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The *Generale:* On the Personification and Glorification of Violence in Nigeria's Niger Delta

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Abstract

This paper attempts to interrogate the origin, development and sustenance of the culture of violence in the Niger Delta as reflected in the idea of the *Generale*. These personalities emerged as a consequence of their affiliation to the struggle for self-determination of the various ethnic groups especially the Ijaws in the 'Oil-rich' region of the Nigerian State. It is observed that, while the struggle was essentially for the benefit of the peoples, living in undeveloped and environmentally polluted areas as a result of Nigerian Government-Multi-National Oil Corporations' partnership activities, the 'fruits' of the agitations are made more manifest in the lives of these few individuals who 'surrendered' arms and ammunitions to the Nigerian State via the Presidential Amnesty Programme which began in 2009. Thus, many young people in an attempt to escape the harsh realities of life, see the 'attainment of the *Generale* status', as the 'best' way out of poverty. This was facilitated by their dependence on the 'street life' where access to guns and drugs, are more fundamental to their existence. The paper recommends that, the machinery of the state at all levels, should provide disincentives for youth against activities that would be detrimental to the society through sports development, skills acquisition and vocational

development. More importantly, *Generales* should imbibe the selfless attitude of the *dramatis persona* of the struggle exemplified in Isaac Boro, who is seen as the symbol of the Niger Delta fight for self-determination. The study is a qualitative one hence, both Primary and Secondary sources (Oral interviews and communications, as well as secondary text) were used within a multi-disciplinary framework.

Keywords: Niger Delta, Amnesty, Violence, Militant, *Generale.*

INTRODUCTION

The nation-state known as Nigeria from 1914, was created and sustained through the use of force by the British authorities. Upon attainment of autonomy by the component parts of the Nigerian state, intimidation, oppression and outright exclusion of other members of these regions were used by the majority groups to hold as well as maintain hegemony. The above bred separatist agitations from the Ijaws, Tiv, Igalla, Efik, Ibibio and other minority ethnic nationalities for a better deal in the entity called Nigeria. After independence in 1960, the ability of some individuals in the Niger Delta area as well as the Eastern part of Nigeria, to comprehend and attempt to utilize same to engage the state on critical issues affecting them, has yielded mixed outcomes. While the likes of Isaac Boro and Odimegwu Emeka Ojukwu failed to make any headway with it, others after 1970, have largely succeeded as they got state recognition and enjoyed several benefits accruable therefrom. In other words, at a personal level, various individuals have been 'blessed' by their involvement in the struggle for a better Nigeria. Some of these personalities have evolved under the guise of the struggle for the emancipation of the oil rich region manifested as resource control and self-determination. Culminating with the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) of the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2009, a group of individuals who were self-styled agitators, acquired the title, *Generale.* This symbolizes their exploits in overcoming the hard and harsh conditions in the region through capital accumulation as well as command over an 'army' of young people. It is observed that, due to their change in economic, social and political status in the Niger Delta, their positions have become an enviable one as younger generation now strive to emulate such personalities thereby, encouraging and sustaining the culture of violence in the study area.

The Niger Delta area has experienced tremendous violence and militarization from the early 1990s. This no doubt, accelerated the regimentation of the people's psyche in their quest for self-determination. The impact of one's contribution to the struggle in the Niger Delta became seen from the violent lens only. For example, the symbol of Ijaw aspiration for self-determination, Isaac Boro, had mostly been seen in terms of his armed insurrection against the Nigerian State in the 'Twelfth Day Revolution'. The intellectual personality of Boro has been largely ignored thereby, painting a picture of a deliberate attempt to undermine the dynamics of his past. In other words, the likes of Ken Saro-Wiwa, E.K. Clark, DSP Alamieyeseigha, Oronto Douglas, T.K. Ogoriba, Felix Tuodolor, and others, who were armed with intellectual tools and skills, have not been given due recognition by the people.

