themselves for the purpose of securing and defending their operations. Some leaders of the militia groups are now involved in illegal theft and illegal trading in refined petroleum products and crude oil. Some even exchange refined petroleum products and crude oil for communication gadgets and arms for militia war (Ikelegbe, A. 2005). The illegal oil business further underpins communal and ethnic conflicts in the Niger-Delta region. The weapon inflow empowers the communities and militia for violent conflicts and other activities bordering on criminality. The theft



and illegal trade in refined petroleum products and crude oil provide financial backing for its leading militia groups and armed gangs. Profitable as it may seem, it is also a known fact that a thousand persons lose their lives annually in bloody encounters between militias, communities and the armed forces (Maier, 2004). Militia groups are involved in violent crime in the Niger-Delta.

### **Ethnic militia movements: Implications for political order in Nigeria**

My basic thrust in this paper has been an attempt to show that inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria have been one of conflicts largely caused by ethnic chauvinism which manifests in the form of ethnic nationalism. The question that readily comes to mind is, how have the various ethnic militia movements impacted on the political order across Nigeria. The anatomy of the country's political development since 1960 shows the extents to which ethnic politics have deeply affected the nation's quest for stable polity. I argue that the significant factor in the emergence of youth-based ethnic militias has been the failure of the political elites to deliver the anticipated. Socio-economic emancipation to the common Nigerian coupled with government's brazen relative deprivation in the administration of political and fiscal federalism in post independent Nigeria. In the face of these differential perceptions, ethnic militancy has thus become as fashionable as a form of ethnic nationalism that have in almost cases constituted a disintegrating rather than a coagulating factor to the Nigerian polity. The examples are very glaring indeed. Consistent with its establishment purpose, the OPC has been engaging other various ethnic nationalities wherever it has perceived any form of threat to its ethnic group and in the process threatening the political order of the country. In response to their perceived marginalization, they have been championing the campaign for decisive political arrangements



like that police, the advocacy for the constitutional conference to determine a new political order or basis for peaceful co-existence in the country. Similarly, the Egbesu, the OPC and the Bakassi Boys also operate under strict ethnic impetus. As for the OPC, apart from its constitution to checkmate the OPC “expansionist” agenda. It also has a political motive of obstructing the bifurcation off Nigeria, since realization of such a move would amount to estrangement from the main source of economic sustenance oil revenue. That apart, the APC also encourages the tenacious hold on to power of the northern political class, whether or not the political order of Nigeria might be jeopardized in the process. The way and manner in which the Bakassi Boys operate has not in any way been different. They have a primary agenda of realizing the Biafran dream-which is in all- and intent and purpose decisive. Along with the Egbesu Boys of Africa, these ethnic militia groups are also known to support the OPC for national conference with the exception of the APC. For the Egbesu Boys, the perception of relative political, economic and social deprivation has produced another dimension of the agitation of ethnic militias in Nigeria that of resources control. Take together, the activities of the ethnic militia movements have openly been at variance with the interest of Nigeria’s corporate political existence in all ramifications of the word. Consequently, political vendetta smear campaigns, ethnic politics have become the idiosyncrasy of Nigeria’s political culture and recipes for the destruction of its political structure, there about. This situation is well captured by Williams. The dramatic upsurge of ethnic militias represents the most critical threat to the Nigerian state to date. State power flows from the ability to impose the national well on all segments of the society. When this monopoly is challenged by force or by sustained disobedience or armed non-compliance, the state becomes a caricature or pathetic parody of its classic in carnation.



Indeed, the contemporary ethnic and religious feuds and conflicts as well as the activities of the militia movements in Nigeria can only be meaningfully understood within the context of the linkage to ethnic politics. During Nigerian First Republic (1960- 1966), political parties were formed along ethno-linguistic lines and were made to champion ethnic interests. Sooner or later, these parties, the Action Group (Yoruba Political Party), the Northern People's Congress (The Hausa/Fulani Dominated Political Party), and the NCNC (The Ibo Dominated Party) were pit together in a serious competition (Badmos, 2003).

During the period under review, ethnically loaded political arrangement had threatened the continued or continual existence of the country and its negative consequences of political riots, arson, killings, etc. (Owoeye and Amusan's (1999: 26) remark clarifies the situation and according to them: the political process in Nigeria followed ethnic and geographic division for a very long time. This affected the type and quality of constitution put in place by different government since independence - - - For the North to have effective control of the state and to break the perceived hegemonic power of the West; the Midwest state was created from the economically and politically powerful Western region in 1964. The 1964 general election result created political instability in Nigeria. The Western region was the most affected because of activities of the Northern People's Congress sponsored alternative political party in the region, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by the Deputy president of the Action Group S.L. Akintola political unrest in the West led to the military intervention in politics on 15 January, 1966. The 1966 coup d'état was believed to be ethnically inspired and cost the North almost all its seasoned political leaderships as the death of the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar. Tafawa Belewa and others would prove. This



