



# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

## THESIS

**NIGERIA'S PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY  
PROGRAM: SUCCESSES, FAILURES,  
AND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES**

by

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June 2023

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| <b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                 |                                                                | <i>Form Approved OMB<br/>No. 0704-0188</i>                 |  |
| Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC, 20503.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                 |                                                                |                                                            |  |
| <b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY<br/>(Leave blank)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                 | <b>2. REPORT DATE</b><br>June 2023                             | <b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b><br>Master's thesis |  |
| <b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b><br>NIGERIA'S PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY PROGRAM: SUCCESSES, FAILURES, AND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                 |                                                                | <b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>                                  |  |
| <b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> John R. Magill                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                 |                                                                |                                                            |  |
| <b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b><br>Naval Postgraduate School<br>Monterey, CA 93943-5000                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                 |                                                                | <b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>            |  |
| <b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b><br>N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                 |                                                                | <b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>    |  |
| <b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                 |                                                                |                                                            |  |
| <b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b><br>Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                 |                                                                | <b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b><br>A                         |  |
| <b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b><br><br>The oil-producing Niger Delta has been wrought with conflict for generations, resulting in the deaths of thousands and the decrease in oil production for Nigeria. In 2009, President Yar'Adua introduced the Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP) in hopes of bringing enduring peace to the region. The PAP provided stipend payments, professional training, and the promise of job placements for militants. In the first five years of the program, violent deaths in the Niger Delta dropped by 75% and oil production levels were restored. However, in the subsequent years, violent deaths have risen, and oil production has fallen well below pre-amnesty levels. This research evaluates the successes and failures of Nigeria's PAP to determine why the program was initially successful but has become increasingly ineffective with the passage of time. The research finds that the PAP initially succeeded in pacifying militants by providing financial incentives and bringing them into the newly created PAP network. However, the PAP failed to build enduring peace because it neglected large swaths of the population, and with the passage of time, the economic incentives for former militants dwindled due to the effect of inflation on militant's stipends. As a result, both the wider population and former militants have turned to widespread oil theft as a means to compensate for their economic plight. |                                                                 |                                                                |                                                            |  |
| <b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b><br>oil, resource curse, Nigeria, Niger Delta, bunkering, theft, organizational behavior, decentralized organizations, amnesty, international oil corporations, IOC, grievance, greed, Presidential Amnesty Program, PAP, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, DDR                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                 |                                                                | <b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b><br>97                           |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                 |                                                                | <b>16. PRICE CODE</b>                                      |  |
| <b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b><br>Unclassified                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b><br>Unclassified | <b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b><br>Unclassified | <b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b><br>UU                    |  |

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
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**NIGERIA'S PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY PROGRAM: SUCCESSES, FAILURES,  
AND ECONOMIC INCENTIVES**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH ASIA, SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The oil-producing Niger Delta has been wrought with conflict for generations, resulting in the deaths of thousands and the decrease in oil production for Nigeria. In 2009, President Yar'Adua introduced the Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP) in hopes of bringing enduring peace to the region. The PAP provided stipend payments, professional training, and the promise of job placements for militants. In the first five years of the program, violent deaths in the Niger Delta dropped by 75% and oil production levels were restored. However, in the subsequent years, violent deaths have risen, and oil production has fallen well below pre-amnesty levels. This research evaluates the successes and failures of Nigeria's PAP to determine why the program was initially successful but has become increasingly ineffective with the passage of time. The research finds that the PAP initially succeeded in pacifying militants by providing financial incentives and bringing them into the newly created PAP network. However, the PAP failed to build enduring peace because it neglected large swaths of the population, and with the passage of time, the economic incentives for former militants dwindled due to the effect of inflation on militant's stipends. As a result, both the wider population and former militants have turned to widespread oil theft as a means to compensate for their economic plight.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

|        |                                                       |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| DDR    | Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rehabilitation       |
| IOC    | International Oil Corporation                         |
| JTF    | Joint Task Force                                      |
| MEND   | Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta      |
| MOSOP  | Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People             |
| NDA    | Niger Delta Avengers                                  |
| NDDB   | Niger Delta Development Board                         |
| NDRDMP | Niger Delta Regional Development Master Plan          |
| NDVF   | Niger Delta Volunteer Force                           |
| NEITI  | Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative |
| NNPC   | Nigerian National Oil Corporation                     |
| OBR    | Ogoni Bill of Rights                                  |
| PANDEF | Pan-Niger Delta Forum                                 |
| PAP    | Presidential Amnesty Program                          |

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thanks to my wife, Rebekah, and my kids, Eliya, Caleb, Grace, Eve, and Martha. You have been so patient and understanding through this experience. I love you. Thank you to Professors Lawson and Meierding who spent so much time and energy over the last year getting me to the point of completion.

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## I. THESIS PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

In the blockbuster film *There Will Be Blood*, the lead character, Daniel Plainview, describes to the citizens of a small religious community the great things that will come to them if they strike oil: “Bread’ll be coming right out of your ears. New roads, agriculture, employment, education... This community of yours will not only survive. It will flourish.”<sup>1</sup> However, this hope—quick riches for a community via large oil revenues—does not always result in public goods provision; rather, the communities and states often become dependent on oil, without the expected benefits materializing. Oil ends up shaping and dominating the social classes and regimes, the “institutions of the state, the framework for decision-making, and the decision calculus of policymakers.”<sup>2</sup> The oil provides an incredible financial reward to those who control it and can therefore lead a country down a path of rebellion and conflict.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the Niger Delta has been and remains a place of conflict to this day—a conflict that is centered on oil, the control of oil revenue, oil pollution, and the perceived marginalization of the people from whose land the oil is extracted. Large reserves of oil were discovered in the Delta in 1956, so much that Nigeria became a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971.<sup>4</sup> Oil has become central to the state’s financing and capacity; in 2019, 80% of government revenue came from the sale of oil.<sup>5</sup> Many Delta citizens and militant groups claim that they have been impoverished while the state has become rich, resulting in people lashing out against the

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<sup>1</sup> *There Will Be Blood*, directed by Paul Anderson (2007; Paramount Vantage, 2007), DVD.

<sup>2</sup> Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>3</sup> James Fearon, “Primary Commodity Exports and Civil War – James D. Fearon, 2005,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 4 (August 2005): 487, <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1177/0022002705277544>.

<sup>4</sup> “OPEC : Nigeria,” Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, accessed July 25, 2022, [https://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/about\\_us/167.htm](https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/167.htm).

<sup>5</sup> Kasirim Nwuke, “Nigeria’s Petroleum Industry Act: Addressing Old Problems, Creating New Ones,” *Brookings* (blog), November 24, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/11/24/nigerias-petroleum-industry-act-addressing-old-problems-creating-new-ones/>.

state.<sup>6</sup> In 2022, 613 people were killed in acts of political violence in the Niger Delta.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Delta residents continue to steal a substantial share of the region's oil output. From the beginning of 2021 through the first half of 2022, the Nigerian state lost an average of more than 200,000 barrels of crude oil per day (bpd) due to theft.<sup>8</sup>

The Nigerian government attempted to address the problem of violence in the Niger Delta through the introduction, in 2009, of a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) campaign known as the Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP). The program had notable success in its first few years, both in terms of reduced violence and higher levels of oil production as pipeline bombings decreased and oil fields were able to be reopened.<sup>9</sup> However, since general enrollment in the program officially closed in 2012, the region has returned to higher levels of violence and increased oil theft, ultimately reducing the quantity of oil that the government can sell.<sup>10</sup> Observing the trends of violence and oil losses before and after the PAP leads to this thesis's fundamental question: Was Nigeria's PAP successful? To the extent that aspects of the PAP were successful, this research explores why and how it was successful in abating violence. And, to the extent that features of the PAP were unsuccessful, it also explores why and how the program has failed to do its part in "bringing enduring peace, security, stability, and development to [the] Niger Delta."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and Ogoni News and Resources," MOSOP & Ogoni News and Resources, accessed October 27, 2022, <http://www.mosop.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> Michelle Gavin, "Nigeria Security Tracker," Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, March 15, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>.

<sup>8</sup> Simon Echewofun Sunday, "How Nigeria Lost N2.4trn to Crude Oil Theft in 28 Months," Daily Trust, May 15, 2022, <https://dailytrust.com/how-nigeria-lost-n2-4trn-to-crude-oil-theft-in-28-months>.

<sup>9</sup> Tarila Marclint Ebiede, Arnim Langer, and Jale Tosun, "Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration: Analysing the Outcomes of Nigeria's Post-Amnesty Programme," *International Journal of Security & Development* 9, no. 1 (April 16, 2020): 12, <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.752>.

<sup>10</sup> Gavin, "Nigeria Security Tracker"; "Nigeria Crude Oil: Production, 2002 – 2023," CEIC Data, accessed April 8, 2023, <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/nigeria/crude-oil-production>.

<sup>11</sup> Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, "The Proclamation – OIAPAP," Presidential Amnesty Programme, June 25, 2009, <https://www.osapnd.gov.ng/the-proclamation/>.

## **A. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THESIS**

Nigeria's PAP is of scholarly interest due to its implications for DDR campaigns, Nigerian security, and economic insecurity. The PAP was constructed on the 2006 model provided by the United Nations for how a DDR campaign should be designed.<sup>12</sup> The successes and failures of this program could therefore shed light on other DDR campaigns that were designed on the UN's framework. Studying Nigeria's PAP can help to provide deeper insights into the strengths and limitations of DDR programs as tools to building lasting peace, especially in areas plagued by economic insecurity.

Concerning Nigerian security specifically, the outcome of the PAP could provide insights into effective and ineffective mechanisms for addressing core grievances of rebels across the country. Nigeria's conflict is not limited to the Niger Delta. The PAP's successes and failures in the oil-producing regions may shed light on factors that may be causing violence in other parts of the country. Its programmatic design, which provided economic benefits to many, also helps to reveal the importance of economic security for other violent networks in Nigeria. This research on Nigeria's PAP contributes to a broader discussion on peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and combatting insurgencies in conflict-laden regions.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Scholars have provided numerous insights into the factors that have contributed to conflict in the Niger Delta and factors that help a DDR program contribute to long-term peace. They have also assessed how well Nigeria's DDR program aligns with the design of other DDR programs. This literature review begins by covering academic work on the resource curse, the greed versus grievance debate in the civil war literature, and how this debate fits into the conflict in the Niger Delta. It is followed by an examination of the literature on factors contributing to DDR programs' long-term success or failure.

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<sup>12</sup> Cyril I. Obi, "Oil and the Post-Amnesty Programme (PAP): What Prospects for Sustainable Development and Peace in the Niger Delta?," *Review of African Political Economy* 41, no. 140 (June 2014): 252, JSTOR.

## 1. Oil Conflict and Greed v. Grievance

The resource curse literature links oil and rebellion through multiple channels of causality. In an oil-cursed state, market forces funnel investment into the highly capital-intensive oil industry, squeezing out non-oil manufacturing and agriculture. This harms economic growth in those more labor-intensive sectors, which can increase unemployment. This can increase the likelihood of rebellion by facilitating recruitment of youth without jobs or other income sources.<sup>13</sup> Oil can also affect the trajectory of rebellions, causing them to be particularly intense and protracted, as rebel groups can exploit the resources to provide a continuous stream of funding for their activities.<sup>14</sup> Oil resources can additionally provide an incentive for rebellion. Although rebels may not attempt to seize control of the central government of oil-producing states, oil encourages secessionist conflicts.<sup>15</sup>

These findings align with arguments on the former side of a broader debate about the causes of civil wars, commonly described as the “greed versus grievance” debate. Scholars on the “greed” side of the debate argue that the probability of a rebellion lies in its economic viability. Collier and Hoeffler find that motivation for rebellion lay much more in rebels’ perception of an economic opportunity than in grievances, which are themselves far more widespread than rebellion.<sup>16</sup> Thus, many rebels’ political motivations—ethnic conflict, religion, political repression or exclusion, and inequality—are unimportant compared to simple economic opportunity when it comes to starting rebellions.<sup>17</sup> Following their initial studies on civil war, Collier et al. nuance their “greed” argument in exchange for a “feasibility” argument: “where rebellion is feasible it will

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 569, JSTOR; Jeffrey D. Sachs and Andrew M. Warner, “Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth,” 6, <https://doi.org/10.3386/w5398>; Michael Ross, *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations*, *The Oil Curse* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 5, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400841929>.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Ross, “A Closer Look at Oil, Diamonds, and Civil War,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, no. 1 (June 2006): 281, <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.081304.161338>. Collier and Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” 588.

<sup>15</sup> Ross, *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations*, 3; Ross, 171.

<sup>16</sup> Collier and Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” 588.

<sup>17</sup> Collier and Hoeffler, 570, 576.

occur.”<sup>18</sup> In particular, when considering the risk of large conflict onset and length, factors such as financial resourcing and military feasibility outweigh the grievances claimed by rebels.<sup>19</sup>

The second camp maintains that grievances are at the heart of the insurgency. Denton and Harris blame political grievances such as corruption and military abuses, asserting that the latter cause an increase in attacks rather than the decrease that was hoped for through deployment of the military.<sup>20</sup> Francis Stewart also aligns with the grievance camp by arguing that “social or political dimensions or cultural status between culturally defined groups” produce conflict.<sup>21</sup> Cedarman et al. argue that Collier and Hoeffler’s disposal of grievances as a motivation for conflict has taken place too prematurely; one of the key grievances, they argue, is inequality, both in political representation and economic standing.<sup>22</sup> Murphy argues that, for Nigeria specifically, the government has misdiagnosed militant activities such as piracy and hot-tapping as outbreaks in crime—motivated by greed—that could be solved with short-sighted amnesty programs. Rather, Nigeria, he claims, is facing a massive grievance issue including poverty and control of the government by non-Delta ethnic groups.<sup>23</sup>

Another group of scholars rejects either explicitly greed- or grievance-based arguments. Young explains that the greed v. grievance argument is really more of an

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner, “Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 61, no. 1 (2009): 3, JSTOR.

<sup>19</sup> Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ginger L. Denton and Jonathan R. Harris, “Maritime Piracy, Military Capacity, and Institutions in the Gulf of Guinea,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 34, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 5–7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2019.1659783>.

<sup>21</sup> Frances Stewart, “Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: An Introduction and Some Hypotheses,” in *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Lars-Erik Cedarman, Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison,” *The American Political Science Review* 105, no. 3 (2011): 492, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055411000207>.

<sup>23</sup> Martin N. Murphy, “Petro-Piracy: Oil and Troubled Waters,” *Orbis* 57, no. 3 (June 1, 2013): 435, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2013.05.011>.

interaction between states and dissidents and how those processes play out.<sup>24</sup> Fearon and Laitin advocate for a conditions-based explanation for insurgencies: weak states are associated with poverty and political instability, which promote rebellion.<sup>25</sup> Kalyvas aligns with Fearon and Laitin's argument regarding weak states, but adds ethnic antagonism and natural resources as factors that increase the risk of civil war.<sup>26</sup> Kalyvas melds Collier and Hoeffler's argument, which used low GDP per capita as a measure to predict civil war, with Fearon and Laitin who emphasized state weakness as the leading factor in civil conflicts.<sup>27</sup> He claims that countries with low GDP per capita, high inequality, and dependence on commodity exports are at high risk of conflict.<sup>28</sup> Poverty, Kalyvas further argues, is one of the most significant factors as it makes opportunity costs of joining a rebellion low.<sup>29</sup>

The literature regarding Nigeria parallels this broader theoretical debate, with scholars claiming greed, grievance, or hybrid causes of conflict in the region. Michael Watts argues that greed causes Nigeria's conflict: "Nigeria is an oil-state, driven by two cardinal principles: how to capture oil rents and how to sow the oil revenues."<sup>30</sup> He claims that oil, as a lootable resource, has provided a feasible way for self-interested rebels to engage and protract conflict.<sup>31</sup> However, he does provide an opening for Fearon and Laitin's perspective that the weakness of the Nigerian state, its resource curse, and colonial

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<sup>24</sup> David Mason and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, eds., *What Do We Know About Civil Wars* (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 40, Kindle.

<sup>25</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (February 2003): 75–76, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000534>.

<sup>26</sup> Stathis Kalyvas, "Civil Wars," in *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. Charles Boix and Susan Stokes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 430.

<sup>27</sup> Kalyvas, 429.

<sup>28</sup> Kalyvas, 418.