The idea of *sele ke olotu* (money makes a man in the Izon parlance), has truly overwhelmed societal attitude towards life and how people should engage it. Thus, material wealth especially in monetary terms, must be gotten 'by any means necessary' to assuage the negative tide of poverty rocking the 'most-richest' region in the Nigerian State. This work is therefore, an attempt to understand the idea of the *Generale,* foundational formation as well as implications on youth as well as societal engagement in

the Niger Delta. To clearly situate our discourse in proper perspective, it is imperative that, we have an idea of the problem as well as clarification of terms used in the paper.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The status of many youth in the area, significantly metamorphosed for the better as training, business and educational opportunities were availed to them via the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) proclaimed by His Excellency, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in 2009. The programme also made provision for monthly welfare stipends for those under it as they pursued their choice of empowerment as provided in various educational as well as vocational courses. This is to ensure they were well taken care of as they underwent the fundamental framework of Disarmament, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DRR). These individuals were grouped under different 'camps' as reflected in their engagement of the state while they laid down their arms and other ammunitions for state pardon.

The identified problem which arose as a fall out of the above is that, the leader of each camp now referred to as *Generale*, attained a fame and status, which attracted state and non-state entities. In other words, the leader of the camp, haven a fame of 'street cred' or 'ruggidity' preceding them, utilized such to engage various institutions and communities for economic patronage related to pipeline surveillance contracts from Multinational Oil Companies, election security provision also known as 'non-conventional security', community vigilante groups formation as well as coordination, etc. These roles carried enormous financial and material resources as well as access to political power as most of such persons were either appointed to positions of authority in capacities as Special Advisers, Senior Special Assistants and Special Assistants, Board and Committee Members, or elected on the platform of political parties to become House of Representatives and Assemblies Members respectively, Local Government and Ward Councilors. The background of being 'strong people' has continued to motivate younger generations to tow the part of being 'street boys and girls' which invariably means involvement in violent oriented activities. This is obviously detrimental to the idea of consensus building needed to sustain the peace various stakeholders yearn for in the Niger Delta. While the above is the case, there had been no deliberate intellectual effort to analyze the concept of a *General*. Although Kalama (2018:151) mentioned the idea of 'unknown generals' who were in control of the creeks and 'former Generals (now ex-militants)', who were regular guests at luxurious hotels as well as apartments to their political godfathers, friends, and associates, the idea of this important personality in the Niger Delta had not been described in detail.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The concept of *Generale* is associated with the Non-State categorization of actors in International as well as State System respectively. The other components of Non-State actors include; religious leadership and organizations (Such as the Catholic Church), musical celebrities, financial and business moguls, sportsmen and women, cultural ambassadors and many others whose actions, considerably influences actions of people as well as Governments in their various areas of abode and beyond. Mercenary groups such as Blackwater, are known as non-state actor groups that have trans-border influences in security issues especially when contracted to provide such service to the required party

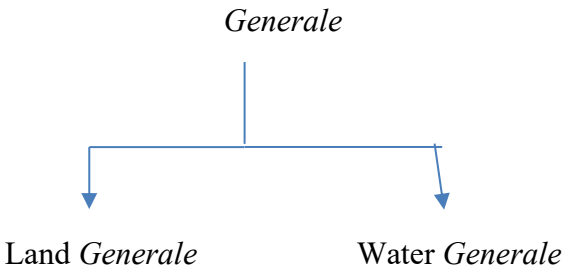
(Singer, 2007). Groups such as this are different from revolutionary groups who do not get contracted for pecuniary purpose to fight a cause. In other words, Blackwater and other groups are composed of individuals who have somewhat denounced their allegiance to any constituted authority in the nation-state system, to providing technical and personnel support to whosoever could pay for their services.

On the other hand, the nomenclature and structure of the groups that housed the *Generale* in the Niger Delta, were induced by revolutionary pressures in the Nigerian State for self-determination especially towards the development of the riverine area of the Niger Delta. A *Generale* was the head of a militant group formed to push the development agenda of the Niger Delta through the employment of guerrilla warfare tactics. Groups such *Egbesu* Boys of Africa (EBA), *Olabara kon opere* (meaning give us what is due us in Ijaw language), Dolphin *Ogbo*, Niger Delta Freedom Fighters (NDFF), Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), The Atangbala Boys (TAB) and a host of others (Courson, 2009:14), provided the fundamental springboard for the emergence of the above personality.