coup was followed by a counter coup by young Hausa/Fulani Officers in July 1966 which ultimately led to the death of the head of state, General, Aguyi,Ironsi. This scenario repeated itself during the second Republic (1978 – 1983) as the inability of the ruling party, the National Party of Nigeria, to effectively handle the ethnic rivalries and problem abruptly terminated the Republic by December 31, 1983 coup de'tat led by Generals Muhammadu Bubari and Tunde Idiagbon. On this, Owoeye and Amusan (1999: 27) aver that the reappearance of the military on the Nigeria's political scene was attributed to the lack of competence, mismanagement, and ethnicity in the Alhaji Shehu Shagari administration. Apart, the annulment of the June 12, 1992 presidential elections which was widely believed to have been won by the business magnate, Chief MKO Abiola, a Yoruba from the Southwest reinforced ethnic division, mistrust and posed a very big challenge to the corporate existence of Nigeria. These developments, no doubt, provided the historical precedents that informed the establishment of the various ethnic militia movements as we hitherto stated. The exit of the military (repressive) regimes and entrance of the civilian dispensation released the pent-up feelings of deprivation and flared up ethnic agitation for their own share of the national cake.

### **Solutions to Menace of Ethnic Militia in the Niger – Delta**

In investigating the most efficient way of dowsing the tension generated by activities of militia groups in the Niger- Delta region, the paper suggests the adoption of the Vulnerability Reduction Strategy (VRS) approach. This approach is inherent in the combination of accommodative, compromise and collaborative strategies.

✓ **Accommodative strategy:** This approach involves the discontinuation of the current competitive approach which often generates exaggeration of value of granting concession on resource



revenue allocation to the affected region, the use of talent and manifest threat built on fear of reprisals and use of force, management of truth on the actuate number of barrels of crude pumped from the Niger- Delta, the accommodative approach that necessitates committed actions from all parities.

- ✓ **Compromise strategy:** This approach involves the manifestation of informal third party intervention void of interest that will assist in the transformation of conflict elements. The joint acceptable informal group will help dowse the existing tensions, facilitate formal roundtable conferences between the aggrieved groups and the implacable state. The informal group will attempt solutions to existing deprivations, perceived injustice and marginalization. The informal groups will neutral elements of future conflicts.
- ✓ **Collaborative strategy:** All this stage efforts will be made to constitute formal mechanism that will be responsible for formal grievance handling. This will involve the establishment of joint committees which will be responsible for the implementation of jointly agreed resolutions (Jegade & Foluke, 2007).

There are major steps necessary for dowsing the crisis in the Niger – Delta which includes:

- ✓ Provision of a conducive environment that wull enhance meaningful negotiation.
- ✓ Encouragement of the mutual interdependency of Nigerian state and the oil communities.
- ✓ Total commitment on the part of the state towards the provision of resources and the expansion of existing resources made available to the people.
- ✓ Resources allocation must be integrative, equitable and information must flow unimpeded from the top to the bottom.



- ✓ The circumventing of resources meant for the region by the elite group must be checked and arrested.
- ✓ Efforts must be intensified, by governments at all levels, in collaboration with the organized private sector and civil society groups to expand the opportunities and improve the quality of education and skill acquisition for the youths.
- ✓ There is also the need for imaginative and far-reaching initiatives in the areas of job creation, poverty alleviation and the refocusing of youthful energy towards constructive endeavours.

Above all, there is the need for the government to put in place security mechanism to curb the menace of militia groups in the region.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Okafor (2000: 3), noting the conceptual difficulty of a general definition, observes that violence can be used to describe every variety of force, militancy, coercion, destruction and aggression directed against persons, properties, and symbols of perceived sources of discontent. This includes such phenomena as riots armed robbery, arson, guerrilla warfare, civil wars, coup d' etat, assassinations, insurrections, rebellions, revolutions and the like. He however, identifies mass violence and in particular, civil violence as suited to the understanding of situations in which violence is directed at people or things that are symbols or agents of the political or civil order. He identified three probable theoretical explanations for the resurgence of civil violence in Nigeria. The first, which derives from psychological studies, is what he terms the "relative deprivation, rising expectation and frustration aggression hypothesis". The second systemic model which he identified just as Nnoli (1995a) did is the widespread belief that there is a paradoxical relationship between



modernization and political disorder. The story of the ethnic militias is not about violence. Some good deeds have been credited to the OPC and Bakassi Boys especially in the area of combating crime. The general perception is that the police are corrupt, inefficient, ill-equipped and unreliable while the militias are incorruptible and efficient. In June 2001, the then Governor of Lagos state, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, publicly announced his willingness to invite the OPC to assist the state to combat criminals who seemed to have overwhelmed the police in Lagos state. This announcement was greeted with applause and approbation by the residents of Lagos who have had to sleep in their houses for months with their eyes wide open because of constant harassment by armed bandits. It is important to emphasize the fact that these agitations by the militias were largely borne out of frustration with the failure of the Nigerian state to promote equity among its component units, ensure equal representation of the units in national, institutions, and compensate these communities for the degradation of their environment.

### **Research Methodology**

The work describes methods and procedures used to conduct this research. The description of the procedures is done under the following headings, research designs, population of the study, sample and sampling procedures, data collection instruments, data collection procedure and limitation of the study.