<sup>29</sup> Kalyvas, 419.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Watts, "Crude Politics: Life and Death on the Nigerian Oil Fields" (Working Paper No. 25, California, 2009), 16, <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=3f57b752dea770933bea5894a9669c4b3c44a281>.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Watts, "The Rule of Oil: Petro-Politics and the Anatomy of an Insurgency," *Journal of African Development* 11, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 28, [https://web.archive.org/web/20220223025742id\\_/](https://web.archive.org/web/20220223025742id_/).

legacies have resulted in a dysfunctional system.<sup>32</sup> Nwajiaku-Dahou generally sides with the grievance camp, claiming that the history of critical junctures tell a more accurate story of conflict in the Delta; she explains that the grievance issues have been muddled by the greed argument due to the constant chase for oil wealth.<sup>33</sup> By studying Ateke Tom, a rebel leader in the Niger Delta, Akintola finds that rebellion entails both greed and grievance: while the rebel leader has indeed enriched himself, he has simultaneously provided public goods for those in the region over which he has influence as a way to compensate for the population's grievances against the central government.<sup>34</sup> Courson argues in accord with the grievance camp, claiming that the lack of social development, unemployment, poverty, and oil pollution have been the primary causes of conflict in the Niger Delta.<sup>35</sup>

When considering the effectiveness of the PAP, Collier and Hoeffler's framework is of particular interest because the PAP's stipend payments directly targeted rebels' financial demands. Collier and Hoeffler's logic suggests that Nigeria's PAP was well designed, as it reduced rebel armament and provided alternative incomes, which would reduce the chances of further conflict.<sup>36</sup> However, the authors might also expect that Nigeria's PAP would fall short, as it did not "accelerate the economic development of the countries' most at-risk peoples and provide an effective military presence," thereby increasing the chances of returning to conflict.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Watts, 44–49.

<sup>33</sup> Kathryn Nwajiaku-Dahou, "The Political Economy of Oil and 'rebellion' in Nigeria's Niger Delta," *Review of African Political Economy* 39, no. 132 (2012): 307–8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2012.688805>.

<sup>34</sup> Olanshile M. Akintola, "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Understanding the Multi-Causal Factors of the Niger Delta Conflicts" (Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2018), 259, <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.757872>.

<sup>35</sup> Elias Courson, "MEND: Political Marginalization, Repression, and Petro-Insurgency in the Niger Delta," *African Security* 4, no. 1 (March 7, 2011): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2011.551060>.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Collier, "The Market for Civil War," *Foreign Policy* 136 (May 2003): 9, ProQuest.

<sup>37</sup> Collier, 9.

## 2. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Campaigns

Another relevant area of literature debates the conditions in which DDR programs are most likely to succeed and the programmatic design features that increase the likelihood of success. As its name suggests, DDR programs are a type of post-conflict intervention that aims to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate former combatants into society both as part of a peace agreement and to prevent a return to armed conflict.<sup>38</sup> Walls claims that the objective of a DDR program is to “ensure peace, foster growth and forestall the re-emergence of violence.”<sup>39</sup> Overall, scholars agree that DDR campaigns can contribute to peacebuilding, if the program is properly implemented. However, they disagree about which aspects of a program are most critical to the success of the DDR program as it attempts to facilitate enduring peace.

Scholars generally agree that DDR campaigns are a singular component in a larger peacebuilding effort. Many scholars posit that, if a DDR program is well-planned and flexible, it has the ability to facilitate longer-term peace; however, if combatants are not given the tools and successfully placed in alternative employment, they are more likely to return to fighting, prolonging the conflict.<sup>40</sup> Scholars also agree that, to prevent an insurgency from resurfacing, a DDR program must be integrated with a broader strategic

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<sup>38</sup> Benjamin Okonofua, “The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016,” *SAGE Publications* 6, no. 2 (June 2016): 1, <https://journals-sagepub-com.libproxy.nps.edu/doi/full/10.1177/2158244016654522>.

<sup>39</sup> W.D. Walls, “The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis,” *OPEC Energy Review* 44, no. 1 (March 2020): 31.

<sup>40</sup> Mats R. Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Arms, Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*, Adelphi Papers, No. 303 (Oxford, [England] ; Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1996); Nat J. Colletta, Markus Kostner, and Ingo Wiederhofer, *The Transition from War to Peace in Sub-Saharan Africa* (World Bank Publications, 1996); Paul Collier, “Demobilization and Insecurity: A Study in the Economics of the Transition from War to Peace,” *Journal of International Development* 6, no. 3 (1994): 343–51, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3380060308>; Kees Kingma, “Demobilization of Combatants after Civil Wars in Africa and Their Reintegration into Civilian Life,” *Policy Sciences* 30, no. 3 (1997): 151–65, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004215705156>.

peacekeeping framework.<sup>41</sup> In fact, the United Nations (UN)—a proponent and designer of the DDR framework—assumes that DDR programs can only be successful when used as a tool within a larger peacekeeping strategy.<sup>42</sup> Okonofua points out that a DDR program is less likely to produce long-term peace when it is built in isolation, ignoring the concerns that drew the combatants into a violent group to begin with.<sup>43</sup> Rather, DDR campaigns stand the best chance of success when they are done in collaboration with national governments and international agencies.<sup>44</sup>

Beyond the consensus for a holistic approach to DDR programs, academia begins to diverge when it comes deciding what aspects of DDR programs are most critical. The first group of scholars tends to emphasize the importance of a pre-DDR peace agreement. Although DDR programs have been implemented before peace agreements were established—as was the case with Nigeria’s PAP—the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations assumes that DDR campaigns take place in a post-conflict setting.<sup>45</sup> Knight and Ozerdem, while advocating for the utility of DDR programs, make it clear that an agreement between belligerents must be achieved before beginning a DDR campaign.<sup>46</sup> Caparini seconds this opinion, claiming that a peace agreement is “a necessary first step to further reforms,” which can be followed by a DDR program or other reform

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<sup>41</sup> Mark Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem, “Guns, Camps and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 4 (2004): 499, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343304044479>; Obi, “Oil and the Post-Amnesty Programme (PAP): What Prospects for Sustainable Development and Peace in the Niger Delta?”; Ebiede, Langer, and Tosun, “Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration.”

<sup>42</sup> Ralph Rozema, “Urban DDR-Processes: Paramilitaries and Criminal Networks in Medellín, Colombia,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 40, no. 3 (August 2008): 427, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X08004392>.

<sup>43</sup> Okonofua, “The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016,” 7.

<sup>44</sup> Okonofua, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem, “Guns, Camps and Cash,” 499.

<sup>46</sup> Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem, 513.

initiatives.<sup>47</sup> She claims that the lack of an official peace treaty before the implementation of the DDR program led to the failure of the program in Mali.<sup>48</sup>

Another set of scholars argue that DDR programs tend to fail when they overemphasize disarmament at the cost of reintegration, a critical component of success. Most DDR programs use the “one-gun-per-person demobilization” tactic, which ignores more complex natures of disarmament.<sup>49</sup> If just the weapons are taken away but the fighters are still a part of their groups, Walls argues, they can simply buy more weapons, or a rebel group can function as peace-spoilers.<sup>50</sup> The reintegration process does not receive as much publicity, funding, and fanfare as the disarmament phase, and thus it is often neglected, argues Jagroop, though it may be the most vital to the long-term success of the program.<sup>51</sup> As the fanfare from disarmament dies down, Denise Spencer asserts, funding for the reintegration phase can be cut off before the reintegration is fully implemented resulting in a return to violence.<sup>52</sup> Mark Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem argued that the concentration on disarmament leads programming efforts to fall short of the socioeconomic needs of the combatants and their dependents.<sup>53</sup> Mats Berdal also concluded that there was no significant relationship between disarmament and long-term security unless it is connected to a reconciliation process.<sup>54</sup> Jagroop concurs by citing the example of Cambodia, where she finds that without the establishment of trust between the wider population, DDR campaign administrators, and ex-belligerents, disarmament broke

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<sup>47</sup> Marina Caparini, “DDR and SSR Challenges in Mali” (Working Paper No. 853, United Nations University – Centre for Policy Research, May 1, 2015), 10, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2670212>.

<sup>48</sup> Caparini, 12.

<sup>49</sup> Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem, “Guns, Camps and Cash,” 500.

<sup>50</sup> Okonofua, “The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016,” 6.

<sup>51</sup> Cassandra Jagroop, “ODU Digital Commons – Graduate Research Conference (GSIS): DDR” (Rising Uncertainty in a World Politics: Security in a World of Uncertainty, Norfolk, VA: Old Dominion University, 2023), 3, <https://doi.org/10.25776/h6dq-aj31>.

<sup>52</sup> Denise Spencer, “BICC Publications/Demobilisation and Reintegration in Central America” (Bonn, Germany: Bonn International Center for Conversion, February 1997), 1–2, <https://www.bicc.de/publications/publicationpage/publication/demobilisation-and-reintegration-in-central-america-175/>.

<sup>53</sup> Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem, “Guns, Camps and Cash,” 506.

<sup>54</sup> Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars*, 24; Berdal, 36.

down. She claims that without a strong trust-building mechanism, the fundamental concepts of a DDR program will weaken with the passage of time.<sup>55</sup>

Along a similar vein, other scholars emphasize that DDR campaigns tend to succeed when they prioritize political and economic aspects of reintegration. Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer claim that, without effective economic reintegration, former combatants can transform into brigands who act with “rent-seeking behavior through the barrel of a gun.”<sup>56</sup> When economic circumstances do not facilitate timely economic integration for ex-militants, cash payments can be an effective tool to extend peace if these payments are tailored to meet the specific needs of the target audience.<sup>57</sup> Berdal argues that the reintegration process is important because it promotes long-term peace.<sup>58</sup> Humphreys and Weinstein suggest that the DDR program in Sierra Leone failed in its reintegration effort, resulting in the program having little effect on the post-war peace; the DDR process, they found from their large-N study, did no better job of reintegrating program participants into society than other combatants who did not enroll in the DDR program.<sup>59</sup> Pugel, using the same methodology in Liberia, had similar results, finding notable inefficiencies in the DDR program construct.<sup>60</sup> Beyond economic integration, Kieran Mitton, studying the DDR program in Sierra Leone, argues that the way in which rebels reintegrate can affect a DDR campaign’s outcome: appropriate political integration is critical to success—a country cannot just include non-state armed actors in the political process and hope that the problem is solved.<sup>61</sup> Rather, ex-militants need to be holistically

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<sup>55</sup> Jagroop, “ODU Digital Commons – Graduate Research Conference (GSIS): DDR,” 3.

<sup>56</sup> Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, *The Transition from War to Peace in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 18.

<sup>57</sup> Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem, “Guns, Camps and Cash,” 514.

<sup>58</sup> Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars*.

<sup>59</sup> Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein, “What Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-Combatants in Sierra Leone” (New York: Columbia University, July 2004), 45, [https://macartan.github.io/assets/pdf/projects/SLXC/200407\\_report.pdf](https://macartan.github.io/assets/pdf/projects/SLXC/200407_report.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> James Pugel, “What Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-Combatants in Liberia” (UNDP, April 2007), 4, [https://kipdf.com/what-the-fighters-say-a-survey-of-ex-combatants-in-liberia-i-february-march-2006\\_5b10b7077f8b9a36398b45cd.html](https://kipdf.com/what-the-fighters-say-a-survey-of-ex-combatants-in-liberia-i-february-march-2006_5b10b7077f8b9a36398b45cd.html).

<sup>61</sup> Kieran Mitton, “Engaging Disengagement: The Political Reintegration of Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front: Analysis,” *Conflict, Security & Development* 8, no. 2 (2008): 24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800802095377>.

integrated into civil society, public discussions, and interaction with established political institutions.<sup>62</sup>

Yet another group of scholars argue that DDR programs fail due to ineffective targeting. DDR campaigns in the 1990s-2010s focused primarily on combatants within military structures.<sup>63</sup> However, providing benefits to the most influential actors both politically and economically may make the difference in lasting peace or a return to conflict. Keen contends that DDR program designers often fail to consider which actors hold the most sway in reducing violence, specifically, which ones have the most to gain by allowing the conflict to continue.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the wider population may feel excluded from the benefits of DDR programs. This can result in watering down the program's resources. Caparini points out that civilians who feel excluded from the program and lack other economic opportunities may fake militancy, join the DDR program, and get in on the benefits of the program to compensate for lack of employment in their area.<sup>65</sup> Jagroop applies this logic to Mali's DDR campaign, claiming that its exclusive nature resulted in a return to violence as not all the actors involved in the conflict were included in the benefits of the DDR program.<sup>66</sup>

### **3. Assessing Nigeria's Presidential Amnesty Program**

There is a consensus in the literature on Nigeria's PAP that the program reduced political violence, but that its DDR program was designed too narrowly to address the

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<sup>62</sup> Mitton, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Thorsten Benner, Stephan Mergenthaler, and Philipp Rotmann, *The New World of UN Peace Operations: Learning to Build Peace?* (OUP Oxford, 2011), 161.

<sup>64</sup> David Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars, The Adelphi Papers* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Routledge, 1998), 72, <http://www.routledge.com/books/>.

<sup>65</sup> Caparini, "DDR and SSR Challenges in Mali," 10.

<sup>66</sup> Jagroop, "ODU Digital Commons – Graduate Research Conference (GSIS): DDR," 4.

broad socio-economic roots of insurgency and oil loss.<sup>67</sup> The PAP literature follows the larger literature on DDR programs: Obi and Wapmuk argue that the PAP needed better economic integration,<sup>68</sup> Okonofua claims that the PAP fell short in politically and socially integrating the former militants,<sup>69</sup> and Omadjohwoefe asserts that the PAP was overly concerned with disarmament.<sup>70</sup> However, the literature on the PAP has not adequately determined *why* the PAP was successful at reducing violence in the years following the program's introduction, and insufficient effort has been made to evaluate the PAP's longer-term outcomes. This research aims to fill these gaps.

I argue that the PAP's success at reducing militancy in its initial years was largely due to its effective programmatic design. The PAP and its paired initiatives built a network, through which the program dispersed economic benefits for individual militants, militant group leaders, and local community leaders. In exchange for financial incentives, militants came out of the woodwork, surrendered their weapons, and were registered. The economic benefits provided a financial incentive for militants to cease their destructive operations, which promoted the Nigerian government's goal of achieving peace and, ultimately, increased oil revenues. This concept stems from the DDR program debate most closely to Knight and Özerdem's ideas about using cash payments as a tool to extend peace when economic integration is not easily achieved in the short-term. While militants claim many grievances, I argue that the preeminence of individual economic incentives over other,

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<sup>67</sup> Ebiede, Langer, and Tosun, "Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration," 12; Okonofua, "The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016"; Olubayo Oluduro and Olubisi Oluduro, "Nigeria : In Search of Sustainable Peace in the Niger Delta through the Amnesty Programme," *Journal of Sustainable Development* 5, no. 7 (2012): 48–61, <https://doi.org/10.5539/jsd.v5n7p48>; Samuel Omadjohwoefe, "Amnesty Initiative and the Dilemma of Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria," *Journal of Sustainable Development* 4, no. 4 (August 2011): 249–58, [www.ccsenet.org/jsd](http://www.ccsenet.org/jsd); Obi, "Oil and the Post-Amnesty Programme (PAP): What Prospects for Sustainable Development and Peace in the Niger Delta?"

<sup>68</sup> Obi, "Oil and the Post-Amnesty Programme (PAP): What Prospects for Sustainable Development and Peace in the Niger Delta?," 260; Sharkdam Wapmuk, "The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta," *Insight on Africa* 4, no. 2 (December 2012): 164, ProQuest.

<sup>69</sup> Okonofua, "The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016," 8.

<sup>70</sup> Omadjohwoefe, "Amnesty Initiative and the Dilemma of Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria," 255.

broad, political grievances was critical to pacification; furthermore, the rebellion in the Niger Delta appears to align with Collier's concept of feasibility; oil provided a lootable resource which could be used to fund the rebellion.. I also argue that the PAP failed in two significant ways: (1) it did not reduce oil theft and (2) the initial pacification of militants did not produce enduring peace or increased prosperity. Over time, both violence and oil theft have steadily increased.

## **C. OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS**

Chapter II provides background information on oil-centric conflict in the Niger Delta, the circumstances leading to the Yar'Adua Administration's creation of the PAP, the PAP's structure, and some of the key events in the following years. Chapters III and IV present the thesis' core analyses. They use a process tracing approach to evaluate the PAP's successes (Chapter III) and failures (Chapter IV). These analytic chapters use changes in rates of violent political deaths, level of militant activity, pipeline bombings, and overall oil losses from 2009, the year in which the PAP was announced, to 2021 to distinguish areas and periods of success from areas and periods of failure. Chapter III focuses on the initial success of the PAP, exploring how and why the PAP was successful at reducing violence and oil losses in the first six years following its debut. It discusses how the PAP's program design fit the organizational structure of rebel groups, creating a network that provided economic benefits to militants and visibility and accountability of militant groups to the government. Chapter IV focuses on the failures of the PAP, examining its relationship to the level of oil losses, specifically oil theft, and to the U-shaped trend in political violence. Both chapters use primary and secondary sources as evidence. Chapter V concludes with an overall evaluation of the PAP as a response to challenges it sought to address in the Niger Delta, identifying policy implications and areas for future research.