There was a conglomeration of most of these revolutionary groups with the name, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) formed in 2005. In other words, MEND was not the name of a group but an alliance of severally groups that worked closely to ensure that, the demands of the struggle were effectively pursued. It was the proper coordination of the activities of militia groups under MEND that escalated the fight for self-determination in the Nigerian state to a different dimension. It is important to note that, at this point, there were two pathways to the actualization of the vision of the Niger Delta struggle. The seeming non-violent oriented groups under the auspices of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) on one hand, and the MEND that was formed to push the resource control battle via violent means on the other. However, while the IYC advocated dialogue and constitutional means (but subtly encouraged division within its ranks based on ruggidity), to engage the Nigerian State, the violent tactics openly employed by MEND got some 'wins' made them more renowned and promoted the use of force as the most potent strategy for effective human and institutional relations in the minds of young people in the area. It is important to point out that, the IYC is the umbrella body of Ijaw youths worldwide. However, a President of this group might not be able to account for the violent activities of individuals related to it because the IYC has no powers to discipline erring members. Such persons might run to the Law courts and take refuge, thereby diminishing the powers of the body.

At the centre of this is the *Generale* personality who was seen to have led the 'barrack' or 'camp' to victory via the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) initiated by the President Yar'Adua administration in 2009, as the model to emulate. This is akin to the idea of agitational terror as well as siege of terror thesis which serves the interest of revolutionary movements (Kalama and Boroh, 2022:229).

It is important to state that, there are two categories of the *Generale* concept. This is due to the operational space and specialty of the groups in the struggle. There is the land (*Ogbo*) and water (*Beni*) *Generale*. This ensures that there was proper coordination between the various groups for effective and speedy execution of briefs. The land *Generale* was responsible for issues related to public relations and engagements including execution of tactical targets in landed areas while those on water were basically concerned with the generation of fund via the brisk oil business in the riverine areas as well as guerilla operations on strategic targets. The diagram below serves to explain the above;



The militant groups have a hierarchy akin to the regimented nature of the military. Thus, there are rank and file personnel in the groups from corporal to *generale.* There are also designated departments that were responsible for virtually all function of the camp. It is important to note that, the militarization of the Niger Delta area over the years, contributed to the adoption of the force modus operandi as the mindset of the average young adult in the area had been militarized due to the abuses as well as show of force that had physically as well as psychologically affected the peoples of the area. The peoples have the area have clearly understood that, the only language the Nigerian Government spoke was laced with force and that was what they also should be communicated with. The constant killings and maiming of peaceful protesters to oil facilities as well as government owned institutions, have made the Niger Delta peoples especially the Ijaws, to mirror back to state authorities, what they been giving to those who had attempted to peaceful engage the Nigerian state.

It is observed that, the idea of 'militant' activities as seen in the activities of MEND coordinated groups, has been misconstrued as being in as category as that of *Boko Haram,* ISWAP and other Islamic oriented groups. This is seen in the attempt to make the Federal Government of Nigeria also extend the same 'Amnesty' granted to those of the Niger Delta to those 'terrorizing' the masses with their activities especially in the Northern as well as South-Western parts of the country. The reality is that, the demands, strategic targets as well as expected outcomes of their engagements as stipulated by the Niger Delta and *Boko Haram* groups respectively, are fundamentally different. While the Niger Delta groups demand for resource control as their fundamental item in the self-determination list, the *Boko Haram* and ISWAP groups wanted the country Islamized. In other words, while the demand from the former groups was to ensure that, every part of the country, develop at their pace thereby, encouraging self-reliance and adequate resource utilization, that of the latter could be seen as an attempt to force non-willing people to accept a belief system alien to them by 'any means possible'.

On the area of strategy, the Niger Delta groups kidnap staff of Multinational Oil Companies operating in the region, bombing of Oil installations to disrupt the smooth exploration of crude oil which is the main foreign exchange earner for the country as well as sabotage of any economic activities related to the oil industry, to press home their demand for more attention to develop their environment. On the part of the latter, these groups kidnap both adherents and non-adherents of Islam for ransom as well as deliberately kill and trade captors to people outside Nigeria, suicide bombing at calculated areas to instill fear in both government circles as well as general public. There is also the destruction of critical infrastructure in the country in a bid to cow the Nigerian state to submission. It was also a means for these groups in the north-east to have access to 'free women' as they have married away or raped mercilessly, abducted women and girls in that area. The popular Chibok and Dapchi girls' episodes as well as the numerous women kidnapped without records, abound in the Nigerian space. Thus, for many

people in the south, it is believed that, one of the major problem of these terrorist groups that have emanated in the north-east of Nigeria, is the lack of fraternal relations between males and females in a way and manner that would encourage consummation of such interactions for societal advancement.

