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further on this discourse, it is necessary to clearly define some key terms that will pervade this text, namely, Ethnicity, the Niger-Delta, Leadership and Security.

Figure 1: The Niger Delta Area



Source: Francis et al 2011: xv.

Modern Nigeria is a sad tale of a nation without a people. For many "Nigerians", loyalty to their ethnic group comes before allegiance to Nigeria. Nigeria is a country where Nigerians still ask themselves "where are you from", as if being a Nigerian is an insufficient qualification or simply irrelevant and meaningless. A national identity is non-existent in Nigeria as almost every national decision is viewed with the binoculars of ethnicity and religion. Modern Nigeria's geo-political space is one of the most diverse in the world. There are between two hundred and fifty to four hundred ethnic groups (Falola and Heaton 2008: xiv). In general terms, the "Y" shape of Nigeria map by the Niger and Benue Rivers separates a predominantly Muslim north, a predominantly Christian south and a religiously balanced west (ICG 2006: 2). In cultural and political terms, the "Hausa-Fulani" of the north, the Yoruba of the south-west and the Igbo of the south-east are the "Big three", being the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. Interestingly, the major actors in the independence movement are representative of the big three: Ahmadu Bello from the north, Nnamdi Azikwe from the south-east and Obafemi Awolowo from the south-west.

Even before independence, there was mutual suspicion among the "Big three" as each was concerned about the welfare and survival of his group and afraid of domination by another. Despite the mutual suspicion that was in the air, they pooled resources together to fight the common colonial enemy. After independence, however, brought in its wake an inevitable struggle among the "Big three" for dominance. Although the regional system of government kept the "Big three" in check, military intervention and the subsequent unification of the administrative system led to a civil war that lasted from 1967 to 1970. The Nigerian Civil War has since engendered a struggle among the various ethnic groups.

NATIONAL INSECURITY AND LEADERSHIP CHANGE: A STUDY OF THE NIGER DELTA MILITANTS IN NIGERIA, 2009-2016

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Introduction

For over a century of its existence, leadership change in Nigeria has functioned as an instigator or dispeller of threats to national security. Right from the early colonial era when the British began to impose their rule over the land, various rebellions broke out across the country. Significantly, however, in crisis situations such as the 'Ijemo Incident' of 1914, Adubi riot in 1918, the anti-tax riot in Warri Province in 1927/28, Aba women riots of 1929 (predominantly involving females), the Benin water rate agitation of 1937-39, the 1958 riots over the reintroduction of school fee in the Eastern Region, (again, with primarily female involvement) etc., the British colonial authority resorted to brutal use of force of arms to quell agitations and disturbances (Afolabi, 2014; 2015; 2016). Even long after colonial rule had been fully established, they did not abandon the use of overt force to coerce the indigenous people into compliance whenever they felt that the peace and security of the geographical space they ruled was threatened.

The British colonial government made attempts to further tackle the security challenges in the country by merging the various sections and ethnic groupings of the country in 1906 and 1914 for the Crown's administrative purposes rather than the cohesion of the country. While the prospects of combined resources, wealth and increased manpower excited the British, the merger resulted into an intricate ethnic and religious rival grouping which continued after independence. Against this backdrop, this study examines the link between leadership change and national insecurity in Nigeria with focus on the Niger Delta militants.

1.1 The Niger-Delta, Leadership and Security

The various regions of the country had disparate levels of development in terms of education and infrastructure, which, over a century later, have still not changed equally. Unfortunately, this has grown to be the bone of contention in national life, over 50 years after independence. Before progressing

to control the federal centre, which controlled the largest share of the national cake.

Merriam-Webster dictionary identified leadership to be the position of a leader while it described a 'leader' as a person 'in a position of commanding authority or influence. Leadership, like almost every other important concept, lacks a generally accepted definition. However, several elements contained in it serves as clear pointer to its nature and meaning. Joseph Rost articulated leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes." In explaining 'leadership capability' on a national scope, Professor J.T. Rourke identified administrative skills regarding organization, legislative skills as it concerns laws, public persuasion and intellectual capacity as its intrinsic element (Rourke 2009:22). Leadership in Nigeria is tantamount to power and the ability to shape the fortunes of the nation for ill or good, hence, its importance.