## II. BACKGROUND AND GRIEVANCES

Over the last three generations, the Niger Delta has experienced a spectrum of conflict, much of which has been intertwined with the central government's relationship with the oil industry. The extractive industry's work in the Niger Delta has resulted in the region becoming "one of the world's most severely petroleum impacted ecosystems."<sup>71</sup> Drilling chemicals such as soda ash have contributed to adding toxicity to the soil, causing defoliation of trees, stunted plant growth, and loss of fertility in the soil.<sup>72</sup> This pollution has damaged the livelihoods of an already poor region and has built deep political and economic grievances, spurring multiple periods of rebellion and unrest. The Nigerian government initially opted for military intervention; however, in 2009, as oil production hit historic lows, the central government transitioned to a softer approach—the Presidential Amnesty Program—which continues to this day. This chapter will discuss the interaction between the Nigerian government's programs to abate unrest in the Niger Delta starting with the early years of conflict, followed by the rise in rebel groups, which led to the release of the Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP). It will end with a discussion of the events following the PAP to include the rise and fall of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA).

### A. EARLY CONFLICT

In an attempt to manage the challenges of oil extraction, the Nigerian government created the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1961 with the hope of spurring development and staving off instability in the region.<sup>73</sup> The actions of the NDDDB proved insufficient, and in 1966, Isaac Boro, an Ijaw-minority activist, college graduate, and policeman, led a group of rebels to attack a police station and bomb oil pipelines.<sup>74</sup> They

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<sup>71</sup> Obi, "Oil Extraction, Dispossession, Resistance, and Conflict in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Niger Delta," 221.

<sup>72</sup> Omadjohwoefe, "Amnesty Initiative and the Dilemma of Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria," 251.

<sup>73</sup> Wapmuk, "The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta," 158.

<sup>74</sup> Wapmuk, 155.

were caught in February 1966, found guilty of treason, and sentenced to death, although later pardoned by a new military government.<sup>75</sup> During the months prior to the arrest, Boro's group, the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), sought to emancipate the Niger Delta, control oil, restore the environment, and broker compensation for the land the oil industry had expropriated.<sup>76</sup> Boro's rebellion inspired many of the follow-on militant groups in the Delta.<sup>77</sup>

The actions of Boro and the NDVF were a small part of what grew into the full-fledged Biafran Civil War. In 1967, an Igbo-led secessionist army in the Niger Delta, aggrieved by the perceived political marginalization during the decolonization process and in attempt to secure greater control over oil revenues, started a three-year war, which resulted "in over 100,000 military casualties...and 2 million Biafran civilians died from starvation during the war."<sup>78</sup> Within the first month of the conflict, the Nigerian government recaptured critical oil-producing infrastructure and began pumping oil again.<sup>79</sup> The Biafran resistance ended on 14 January, 1970, when the rebels surrendered to the British-supported Nigerian government.<sup>80</sup>

Over the following 25 years, the central government took increasing percentages of oil revenue from the Delta and continued its attempts to stave off unrest by creating new commissions that promised to resolve local grievances. In 1975, the derivation principle—a percentage of oil rents returned to the oil-producing region—was decreased to 20% from

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<sup>75</sup> Wapmuk, 155.

<sup>76</sup> Walls, "The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis," 30.

<sup>77</sup> Temitope B. Oriola and Ibikunle Adeakin, "The Framing Strategies of the Niger Delta Avengers," in *The Unfinished Revolution in Nigeria's Niger Delta* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 120.

<sup>78</sup> "ICE Case Studies-The Biafran War," ICE Case Studies, February 14, 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170214103207/http://www1.american.edu/ted/ice/biafra.htm>.

<sup>79</sup> Chibuike Uche, "Oil, British Interests and the Nigerian Civil War," *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 1 (March 2008): 131–35, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853708003393>.

<sup>80</sup> Abubakar Atofarati, "The Nigerian Civil War: Causes, Strategies, And Lessons Learnt" (Case Study, USMC Command and Staff College, 1992), <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1992/AAA.htm>.

the 1960 level of 50%.<sup>81</sup> Likely knowing that this may further stir up issues, the central government created their next development commission in 1976, the Niger Delta Basin and Development Authority. The derivation principle was again lowered to 1.5% in 1982 and down to 1.0% in 1990.<sup>82</sup> In 1992, Nigeria raised the derivation principle up to 3.0% and created yet another commission—the Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission—in hopes of minimizing unrest in the region.<sup>83</sup> In all, “at least thirteen inquiries, panels, [and] committees have been set up... [but] the problems they were created to tackle are not only still there but have also grown in great proportions.”<sup>84</sup> Ultimately, the commissions failed to rectify the claimed grievances of pollution and lack of economic development.

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) originated in 1990, and similar to Boro’s and Biafran grievances, it aimed to promote democracy, pursue economic and physical development for the region, guard the environment, safeguard the traditions and culture of the Ogoni people, and achieve self-determination—but this time non-violently.<sup>85</sup> MOSOP claimed that “\$100 billion worth of oil had been carted away from Ogoniland [and] in return for this, the Ogoni have no pipe-borne water, no electricity, very few roads, ill-equipped schools and hospitals, and no industry whatsoever.”<sup>86</sup> Oil spills, gas flaring, and the dumping of industrial waste destroyed the fishing industry, contaminated the groundwater, and poisoned the air.<sup>87</sup> From 1982–92, Shell—the largest

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<sup>81</sup> S. R. Akinola and Ayo Adesopo, “Derivation Principle Dilemma and National (Dis)Unity in Nigeria: A Polycentric Planning Perspective on the Niger Delta,” *Journal of Sustainable Development* 4, no. 5 (2011): 252, <https://doi.org/10.5539/jsd.v4n5p251>.

<sup>82</sup> Akinola and Adesopo, 252.

<sup>83</sup> Wapmuk, “The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria’s Niger Delta,” 158.

<sup>84</sup> Jide Ajide, John Ashima, and Oluwole Agunbiade, “How Government Underdeveloped the Niger Delta,” This Day Live, January 2023, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/01/08/how-government-underdeveloped-the-niger-delta/>.

<sup>85</sup> MOSOP & Ogoni News and Resources, “Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and Ogoni News and Resources.”

<sup>86</sup> MOSOP & Ogoni News and Resources.

<sup>87</sup> “Oil: The Curse of the Ogoni,” University of Michigan, accessed March 6, 2023, [http://websites.umich.edu/~snre492/cases\\_03-04/Ogoni/Ogoni\\_case\\_study.htm](http://websites.umich.edu/~snre492/cases_03-04/Ogoni/Ogoni_case_study.htm).

International Oil Corporation (IOC) operating in the Delta—spilled 1.6 million gallons of oil in Nigeria and was involved in notable bribery schemes.<sup>88</sup> MOSOP's demands in their symbolic document, the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR), included compensation for the environmental destruction, a larger share of oil revenues, cultural rights, religious rights, language rights, and better representation in Nigerian institutions.<sup>89</sup>

MOSOP held weekly rallies at various community levels culminating in a march of over 400,000 people throughout Ogoniland protesting oil pollution and ethnic marginalization.<sup>90</sup> MOSOP intentionally pursued non-violent protest to avoid government violence against civilians that occurred during the Biafran Civil War.<sup>91</sup> Their protests caused so much disturbance that Shell was pressured to cease production from the Ogoni oil fields in 1993 (and has never resumed since), causing Nigeria's oil production to drop by 185,000 bpd.<sup>92</sup> Shell claimed that, by 1995, 18 million barrels of oil production had been lost due to actions of MOSOP and other groups.<sup>93</sup>

The Nigerian government responded with repression. The state targeted Ogoni communities with a pseudo military occupation, resulting in more than 2,000 Ogoni civilians killed from 1993–1995.<sup>94</sup> MOSOP's most prominent leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa, who had gained the support of the international community, was framed for murder and hanged with eight compatriots in 1995.<sup>95</sup> Over the next few years, the group fractionalized,

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<sup>88</sup> “UNPO: Ogoni: Timeline of the Ogoni Struggle,” Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, March 20, 2018, <https://unpo.org/article/20716>.

<sup>89</sup> Tijen Demirel-Pegg and Scott Pegg, “Razed, Repressed and Bought off: The Demobilization of the Ogoni Protest Campaign in the Niger Delta,” *The Extractive Industries and Society* 2, no. 4 (December 1, 2015): 660, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2015.09.004>.

<sup>90</sup> IkpoBari Dumletam Senewo, “The Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR): Extent of Actualization 25 Years Later?,” *The Extractive Industries and Society* 2, no. 4 (December 1, 2015): 664–70, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2015.06.004>.

<sup>91</sup> Demirel-Pegg and Pegg, “Razed, Repressed and Bought Off,” 662.

<sup>92</sup> Demirel-Pegg and Pegg, “Razed, Repressed and Bought Off.”

<sup>93</sup> Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas, *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights, and Oil* (London: Verso, 2003), 197.

<sup>94</sup> Scott Pegg, “The Cost of Doing Business: Transnational Corporations and Violence in Nigeria,” *Security Dialogue* 30, no. 4 (1999): 474.

<sup>95</sup> Kiale Nyiayaana, “MOSOP since 1995: Somewhere between Hope and Despair?,” in *The Unfinished Revolution in Nigeria's Niger Delta* (Routledge, 2018), 16.

with some straying from Saro-Wiwa's peaceful approach. The violent factions began bombing oil installations, stealing, and kidnapping.<sup>96</sup> Since the late 1990s, MOSOP's prominence has faded, but the violent factions set the tone for follow-on rebel groups.<sup>97</sup>

## **B. MEND-LED VIOLENCE AND OIL LOSSES**

In late 2005, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) became the most notable regional resistance group, garnering a global audience as it ramped up violent attacks against oil infrastructure both on- and off-shore.<sup>98</sup> The pressure on smaller rebel groups by the Joint Task Force (JTF)—the Nigerian government's force deployed to quell violence in the Niger Delta—led to the consolidation of smaller rebel groups into the umbrella organization of MEND.<sup>99</sup> MEND's leadership operated largely in secret without a clear figurehead. It claimed grievance against four organizations: British colonists and the political legacy left behind, the Nigerian state, which it accused of favoring northern Nigerian interests, IOCs, and the political elite within the Delta.<sup>100</sup> MEND claimed that the group was an “amalgam of all arm-bearing groups...who have had relatively no benefits from the exploitation of [their] mineral resources by the Nigerian government and oil companies over the last fifty years.”<sup>101</sup> One of MEND's demands was

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<sup>96</sup> Adeosun Ahmed Babatunde, Ismail Norafidah, and Zengeni Knocks Tapiwa, “Niger Delta Avengers and the Niger Delta Question: What Way Forward?,” *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences* 5, no. 9 (September 2016): 7, <https://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:ijarmss&volume=5&issue=9&article=001>.

<sup>97</sup> Rhuks Ako, “A Lega(l)Cy Unfulfilled: Reflections of the Wiwa-Led MOSOP and the Localisation of Human Rights,” *The Extractive Industries and Society* 2, no. 4 (December 1, 2015): 625, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2015.04.007>.

<sup>98</sup> Cyril I. Obi, “Oil Extraction, Dispossession, Resistance, and Conflict in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Niger Delta,” *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 30, no. 1–2 (January 2010): 230, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2010.9669289>.

<sup>99</sup> Damilohun D. Ayoyo and Temitope B. Oriola, “A Critique of Joint-Military Task Force (JTF) Deployment in the Niger Delta,” in *The Unfinished Revolution in Nigeria's Niger Delta* (Routledge, 2018), 45.

<sup>100</sup> Oriola and Adeakin, “The Framing Strategies of the Niger Delta Avengers,” 139.

<sup>101</sup> Obi, “Oil Extraction, Dispossession, Resistance, and Conflict in Nigeria's Oil-Rich Niger Delta,” 231.

that 50% of oil revenue—an increase from the level which had been raised to 13% set in the new constitution in 1999—be returned to the Delta.<sup>102</sup>

MEND took violence against oil infrastructure to the next level, while simultaneously using oil exploitation to sustain its movement. The Nigerian government estimated that, between 2003 and 2008, \$100 billion in oil revenue was lost due to youth insurgent activity led by MEND.<sup>103</sup> In 2008, MEND bombed the Bonga offshore oil field, shutting it down and thereby decreasing hydrocarbon output by 150 MMcf of natural gas and 200,000 barrels of crude per day—about 10% of Nigeria’s total production at the time.<sup>104</sup> Between 2008 and 2009, 2,000 people were killed and hundreds taken hostage by MEND.<sup>105</sup>

Like other rebel groups, MEND’s major source of financing was oil bunkering: tapping a pipeline and selling the oil to transporters who then sell the oil in a neighboring country.<sup>106</sup> In 2009—the first year the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) tracked the amount of stolen and sabotaged oil losses—8.4 million barrels of oil was lost due to theft and an additional 61 million barrels lost due to sabotage. Beyond their oil racketeering, MEND also received payments from oil companies in return for pipeline protection.<sup>107</sup>

### C. INTRODUCTION OF THE PAP

To address the MEND-led violence, in 2009 the Nigerian government, led by President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, instituted the Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP),

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<sup>102</sup> Stephanie Hanson, “MEND: The Niger Delta’s Umbrella Militant Group,” Council on Foreign Relations, March 21, 2007, <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/mend-niger-deltas-umbrella-militant-group>.

<sup>103</sup> Wapmuk, “The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria’s Niger Delta,” 158.

<sup>104</sup> Wapmuk, 157.

<sup>105</sup> Walls, “The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis,” 31; Oriola and Adeakin, “The Framing Strategies of the Niger Delta Avengers,” 127.

<sup>106</sup> Hanson, “MEND.”

<sup>107</sup> “The Swamps of Insurgency: Nigeria’s Delta Unrest” (International Crisis Group, August 3, 2006), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/swamps-insurgency-nigerias-delta-unrest>.

which invited militants to lay down their arms, receive job training, and reintegrate into society.<sup>108</sup> Beyond political amnesty and job training, participants were also given living stipends of ₦65,000/month (US\$428 in 2009).<sup>109</sup> The Nigerian government hoped to break the ties that existed between individual fighters and their militant groups and to transform those fighters into upstanding members of society by giving them skills that would help to build the infrastructure and economy of the Niger Delta.<sup>110</sup>

Though met with initial doubts, the PAP provided a legal offramp for militants to reintegrate into society. The amnesty granted an “unconditional pardon to all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in the commission of offences associated with militant activities in the Niger Delta.”<sup>111</sup> This was based on section 175 of the Nigerian constitution, which gives the president pardon authority to entirely remit or to lessen a sentence.<sup>112</sup> The program was offered to all militants throughout the Niger Delta, but it particularly sought to pacify the most violent states: Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers.<sup>113</sup>

The PAP saw high enrollment and program completion rates in the years following its debut. In the first iteration from June to October 2009, 20,192 militants—10,000 more than expected, many of whom are suspected to have never been militants—gained amnesty by turning in all types of weapons from tear gas grenades, to small arms, bullet proof jackets, and gun boats.<sup>114</sup> The second iteration in November 2010 saw an additional 6,166 militants enter the program.<sup>115</sup> The final enrollment period occurred in 2012 when 3,642

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<sup>108</sup> Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, “The Proclamation – OIAPAP,” Presidential Amnesty Programme, June 25, 2009, <https://www.osapnd.gov.ng/the-proclamation/>.

<sup>109</sup> Walls, “The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis,” 28.

<sup>110</sup> Okonofua, “The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016,” 3.

<sup>111</sup> Oluduro and Oluduro, “Nigeria,” 50.

<sup>112</sup> Oluduro and Oluduro, 50–51.

<sup>113</sup> Walls, “The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis,” 28.

<sup>114</sup> Wapmuk, “The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria’s Niger Delta,” 161.

<sup>115</sup> Oluduro and Oluduro, “Nigeria,” 52.

more militants were granted amnesty.<sup>116</sup> Militants who enrolled in the program spent the first four weeks in a rehabilitation program which focused on anti-militancy counseling and reorientation to “moral [and] spiritual regeneration of ex-militants.”<sup>117</sup> The second portion provided technical training, which lasted from 3–18 months and included training in the oil and gas industry such as in exploration, production, and processing.<sup>118</sup>

The program camped and trained militants in batches of 1500–2000, teaching them other skills such as carpentry, welding, and entrepreneurship.<sup>119</sup> From 2010 to 2014, just over 15,000 militants were given rehabilitation training, and another 15,000 formal education and vocational training.<sup>120</sup> This training utilized 28 foreign institutions from 15 countries and 36 Nigerian institutions from 10 separate Nigerian states. By 2017, a total of 30,000 former militants had graduated from vocational training.<sup>121</sup> Following training, the PAP also attempted to help find job placements for vocational training graduates.<sup>122</sup> One of the important job placement opportunities for former militants has been through the PAP-paired initiative of pipeline security contract.<sup>123</sup> These contracts have been particularly lucrative for former militant leaders who have brokered contracts and hired those in their militant groups to run the security.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ndubuisi Nwokolo and Iro Aghedo, “Consolidating or Corrupting the Peace? The Power Elite and Amnesty Policy in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria,” *Chinese Political Science Review* 3, no. 3 (September 2018): 329, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-018-0098-y>.

<sup>117</sup> Oluduro and Oluduro, “Nigeria,” 52.

<sup>118</sup> Oluduro and Oluduro, 52.

<sup>119</sup> Wapmuk, “The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria’s Niger Delta,” 162.

<sup>120</sup> Nwokolo and Aghedo, “Consolidating or Corrupting the Peace?,” 330.