The MEND allied groups attack facilities and kidnap staff of the Multinational oil companies only with no intentions of making monies from the struggle. It was a principled struggle as the Ijaws believed that, *Tamarau* (God almighty) and the *asain* (arch-angels) especially *Egbesu*, does not support the use of the struggle for justice in the Niger Delta for pecuniary gains. That of *Boko Haram* is against everybody and everything in the country. Thus, the Niger Delta attention is particular while that of the North-east is general. People were not targeted to be killed by those in the Niger Delta but those who use the name of religion have killed numerous Nigerians who have not offended them in anyway. It would thus be irrational to equate the activities of a resource control induced militant group, to a terrorist propelled one under the guise of religion.

The reality in Nigeria is that, the appeal to force by the civilian populace, is very alarming. It has been noted by the young people that, when they resort to force, they would have whatever they want. Those who could demonstrate that, they could engage the security forces of the country, are mostly rewarded more than those who have innovative intellectual ideas to advance the nation's fortunes. In fact, the *Generale* has become so influential and powerful that, the conventional security including those in the armed forces, now provide protection for these non-conventional security personnel. This is one of the most striking irony that makes the *Generale* personality more enticing and worth attaining by any means necessary.

To cap this section, we must recall that, a *Generale* is the highest rank of a militant hierarchy or set-up with numerous soldiers underneath akin to a formal military arrangement. It could be attained through one's bravery in the conduct of the objectives of hostile diplomacy and confrontation of oil companies' facilities as well as the security apparatus of the Nigerian state who get in the way of the execution of their strategies.

ROLE MODEL FOR THE NIGER DELTA STRUGGLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

Before examining the fallouts of the Post-Amnesty created *Generale* disposition as they relate to the advancement of peace and development, it is imperative to have an historical understanding of the inspiration or personality that had sustained the struggle for self-determination in the Niger Delta before the arrival of the personality in focus. The central personality that had provided inspiration for the struggle for the recognition of the Ijaw ethnic nationality, a people who believe that, they have been most marginalized in the political economy of Nigeria, is Isaac Jasper 'Adaka' Boro (Eweke and Tonkiri, 2022:207-222).

Isaac Boro is renowned for leading the popular 'Twelfth Day Revolution' against the Nigerian State in a bid to excise the Niger Delta Republic from the former in 1966. This was the first attempt by any group to secede from post independent Nigerian federation and it was mainly composed by Ijaw indigenes to have for themselves, a political entity where they would determine their existence and future. It is important to note that, Isaac's story is always told from the end which have very corrosive and addictive narrative in influencing the minds of others. In other words, the period being concentrated on, in telling

the story of the source of inspiration for the struggle for self-determination in the area, is centred on the part that would arouse the nationalistic spirit of the Ijaw youth to rise up and be counted on the side of their ancestors, land and those to come. In the struggle for the liberation of the Ijaw people from internal colonialism where the political economy of the country, the resort to utilization of ethnic political mobilization becomes paramount.

The elevation of Isaac Jasper Boro to the status of an inspirational personality, was cemented when he was killed towards the culmination of the Nigerian civil war in 1969. It was during this period the Biafran section also attempted to secede in 1967; the way he had earlier tried to lead others to achieve. It is not necessary to dwell on how he was murdered. What is important from the conflicting narratives of his death is that, there had been no trust amongst the peoples of Nigeria. Thus, he paid the supreme price not only trying to realize for the Ijaws, the dream of their own political entity where they would control their development, but also the battle to 'keep Nigeria one'.