Security denotes the state of being safe or protected from danger. On a national scale, it connotes the state of stability, peace, and freedom from threats, both internal and external in a nation. National Security is ideally the protection of national survival (Brennan 1961:31). Essentially, security typically serves an instrumental value which allows for the enjoyment of the outcomes of other values. On a national scale, these other values are peace, prosperity and freedom amongst others. Security is a variable since there are varying degrees of security. Threats to people or nations may vary, while the number of values to be protected differs as well as expectations of future outcomes (Hermann 1977:45-7). National Security is viewed as a multi-dimensional process whose purpose is to safeguard national values. The most fundamental value of any nation is her survival. Thus, one could say that a nation that possesses the capacity to protect herself from internal and external harm can maximise its developmental potentials in an atmosphere of peace and calm (Igbogo 2015).

2.1 Tracing the History of Leadership Change and National Security in Nigeria

Without doubt, the Western Region crisis in 1962 was the result of a personality clash between the two leaders of the Action Group (AG), Premier S.L. Akintola, and Opposition Leader at the Federal Parliament, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The resultant expulsion of Akintola from the party in May 1962 was a signal for the Western House to oust him from his premiership, and have the Governor of the region, Chief Dauda Adegbenro, as a replacement. Violent altercations between Akintola and Awolowo's supporters erupted in the region, earning it the appellation 'Wild Wild West' (Diamond 1988:20).

It has also been severally argued that it was the combination of the socio-economic and political events in the immediate post-independent Western Nigeria that morphed into the military coup of January 1966. In fact, the chaos and pandemonium that characterized the October, 1965 elections in the West, with riggings and manipulations, a situation which spluttered a violent aftermath that was characterized by politicians attacking members of the opposition

party, dousing them in petrol and setting them ablaze. It was the *operation wetie* era, a period when members of opposing parties were set ablaze after dousing them with petrol. For the residents of the rural areas in the West, even military intervention meant very little change, if at all any. It was this unfortunate situation that ultimately culminated in the riots of 1968/1969 when the peace and security of the nation was again threatened as a result of the activities of the resource poor peasant farmers in the Western State at a time when the Nigeria Civil War was being prosecuted.

The spate of wanton killings and destruction of properties in the West eventually led to the imposition of a state of emergency by the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa led Federal Government. Subsequently, Akintola was returned to power against the wishes of the region, and this became the seed for sustained insecurity in the region, which climaxed in the January 15, 1966 military coup that altered the political course of Nigeria. It is instructive to note that the first imposition of a state of emergency in an independent Nigeria was to deal with issue of insecurity instigated by Leadership Change in Western Region; hence, the need for this discourse (Jorre 1972:51).

The chaotic political condition of Nigeria from 1966-1970 thrived in an atmosphere of threats to National Security. Without doubt, leadership change was a fundamental reason for the upsurge of bloody coups, civil violence, ethnic pogroms and even a civil war in the country. The ball was set rolling by the first coup of January 15, 1966 when a group of majors led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu attacked the political and military superstructure of the country. Some 22 people were killed, including the Prime Minister, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, along with some senior politicians such as the Western Premier, Chief S.L. Akintola, Northern Premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello and top military officers (Siollun 2009:30).

While the coup was supposedly launched to rescue the ship of state from being wrecked by corrupt and power-seeking officials, it ultimately sent the wrong signals to an ethnic sensitive nation. Four of the five majors who led the coup were easterners, and majority of those who lost their lives in the coup were non-easterners. Hence, when Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi took over, he did not punish the coup plotters but issued Decree No. 34 that introduced a unitary system of government. Other ethnic groups in the country drew the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that it was an 'Igbo Coup' (Achebe 2012:79).

No level of sensitization could dispel the existence of ethnic cleavages in the country, particularly the north. On July 29, 1966, another coup led by northern military officers was staged and Gen. Ironsi consequently lost his life. Col. Yakubu Gowon, a Northern Christian, was named Head of State in Ironsi's stead. What followed was a large-scale ethnic violence, which took the form of lootings, killings and the mass fleeing of easterners from other parts of the country back to the East (Madiobe 1980:55). Estimates at the time put the number of Igbo civilians killed at thirty thousand while hundreds of thousands more were displaced, suffering one form of damage or the other (Akintola 1972:51).

its abundant natural resource. It also highlights the trend of excessive focus on the development of one sector of the economy to the neglect of other sectors (Ross 2014: 239-259). The uglier end of this curse unfortunately plagues the Niger Delta region. While more light will be shed on this later in the discourse, it suffices to note here that the threats to national security from the Niger Delta region stemmed from bodies of aggrieved indigenes who felt short-changed and prevented from reaping the resources and benefits accruing from their environment.