### **Research Design**

The surveys research method was used for this study. This was considered appropriate because survey design generally can be used to effectively investigate problems in realistic settings. The survey



techniques will also allow the researcher to examine several variables and use multi-variety statistics to analyse data.

### **Population of the study**

The population consists of the entire staff of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) with staff strength of 150 employees.

### **Sample size and Sampling Techniques**

Out of the population of 150 persons in the commission, 120 persons were selected using the simple random sampling techniques. The logic behind this is in conformity with the views of (Okoh 2005) in his book, the principles of educational research. He opined that for any population below 100 persons or object at least more than 50%, of the population is adopted as its sample to enhance effective representation so that conclusions from the study can be generalized.

### **Instrument of Data Collection**

The major instrument used for this study is the questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured in a five-like scale measurement attitude of strongly, agreed, undecided, disagreed, and strongly disagreed.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher personally collected data from the respondents through the help of the human resources manager. After distribution of the questionnaire given in order to give enough time to the respondents to reflect on the items on the questionnaire to facilitate valid responses.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Data analysis has been defined as those techniques used whereby the researcher extracts relevant informations from the data which would



enable a summary description of the subject studies to be made. In analyzing the data collected for the purpose of carrying out this research, the statistical tool known as the Pearson product moment correlation (PPC) and the statistics were used. The use of sample percentage was also deployed. Tables were used in presenting the data for the purpose of the simplicity and clarity. The Pearson product moment correlation (PPC) techniques can be expressed by the formula.

$$r = \frac{n \sum Xy - \sum X \sum y}{\sqrt{[n \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Where  $X$  = independent factor

$y$  = dependent factor

Since the research instrument used was the questionnaire, it was designed using the five like scale method. The questionnaire was designed in the following ways.

- i. Strongly Agreed (SA) -5
- ii. Agreed (A) - 4
- iii. Undecided (U) - 3
- iv. Disagreed (D) - 2
- v. Strongly Disagreed (SD) - 1

#### Decision Rule:

In taking decision for “ $r$ ”, the following rules shall be observed. If the value of “ $r$ ” tabulated is greater than “ $r$ ”, calculated, accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) and reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) if the “ $r$ ” calculated is greater than the “ $r$ ” tabulated, accept the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) while the alternative hypothesis is rejected.



### **Limitation of the Study**

Financial constraint – insufficient fund tends to impede the efficiency of the researcher in sourcing for the relevant materials, iterative or informations and in the process of data collection (internet, questionnaire and interview).

### **Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation**

The paper is devoted to the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data gathered in the course of this study. The data used for this study is primary data gotten from employees of selected banks. The data are been analysed using correlation and regression.

### **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

The work examined the public perception of ethnic militia, a threat to democracy and security in Nigeria by undertaking a comparative analysis of Niger-Delta militias. This became necessary because of the preponderance of violence-oriented ethnic organizations and the centrifugal nature of their activities that impact negatively on the course of nation-building in Nigeria. The result is the proliferation of ethnic based organizations making various demands on the Nigeria state and operating outside the confines of the law. The response of the democratic government to these developments has tended to exacerbate the situation because of the tactics of repression which were incidentally used by successive military administrations and so, rather than abate, the spate of sub nationalism in the country has intensified. Given this backdrop, the study focused on ethnic militia, a threat to democracy and security in Nigeria using the specific case of Niger-Delta militias.



## **Findings**

One important finding from this work is the fact of ideological factor borne out of grievance against the Nigeria political system. Therefore those issues that alienate the masses from the state upon which certain elite could use to mobilize a rebellion against the state must be eliminated.

## **Conclusion**

The Nigerian state is a creation of violence and since inception has been held together via violent means. This is typified by the character of colonial and military administrations which had together dominated greater proportion of the country's political life. An aspect that complemented the violent hold of the country, is the tactics of playing up the diversity of the country by pitching one ethnic group against another as a strategy of regime entrenchment, tactics used by both colonial and military administrations to hold on to power. This style of administration, of course awakened ethnic consciousness giving rise to interethnic suspicions and distrusts country's political process in the sense that politics is clouded by rival ethnic competition for eHarmony. That rival hegemonic competition that took ethnic-regional lines during the process of decolonization eventually degenerated into a civil war shortly after independence. One thing that can however not be taken away is the fact that OPC and MASSOB are developments that emerged from the dynamics of the Nigerian political processes. As such, the study achieved its objective that examined how the organization emerged as a new form of sub nationalism in Nigeria. That it was the contradictions of the Nigeria political system where politics has been defined in the line of ethnic connotation thus constituting the breeding ground for rhetoric's of sub-nationalism to strive.



### **Contribution of the study to the Knowledge**

The study has shown that ethnic militia; particularly Niger-Delta emerged as expressions of sub-nationalism arising from the weakness and inability of the Nigerian state to resolve perceived marginalization by some sections of the society. The work also shown that ethnic cleavages have become a political refuge for marginalized political entities because of inequitable political representation at the central government level. It also demonstrated that socio-economic considerations and personal idiosyncrasies of prime movers led to the militarization of Niger-Delta. It also shown that the closely knotted structures of the militia groups are significant factors for their resilience in the face of violent response from the state.

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