<sup>121</sup> Nwokolo and Aghedo, 331.

<sup>122</sup> “Placement – OIAPAP,” Presidential Amnesty Programme, 2021, <https://www.osapnd.gov.ng/job-placement-2/>.

<sup>123</sup> Nwokolo and Aghedo, “Consolidating or Corrupting the Peace?,” 338.

<sup>124</sup> Nwokolo and Aghedo, 338; Mary Izuaka, “Why We Awarded Multi-Billion Naira Pipeline Protection Contract to Tompolo – NNPC,” *Premium Times Nigeria*, August 30, 2022, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/551584-why-we-awarded-multi-billion-naira-pipeline-protection-contract-to-tompolo-nnpc.html>.

#### **D. THE RISE OF NDA THROUGH PRESENT DAY**

Over the five years following its introduction, MEND was integrated into the PAP and officially signed a cease fire in 2014.<sup>125</sup> However in 2015, President Goodluck Jonathan—a native of the Niger Delta and proponent of the PAP—left office. His successor, President Buhari, felt as though the PAP, which originally had been designed as a five-year program, had run its course, become a tool for corruption, and that pipeline security contracts were dysfunctional tools for former militants to enrich themselves.<sup>126</sup> Thus, the PAP budget was cut by two-thirds; pipeline security contracts were cancelled, and one of the prominent MEND leaders and pipeline security contract recipients, Government Ekpemupolo (known as “Tompolo”) was prosecuted for corruption.<sup>127</sup> Out of these circumstances, a group known as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) resurrected the conflict in the Niger Delta.<sup>128</sup> NDA, like MEND, has operated as a leaderless organization and without a unified headquarters.<sup>129</sup> The NDA’s grievances resembled those of preceding movements. The NDA placed blame on four main entities: IOCs, the Nigerian government, Niger Delta elites, and former leaders from MEND.<sup>130</sup> It attempts to distinguish itself from Boko Haram, ISIS, and the like by claiming that it does not attack people, but attacks targets that are central to its claimed grievances.<sup>131</sup>

As a result of the NDA’s activity, in 2016, Nigeria lost 100 million barrels of oil: 81 million from sabotage and 19 million due to theft.<sup>132</sup> Pipeline attacks and oil theft

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<sup>125</sup> “Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND),” accessed October 26, 2022, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/mend.htm>.

<sup>126</sup> Maggie Fick, “Nigeria Oil Infrastructure Threatened by Cuts to Amnesty Fund,” *Financial Times*, May 9, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/6d7f2766-15bf-11e6-b197-a4af20d5575e>.

<sup>127</sup> “Former Niger Delta Militant Tompolo Summoned to Lagos Court,” *Reuters*, January 13, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/nigeria-corruption-idINL8N14X3Q120160113>.

<sup>128</sup> Babatunde, Norafidah, and Tapiwa, “Niger Delta Avengers and the Niger Delta Question: What Way Forward?,” 8.

<sup>129</sup> Oriola and Adeakin, “The Framing Strategies of the Niger Delta Avengers,” 127.

<sup>130</sup> Oriola and Adeakin, 139.

<sup>131</sup> Oriola and Adeakin, 144.

<sup>132</sup> “2016 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, December 3, 2018), <https://neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>.

became so acute that the country saw its lowest annual level of oil production in twenty years, damaging the economy and tying the hands of the now underfunded government, exacerbating the existing funding problems caused by low oil prices in 2016.<sup>133</sup> The NDA's oil-focused militancy motivated the Nigerian government to retain the PAP. Following the Pan-Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF)—a regional group of elders that represents the Niger Delta as a whole to the central government—in 2016, the central government made a bargain to rectify some of the organization's grievances in exchange for NDA to cease their pipeline bombings.<sup>134</sup> NDA temporarily held up their part of the bargain by halting bombings on oil infrastructure. However, according to the NDA, the government did not follow through on its promises in accordance with the timeline established at the PANDEF and thus the NDA proceeded with a series of pipeline bombings..<sup>135</sup> Nonetheless, in late 2016, the NDA came to the negotiating table, represented by the self-proclaimed Ijaw leader Edwin Clark, bringing its complaints to Nigeria's president Muhammadu Buhari.<sup>136</sup> Negotiations were successful and the funding for the PAP was reinstated. The last post on the NDA's website was in January of 2018.<sup>137</sup> There have been no attributable attacks since.

The violence in the Niger Delta has largely subsided, but the grievances remain, and oil theft is pervasive. Despite the presidential and high-level committees' attempts to address the issues of the Niger Delta, little progress has been made on resolving pollution, marginalization, and poverty.<sup>138</sup> In the last ten years, there have been 9,828 oil spills

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<sup>133</sup> Salihu Mohammed Niworu, "The Niger Delta Avengers, Autonomous Ethnic Clans and Common Claim over Oil Wells: The Paradox of Resource Control," *African Research Review* 11, no. 2 (2017): 51, <https://doi.org/10.4314/afrrrev.v11i2.4>.

<sup>134</sup> Oriola and Adeakin, "The Framing Strategies of the Niger Delta Avengers," 150.

<sup>135</sup> Oriola and Adeakin, 149.

<sup>136</sup> Niworu, "The Niger Delta Avengers, Autonomous Ethnic Clans and Common Claim over Oil Wells," 52.

<sup>137</sup> "Niger Delta Avengers," Niger Delta Avengers, January 17, 2018, <https://www.nigerdeltaavengers.org/>.

<sup>138</sup> Wapmuk, "The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta," 159.

documented in the Delta.<sup>139</sup> Despite much controversy, the PAP was granted ₦65 billion (\$143 million) of funding for 2023—the same level of funding that it has been receiving since 2017.<sup>140</sup> As of 2021, the Niger Delta had not been de-militarized and the JTF is still present.<sup>141</sup> Development is still lacking; infrastructure is limited, and unemployment is still high. Beyond this, oil theft has remained. As of 2020, official losses of Nigerian oil to theft were tallied at over 100,000 bpd.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ekpali Saint, “Timeline: Half a Century of Oil Spills in Nigeria’s Ogoniland,” Al Jazeera, accessed March 3, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/12/21/timeline-oil-spills-in-nigerias-ogoniland>.

<sup>140</sup> Idowu Bankole, “2023 Budget: OBJ, Jonathan Others to Benefit from N3.008 Trn Service Wide Vote,” Vanguard News, October 9, 2022, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/10/2023-budget-obj-jonathan-others-to-benefit-from-n3-008-trn-service-wide-vote/>; “Nigeria’s Presidential Amnesty Programme: Untangling the Dependencies That Prevent It Ending” (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Stakeholder Democracy Network, 2021), <https://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/PAP-financial-dependencies.-Report.-2021-23.08.21-DT.pdf>.

<sup>141</sup> Operation Delta Safe, “Joint Task Force Operation Delta Safe,” Social Media, Facebook, March 28, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Jointtaskforceoperationdeltasafe>.

<sup>142</sup> “2020 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, February 14, 2022), <https://neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>.

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### III. PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY PROGRAM SUCCESSES

Violent deaths in the Niger Delta averaged over 1000 per year in 2008 and 2009 leading up to the debut of the PAP.<sup>143</sup> During the same period, militancy contributed to a decline of 650,000 bpd of crude oil production from a 2005 high of 2.5 million bpd.<sup>144</sup> The value of this drop in oil production equated to around \$64 million each day at 2008 prices. The introduction of the Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP) in 2009 and its paired initiatives by the Yar'Adua administration has been credited with a reduction of violence and increased oil production from the region.<sup>145</sup> According to one analysis, the PAP has “contributed to peace and stability in the Niger Delta, which has not only increased crude oil production but also unambiguously improved the lives of former militants and raised government revenue collections.”<sup>146</sup> For the three-year period from 2013–2015—the three years following the last enrollment opportunity for the PAP—insurgency declined by 75% with total violent deaths dropping to fewer than 250 per year.<sup>147</sup> In the years leading up to the PAP, militant attacks on pipelines caused more than 100 spills per year; in contrast, for the 2013–2015 period, attacks on pipelines dropped to 20 per year.<sup>148</sup> Prior to the PAP and its paired initiatives of pipeline security contracts and increased oil stakes for local communities, the Council on Foreign Relations estimated that there were 60,000 armed

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<sup>143</sup> Walls, “The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis,” 31; Oriola and Adeakin, “The Framing Strategies of the Niger Delta Avengers,” 127.

<sup>144</sup> Walls, “The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis,” 27.

<sup>145</sup> Walls, 38–39; “Physical and Process Audit Report For the Period 2009–2011” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, April 29, 2013), 102, <https://www.neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>.

<sup>146</sup> Walls, “The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis,” 38–39.

<sup>147</sup> Gavin, “Nigeria Security Tracker.”

<sup>148</sup> Raymond Adibe, Ejikeme Nwagwu, and Okorie Albert, “Rentierism and Security Privatisation in the Nigerian Petroleum Industry: Assessment of Oil Pipeline Surveillance and Protection Contracts,” *Review of African Political Economy* 45, no. 156 (April 3, 2018): 238, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2017.1391771>.

insurgents in the Niger Delta.<sup>149</sup> With 30,000 participants, the PAP effectively cut this number in half. Furthermore, organized violence abated when the largest militant group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), agreed to a ceasefire in 2014. The agreement has been upheld since; not only did violent deaths decline, but organized large-scale rebel violence eroded as the PAP began to affect militancy in the Niger Delta.<sup>150</sup> Following the implementation of the PAP in 2009, oil production returned to its pre-MEND levels of 2.5 million bpd.<sup>151</sup>

These successes of the PAP—reduced violent deaths, reduced numbers of insurgents, reduced pipeline attacks, MEND’s ceasefire, and the subsequent increase in oil production—aligned with the Yar’Adua administration’s hopes that the PAP would create a system of inclusive peacebuilding, without which Nigeria may relapse into violent conflict.<sup>152</sup> The lower levels of unrest and higher oil production in the years following the PAP’s debut suggest that certain aspects of the program were effective at addressing the problems that the Nigerian government faced.

The PAP’s success in reducing militancy can be attributed to two components of the program’s design. First, the PAP provided an economic benefit to multiple tiers within the organizational structure of the militant groups and the local communities, which incentivized cooperation at each level. Second, the PAP did this in such a way that it centralized and exposed the groups, which strengthened the program’s ability to monitor and contain the groups. Third, the PAP targeted militants’ weapons, degrading their means of rebellion. Reducing unrest in turn facilitated a significant increase in oil production coming from the region. This chapter will proceed by discussing how the first design component, economic benefits, was effective at abating violence, followed by an

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<sup>149</sup> Judith Burdin Asuni, “Understanding the Armed Groups of the Niger Delta” (Working Paper, Council of Foreign Relations, September 2009), 5, [https://www.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2009/09/CFR\\_WorkingPaper\\_2\\_NigerDelta.pdf](https://www.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2009/09/CFR_WorkingPaper_2_NigerDelta.pdf).

<sup>150</sup> “Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND),” accessed October 26, 2022, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/mend.htm>.

<sup>151</sup> “Nigeria: Oil Production 2021,” Statista, accessed May 2, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/265195/oil-production-in-nigeria-in-barrels-per-day/>.

<sup>152</sup> Ikelegbe and Umukoro, 26.

explanation of how the second design component, the centralization of militant groups, facilitated the governments goals. Next, it will discuss the effects of disarmament on militancy in the region. The chapter will conclude with an account of how the rise and fall of the NDA reinforces these principles.

#### **A. THE PAP'S EFFECTIVE DESIGN**

For economic benefits to successfully incentivize militants to lay down their arms, they need to be tailored to the recipient organization's structure. Resistance groups in the Niger Delta have adapted to government action by altering their organizational structure; the PAP's design effectively counteracted the rebel group's adapted structure. MOSOP, which was successfully repressed by the government, was a public and centralized organization with a president, spokesperson, and steering committee.<sup>153</sup> MEND, and subsequently the NDA, took on a more decentralized structure, which minimized the role of their leadership and operated more secretively.<sup>154</sup> The PAP responded to group decentralization and the less targetable attributes of secret and flatter organizations by building a system that encouraged centralization and exposed less identifiable actors by drawing them into a network that exchanged economic benefits for registration and accountability of those involved in the militancy.

Prior to the PAP, MEND and NDA's decentralized and secretive natures made it difficult and unintuitive for government forces to create an effective response. Rather than building a classic hierarchical command structure, MEND constructed their organization by building alliances with smaller groups acting as an umbrella organization for smaller groups.<sup>155</sup> NDA also did this by using smaller strike teams, which operated independently, feeding off each other's work.<sup>156</sup> The potentially competing interests and multiplicity of

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<sup>153</sup> Okonta and Douglas, *Where Vultures Feast*.

<sup>154</sup> Chris Ewokor, "The Niger Delta Avengers: Nigeria's Newest Militants," BBC News, June 2, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36414036>; Oriola and Adeakin, "The Framing Strategies of the Niger Delta Avengers," 127; Hanson, "MEND."

<sup>155</sup> Hanson, "MEND."

<sup>156</sup> Emma Amaize and Perez Brisibe, "Who Are the Niger Delta Avengers?," Vanguard News, May 15, 2016, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/05/niger-delta-avengers/>.

rebel groups underneath an umbrella structure can make appeasement of groups particularly difficult.<sup>157</sup> The Nigerian government would have liked to just take out the leadership of MEND and call it a day, “cutting off the head of the spider.”<sup>158</sup> However, rebel groups like MEND resemble more of a starfish than a spider—cutting off a leg does not kill the starfish but actually creates a whole new starfish.<sup>159</sup> To combat this, the Yar’Adua administration had to draw each individual actor out of the woodwork and provide an individual benefit to everyone to lay down their arms. The PAP did this by providing benefits to three groups: individual militants, rebel group leaders, and local communities.

### **1. Benefits for Individual Militants**

A key mechanism of the PAP’s success is the social welfare payments that are designated for the former militants enrolled in the program. Each PAP enrollee receives a ₦65,000/month stipend.<sup>160</sup> The crafters of the PAP initially set the social welfare payment at ₦20,000/month (\$132 in 2009); however, this stipend amount was perceived as an insult by the former militants, and their advocates negotiated an increase to ₦65,000/month (\$428 in 2009), commensurate with the median income for the whole of Nigeria.<sup>161</sup> The stipend level settled on by the Yar’Adua administration appears to be effective at keeping enrollees in the program and away from active insurgency. The effectiveness of these payments exposes the relative importance of individual aspirations over group grievances. In other words, “the attraction of group membership is...in attaining something by means of this

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<sup>157</sup> Carmela Lutmar and Lesley G Terris, “Introducing a New Dataset on Leadership Change in Rebel Groups, 1946–2010,” *Journal of Peace Research* 56, no. 2 (March 1, 2019): 306, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343318802979>.

<sup>158</sup> Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2006), Kindle.

<sup>159</sup> Brafman and Beckstrom, 34.

<sup>160</sup> Tife Owolabi, “Nigeria Militant Amnesty Program Faces Cash Crunch, Says Official,” Reuters, March 17, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-oil/nigeria-militant-amnesty-program-faces-cash-crunch-says-official-idUSKBN16O2GO>.

<sup>161</sup> Charles Robertson, Nothando Ndebele, and Yvonne Mhango, “A Survey of the Nigerian Middle Class” (Renaissance Capital, September 26, 2011), 2, [https://resource-recycling.com/e-scrap/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/09/Survey\\_Nigerian\\_middle\\_class-260911.pdf](https://resource-recycling.com/e-scrap/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/09/Survey_Nigerian_middle_class-260911.pdf).

membership.”<sup>162</sup> Individual militants chose the gains of the PAP, a standard of living commensurate with the Nigerian middle class, over those of active membership in the militant group. Even for those who had not been placed in an active employment, many viewed their situation in the PAP as better than being an active part of their militant group.<sup>163</sup>

Beyond social welfare payments, the PAP contributed to reduced militancy by attempting to address unemployment for those enrolled in the program. Its promise of training and employment alternatives opened the door for militants to transition from illicit to legitimate livelihoods. Unemployment in the Niger Delta—28-38%—had made the region ripe for insurgency.<sup>164</sup> Quantitative analysis has shown that youth unemployment is a primary contributor to domestic terrorism.<sup>165</sup> The PAP successfully made the first step in reducing this incentive for terrorism by providing job training, which resulted in 30,000 PAP enrollees graduating from vocational training.<sup>166</sup> The training and employment alternatives encouraged ex-militants to build industry-specific skills.<sup>167</sup> One of the major training specialties that PAP participants received was oil-industry training such as exploration and processing.<sup>168</sup> Though not the only skills training offered through the PAP, these skills are in line with the major industry in the region.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1965), 6.

<sup>163</sup> Okonofua, “The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016,” 12.

<sup>164</sup> Jens Kristensen, “Additional Financing for State Employment and Expenditure for Results Project” (World Bank, June 12, 2013), 1–3, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/681711468297564975/pdf/NG000P133071000for0Results0Project.pdf>.