Apparently, the streams of violent agitations by militants in the Niger-Delta region rode on the wings of allegations of marginalisation and discrimination by successive federal governments. This however changed when Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian Ijaw from the Niger Delta, became Vice-President in 2007, and later President in 2010. He was instrumental to the formulation and implementation of the Niger Delta Amnesty programme. Goodluck Jonathan was sent on missions to the creeks by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to meet with armed groups in the region in the build up to the amnesty program (Ukiwo 2015:14-17). Power in the Nigerian polity has long been associated with political control over the nation. By virtue of the nation's ethno-religious differences, a lot of importance is placed on the ethnic and religious identity of whoever holds the wheels of power. The nation's long history of military coups has only compounded this delicate situation. Between 1966 and 1993, 9 military coups were staged; six were successful while three failed (Siollun 2009:59).

The Federal Government of Nigeria wields vast powers over its economic resources and military capabilities, which are its target as cherished prizes. Sadly, the history of the nation has been coloured with the often-bloody struggle for power between the nation's ethnic groups. From the January and July 1966 coups, the paradigm was set for the manifestation of ultimate ethnic power in either a Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba control of the seat of power. The widespread belief is that the ethnicity or religion that controls the seat of power will gain an advantage over other parts of the country. In most cases, this belief has turned out to be false. To their credit, minorities satisfy their own quest for power by supporting one of the three major ethnic groups in the country or championing their sole struggle like the Niger Delta Militants or the Kanuri people, who constitute the major population of Boko Haram.

The struggle for power in Nigeria has undoubtedly occasioned the emergence of several threats to national security. In some cases, ethno-religious sections of the country have seen it as their onerous task to cleanse the Niger Delta power structure of corruption and perceived civil influence, then, impose their rule over the nation. However, ardour to join the sect among northerners began to wane when Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim Fulani from the North, succeeded Jonathan as president. At present, the fighting capabilities of the insurgents in the North-east has been decimated (BBC 2015). Unfortunately too, the ethnic insurgency still lingers, not only in Nigeria, but across the Lake Chad region.

1972). At this period of Nigeria's development, national security was not at its lowest ebb, the threats that it engendered were largely internal and ethnic.

In the meantime, the politics of leadership change witnessed the rise of dissenting voices calling for a breakup of the country along ethnic lines. The Igbos, who considered themselves as the most aggrieved, were at the forefront of the growing restiveness. They held that a state which had failed in providing security for its citizens should have no right to their allegiance. The Igbos, undoubtedly, perceived the Northern dominated military government as tyrannical and illegitimate. Indeed, Lt Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Military Governor of Eastern Region, refused to recognise Lt. Col. Gowon as Head of State because the latter was not the most senior military officer at the time. Thus, the table was effectively set for the secession of Eastern Nigeria as the Republic of Biafra and the commencement of the bloody Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) that followed.

A re-examination of the events that brought Nigeria to the edge of precipice in its early years will reveal that forceful leadership change was significantly responsible for heightening the already tenuous ethnic relations in the polity. Right from the Western Region crisis of 1962 to the coup and counter-coup of 1966, and consequently, the Biafran secession and Nigerian Civil War (1967-70), leadership change largely played the role of a catalyst of ethnic and religious crises and also presented as threats to national security in the early post-colonial Nigeria. In particular, one could assert that the January 1966 coup and Ironsi's takeover of power not only irritated the Northern political and military elements, it triggered need for the July counter-coup, which stemmed the fears of the Northern elements while provoking dissatisfaction of people of Eastern origin.

Oil and Power: Pillars of National Security

Since the discovery of oil in Oloibiri in 1956, the black gold has geometrically risen to become a foremost factor in the socio-political and economic affairs of Nigeria. Control of oil resources inextricably became linked with power as Nigeria branched from its agro-based economy of the 1960s to depend on oil revenues after the civil war. The rise in oil prices in the 1970s saw an increase in oil revenue, and daily production peaked at 2 million barrels of crude oil per day (NNPC nd).

The oil produced in the Niger Delta came to account for 95% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and 80% of Federal Government revenues (Ochukwu et al 2016). As at 2007, it was estimated that as much as 100 billion barrels of oil had been extracted from the Niger Delta since oil was struck at Oloibiri in 1956. Thus, Nigeria has earned about \$600 billion from oil and gas production in the region since exports began in 1958 (Akiri 2008).