There are fundamental questions that needs clarifications. Since Isaac Boro has been identified as the symbol and inspiration of the Niger Delta struggle for Self-Determination, it is imperative to enquire about what influenced him to embark on the battle to emancipate his people and put their developmental destiny in their hands? What options did he explore in engaging the Nigerian state as regards the problems of the country? While it is not an intention to give a full-blown biography of this personality, it is vital to have basic information about him to have a clear-cut direction on

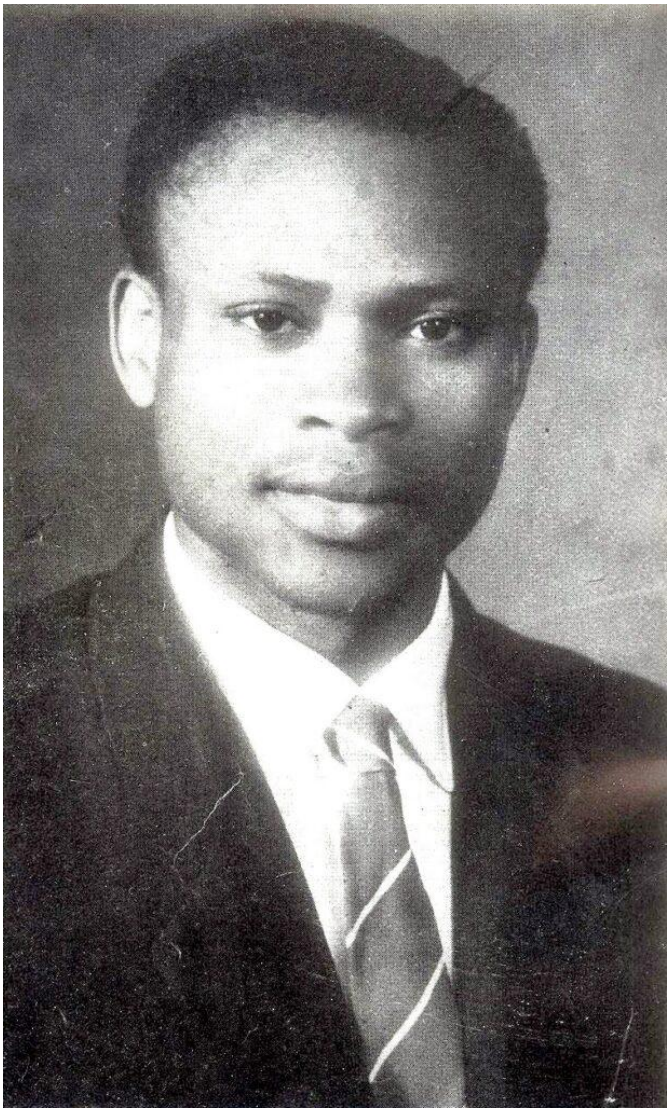


Fig. 1. Portrait of Isaac Jasper Boro, the inspirational personality for the Niger Delta Self-Determination struggle. Source: www.bing.com.

The likely places to situate the influences on him. Isaac was born to Jasper Boro, a trained teacher in the early nineteen-thirties. The strong influence of education at a very young age which enabled him to appreciate the environmental peculiarities, the dynamics of ethnic politics as well as the place of the Ijaw people in the schedule of things in Nigeria, were unveiled to him not only via ideas passed to him by elders of his community, but also in real-time engagements he had with others in the society (Awortu, 2013).

Isaac Boro's short time in service as a Police Officer in the then eastern region of Nigeria, also enabled him to have requisite knowledge about weapon handling and warfare tactics. In addition to this, was Boro's technical training as a chemistry student which also exposed him to rudimentary bomb-making as well as manufacturing of other devices needed to carry out the war (Boro, 1982). On the leadership and human relations part, his exposure to socialist ideology via his involvement in student unionism at the University of Nigeria, Nsuukka, contributed to the clarion call to lead a revolution for his people.

The influences of personalities such as Fidel Castro, Amilcar Cabral, Che Guevara and Sekou Toure, to mention but a few, implanted in him the selfless spirit for service to his people.

One thing must be made abundantly clear. This is in relation to the impact of Isaac Boro's life on subsequent generation of young people of Ijaw extraction and beyond. That is the fact that, Boro outlived his time. While the Niger Delta legend lived for less than thirty (30) years (from September 1938 to May 1968), his exploits in the area of social justice as a tool for ensuring a balanced Nigerian federation, cannot be denied. Okeowo (1988) noted that, Isaac Boro challenged the validity of the December 1964 Federal elections which returned the then President, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe as well as the Prime Minister, Alhaji Abubakar Tafewa Balewa on account of identified irregularities that marred the exercise. As President of the Student Union, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, he utilized his position judiciously to engage institutions of the Nigerian state to ensure the fair treatment of Nigerians, students especially. This patriotic attitude of Isaac Boro was noted when it was observed that, such assertiveness cannot be easily found among young people in Nigeria. It was stated that;

> *Today, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for student leaders in the spirit of truth, passion and love for the Nigerian state, to embark on such seemingly 'herculean' task of canvassing for the 'public good'* (Eweke, 2015: 33).