<sup>165</sup> Adesoji Adelaja and Justin George, “Is Youth Unemployment Related to Domestic Terrorism?,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 14, no. 5 (2020): 50, JSTOR.

<sup>166</sup> Nwokolo and Aghedo, “Consolidating or Corrupting the Peace?,” 331.

<sup>167</sup> Margarita Estevez-Abe, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice, “Social Protection and the Formation of Skills: A Reinterpretation of the Welfare State,” in *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*, ed. Peter A. Hall and David Soskice (Oxford University Press, 2001), 0, <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199247757.003.0004>.

<sup>168</sup> Oluduro and Oluduro, “Nigeria,” 52.

<sup>169</sup> Estevez-Abe, Iversen, and Soskice, “Social Protection and the Formation of Skills.”

The PAP was paired with pipeline security contracts that provided employment within the oil industry for individual militants.<sup>170</sup> One of the central stated grievances of militants involved the perception that the people in the Niger Delta did not benefit from the oil production in their homelands, despite bearing the cost of its production through a polluted environment. Providing training that focused on oil and following up with oil-relevant jobs provided PAP enrollees with knowledge and an understanding of the industry that built a sense of ownership of the oil industry. Those who were eventually placed in oil jobs—even those not directly related to their training such as pipeline security—directly reaped the benefits of oil, addressing the grievances espoused by groups like MEND and MOSOP who claim they “have had relatively no benefits from the exploitation of [their] mineral resources” and received the building of “no industry whatsoever.”<sup>171</sup>

The PAP’s benefits to individual fighters were particularly effective at reducing the chances of a return to militancy for a specific and important sub-group of militants. A survey of 346 ex-combatants in the Niger Delta found that the PAP’s participants who were married or had been in their militia group for five years viewed their situation as better outside of the group than inside, claiming that they were unlikely to rejoin their militia group.<sup>172</sup> The survey also showed that people’s exposure to pollution, their ethnicity, and their gender had no bearing on whether the PAP’s members thought themselves likely to rejoin their militant group.<sup>173</sup> Only those who felt they were better off in the group than outside were seriously considering rejoining their militia group.<sup>174</sup> Married militia members and those who had a longer tenure in their particular militia tended to be older. While many of these survey respondents were still unemployed, they claimed that they

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<sup>170</sup> Amalachukwu Okafor and Ayobami Olaniyan, “Legal and Institutional Framework for Promoting Oil Pipeline Security in Nigeria,” *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy (The)* 8, no. 2 (2017): 221, <https://doi.org/10.4314/jsdlp.v8i2.10>.

<sup>171</sup> MOSOP & Ogoni News and Resources, “Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and Ogoni News and Resources”; Obi, “Oil Extraction, Dispossession, Resistance, and Conflict in Nigeria’s Oil-Rich Niger Delta,” 231.

<sup>172</sup> Okonofua, “The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016,” 12.

<sup>173</sup> Okonofua, 8.

<sup>174</sup> Okonofua, 8.

were better off outside of their militia rather than inside.<sup>175</sup> This indicates that even without a regular job placement, the monthly stipend proved to be of more value to that particular demographic than the particular grievances the group espoused.

Effective targeting of married or older militants through the PAP contributes to a more sustainable peace. The older and more mature members of the group are likely to fill some form of leadership role within a militant group. The elimination of mid-tier leadership can pose significant problems for an insurgency. As terrorism expert Marc Sageman notes,

Arresting these individuals would degrade these networks into isolated units, singletons or cliques, who would consequently be incapable of mounting complex large-scale operations owing to the lack of expertise and logistical and financial support. Small-scale operations would be very hard to eradicate completely, but without spectacular successes to sustain their motivation for terrorism, isolated operators will lose their enthusiasm.<sup>176</sup>

As larger portions of this demographic who have been pacified through the PAP do not see themselves returning to the militia group, the viability of the group to resurge is degraded. If the militia were to reaggregate and resume violent activity, they would be missing large portions of their mid-level leadership experience—a critical piece of decentralized groups who operate relatively independent small strike teams—who had left their life of militancy in search of a more stable life with lower risk. The loss of the most experienced veterans of the conflict creates a less formidable militant force.

## **2. Benefits for Rebel Group Leaders**

While demobilizing individual fighters' role was crucial, the PAP also provided an added benefit for militant group leaders by funneling all stipends through them, providing opportunities for skimming, which is indeed commonplace.<sup>177</sup> Militant group leaders' (or Camp Leaders as the PAP website refers to them) skimming off cash from their subordinates is so prevalent that the PAP's official website includes in their FAQ a section

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<sup>175</sup> Okonofua, 12.

<sup>176</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 176.

<sup>177</sup> Nwokolo and Aghedo, "Consolidating or Corrupting the Peace?," 338.

for how a PAP enrollee can file an official complaint for their Camp Leader diverting funds.<sup>178</sup> While this corruption appears unjust, it is a unique feature of the PAP that benefits not just the military leaders but also the government's efforts to reduce violence.

While the way in which stipends flow to former militants was not part of the official proclamation of the PAP, it has become part of the programmatic structure. According to the PAP website, “[s]ome camps have a signed agreement with the office to allow for bulk payment through their leader, this is usually [an] internal arrangement by the camp on how its members are paid. This arrangement is sacrosanct.”<sup>179</sup> At the outset of the PAP, these leaders were motivated to corral as many former fighters into their militia as possible to maximize their potential cut in the stipends. The more fighters that a group recruited, the more money flowed through the group leader.

Militant group leaders have maximized their financial benefit through the PAP by growing their networks and building dependency of lower-level fighters on the group leader. First, the most prominent leaders in MEND negotiated multimillion dollar pipeline security contracts as part of the PAP initiative.<sup>180</sup> These contracts allowed them to grow their own network beyond what they were already receiving through stipend payments. They hired and brought in former militants as security guards, which added to the income of those lower militants, but also increased the value of the militant leader to the lower-level fighters, which increased the power and sway that the militant leaders held. Second, while only those present at the negotiating table at the outset of the PAP know who advocated for funneling stipends through group leaders, it appears militant leaders likely advocated for this system. Through this system, militant leaders can build further dependency of militants on the leader, keeping their group members within their group, and thus having access to take a portion of their stipends. On multiple occasions, the PAP stipend payments have gone delinquent by the government or beneficiaries have been

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<sup>178</sup> “General Faq – OIAPAP,” Presidential Amnesty Programme, 2021, <https://www.osapnd.gov.ng/general-faq/>.

<sup>179</sup> Presidential Amnesty Programme.

<sup>180</sup> Nwokolo and Aghedo, “Consolidating or Corrupting the Peace?,” 338.

delisted from the amnesty program.<sup>181</sup> The ex-militant leaders are the ones that protest, not the militants. The vigilance of the ex-militant leaders who blackmail and threaten violence as they advocate to get missed stipend payments to their subordinates suggests that these leaders are not just selfless actors trying to care for their subordinates.<sup>182</sup> Rather, the militant leaders are in fact motivated to keep as many militants on their PAP roles as possible to maximize the leader's access to stipend benefits.

While this payment system catered to the interests of the rebel group leaders, it also served the needs of the government. Actors in the government's PAP network can use this structural financial incentive for militant leaders as leverage over the militant groups to force compliance and reduce militancy. Funneling stipends through militant group leaders increases the stakes of the militant group leaders. These group leaders who now are increasing their wealth by participating in the PAP are motivated to follow the rules, keep the peace, and retain PAP membership in an effort to retain their group members and maximize the amount of money that they could skim off. If militants from their group are expelled from the program for participating in acts of violence, they could lose the entire benefit coming through the group leader's account, or at a minimum, access to the stipends of those caught in violence. The goal of the government in creating the PAP was to build peace and stability; thus, as group leaders curtail their groups in an effort to stay in the PAP, the government's goal of peace is furthered. While this may not be the most ideal structure from a rule-of-law and anti-corruption perspective, in the first years following the PAP, it contributed to the pacification of rebel groups and ultimately the reduction in violent deaths and pipeline bombings.

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<sup>181</sup> Olusegun Samuel and Blessing Ibunge, "Ex-Militant Leaders Kick against Alleged Delisting of 3,548 Beneficiaries from Amnesty Pay," *This Day Live*, October 2022, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/10/31/ex-militant-leaders-kick-against-alleged-delisting-of-3548-beneficiaries-from-amnesty-pay/>; "Nigeria's Parliament to Investigate Lack of Funds for Delta Militant Amnesty," *Reuters*, April 4, 2017, sec. Emerging Markets, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-oil-idUSKBN1762G8>.

<sup>182</sup> Samuel and Ibunge, "Ex-Militant Leaders Kick against Alleged Delisting of 3,548 Beneficiaries from Amnesty Pay."

### 3. Benefits for Community Leaders

The PAP furthered its aims by providing a benefit to Niger Delta community officials, bringing them into the PAP network. Almost immediately following the PAP's debut, the Yar'Adua administration gave up a 10% stake in the oil and gas holdings to the communities that produce the oil, giving them a bigger stake in the oil business.<sup>183</sup> While this was not officially part of the PAP, the timing of its debut and clear connection to oil related grievances in the Niger Delta intimately ties this initiative to the PAP. The PAP-paired policy change of giving local authorities a 10% stake in oil and gas contributed to the success of the program by bringing elites who have a significant influence on levels of violence in the regions into the PAP network. Bringing other key stakeholders, not just the militants, into the PAP provides accountability for the local region to reduce militancy.

At the outset of the PAP, there was significant skepticism among rebels about whether the government was tricking them through an elaborate scheme to turn themselves in.<sup>184</sup> Based on the timing of the increased oil stake to the local communities, it appears as though the government was attempting to utilize local elites to boost enrollment. The government effectively used stakeholders at the local level as a tool to show the legitimacy of the program.<sup>185</sup> Local media advertised for the PAP, and community elites organized local meetings where militants could clarify the rules of the program, ultimately resulting in over 20,000 militants accepting amnesty during the initial enrollment period.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> The sources do not give the exact date of this announcement by the Yar'Adua administration. What is clear is that it came shortly following the initial announcement of the program. Based on the initial skepticism of militants to apply for the program, this incentive was most likely used as a way to utilize the local elite to use their influence over local militant groups, which they are often connected, to get the militants to sign up for the PAP. The initial 60-day window for enrolling in the PAP was extended due to lack of enrollees. It follows that once the local leaders were able to meet with locals and convince them that the program was not a trick to get them to turn themselves in for their crimes, the program was able to successfully get a much larger number of participants in the first enrollment period (greater than 20,000), Oluduro and Oluduro, "Nigeria," 54.

<sup>184</sup> Wapmuk, "The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta," 154.

<sup>185</sup> Walls, "The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis," 31.

<sup>186</sup> Wapmuk, "The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta," 160.

Providing a benefit to local leadership was instrumental in recruiting militants to sign up for the PAP. Prior to the local leaders receiving a stake in oil profits, there was little incentive for local leaders to attempt to reduce militancy. In fact, militants were often used by local leaders as tools to garner support against political opposition.<sup>187</sup> However, as local leaders increased the benefits they had access to from the oil pumped through their newly acquired 10% stake, they were incentivized to keep as much oil flowing as possible. Reducing militancy by using their resources and influence to encourage program recruitment was now to their benefit.

The reduction in violence from the PAP is partially attributable to the new motivation for elites to maximize oil flow. The enticement of bigger profits from more oil caused them to use their influence and networks in the states and localities to convince militant groups to pacify reducing the overall level of violence, increasing the flow of oil, and ultimately a larger amount of cash available to the local leaders. Much like facilitating corruption by funneling stipends through group leaders, this approach of utilizing local elites' personal financial interests might not be the most liberal democratic way of promoting peace; nevertheless, it likely has been a mode of operation that has contributed to the success of the PAP in reducing violence.

## **B. CENTRALIZATION AND EXPOSURE OF ACTORS**

The PAP effectively exposed and centralized the formerly decentralized and secretive groups through formal registration of every militant and group leader enrolled in the program. The PAP provided a benefit to everyone involved from the local elite to the individual fighter. As each of these actors signed up to receive their benefit—whether it was turning in weapons to officially enroll in the PAP or whether it was local officials signing contracts to transfer oil stakes to the community—they were all officially registered. Registering every militant from the lowest foot soldier to the more prominent leaders of MEND helped to dismantle the secretive nature of those involved in the rebel groups. By registering every militant and their leaders through linking bank accounts and

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<sup>187</sup> Nwokolo and Aghedo, “Consolidating or Corrupting the Peace?,” 336–37.

funneling stipends the government now had an official means to keep tabs on 30,000 militants that had previously eluded the government's control and oversight. While the actors were given amnesty for their crimes, they now had a legal, as well as financial, incentive to comply with the PAP's goal of bringing peace to the Niger Delta. They could no longer easily conceal their activities.

The PAP's incentive structure helped centralize formerly decentralized rebel groups. While it appears counterintuitive to deliberately centralize the network, thereby maintaining the rebel organizations, in fact it gives the Nigerian government an advantage as they can monitor and hold leverage over the entire network rather than trying to wage a war against scores of groups spread across a complex terrain. The techniques for combatting centralized opponent groups are more intuitive than decentralized groups.<sup>188</sup> The government, for example, could withhold stipend checks if the militant groups returned to violence, motivating both the group leaders and the individual militants to cease and desist from violent acts. Furthermore, the central government can use oil revenues as leverage over local elites, who now want to maximize oil flow to increase their community's profits (and likely their own personal profits), to convince rebel groups to stop committing violence and pipeline bombings. As a result, the entire rebel group remains in the network and ultimately gives some level of coercive power for the government over the entire system. Once again, bringing all of these actors into the network may not be the most ideal method to restore order, but it has contributed to the government having better control of the region and reducing violence in the years following the introduction of the PAP.

### **C. REDUCED VIOLENCE VIA REDUCED MEANS FOR REBELLION**

The PAP contributed to reduced violence in the Niger Delta by reducing the quantity and types of arms in the hands of militants. The amnesty program reduced the total number and the quality of arms in the region initially by 2,760 various types of guns, 287,445 rounds of various ammunition, 763 sticks of dynamite, 70 rocket propelled

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<sup>188</sup> Brafman and Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider*.

grenades, 18 gunboats, and numerous improvised explosive devices (IED).<sup>189</sup> The PAP's offer of "pardon [to] take effect upon the surrender and handing over of all equipment, weapons, arms and ammunition" demonstrated the Yar'Adua Administration's belief that reducing weapons would ultimately promote "peace, security, order and good governance."<sup>190</sup> The World Bank, along with multiple other studies, found that "widespread access to weapons may simply be associated with higher levels of crime, especially in the presence of 'the culture of violence inherited from war.'"<sup>191</sup> Moreover, certain types of available weaponry may prove particularly difficult for the government in its attempts to provide stability and security.<sup>192</sup>

While the number of small arms collected is relatively insignificant compared to the three million small arms held by civilians in Nigeria in 2007, the reduced access to explosives and ammunition is notable.<sup>193</sup> To put the ammunition numbers in perspective, police forces in 2007 across the whole of Nigeria only possessed 1.1 million rounds of ammunition.<sup>194</sup> More importantly with regards to explosives, Nigeria is known to have had success in limiting access to explosives.<sup>195</sup> Further reducing the access to these hard-to-acquire explosives contributed to reducing the ability of insurgents to sabotage pipelines. Pipeline bombings were reduced by 80% following the last enrollment period of

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<sup>189</sup> Wapmuk, "The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta," 163; Daniel E. Agbiboa, "Transformational Strategy or Gilded Pacification? Four Years On: The Niger Delta Armed Conflict and the DDR Process of the Nigerian Amnesty Programme," *Journal of Asian and African Studies (Leiden)* 50, no. 4 (2015): 401, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909614530082>.

<sup>190</sup> Yar'Adua, "The Proclamation – OIAPAP."

<sup>191</sup> Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl and Nicholas Sambanis, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programs: An Assessment* (Rochester, NY: Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2010), 9, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1906329>.

<sup>192</sup> Schulhofer-Wohl and Sambanis, 9.

<sup>193</sup> Jennifer Hazen, "Small Arms, Armed Violence, and Insecurity in Nigeria: The Niger Delta in Perspective" (Occasional Paper No. 20, Small Arms Survey, December 2007), 25, <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-OP20-Nigeria.pdf>.

<sup>194</sup> Hazen, 32.

<sup>195</sup> Ismail Abdulaziz, "Nigeria's Silent Success in Regulating Use of Explosives," News Agency of Nigeria, March 14, 2023, <https://www.nannews.ng/2023/03/14/nigerias-silent-success-in-regulating-use-of-explosives/>.

the PAP.<sup>196</sup> The reduction in explosives brought about through the PAP could also have a significant impact on the capability of militants to disrupt the flow of oil. One of the main targets for militant groups has been oil pipelines and infrastructure. Groups bombed the pipelines, forcing oil companies to shut down the pipeline, repair it, and then attempt again to secure that piece of the pipeline. Taking 763 sticks of dynamite and additional IEDs out of the hands of militants saved the government hundreds of broken pipelines. These hundreds of broken pipelines would have forced the oil industry to shut down many fields for days or weeks at a time, causing millions of dollars in lost oil production. Beyond shutting down the oil flow, reducing bombings also reduces oil pollution. Aside from the apparent inconsistency of the militants who complain about oil pollution, then bomb pipelines causing huge spills, the government actually has helped to reduce the oil pollution grievance by reducing the number of bombings, even if the government was not responsible for bombing related pollution.