Due to its over-reliance on petrodollars, economists have diagnosed Nigeria as suffering from the 'resource curse' also known as the 'Dutch Disease', which explains why the nation suffers from 'handicapped' development despite

where over 15,000 people were killed and over 2 million have been displaced in 2018 (Thompson, Jawondo, Nwaorgu & Afolayan 2019). Progressively, as tensions in the North decreased, it relatively heightened in the South with the emergence of threats to national security from various Niger Delta militant groups who mounted an aggressive campaign to sabotage the country's oil pipeline networks. Also, the secessionist group, Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), gained prominence in the South-east as various clashes between the IPOB and security forces occurred.

Without doubt, the effect of leadership change on issues of national security has not only been subjective to the motions of the populace, but has also sufficed as an aggregate of the policies and efficiency of the leaders of the nation during the periods in view. Between 2009 and 2016, Nigeria has not only experienced two government tenures, but has also seen the ascension to power of two political parties. The effect these have had on issues of national security vary dispassionately. At this point, an examination of the Niger-Delta militants and Boko Haram insurgents under the Jonathan and Buhari tenures will reveal some of the salient evidential effects that leadership change has had on issues of national security.

Origin of Niger-Delta Militancy

The Niger-Delta is the delta of the Niger River located right on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean in Nigeria. The area, covering about 70,000 square kilometres, is considered as Africa's largest wetland and home to some of the largest mangrove forests in the world (CLO 2002:2; Hogan 2013:28). The region consists of nine (9) coastal southern Nigerian states, namely Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers. Of all these, the only non-oil producing state is Cross River.

While the region is densely populated with over 30 million people, its occupants are mainly minority ethnic nationalities, with the Ijaws as the largest group. The region has had economic significance for its resource since the nineteenth century. It was a major producer of palm oil, earning it the name Oil Rivers when it became a protectorate of Britain from 1885 to 1893 (Jones 1963:41). The swampy region holds the bulk of Nigeria's oil & gas reserves, which is the capital pillar of the Nigerian economy. Nigeria draws massive revenues from the Niger-Delta, yet, the region has little to show for the vast wealth it had produced. The inequality in wealth distribution is further augmented by the environmental damages caused by oil extraction which harms the eco-system of the region and the livelihood of its occupants. Over the years, oil spills have rendered arable land and fishing waters generally unusable for the natives. The locals have placed the blame for this degradation and poverty on the activities of multinational oil corporation and state sponsored marginalisation and oppression of protests. This accounts for the present social, economic and human development deficits in the region, which have been the catalysts of crises in the Niger Delta (HRW 1999:39).

The Niger Deltans are driven by a sense of injustice owing to abject poverty and mass unemployment occasioned by the explorative activities of the oil companies such as oil spills and gas flaring. The environmental impacts of oil spills are worse because almost 60 percent of the people in the Niger Delta depend on the environment for their livelihood which is mainly fishing and agriculture. (Francis, Lapin & Rossiaco 2011: 1-2). The combination of lack of resource control and the negative environmental impact have resulted in conflicts and emancipation movements in the region. Armed groups have waged systematic campaigns against the government and oil companies in order to have their demands met while unemployed youth have often taken advantage of the situation by engaging in criminal acts, including kidnapping and oil theft (Francis et al 2011:5).

Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro led the earliest post-independence act of resistance against the government. An Ijaw student's union leader and activist, Adaka Boro and his 50-man Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) declared "The Niger Delta Republic distinct and separate from Nigeria" on February 23, 1966 (Tebekeami 1982:31). The Adaka Boro-led uprising was triggered by the political marginalisation and economic deprivation suffered in the region. Isaac Boro's led movement was crushed by Federal troops after twelve days and he was arrested. However, the seeds of resistance had been sown in the Niger-Delta.

Consequently, the agitations were picked up by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), which was founded by famous environmentalist and writer, Ken Saro Wiwa, in 1990. MOSOP campaigned for local autonomy for the Ogoni People, as well as redressing of the social, economic and ecological damages done to Ogoni land by oil and mining activities. To drive home their demands, MOSOP mobilised and successfully halted all oil extraction activities in Ogoni and through peaceful non-violent mass action in 1993. The military regime at the time led by Gen. Sani Abacha however treated the resistance as a threat to national security and violently repressed the campaign with military brutality and efficiency. Eventually, Saro-Wiwa and eight other leaders of MOSOP were arrested on trumped up charges, sentenced to death in a show trial and executed on November 10, 1995 (Saro-Wiwa 1992:31).