The point being made above is that, Boro was an all-round leader. While the part where he took up arms against the Nigerian state had been severally emphasized, his intellectual activities and achievements, had been dwarfed and reduced to nothing thereby, making him only appealing to the nationalistic drill towards armed insurrection.

The virtues of selflessness, service and sacrifice which Isaac Boro mirrored in his activities to both the Ijaw ethnic nationality as well as the Nigerian state, are obvious lacking in the *Generale* personalities as they have be accused of selfishness, deviation from the people's course of focusing on the development of the deltaic areas neglected by the Nigerian state as well as the adoption of a very materialistic lifestyle which poisons the very soul as well as foundation upon which the struggle was built on. In a nutshell, while latter day Niger Delta 'freedom fighters' adopted his passion to serve up until the extent of laying down one's life, their personalities are not balanced as the intellectual part which was the foundation of Isaac Boro, was virtually non-existent in most of their make-up.

THE POST-AMNESTY ERA *GENERALE* AND THE CONTRADITION OF CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN THE NIGER DELTA.

The intention of the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2009, which culminated in the establishment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), was to curb the negative effects of militant activities in the country to ensure that, the crude flow to boost the revenue base of the country. The President Yar'Adua led administration, attempted to manage the problem of militancy by focusing on human capital development for young people to divert their attention from negative vices.

The President in his broadcast to the nation, explained that, the programme became necessary to give opportunity for the area to be developed through meaningful engagement of the human resource embedded in therein. The concept of placing the people as principal target for moving the oil rich region forward, was with the best of purpose. It was discovered that, the people of the Niger Delta especially those of the Ijaw ethnic nationality, were not actively involved in the oil and gas business which provided the bulk of foreign exchange earner for the country. Also, the indigenous homeland of the Ijaw people, housed most of the oil fields, installations and pipelines which affected them negatively through crude oil spillages, gas flaring as well as toxic waste from production activities, dumped into the environment, causing untold health as well as ecological problems.

The programme was founded on three fundamental pillars which included Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). The pillars represented the steps the programme was designed to take in other to transform youths of the area from violent oriented beings to responsible individuals, capable of contributing enormously to the advancement of the region in particular and Nigeria in general. To ensure proper management of the programme, an office Headed by a Special Adviser to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on Niger Delta, was created to oversee it. The first special aide to the President on Niger Delta, was Chief Ndutimi Alaibe, a former Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The special adviser set out to implement the programme of the amnesty office in conjunction with the various affected state governments by first, identifying hotspots in the region and deployed diplomatic skills in engaging militant groups to drop their arms for the official pardon deal. Notable *Generales* such as Tompolo, John Togo, Ogunboss, Africa Ukparasia, Boyloaf, Joshua Maciver, Soboma George, Tom Ateke, and a host of others, embraced the programme which was mostly vocationally oriented. However, Asari Dokubo, a renowned Niger Delta agitator also known to have utilized violence at some point to rise to prominence in the area, rejected the amnesty deal claiming that, he had not been tried and convicted by a competent court of law to warrant a pardon from the President (Amaize and Ige, 2009).

The programme commenced with the submitting of arms and other sophisticated ammunitions by militant groups to the Federal security agencies at designated points in the Niger Delta. However, Yenagoa in Bayelsa State and Port-Harcourt in Rivers State respectively, housed more activities of militant group disarmament in the Niger Delta. The next phase of the programme after necessary documentation at the at the disarmament stage, was the demobilization of repentant fighters. This was done in batches at a camp organized for ex-agitators at Obubra, Cross Rivers State. Activities at the campground included value reorientation seminars, physical fitness trainings, entrepreneurship lectures as well as team work talks. The last phase which is known as reintegration, commences with the training of the ex-militant. On the desired skill or course of study in chosen institutions of higher learning to ensure that, they return back to contribute favourably to the advancement of the Niger Delta in particular and the Nigerian state in general. it is also important to state that, these activities in the programme, were sponsored by the Federal Government as the participants were also placed on monthly stipends from the month they submitted their arms. It is like, placing them on 'life pension' as militants had been paid perpetually.