While the weapons cannot be blamed for the conflict, they certainly facilitate it.<sup>197</sup> The PAP recognized the link between all different kinds of weapons and violence and successfully convinced 30,000 militants to voluntarily hand their weapons over to the state, thereby making recurrence of violence less likely, while also protecting oil pipelines, and reducing pollution caused by pipeline bombings.

#### **D. NDA AND GRIEVANCES**

The history of the NDA provides additional evidence that economic benefits were key to the PAP's successes. When the PAP's funding expired and was not renewed in December 2015, violence in the Delta resurged. The PAP enrollees, now organized as the NDA, threatened security and oil production once more. In 2016, NDA coordinated a series

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<sup>196</sup> Adibe, Nwagwu, and Albert, "Rentierism and Security Privatisation in the Nigerian Petroleum Industry," 238.

<sup>197</sup> Michael Renner, *Small Arms, Big Impact: The Next Challenge of Disarmament* (Darby, PA: DIANE Publishing, 1998), 8.

of pipeline bombings.<sup>198</sup> Their sabotage and theft caused oil losses to rise to more than 100 million barrels in 2016, an increase of nearly 400% over 2015.<sup>199</sup>

The NDA claimed four main grievances as their motivations for violence: a funding cut that resulted in the cancelation of militants' stipends, the cancelation of pipeline contracts that provided jobs and significant wealth for the primary contract beneficiaries, the defeat of President Goodluck Jonathan—a native of the Niger Delta—to the opposition candidate President Muhammadu Buhari in May 2015, and the jailing of a MEND leader.<sup>200</sup> Despite having four grievances, only two of these grievances—full funding of the PAP and renewal of the pipeline security contracts—were required for the NDA to give up their militancy in early 2017.<sup>201</sup>

NDA's rapid rise after the announcement of funding cuts to the PAP, and its swift practical disbandment after those cuts were cancelled, shows that its individual financial motivations were preeminent, despite the NDA echoing MEND's rhetoric about pollution and marginalization. With a cut in funding for the PAP, the fighters lost their economic livelihood and thus increased their incentive to return to fight with their militant groups.<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, leadership throughout the militant groups was financially affected. The top beneficiaries who had received the multimillion-dollar pipeline contracts were cut out of the network. The militant leaders who had all the stipends funneling through their accounts were also cut out. The benefits and pay that all of these actors could receive as a militant now offset the income lost from their stipends they were no longer receiving. The primary advantage of being in the PAP was negated. The bombings carried out in retaliation also

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<sup>198</sup> Babatunde, Norafidah, and Tapiwa, "Niger Delta Avengers and the Niger Delta Question: What Way Forward?," 8.

<sup>199</sup> Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, "2016 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report."

<sup>200</sup> Babatunde, Norafidah, and Tapiwa, "Niger Delta Avengers and the Niger Delta Question: What Way Forward?," 8.

<sup>201</sup> Abosede Oladepo, "Niger Delta Amnesty to Pay Ex-Militants 2016 Stipends," *The Guardian Nigeria News – Nigeria and World News* (blog), April 18, 2017, <https://guardian.ng/news/niger-delta-amnesty-to-pay-ex-militants-2016-stipends/>.

<sup>202</sup> Seun Opejobi, "Nigeria Will Go up in Flames If Amnesty Budget Is Slashed – Ex-Militants Threaten FG," *Daily Post Nigeria* (blog), December 15, 2015, <https://dailypost.ng/2015/12/15/nigeria-will-go-up-in-flames-if-amnesty-budget-is-slashed-ex-militants-threaten-fg/>.

resulted in millions of barrels of oil flowing into the Delta environment, further indicating that pollution grievances were just rhetoric, and the militants' primary concern was their paychecks. After the program was reinstated in April 2017 and fighters received back-pay for 2016, the violence abated.<sup>203</sup> Total oil losses returned to levels just above the 2015 lows.

#### **E. THE PAP'S SECONDARY SUCCESS – INCREASED OIL PRODUCTION**

The increased pacification of militants and their groups has contributed to increased flows of oil in the Niger Delta. The main beneficiary has been the Nigerian government. Nigeria's oil production dropped from 2.5 million bpd in 2005 to less than 1.7 million bpd in 2009.<sup>204</sup> Following the introduction of the PAP, production returned to around 2.5 million bpd.<sup>205</sup> Statistical analysis has shown that the PAP increased oil production by 40% relative to what would have been achieved without the PAP, controlling for price and new drilling.<sup>206</sup>

As discussed in previous sections, oil production increased because militants' attacks on pipelines decreased after the PAP, due to reduced incentives for militants and increased pipeline protection contracts. Comparing sabotage losses in 2009 to the following years suggests that the PAP had a significant effect on the losses that were attributable to sabotage. In 2009, 61 MMbbl were lost to sabotage; 2010 was reduced to 15MMbbl; 2011 saw further reduction to 14MMbbl.<sup>207</sup> The NEITI reported no sabotage losses until 2016 when NDA caused 81MMbbl in sabotage losses.<sup>208</sup> Additionally, the end of militancy and insecurity in the Niger Delta reduced the frequency of kidnapping of oil

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<sup>203</sup> Oladepo, "Niger Delta Amnesty to Pay Ex-Militants 2016 Stipends."

<sup>204</sup> "Nigeria Crude Oil Production – March 2023 Data – 1973–2022 Historical – April Forecast," Trading Economics, accessed April 8, 2023, <https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/crude-oil-production>.

<sup>205</sup> CEIC Data, "Nigeria Crude Oil: Production, 2002 – 2023."

<sup>206</sup> Walls, "The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis," 28; Walls, 36.

<sup>207</sup> Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, "Physical and Process Audit Report For the Period 2009–2011," April 29, 2013.

<sup>208</sup> Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, "2016 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report."

workers, which facilitated the IOCs efforts to continue exploring and pumping oil.<sup>209</sup> This fear of kidnapping—by 2008 over 200 foreign oil workers had been kidnapped—or violence against oil company’s employees has forced IOCs to shut down multiple operations.<sup>210</sup> The lack of overall security increases the cost both financially to the IOCs to pay for more security personnel and the intrinsic cost to IOC employees who face personal harm. Kidnappings can often draw unwanted international attention. IOCs would prefer to avoid this type of attention as it leads to international sympathy for the militants’ grievances, specifically the ones directly tied to the oil industry. This ultimately can force IOCs to spend more money to deal with pollution or give additional compensation for expropriated land.

Kidnappings in Nigeria peaked in 2010 and then decreased by 25% by 2013.<sup>211</sup> While the kidnapping data only indicates the whole of the country, the rise of Boko Haram in 2009 who was responsible for a large number of abductions, further indicates that kidnapping in the Niger Delta dropped significantly in the years following the introduction of the PAP. Thus, as the risk of violence and kidnapping was lowered through reduced access to arms, reduced economic motivation for militancy, and increased training in the oil industry, the cost of doing business in the Niger Delta for IOCs was lowered and larger amounts of oil flowed from the region unimpeded. This was not just a benefit to the IOCs, but from the Nigerian government’s point of view, the reduced threat in the Delta resulted in increased revenues flowing into state coffers.

## F. CONCLUSION

The legal alternative to violence provided by the PAP effectively coopted thousands of rebels out of violence into the government network. With 80% of

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<sup>209</sup> Omadjohwoefe, “Amnesty Initiative and the Dilemma of Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria,” 254.

<sup>210</sup> Tom Ashby, “Gunmen Kidnap 20, Free 8 in Nigerian Oil Delta,” *Reuters*, May 3, 2007, sec. World News, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-kidnap-confirmed-idUSL0363415520070503>; Nseabasi S. Akpan, “Kidnapping in Nigeria’s Niger Delta: An Exploratory Study,” *Journal of Social Sciences* 24, no. 1 (July 1, 2010): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2010.11892834>.

<sup>211</sup> William Assanvo and Don Okereke, “Nigeria’s Kidnapping Crisis,” *ENACT Observer*, February 1, 2019, <https://enactafrica.org/enact-observer/nigerias-kidnapping-crisis>.

government revenue being derived from oil, all of which flows from the Niger Delta, and oil production dipping by 650,000 bpd, the administration had to find a way to bring the militants on their side.<sup>212</sup> The PAP effectively did this by addressing the core economic aspirations of individual militants, militant group leaders, and community officials. Furthermore, the PAP did all of this in a way that was particularly tailored to the operating environment and structure of the rebel groups, centralizing decentralized groups, collecting weapons, and creating a registry and system of monitoring groups, which reduced violent deaths, pipeline bombings, and subsequently increased oil production.

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<sup>212</sup> Walls, “The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis,” 27; Babatunde, Norafidah, and Tapiwa, “Niger Delta Avengers and the Niger Delta Question: What Way Forward?,” 2.

## IV. PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY PROGRAM FAILURES

The previous chapter argued that the Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP) was successful at abating violence, pacifying 30,000 militants, and reducing pipeline bombings in the years following the PAP's introduction. The government brought militants into the PAP network by providing financial benefits that incentivized them to abandon violence. This revealed that former militants were motivated by their own economic interests more than the grievances espoused by their rebel groups. The PAP's strategy was effective in the short-term, helping to meet the program's "avowed commitment to bringing enduring peace, security, stability, and development to [the] Niger Delta."<sup>213</sup> However, as time has passed, the effectiveness of the PAP has waned. Failed hopes of employment for most ex-militants and the dwindling benefits of the PAP have contributed to this problem. The economic incentives that formerly brought actors into the PAP network are no longer as effective as they were in the early 2010s.

The passage of time has revealed two key failures of the PAP: (1) the PAP never addressed the problem of oil theft, and (2) the PAP was not a long-term solution to political violence. Oil theft has continually risen from 8.4 MMbbl in 2009 to 39 MMbbl in 2020.<sup>214</sup> Politically motivated violent deaths have increased since the final enrollment period of the PAP in 2012. Although they fell from 1,000 per year in 2008–2009 to 250 per year in 2013–2015, violent deaths redoubled to over 500 per year in 2016, peaked at 779 in 2017, and then returned to a range of 450–600 per year from 2018–2020 following the pacification of the Niger Delta Avengers.<sup>215</sup>

While the PAP never could be expected to solve all of the economic issues of the Niger Delta, the government failed to use the period of reduced political violence in the

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<sup>213</sup> Yar'Adua, "The Proclamation – OIAPAP."

<sup>214</sup> Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, "Physical and Process Audit Report For the Period 2009–2011," April 29, 2013; Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, "2020 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report"; "Crude Oil Prices – 70 Year Historical Chart," MacroTrends, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>.

<sup>215</sup> Extracted from Gavin, "Nigeria Security Tracker."

years following its introduction to improve the economic situation in the Niger Delta. This failure incentivized former militants and non-militants alike to participate in oil bunkering. While bunkering is a common way that militant groups are funded, it is also a practice that is known to be a widespread problem with diverse actors, not just militants.<sup>216</sup>

The PAP provided short-term benefits to militants, but it has failed to transition these short-term benefits into sustainable livelihoods that would contribute to a long-term peace and sustainable development. Although the PAP was effective in its strategy to pacify militants in the short-term, “development to our nation’s Niger Delta” has not manifested as the PAP had hoped to facilitate. Over the 14 years since the PAP was introduced, the value of social welfare payments to those brought into the PAP network has declined due to inflation, and the hope of job placements has largely failed to materialize. This has resulted in former militants being left with a lower economic standing than when they initially received the stipend payments. In an effort to regain their previous economic standing, they are left with few choices: among them, steal oil to compensate for reduced stipends or return to militancy.

This chapter first explains how oil theft has been a tool to combat economic grievances, explaining how oil theft, prices, sabotage, and the PAP have interacted to show that the PAP did not address the problem of oil theft. Considering the PAP’s inability to reduce oil theft, the next two sections discuss the economic motivations and opportunities for both militants and non-militants to turn to oil theft as a means to improve their economic situation. The chapter concludes with a section on the PAP’s failure to curb long-term violence.

## **A. OIL THEFT**

The more peaceful conditions achieved through the PAP in the short-term did not usher in widespread economic development as the program claimed was its goal; thus, people turned to oil theft. The PAP did not reduce either the total amount of oil stolen or

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<sup>216</sup> Libby George, “Churches, Mosques House Stolen Nigerian Fuel in Pervasive Oil Theft, Says NNPC Head,” *Reuters*, August 30, 2022, sec. Africa, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/churches-mosques-house-stolen-nigerian-fuel-pervasive-oil-theft-says-nnpc-head-2022-08-30/>.

the frequency at which actors in the Delta tapped pipelines to steal the oil. The failure of the Nigerian government to overcome resource curse tendencies has contributed to stubbornly high unemployment, which has driven those affected to seek alternative livelihoods: specifically, oil theft. The PAP's militant-only focus failed to rectify the problem of oil theft in the Delta, which has come at a notable cost to the Nigerian government. This section discusses the dynamics of oil theft and is followed by two analyses of the motivations of militants and non-militants to participate in bunkering.

The Nigerian government and wider economy did not capitalize on the reprieve in violence to build a strong economy. In 2013, following the last enrollment period for the PAP, overall unemployment in the country was at 21.4% and youth unemployment—classified as those ages 15–24—was 25.2%.<sup>217</sup> The Niger Delta's unemployment is no exception from the rest of the country. For example, in 2013, Bayelsa state's youth unemployment was at 38.4%, and Rivers state was at 27.9%.<sup>218</sup> The PAP had aimed to reduce violence, which would then facilitate economic development; however, this has not materialized, and unemployment rates have remained high. In 2018, the unemployment rate in the Niger Delta as a whole was 32%, rising to 37% in the summer of 2020 as the COVID pandemic upended the world economy.<sup>219</sup> In fact, economic issues for the wider population have affected the PAP since its outset. The economic benefits of the PAP incentivized large numbers of non-militants to indict themselves for militancy in order to receive stipends.<sup>220</sup> The government only expected to have around 10,000 militants sign up for the PAP, but it ended up being forced to cap the program at 30,000 enrollees due to limited funds.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Kristensen, "Additional Financing for State Employment and Expenditure for Results Project," 2.

<sup>218</sup> Kristensen, 3.

<sup>219</sup> Timileyin Omilana, "NDC Calls for Niger Delta Autonomy over Spike in Unemployment Rate," *The Guardian Nigeria News – Nigeria and World News*, August 19, 2020, <https://t.guardian.ng/news/ndc-calls-for-niger-delta-autonomy-over-spike-in-unemployment-rate/>.

<sup>220</sup> Wapmuk, "The Amnesty Programme and the Challenges of Ending Youth Militancy in Nigeria's Niger Delta," 165.

<sup>221</sup> Xan Rice, "Nigeria Begins Amnesty for Niger Delta Militants," *The Guardian*, August 6, 2009, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/aug/06/niger-delta-militants-amnesty-launched>.

The failure of the PAP to address oil theft has left an opportunity for militants and non-militants to overcome their economic hardship caused by a weak economy. A simple and familiar way for militants to replace their lost income outside of a formal job is through oil bunkering and refining. This theft can be as small as a petty criminal drilling a hole in a pipeline, filling a barrel and rolling it down the path to a small truck; the trucker then sells the loot to a bigger outfit, which then drives it across a border and sells it to the next actor down the supply chain.<sup>222</sup> Eventually, the stolen oil gets mixed with legitimate oil, is refined, and ends up in gas tanks throughout the world. Or, the theft can be a larger racket, such as a recently discovered two-and-a-half-mile pipeline connected to a main export terminal that likely took large construction equipment to install and a sophisticated organization to operate over the nine years it was in place.<sup>223</sup> Any citizen who has a pipeline near his residence can drill a hole in the pipeline and siphon oil.<sup>224</sup>

Small bunkerers can make \$50 a day stealing oil; those with enough cash for the upfront costs of building their own refinery can become very wealthy.<sup>225</sup> A refinery costs around \$4,700 to set up, and can produce revenue of \$7,800 a month, paying for itself in two weeks.<sup>226</sup> These refineries are so prevalent that the Joint Task Force (JTF) reports that they have destroyed over 1,800 in their campaign in the Niger Delta.<sup>227</sup> The bunkering industry is highly profitable, with benefits accruing to many.<sup>228</sup> The profits from this

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<sup>222</sup> James Barnett, “The Oil Thieves of Nigeria,” *New Lines Magazine*, January 26, 2023, <https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/the-oil-thieves-of-nigeria/>.

<sup>223</sup> Camillus Eboh, “Nigerian Oil Export Terminal Had Theft Line into Sea for 9 Years,” *Reuters*, October 6, 2022, sec. Africa, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigerian-oil-export-terminal-had-theft-line-into-sea-9-years-2022-10-05/>.