Since MOSOP, a variety of resistance and armed groups have emerged, as number came together in 2005 under the umbrella of Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). A new wave of agitations in the Niger-Delta erupted in 1998 with the Kaiama Declaration issued by the Ijaw Youth Council on December 11, 1998 (Ezeudu 2013:42). Other armed militant groups that have emerged in the region include Egbesu Boys, Joint Revolutionary Council, MENBUTU, Arobo Freedom Fighters, Niger Delta Volunteer and recently, the Niger Delta Avengers (Ebienu 2011:637-643). These ones collectively dealt devastating damaging blows on the Nigerian polity and serious threats to National Security through the abduction of foreigners, Nigerians as hostages, illegal oil bunkering, scaring away employees

created to manage the national river basins, which achieved little. In 1982, the Shagari administration set up a Presidential Task Force on Niger Delta Development (PTFND) to formulate solutions to the problems of the delta region. In 1993, the Oil and Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was created by President Babangida as a result of strenuous advocacy by Niger Delta regional leaders with support from the oil industry. Soon after the 1999 election, President Olusegun Obasanjo also established a committee that led to the creation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) whose mandate was to implement projects and programs for the sustainable development of the Niger Delta area. In addition to the NDDC, a new Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs was created by President Yar'adua in September 2008 (ICG 2006: 19).

Terrorism is the hallmark Niger Delta militant groups and they have adopted tactics of random and systematic use of violence in outrageous, shocking, unexpected and attention-grabbing ways through the destruction of pipelines and attacks on oil facilities. Oil workers, especially expatriates, were targeted and abducted. Although kidnapping is as old as humanity, the activities of Niger Delta militant groups have succeeded in institutionalising kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria. For instance, in January 2009, gunmen hijacked a French vessel with four expatriates and five Nigerians aboard. The vessel and crew were however released three days later. In May 2009, gunmen loyal to militant Tom Polo seized the MV Spirit and abducted 19 hostages (15 Filipinos and four Nigerians) plus the vessel. The same day, they seized the *MT Chikana*. The JTF (Joint Task Force set up by the Federal government to curb the threats posed by militancy in the region) later launched a huge offensive and razed Tom Polo's camp, freeing some of the hostages. MEND claimed 2 Filipinos were killed in crossfire. On 16 May, JTF said they had freed 9 expatriates and 4 Nigerians. On 23 May, they again announced the rescue of 3 more members of the group. It was these last two incidents that prompted MEND to declare a full-scale war and no fly zone for helicopters of oil companies across the Niger Delta area (Onukwugha 2016).

It is, however, significant to note that the various attempts by successive governments to address the Niger-Delta crises did not pacify the Niger-Deltans. The emergence of one of their own as Vice-President, and later, President, seemed to be 'the real deal' that silenced the grievances of the region. The emergence of Goodluck as vice-president in 2007 gave the minority Niger Deltans a sense of belonging which have been arguably absent since independence. It also gave them the result they deserve as the goose that lays the golden egg. As vice-president, Goodluck Jonathan was pivotal to the conception and implementation of the Niger-Deltan amnesty programme which have been instrumental in sustaining the relative peace in the region since the commencement of implementation. Jonathan eventually became Acting President in a way deemed by some as divinely orchestrated or an act of "Goodluck", and later, President in 2015, thus consolidating the Niger-Deltan (Ijaw) grip on national leadership.

multinationals, disrupting business activities, discouraging foreign investment while promoting a general climate of instability and hostility in the region.

Several attempts to find a lasting solution to the crises in the region have yielded little results. Government boards, commissions and ministries that were deployed to specially cater for the needs of the Niger-Delta have fallen short of a sustained headway. In June 2009, President Umaru Musa Yar'adua (2007-2010) granted amnesty to the militants and launched the Niger-Delta Amnesty Programme. The aim was to disarm the militants, offer them stipends and train them in vocational skills. Over 20,000 militants responded and surrendered to the government for rehabilitation. This has however not helped the situation in the Niger-Delta area as the ebb and flow in peace and stability has remained sustained. Indeed, President Yar'adua's amnesty programme did not permanently halted the recurring problems of agitations as issues of exploitation and underdevelopment has not been rested in the Niger Delta area. (Akinwale 2010:201-207). However, it acted as the bedrock to the seed of sustainable peace in the region. Any wonder Aghalino (2012) described the late Yar'adua's tenure as brief but revolutionary?

