

The Political Lives of Armed Groups after Conflict: Why Militant Groups Persist in Nigeria's Niger Delta

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Structure of the presentation:

- ▶ Armed Militancy in the Niger Delta
- ▶ The Logic of Armed Militancy in the Niger Delta
- ▶ Nigeria's Presidential Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta
- ▶ The Transformation and Persistence of Armed Militant Groups in the Niger Delta
- ▶ Conclusions

Armed Militancy in the Niger Delta

There are three key dimensions to armed militancy (and political violence) in the Niger Delta:

Natural Resources (Crude Oil): local, national and international competition for access to crude oil in the Niger Delta.

Communal Violence: violent conflicts between and within communities in the Niger Delta.

Electoral Violence: political violence in the electoral process.

The Logic of Armed Militancy in the Niger Delta

Analysis of research on militancy in the Niger Delta shows that:

- ▶ Armed militants emerged in a context of competition for access to natural resources (and rents).
- ▶ The distribution of crude oil rents were determined by state power.
- ▶ The exercise of state power ensured that local communities were historically excluded from rents and other benefits of the oil sector.
- ▶ Environmental and political agitations evolved into armed militancy seeking to challenge state power.
- ▶ By challenging state power, armed militants begin to build political power within their communities.
- ▶ This process created a logic of power within armed militant struggle.

Nigeria's Presidential Amnesty Programme in the Niger Delta

- ▶ PAP is a state led disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme in Nigeria's Niger Delta.
- ▶ Introduced in 2009 to bring an end to the armed militancy.
- ▶ 30,000 militants reported to have registered for disarmament and demobilisation.
- ▶ Reintegration includes a financial and political package for leaders of armed militant groups.
- ▶ Ex-fighters received monthly financial stipends and training opportunities.
- ▶ "Ex-fighters" received payments and training opportunities through their former leaders.

The Transformation and Persistence of Armed Militant Groups in the Niger Delta

The DDR programme led to the following outcomes:

- ▶ Armed militant leaders and their fighters were able to “exit” the bush.
- ▶ Leaders of armed groups had access to state resources and opportunities for patronage.
- ▶ Leaders of armed groups used state resources through the DDR programme to extend political patronage network within their communities.
- ▶ Militant leaders moved from “bush thugs” to patrons in the alliance with political elites.
- ▶ Militant leaders were able to maintain their place in the logic of power and competition for resources in the Niger Delta.
- ▶ DDR programme did not unbundle the logic of power that created and sustained armed militants in the region.

Conclusions

- ▶ Armed groups are an outcome of power competition at different levels of society (community, national, regional).
- ▶ Armed groups that emerge out of a specific context eventually seeks to maintain power.
- ▶ How armed groups use power during conflicts shapes the trajectory of the conflicts.
- ▶ How peace processes address the logic of power in conflict contexts, such as the Niger Delta, impacts on the 'post-conflict' nature of armed groups.
- ▶ In the Niger Delta, the PAP did not disrupt the logic of power of armed militancy. Instead, it reinforced this logic.
- ▶ The PAP
- ▶ Militant leaders were able to maintain their place in the logic of power and competition for resources in the Niger Delta.
- ▶ DDR programme did not unbundle the logic of power that created and sustained armed militants in the region.

Conclusions

- ▶ New militant groups are emerging in the Niger Delta.
- ▶ New groups are largely linked to illicit economies in the region.
- ▶ New groups often challenge the dominance of former militant leaders.
- ▶ Former militant leaders negotiate with new groups or confront them where possible.

Thanks for listening!

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Selected Readings:

- ▶ Ebiede, T., Langer, A., & Tosun, J. (2020). Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration: Analysing the outcomes of Nigeria's post-amnesty programme. *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 9(1), 1-17.
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- ▶ Ebiede, T. M. (2017). Community conflicts and armed militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta: Change and continuity?. *Society & Natural Resources*, 30(10), 1197-1211.
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