<sup>224</sup> “Nigeria’s Faltering Federal Experiment” (International Crisis Group, October 25, 2006), 7, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/nigerias-faltering-federal-experiment>.

<sup>225</sup> Fyनेface Dumnamene, “Nigeria’s Illegal Oil Refineries: Dirty, Dangerous, Lucrative,” *BBC News*, April 26, 2022, sec. Africa, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-61216157>; AKintunde Akinleye, “Nigeria’s Illegal Oil Bunkerers,” *Reuters*, September 22, 2014, <https://widerimage.reuters.com/story/nigerias-illegal-oil-bunkerers>.

<sup>226</sup> John Campbell, “A Primer on Nigeria’s Oil Bunkering,” *Africa in Transition from the Council on Foreign Relations* (blog), August 4, 2015, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/primer-nigerias-oil-bunkering>.

<sup>227</sup> Dele Ogunyemi, “Military JTF Destroys over 1,800 Illegal Refining Site,” *PUNCH Newspaper*, January 1, 2023, <https://punchng.com/military-jtf-destroys-over-1800-illegal-refining-site/>.

<sup>228</sup> Rebecca Golden-Timsar, “Amnesty And New Violence In The Niger Delta,” *Forbes*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/uhenergy/2018/03/20/amnesty-and-new-violence-in-the-niger-delta/>.

enterprise accrue to every level, from the individual stealing the oil to politicians, chiefs, military officers, oil company staff members, and rebel groups.<sup>229</sup> In the 7 years prior to the PAP, pipelines were vandalized—a term meaning oil theft, not sabotage—at a rate of just over 2,000 times per year.<sup>230</sup> However, while pipeline bombings declined after the PAP, oil vandalism spiked 175% to 5,518 incidents in 2010 and averaged 3,700 incidents per year from 2012–2015, an 85% increase from pre-PAP levels.<sup>231</sup>

It is not surprising that oil theft has grown, as many have noted that it is, to a significant degree, a response to perpetrators' inability to find legitimate work.<sup>232</sup> Understanding the pattern of oil theft is important to understanding the effectiveness of the PAP. While economic incentives were a key feature of the PAP's success, oil theft can provide supplemental income to former militants and non-militants alike. Due to political and economic failures of those in Nigeria, oil theft has remained a significant and growing problem in the Niger Delta.

Given that the unemployment rate in Nigeria is always elevated—incentivizing oil theft—overall levels of theft tend to follow the price of oil (Figure 1). The Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) provides data on oil losses. Total losses are the combination of both theft and sabotage. Oil theft, often referred to as oil bunkering, is defined as the “illegal removal of crude oil from the well heads and other operational facilities of the covered entities through any means employed by the perpetrators.”<sup>233</sup> Sabotage is defined as “the deliberate act of causing damage to well heads and facilities of the covered entities, and includes the block of access to these facilities,

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<sup>229</sup> International Crisis Group, “Nigeria’s Faltering Federal Experiment,” 7; Golden-Timsar, “Amnesty And New Violence In The Niger Delta.”

<sup>230</sup> Adibe, Nwagwu, and Albert, “Rentierism and Security Privatisation in the Nigerian Petroleum Industry,” 348.

<sup>231</sup> Adibe, Nwagwu, and Albert, 348.

<sup>232</sup> Tombari Bodo, Batombari Gbidum Gimah, and Kemetonye Joy Seomoni, “Illegal Oil Bunkering in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: A Challenge to Nigeria’s Development,” *European Scientific Journal ESJ* 16, no. 29 (October 31, 2020): 139, <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2020.v16n29p134>; Eric Adishi and Michael Hunga, “Oil Theft, Illegal Bunkering and Pipeline Vandalism: It’s Impact on Nigeria Economy, 2015 – 2016,” *Journal of Economics and Business Management* 3, no. 2 (2017): 53, [www.iiardpub.org](http://www.iiardpub.org).

<sup>233</sup> Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, “Physical and Process Audit Report For the Period 2009–2011,” April 29, 2013, 23.

capable of stopping crude oil production.”<sup>234</sup> The NEITI only reported sabotage in years where sabotage was notably high, such as 2009–2011, and 2016. During all other years, sabotage and theft are lumped together into a single metric, oil losses.

In 2009, oil prices were low as a result of the Global Financial Crisis, and oil theft was also low (8.4 MMbbl). As prices rose through 2013, total oil losses increased to a high of 78 MMbbl. While this loss does include an unknown quantity of oil lost due to sabotage, it is reasonable to assume that the largest portion of the loss was due to theft, not sabotage, as the NEITI did not explicitly report the sabotage in 2013. Furthermore, violent political deaths, which generally rise and fall along with sabotage, were at a low of 188 in the same year.<sup>235</sup> Thus, losses from theft in 2013 likely exceeded losses from theft in 2009. This correlation between oil prices and total oil loss continued through 2015. As oil prices declined precipitously between 2013 and 2016, oil theft plummeted to 19MMbbl. Total oil loss then spiked in 2016, to 81 MMbbl, even as oil prices remained low. This spike in oil losses is attributable to sabotage, not theft, and correlates with the rise of the NDA: an organization with political grievances.<sup>236</sup> The oil theft pattern, in contrast, is consistently correlated with oil prices, which suggests that it is driven by economic concerns and persists, regardless of whether militants are active or were pacified through their inclusion in the PAP benefit network.

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<sup>234</sup> Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, 23.

<sup>235</sup> Extracted from Gavin, “Nigeria Security Tracker.”

<sup>236</sup> Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, “2016 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report.”

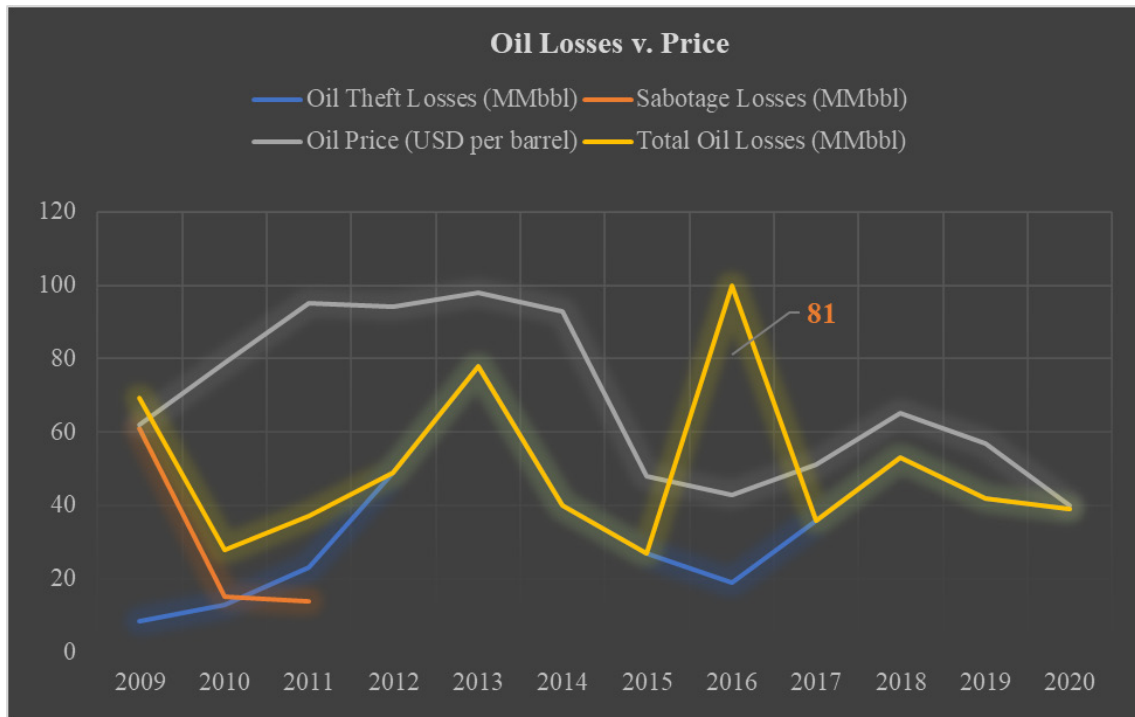


Figure 1. Oil Losses v. Price, 2009–2020<sup>237</sup>

It follows that, as the price of oil increases, not only does the total volume of stolen oil rise, but so does the number of participants involved in the bunkering business. Oil theft is clearly an economic enterprise, responding to price signals. The pervasive theft of oil and its relation to the price of oil shows the relative value of oil to the livelihoods of the residents of the Niger Delta. Those who are unemployed or underemployed are more

<sup>237</sup> Adapted from Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, “Physical and Process Audit Report For the Period 2009–2011” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, April 29, 2013), <https://neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>; “2012 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, March 10, 2015), <https://neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>; Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, “2016 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report”; Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, “2020 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report”; “2013 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, March 10, 2015), <https://neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>; “2014 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, December 23, 2016), <https://neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>; “2015 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, December 27, 2017), <https://neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>; “2017 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, November 2019), <https://neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>; “2018 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, 2020), <https://neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>; “2019 Oil and Gas Industry Audit Report” (Abuja, Nigeria: Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, 2021), <https://neiti.gov.ng/audits/oil-and-gas>.

willing to accept the risk of getting caught and facing the legal ramifications when the financial incentive is higher; however, as the price drops, and the risks and costs of stealing oil do not, incentives to participate in oil theft over other forms of informal employment are reduced. Despite oil theft fluctuating with the price of oil, it remains a pervasive problem, unaffected by the PAP.

## **1. Militant Oil Theft**

While no known data set parses out who is stealing the oil, it is reasonable to assume that both militants and non-militants are involved, as both sets of actors possess economic incentives to engage in oil theft. The PAP participants' incentives to engage in oil theft have increased over time. The program was designed to last for five years, and it did not provide an effective long-term strategy to sustain or transition militants' livelihoods. Accordingly, with the passage of time since the PAP's debut, militants have been increasingly motivated to turn to oil theft for three reasons: first, inflation has eroded the purchasing power of the PAP's stipends, incentivizing former militants to steal oil; second, job placements through the PAP have been few, preventing former militants from turning to legitimate employment; third, the PAP's poor monitoring of former militants has facilitated militants' illicit activities.

Inflation has eroded the PAP's stipends, driving former militants into oil theft. Over the 14 years since the introduction of the PAP, militants have received no cost-of-living adjustment to their stipend. The real value of their ₦65,000 stipends has thus fallen from \$432 to \$142, the latter being approximately the same amount that militants rejected in their initial PAP negotiations with the government. The dwindling benefits of stipend checks leave militants with two options: return to militancy to show that their demands are no longer being met or turn to oil theft to make up the difference for the reduced purchasing power of their stipends. The gap between oil prices and oil theft closes from 2013–2020, most notably beginning in 2017 (Figure 1). This suggests that the relative value of stealing oil increased, relative to finding other sources of income. As a result, larger numbers of former militants turned to oil theft out of economic desperation or the opportunity to enrich themselves.

Unfulfilled hopes of legitimate work provided through the PAP have also encouraged militants to seek alternative livelihoods, including oil bunkering. Despite the PAP's claim that "Job placement is a vital component of every DDR program like the PAP and accounts for the feasible aspect of sustainable reintegration," the program failed to effectively place most former militants in jobs.<sup>238</sup> In the first three years of the PAP, only 200 former militants were successfully placed in jobs, and by the end of 2014, the total placements had risen to only around 2,300.<sup>239</sup> By 2019, 4,450 former militants had been placed in jobs.<sup>240</sup> As a reminder, this is out of 30,000 participants over a period a decade.

The program routinely lauds its own work of providing vocational and reintegration training. Presumably, if job placements were a successful feature of the program, that too would be noted on the PAP website or throughout the media and political messaging. Rather, the PAP's job placement page on Facebook is only followed by 31 people as of May 2023.<sup>241</sup> Furthermore, as of April 2023, the Job Placements Quick Link on the PAP's website is a blank page with an error and has been in this status for multiple months at least.<sup>242</sup>

The poor overall state of the Nigerian economy and the ineffective parts of the PAP administration appear to be making it particularly difficult for the PAP to effectively place former militants in long-term employment. The PAP cannot be held solely responsible for job placements issues, as unemployment is a country-wide problem. The failure of the PAP to meet long-term economic needs points back to Obi and Okonofua's assessments that a

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<sup>238</sup> "OIAPAP – Office of the Interim Administrator, Presidential Amnesty Programme," Presidential Amnesty Programme, 2021, <https://www.osapnd.gov.ng/#>.

<sup>239</sup> Ebiede, Langer, and Tosun, "Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration," 7.

<sup>240</sup> This source discusses entrepreneurship opportunities provided through the PAP such as setting up small businesses; however, it is unclear whether the number given is just for total new businesses setup or for the total that have been employed through the PAP. Bayo Akinloye, "Presidential Amnesty Programme: Then and Now," This Day Live, 2019, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/05/19/presidential-amnesty-programme-then-and-now/>.

<sup>241</sup> Job Placement at Presidential Amnesty Programme, "PAP Job Placement Idpe," Social Media, Facebook, accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/jobplacement.idpe.54>.

<sup>242</sup> Presidential Amnesty Programme, "Placement – OIAPAP."

successful DDR program is built as part of a grander recovery strategy.<sup>243</sup> Since a long-term Nigerian economic growth program did not provide an exit strategy from the PAP, former militants are likely turning to the bunkering business—one largely familiar to them, as it was a known instrument for funding rebel groups—and use stolen oil as a means of compensating for the PAP and the wider economy’s failure to create a long-term solution to their economic situation.

While the inflation-eroded stipends and lack of job placement provided economic motivation for the PAP enrollees to steal oil, the program’s lack of structure and monitoring provisions created the opportunity. While militants swore the PAP’s oath to “faithfully and lawfully support every effort being made by the federal, states and local governments and their agencies for the overall development of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria,” the PAP did not provide an accountability mechanism to prevent militants from engaging in oil theft.<sup>244</sup> The PAP participants reported that many training days would only last for thirty minutes and then they would be sent home.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, former militants often had significant wait times for their training programs. Although the PAP was introduced in 2009, it was not until 2017 that the majority of the PAP enrollees completed job training.<sup>246</sup> With the total program length ranging from 4–19 months, many program enrollees had a significant amount of time to engage in outside activities while waiting for training and job placement. While waiting for their turn in the program, the PAP participants are known to have engaged in oil theft.<sup>247</sup> Furthermore, no accounts of expulsion from the program for oil theft have been reported. The copious amounts of discretionary time and lack of accountability and monitoring provided an opportunity for former militants to participate in bunkering.

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<sup>243</sup> Okonofua, “The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016,” 7; Obi, “Oil and the Post-Amnesty Programme (PAP): What Prospects for Sustainable Development and Peace in the Niger Delta?,” 251.

<sup>244</sup> Olusegun Adeniyi, “Tompson and the Amnesty Deal – THISDAYLIVE,” This Day Live, December 2022, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/12/01/tompson-and-the-amnesty-deal/>.

<sup>245</sup> Ebiede, Langer, and Tosun, “Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration,” 8.

<sup>246</sup> Nwokolo and Aghedo, “Consolidating or Corrupting the Peace?,” 331.

<sup>247</sup> Ebiede, Langer, and Tosun, “Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration,” 9.

## 2. Non-Militant Oil Theft

Militants are not the only ones involved in oil theft; the wider Delta population also possesses the motivation to bunker oil, a problem which the PAP has not addressed. A DDR program is not capable of fixing every problem; it cannot stand alone.<sup>248</sup> The PAP's exclusive focus on providing economic benefits to militants left the larger population—who still remained poor—in the same economic situation as they found themselves prior to the PAP and many have turned to oil bunkering. While bunkering is a common way that militant groups are funded, it is also a practice that is known to be a widespread problem with diverse actors, not just militants.<sup>249</sup>

The stubbornly high unemployment and increasing levels of oil theft support one critical assessment of Delta development initiatives, which observes that the “thirteen inquiries, panels, [and] committees have been set up... [but] the problems they were created to tackle are not only still there but have also grown in great proportions.”<sup>250</sup> These economic and development programs introduced to help the Niger Delta have not produced a better economic situation, which would reduce the motivation for the wider population to turn away from oil theft in exchange for legitimate work in the formal sector. While a DDR program such as the PAP never could be expected to solve all the economic issues of the Niger Delta, the government failed to use the period of reduced political violence in the years following its introduction to improve the economic situation in the Niger Delta—incentivizing militants and non-militants alike to participate in oil bunkering.

The analysis from Chapter III indicated that the PAP was effective at abating pipeline sabotage, as the levels of these attacks dropped dramatically with the program's debut. However, the PAP did not reduce the total amount of oil stolen. This suggests that the quantity of oil stolen is not directly related to the activities of organized violent militant groups; rather, the wider population uses bunkered oil as an economic opportunity. The

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<sup>248</sup> Okonofua, “The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016,” 6–7.

<sup>249</sup> George, “Churches, Mosques House Stolen Nigerian Fuel in Pervasive Oil Theft, Says NNPC Head.”