Niger Delta Militancy, National Insecurity and Leadership Change, 2009-2016

Successive national governments have attempted to solve the long-standing problem of revenue allocation and resource control, which are the core demands of Niger Delta groups. Before 1958, oil producing areas got 100% of oil proceeds. From 1958, the allocation of oil revenue was based on the recommendations of the Raisman Commission of a revenue formula that reduced the percentage that accrued to the oil producing areas to 50%, giving 20% to the federal government and 30% to a Distributable Pool Account (DPA). These were administered by the federal government and allocated to states and special projects (Akinwale: 2010:205).

The military government of Gen. Yakubu Gowon raised the number federating states in order to weaken the Eastern Region and prevent a possible Biafra exit. This led to the gradual reduction in the revenue accruable to the oil producing areas with their share falling to 45 percent by 1970. The Petroleum Decree of 1969 also gave "the ownership of all oil and gas within any land in Nigeria as well as under its territorial waters and continental shelf" to the federal government (Francis et al 2011:72). The policies of the Gowon regime, however, fuelled the Biafra secession that it aimed to prevent as the Igbo and the oil producing areas perceived the policies as targeted at the Eastern Region. Since the end of Nigeria Civil war, successive governments have also aimed to address the Niger Delta problem from the angle of revenue allocation.

As a result of the recommendation of the Willink Commission of 1958, the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) was established in 1960. Though it was succeeded in 1976 by the Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority (NDRBDA), it was one of twelve parastatal companies that was

situation significantly helped to further calm agitated nerves and restore peace in the Niger-Delta.

While leadership change may have placated a large section of the Niger Delta region and induced them to embrace the amnesty programme, it, however, did not bring about lasting solutions to the plight of the average Niger Deltan. The Jonathan presidency, which was a rare and golden chance that came on a platter of gold for the Niger-Delta, squandered the window of opportunity to proffer long-lasting solutions to the Niger-Delta crises. Based on the abnormal but normalised use of state power to further personal, clan and ethno-religious interests in Nigeria, the Jonathan president did not do enough to further the long-term interests of the common man in the Niger-Delta, which signifies a fundamental proof that the political elite in Nigeria only use their ethno-religious affiliation to further their political ambitions. By and large, one could aver that the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as vice president, and later, President, only succeeded in reducing the activities of the Niger Delta Militants, but did not address the core problems that ceaselessly ravaged the Niger-Delta area since the immediate post-independence period.

Conclusion

This chapter investigated the nexus between leadership change and the Niger Delta Militancy in Nigeria. The chapter found that the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as Acting President, and later, as President, was pivotal in calming agitated nerves in the Niger Delta.

One could convincingly argue that the Niger Delta Militancy followed a historical pattern in the Nigerian polity of ethnic militias serving as "pressure groups" to extract political concessions from the country. The Niger Delta militants fought for the oil-producing areas in the South-south geo-political zone just as it was instrumental to the gradual recession of Niger Delta militancy. The impact of leadership in the activities of Niger Delta Militants underscores the use of violence as means of political participation and advocacy by various groups within Nigeria.

These manifestations are also not unconnected with the activities of elected representatives whose allegiance is, usually, first, to their ethno-religious constituencies, thus subordinating the national base. Unfortunately, in cases where marginalisation exists based on ethnic or religious intolerance, leadership agitations and violence, which often threatens national security. It functioned as an immediate cause for either the reduction of terrorist agitations in a section of the country or a trigger for an upsurge of violent disturbances in another. For instance, the rise to power of President Goodluck Jonathan in 2009 undoubtedly occasioned a decline in the threat posed by the Niger-Delta Militants to national security. For example, the subsequent accession of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 also witnessed a corresponding agitation of the Niger-Delta militant groups and the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB). The hard fact is that

the ebb and flow in the activities of radicalised religious groups or ethnic chauvinists in Nigeria has come to be dependent on which part of the ethnic divide the president/political elite came from; it appears insurgency will remain a part of Nigeria for as long as ethnic or religious sentiments remains a fundamental factor in the Nigeria polity. One would have thought that the Niger Delta would pose a lot of insecurity challenges to the Muhammadu Buhari administration. However, it is significant to note that the region here he hails from (North), seems to be the cog to the nation's development. Lessons learned is that up till just the advent of COVID 19 Pandemic in early 2020, good governance and political will remained major keys to sustainable development, peace and national security across the country, including the area that produced the "golden egg" for so long - The Niger Delta.

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SECTION F

INTER/INTRA-GROUP RELATIONS