The amnesty programme might have succeeded to solve issues of hostilities against the production of crude oil in the area for a while. However, it has complicated the social fabric and value system in the 'oil rich region'. The first problem the Nigerian Federal government created amnesty programme has

caused, emanated from the mindset of programme beneficiaries. Perhaps the most prominent is the development of the 'entitlement mentality' among ex-militants on any 'benefits' or concessions the Nigerian state grants the Niger Delta. Since they have the mindset that, they 'fought' for the recognition of the special plight of the area by 'taking up arms against the state, they then concluded that, they deserve not just to be served first, 'any meal' that is brought to the area in whatever guise (scholarships, contracts, employment, empowerment and agricultural programmes), they also believed they have the prerogative to determine who gets what, when and how should they not be much interested in personally having them. They thus, exclude others who were not 'gunmen and women', from accessing benefits of being citizens of the state. An exclusion trap is thus, created where the *Generales* and their ex-militants, have marginalized and deprived others, in the name of 'freedom fighting', from gaining access to what the Federal government has been accused of in the past. In other words, they have succeeded in replacing the state authorities, in oppressing their own people. This mentality denies the existence of non-violent agitators, who had given their all also to ensure that, the struggle for the development of the area, was achieved. Common phrases used by amnesty beneficiaries as bragging right and license include,

Na we shoot gun for the struggle;

The struggle na our cocoa farm;

Na we don suffer for the Niger Delta head, etc.

Such comments had been used to taunt or bully others who had not participated in the struggle for the emancipation of the Niger Delta via peaceful means. The open admittance of ability of utilize force by militants, shows that, the demobilization phase in the amnesty programme, had not yielded the desired outcome. The reintegration of ex-militants who had become the 'new brides' of the Nigerian state, has significantly altered the social configuration of the Niger Delta as the average mind is still very much inclined to oppressive tendencies.

Associated with the above is the propensity of younger minds to utilize the 'gun way' in their engagement of the society. The appeal to force which the attitude of ex-militants fragrantly displays, had been taken to imply that, 'might is right' at times. This has adversely increased and violent behaviour through attraction of people to group membership that charges the environment negatively. This is the most potent problem which the aftermath of the programme has warranted. In other words, there might be other 'amnesty programmes' for different groups at different times as the state authorities no doubt, had mostly adopted the pacification approach to dissident violent groups in the early twentieth-first century. The mistake of equating seeming dissident groups as freedom fighting groups without a thorough scrutiny of their aims as well as objectives, has made the federal government to also consider pardoning *Boko Haram* and other secessionist groups. The average mindset of youths in the Niger Delta has come to perceive that, since their struggle is for resource control, they would no doubt, get something from their engagement since the state and their oil exploration partners had been desperate to ensure the non-disruption of production activities in the area.

As young people are tempted to get involved in the 'gun play' business, it increases the urge for acquisition of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in the Niger Delta to show that they are also capable of 'brave exploits'. To acquire arms, which seems to be the most important tool in the street business, young people resort to criminal activities to enable them raise fund for the purchase arms. Illegal oil bunkering, robbery and sea piracy, kidnapping for ransom as well as drug trade, provide

enough finance for the procurement of ammunitions (Obasi, , 2011; Kalama and Boroh, 2022; Ojudu, 2007). Other means of obtaining arms include seizure from clashes with security operatives and rival street gangs. Protection fees collected from oil producing as well as servicing firms and patronage from the political class for electioneering purposes, add to the arsenal of militant groups. It is important to note that, there is a thin line between existing street gangs and militant groups as their membership overlap or in some cases, such groups could transform themselves to whatever they wish to represent.