<sup>250</sup> Ajide, Ashima, and Agunbiade, “How Government Underdeveloped the Niger Delta.”

opportunity to steal oil is still present and available for the 99.9% of the population that were not included in the economic benefits of the PAP.

The government's exclusive reliance on the PAP to bring security to the Niger Delta has failed to improve the economic situation of large portions of the population. One illustration of this neglect is the PAP's exclusion of women. Only 133 women were brought into the program, less than 1% of the total enrollment.<sup>251</sup> The general exclusion of women from the benefits of the PAP left a significant demographic who possessed the same (or worse) economic situation as former militants. Thus, many women have turned to oil bunkering. In fact, many of the illegal bootleg refineries present in the Niger Delta are operated by women.<sup>252</sup> Women whose spouses or children died in the conflict receive no benefit, so they are particularly likely to find whatever means feasible to provide for themselves and their families. In 2012, the UN reported that, "Failing to ensure engagement of women in post-conflict governance often led to neglect of their access to economic opportunities."<sup>253</sup> This wider failure appears to apply to Nigeria. Thus, women choose to steal or refine oil where they can make \$50 to \$60 per day, a Figure 25 times greater than the poverty rate.<sup>254</sup> The access and prevalence of oil theft and refining is a lucrative and viable way to compensate for the financial losses that they have experienced, whether they be from oil pollution which has degraded their traditional means of sustainment through farming or fishing, or through the loss of family members' incomes.

## **B. MILITANCY**

As discussed in Chapter III, the PAP was shown to have a notable effect on reducing militancy by reducing pipeline bombings, violent deaths, and total numbers of active

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<sup>251</sup> Okonofua, "The Niger Delta Amnesty Program: The Challenges of Transitioning From Peace Settlements to Long-Term Peace – Benjamin A. Okonofua, 2016," 16.

<sup>252</sup> Moses Obenade and Gordon Tami Amangabara, "Perspective: The Environmental Implications of Oil Theft and Artisanal Refining in the Niger Delta Region," *Asian Review of Environmental and Earth Sciences* 1, no. 2 (August 2014): 25–29, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/aoj/areaes/v1y2014i2p25-29id674.html>.

<sup>253</sup> Stefan Barriga, "'Wherever There Is Conflict, Women Must Be Part of the Solution,' Security Council Told in Day-Long Debate Urging Their Inclusion in Restoring Fractured Societies," United Nations – Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, November 30, 2012, <https://press.un.org/en/2012/sc10840.doc.htm>.

<sup>254</sup> Akinleye, "Nigeria's Illegal Oil Bunkers."

militants by providing economic incentives for militants to pacify. However, what appeared to be a positive trend in the early years of the program subsequently reversed course. Since 2015, violent political deaths have been on the rise again. Militancy in the region appears to be resurging for the same reasons that militants are involved in oil theft: erosion of benefits and lack of job placement. While militants may claim political grievances such as pollution are motivating their renewed activities, their pacification in response to stipends showed that economics were at the core of their militancy.

Between 2009 and 2013, the number of violent deaths in the Niger Delta dramatically declined, from over 1,000 per year to a low of 188.<sup>255</sup> Violent political deaths in 2014 and 2015 increased only slightly to 204 and 264 respectively.<sup>256</sup> However, with the formation of the NDA in 2016, deaths more than doubled to 532 and nearly tripled to 779 in 2017.<sup>257</sup> After NDA's pacification in early 2017 via reinstatement of the PAP stipends, violent deaths dropped to 458 in 2018, but subsequently climbed again, averaging 682 per year for 2019–2022.<sup>258</sup> Thus, the positive progress towards peace achieved through the PAP appears to have reversed, although the PAP's gains have not yet been totally cancelled out.

Deteriorating economic conditions appear to have encouraged this return to militancy. Violent deaths rose as the value of militants' stipends declined due to inflation. The wider economy's inability to meet the job demands of militants, combined with the PAP's failure to place participants in the jobs that were available, has also encouraged former PAP enrollees to return to violence. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, as Niger Delta unemployment rose, violent deaths climbed to 938 (2021), nearly equivalent to the worst years of MEND in 2008–2009.<sup>259</sup> Under these deteriorating economic conditions, returning to militancy became an increasingly attractive option as militants will

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<sup>255</sup> Gavin, "Nigeria Security Tracker."

<sup>256</sup> Gavin.

<sup>257</sup> Gavin.

<sup>258</sup> Gavin.

<sup>259</sup> Walls, "The Presidential Amnesty Programme of 2009 and Nigerian Oil Production: A Disaggregate Econometric Analysis," 31; Gavin, "Nigeria Security Tracker."

receive pay from their militant group.<sup>260</sup> While the exact amount of compensation received by Niger Delta militants from their groups has not been revealed, militants do generally receive pay from their groups.<sup>261</sup> Furthermore, they receive the intangible benefits that go along with being part of a militant group such as comradeship and a sense of purpose.<sup>262</sup> While these do not affect their economic situation, they could appease some of an individual's pent-up frustration due to their poor economic situation.<sup>263</sup>

Political grievances, especially those linked to oil industry pollution, are still present in the Niger Delta. Delta communities' drinking water has 900 times the World Health Organization's recommended benzene levels. Wells also contain 1000 times the Nigerian standard for hydrocarbon content. These conditions increase the likelihood of cancer, reducing the life expectancy of Delta residents to 41, compared to 55 for Nigeria as a whole.<sup>264</sup> These conditions have economic implications. Farming and fishing are significantly degraded by the pollution. Ironically, the loss of these traditional means of income drives people towards oil bunkering, which further degrades the environment. Approximately half of the crude delivered to illicit refineries cannot be usefully processed.<sup>265</sup> The leftover materials seep into the ground or are burned off, creating both toxic air pollution and ground pollution, which eventually seeps into the water table, limiting the chances that the population will ever return to a livelihood built on farming or

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<sup>260</sup> Benjamin W. Bahney et al., "Insurgent Compensation: Evidence from Iraq," *The American Economic Review* 103, no. 3 (2013): 518, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.103.3.518>.

<sup>261</sup> Bahney et al., 518.

<sup>262</sup> Nichole Argo, "Why Fight?: Examining Self-Interested Versus Communally-Oriented Motivations in Palestinian Resistance and Rebellion," *Security Studies* 18, no. 4 (December 2, 2009): 654, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410903368920>.

<sup>263</sup> Argo, 654.

<sup>264</sup> "Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland" (Nairobi, Kenya: United Nations Environment Programme, 2011), 10–11, <http://www.unep.org/resources/report/environmental-assessment-ogoniland>; United Nations Environment Programme, 192; "Nigeria Confronts the Toxic Legacy of 60 Years of Abundant Oil," Bloomberg, accessed April 27, 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2020-niger-delta-oil-pollution/#xj4y7vzkg>; "Life Expectancy at Birth, Total (Years) – Nigeria," World Bank Open Data, accessed April 27, 2023, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=NG>.

<sup>265</sup> Obenade and Amangabara, "Perspective: The Environmental Implications of Oil Theft and Artisanal Refining in the Niger Delta Region," 27.

fishing. Thus, while it could be argued that violence in the Niger Delta is reviving because of the original grievances like pollution, even these are linked to economic issues.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

Oil theft is an economic enterprise, which can be used as a tool to overcome general unemployment across the wider population or as an opportunity for former militants to restore depleted benefits and compensate for a lack of job opportunities. Over the 14 years since the PAP's inception, the benefits that seemed to pacify militants have deteriorated as job placements through the program have been few and inflation has diminished the purchasing power of the stipends that had previously pacified militants. Persistently increasing oil theft has revealed the PAP fell short in addressing this problem. The failures of the program have resulted in increased oil theft relative to the price of oil as a means to supplement the incomes of both those inside and outside of the PAP network. The wider Nigerian government failed to provide a long-term solution to the core economic demands in the Niger Delta, despite having a temporary reprieve in violence in which significant gains may be made. This has resulted in both the wider population participating in oil theft and former militants returning to violence.

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## V. CONCLUSION

Oil conflict and the Niger Delta have become synonymous. Conflict surrounding oil has been commonplace in the region for nearly 60 years and has manifested in myriad ways, from peaceful protests to armed insurgency. Scholars have studied both the resource curse and Nigeria's place in that literature thoroughly, finding that the Nigerian state has become an archetypical example of an oil-cursed state. To combat the Niger Delta conflict and to bring peace to the region, the Nigerian government introduced a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) campaign. Previous studies agree that Nigeria's Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP) reduced political violence, but that its design fell short because it failed to address the root causes of insurgency, most notably the region's economic concerns. This thesis assessed the successes and failures of Nigeria's PAP. It analyzed why the PAP was initially successful in reducing violence in the short-term. It then analyzed the longer-term failures of the PAP in terms of oil theft and increased levels of militancy.

The PAP's most notable success came in the first six years following its implementation, when violent deaths in the Niger Delta decreased by 75%. This was accomplished by building a network of PAP beneficiaries. The PAP's structure was tailored particularly well to the decentralized nature of rebel groups. The program did not just address one level of the insurgency but provided an economic incentive to all of the key actors within rebel networks in the Niger Delta: individual militants, militant group leaders, and local community leaders. The short-term success of the PAP through cash payments bolstered Knight et al.'s suggestion that cash payments can be a useful tool for extending peace, and it reinforced their recommendation that cash payments must be tailored to the particular circumstances of the conflict and the actors involved.<sup>266</sup> Peace dividends in the region were gained through an incentive structure where local community leaders were given stakes in the oil industry, individual militants received a stipend check, and militant leaders received both pipeline security contracts and were given access to their

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<sup>266</sup> Knight and Alpaslan Özerdem, "Guns, Camps and Cash," 514.

group members' stipend checks. While this new network was not the most liberal democratic structure and facilitated corruption, it did significantly reduce violence in the short-term.

The PAP's most notable failures were seen in two areas: oil theft and an eventual return to militancy. Oil theft, which responds to prices in oil, was unaffected by the PAP. In fact, oil theft has notably grown since the program's introduction, reinforcing the importance of addressing the economic demands of both militants and non-militants. Militant stipend checks were never increased despite high inflation, and minimal job placements occurred following the PAP-provided vocational training. This situation resulted in militants bunkering more oil as the value of their benefits decreased, in an effort to regain the economic status that they held at the program's outset. The PAP, which has failed to fully reintegrate rebels through job placements, reinforces the scholarly findings of Berdal, who claims that providing alternative means of employment is an important part of the long-term success of DDR programs.<sup>267</sup> It also fortified Colletta et al.'s idea that, without effective reintegration, rebels will pursue their livelihoods elsewhere;<sup>268</sup> in the case of the Niger Delta, that is manifested largely through oil bunkering and a return to militancy. While inflation and unfulfilled aspirations of long-term employment wore away at their stipends, some militants returned to violence, resulting in a growing number of politically motivated deaths since the last enrollment period of the PAP. Non-militants were left out of the benefits of the PAP. The state of the wider economy has left large percentages of the population in poverty, which has also contributed to the growing problem of oil theft in the region.

This thesis shed light on DDR campaigns, economic security, and Nigerian security. The failure of the PAP to provide a lasting peace also supplements the wider literature and the United Nation's recommendation that DDR programs that pursue long-term peace must be paired with broader peacekeeping and economic strategies. This analysis of the PAP further adds to the literature by showing the utility of providing

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<sup>267</sup> Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars*.

<sup>268</sup> Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer, *The Transition from War to Peace in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 18.

economic security to rebels, in this case via stipends, and how that economic benefit can lead to a reprieve in violence, at least in the short-term. Lastly, for Nigeria as a whole, since economic incentives proved useful in promoting peace, Nigeria could use other development and economic programs as part of a long-term strategy to quell rebellion.

## **A. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The most significant, albeit unsurprising, finding of this research is the correlation between providing economic benefits for militants and the subsequent reduction in violence. As the PAP's stipends were introduced, violence was reduced; when the PAP discontinued stipends in late 2015, violence led by the Niger Delta Avengers returned to the region. Then, when the PAP was reinstated in early 2017, violence once again was reduced. This has significant policy implications. As the literature on DDR programs suggests, the PAP should have been paired with wider economic and development policies. In light of these findings, I offer three possible recommendations.

First, in the pursuit of a peace that is not simply tied to providing stipends to every militant-minded individual in the Niger Delta, the Nigerian government should pursue wide economic development for the region. The many commissions on development for the region have not produced notable changes for employment in the region, nor likely across the whole of Nigeria. Investigating possible corruption in these commissions and creating a transparent and accountable economic commission could produce better long-term outcomes. Economic policy development would help to target the remaining 99.9% of Niger Delta residents to which the PAP provided no direct economic benefits. This might help stave off the next generation of militants that have now grown up but do not enjoy the benefits that ex-militants receive through the PAP.

Second, an audit of corruption within pipeline security contracts is due. Pipeline security contracts, which have been in place since 2011, should have largely reduced both oil theft and sabotage of pipelines.<sup>269</sup> Yet, as shown in this research, oil continues to be

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<sup>269</sup> Geetha Narayanasamy, "Nigeria Hands Pipeline Protection Contracts to Oil-Producing Communities," S&P Global Commodity Insights, March 12, 2015, <https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/oil/031215-nigeria-hands-pipeline-protection-contracts-to-oil-producing-communities>.

stolen in mass quantities. This audit should be a joint initiative between the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), international oil companies that are active in the Delta, and local community leaders. If notable shortcomings are found during the audit, the NNPC needs to incorporate mechanisms for contract enforcement to reduce oil theft and sabotage. One possible mechanism would be to create a new system of pipeline security that shares responsibility between law enforcement and private contractors to provide a level of accountability for both entities. This, combined with better surveillance equipment, such as using cost-effective drones, could help to offset some of the losses along oil pipelines.

Lastly, the PAP's focus should be modified. This could be done with two lines of effort: shifting emphasis to job placement and beginning the phase-out of the program. The dwindling stipends due to inflation have already negated significant portions of the incentive that prevented violent activity. The PAP administrators should shift their focus to job placement. The program effectively used a carrot to get the militants away from violence; now the Nigerian government needs to incentivize ex-militants to exit the program into a long-term solution. If the enrollees do not actively apply for job openings, they should have their benefits withdrawn.

## **B. AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research could be expanded in multiple ways. First, investigative studies on oil theft could shed more light on the racket. Specifically, research should be conducted which parses out how much of the oil bunkering is being conducted by former militants, active militants, and other entities. An additional area that this research could not sufficiently explore was the role of pipeline security contracts and how they affected the outcome of the PAP. These security contracts were highly lucrative, particularly for militant leaders, but they have been wrought with conflict.<sup>270</sup> The contracts surely provided some jobs for ex-militants and were also an important aspect of pacifying the NDA; however, little work has been done to analyze how much they actually protected

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<sup>270</sup> Izuaka, "Why We Awarded Multi-Billion Naira Pipeline Protection Contract to Tompolo – NNPC"; Reuters, "Former Niger Delta Militant Tompolo Summoned to Lagos Court."

pipelines from theft and sabotage, and whether the security personnel were involved themselves in oil bunkering.

Third, since the release of the PAP, the UN has updated their recommendations on how a DDR program should be designed. Comparing DDR campaigns from other countries, which have built on the 2010 UN framework, to the PAP could shed greater light on whether the new DDR program framework, which emphasizes a community-based approach rather than a militant-focused approach, is resulting in better outcomes than the PAP. Lastly, studies could investigate how the demographics of militants might be influencing militancy in the Niger Delta. Since the last enrollment period for the PAP ended in 2012, there is a new group of unemployed youth that is in the same economic situation that MEND fighters were prior to the PAP. This new generation of youth who do not receive the benefits of the PAP are incentivized to steal oil or to join a militant group, such as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force—an old group that has recently resurged in the region.<sup>271</sup> Understanding the generational gap between the PAP participants and those who have since joined militant groups may provide a better understanding of ways to combat the rising violence in the region.

### **C. LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

Multiple unanswered questions arose throughout this research. First, very little information about the original design of the program was able to be obtained. The only publicly issued source document of the PAP is the proclamation given by President Yar'Adua in 2009. One article published the oath of enrollment that all the PAP militants were required to take upon turning in their weapons and joining the program. Thus, assessments of the program were largely derived from secondary sources, the PAP's official website, and social media feeds. Second, the NEITI reports, which were used for assessing oil losses due to theft and sabotage, are typically released two years after the end of the reporting year, hampering the current relevance of the data. Furthermore, the NEITI

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<sup>271</sup> "Asari Dokubo, Founder of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force and His Entourage Heavily Armed with Weapons Walking Freely in Rivers State," Facebook Watch, July 30, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=440172291459481>.

reports only break out sabotage from oil theft in years where it is notably high. This research would have been bolstered by seeing how oil theft numbers responded to the COVID pandemic in 2021 and 2022, as well as a year-by-year analysis of oil theft and sabotage broken out separately. Lastly, based on the lack of documentation, it seems as though negotiations between the Nigerian government, militant groups, and local communities at the outset of the PAP occurred largely behind closed doors. More details about this process would have helped to assess the importance of various actors and their roles in shaping the PAP, which would have provided greater insights into the design characteristics and appropriate targeting of DDR programs in general.

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