The ranks of the various camps of ex-agitators had not been free from concerns about the equitable distribution of the 'gains of the struggle'. There had been accounts of highhandedness and corrupt handling of fund by the leadership of different militant groups led by the *Generale*. Thus, the 'soldiers' had accused their leadership of either short-paying or totally withholding stipends due them without justifiable cause. This had led to intra-camp clashes that had resulted in the death of ex-agitators. For example, Commander Ebi was alleged to have been shot in 2010 by members of his infantry as a result of the grievances related to stipend payment. The assassination of *Generale* Soboma George in 2011 have conspiracy hypothesis to fund management (Tubodenyefa and Felix, 2014). Also, in 2022, *Generale* Swordman was also allegedly shot by members of his camp for related issues. There is hardly any militant *Generale* alive that had not been accused of withholding the rights of their soldiers. It is either the *Generale* was attacked or dissident members of the group masterminding such 'rebellion', killed or excommunicated from the cluster. Such attitude obviously, would propel others to aspire to establish their barracks to their advantage. Thus, the strive to become a *Generale*, with 'right and privileges' bestowed on one to access state resources even via illegitimate means such as oil bunkering activities, have no doubt, complicated the security situation in the Niger Delta. The access to financial wealth, has made many ex-militants to abandon their various skills acquired during the training. Many sold their start-up kits for paltry sums and returned back to the creeks to continue in activities that are 'lucrative' to them via the instrumentality of the gun. There are times when things might seem calm in the area but critical African parents know that, 'when a child is not in sight and there is no noise to indicate that the child is playing, that is probably a sign that, something bad had happened or about to take place'.

CONCLUSION

The paper has attempted to highlight the origin, types and attainment of maturity of the *Generale* personality in the Niger Delta area. It has been made clear that, the *Generale* status which had been made 'money-spinning', is now desirable by young people and even parents who encourage their children to become like 'Tompolo' or 'Ogunboss' without recourse to the concomitants of such personalities. It would be a herculean task to discourage the upcoming generation from emulating the 'other side' of such personalities considering the benefits attached. Thus, the circle would continue as those deprived of access to quality education with sound moral mentorship as well as discipline, might be tempted to follow such part.

According to Sheriff Folarin, the future is gloomy as regards the capacity of the state to manage security issues so long violently oriented militants, are given preference more than others. This is due to the hindsight gotten from the treatment given to those who take up arms against the state with the people bearing the brunt of such oppressive tendencies. Hear him;

> I foresee a time incompetence in the management of our security in Nigeria would culminate in grim compromises in which national leaders would be patronizing and begging bandit commanders to take positions of minister, governor and local government chairman, just to discourage them from the act of terrorizing the country. It's already happening. Emirs now beg terror leaders to take chieftaincy titles, just for their kingdoms to become safe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of personification and glorification of violence in the Niger Delta is a complex and sensitive topic. It requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders, including the government, community leaders, media organizations, and civil society groups. In fact, these recommendations should be utilized even in the Northern part of Nigeria, where young minds are manipulated to get involved in terrorist-related activities as well as banditry. Here are some recommendations to address identified issues:

1. Education and Awareness: Implement educational programs that focus on non-violence, conflict resolution, and the consequences of violence. These programs should be targeted at schools, community centers, and youth organizations to promote understanding, empathy, and peaceful coexistence. Reward and recognition for intellectual efforts should be instituted to attract citizens to meaningful ventures.

2. Media Responsibility: Encourage media organizations to report on the Niger Delta issues responsibly and avoid sensationalism or glorification of violence. Promote responsible journalism that highlights the root causes, impacts, and potential solutions to violence, thereby fostering a more balanced and nuanced understanding of the situation.

3. Community Engagement: Engage with local communities, particularly youth, through dialogue, workshops, and community initiatives. Empower them with skills, vocational training, and economic opportunities to provide viable alternatives to violence and criminal activities.

4. Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: Strengthen local conflict resolution mechanisms by promoting dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation processes within communities. Support the establishment of community-led initiatives that foster peaceful resolutions to disputes and prevent the escalation of violence.

5. Government Accountability: Encourage transparency and accountability within the government, ensuring that justice is served for any acts of violence or human rights abuses. Enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in preventing and addressing violence while respecting human rights. Government must be firm in denouncing crime and violence to boost the confidence of citizens.

6. Economic Development: Foster sustainable economic development in the Niger Delta region to alleviate poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Promote investment in infrastructure, agriculture, tourism, and other sectors that can create job opportunities and improve living conditions.

7. Environmental Sustainability: Address the underlying environmental concerns in the Niger Delta, such as oil pollution and degradation. Implement measures to protect the environment and ensure the

responsible management of natural resources, which can help reduce tensions and conflicts related to resource exploitation.

8. International Cooperation: Foster collaboration and support from international organizations, NGOs, and other countries to provide resources, expertise, and assistance in addressing the root causes of violence and promoting sustainable development in the region.

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