



Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment of the Presidential Amnesty Programme for Niger Delta Ex-Militants

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Abstract. Fifteen years after granting presidential amnesty to ex-militants as part of the strategic approach to peacebuilding in Nigeria's Niger Delta, it is imperative to conduct a Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP). A plethora of studies on the PAP are limited to a vague and undefined broad set of conclusions. This article provides a reflection of the PAP using PCIA framework in peacebuilding. The objective is to advance the minimalist and maximalist approaches to peacebuilding in the context of negative and positive peace in the Niger Delta region. A mixed research method utilizing descriptive survey and semi-structured interviews was adopted. The findings reflect an interesting complex intersection of issues inextricably linked to negative and positive peace. The article argued that the PAP overwhelming mandate to stabilize the region for increased crude oil production using negative peace to safeguard critical national assets without prioritizing the needs of ex-militants and communities could engender the broader drivers of armed insurrection. It concludes that PAP reintegration process has been reduced to Nigeria's albatross and a prisoner of its own creation as a result of the brinkmanship and identity politics where few ex-militant commanders and PAP officials appropriate a common heritage as an ethnic estate. Considering the challenges of economic reintegration and obtaining formal jobs, the article suggests that one strategic way to exit the PAP is to establish an Oil and Gas Assets Surveillance and

Protection Corps (OGASPC) to absolve ex-militants in formal employment for effective surveillance and protection at the community level.

Keywords: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment, Amnesty, ex-militants, Niger Delta, Minimalist, Maximalist.

1. Introduction

Globally, the peacebuilding sector has observed the implementation of amnesty initiatives by various state and non-state actors as a strategic response to conflict situations—particularly civil wars and armed conflicts—to uphold peace and security at global, regional, national, and local/community levels. Researchers include Collier et al. (2003), Doyle and Sambanis (2000), Muggah (2009), Okonofua (2016), Seethaleri (2016), Jarikre (2017), and Ikelegbe and Mukoro (2017) have investigated selective amnesties and their efficacy in mitigating violent conflicts and fostering peace across many geographies. Consequently, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa have had reasons to implement amnesty programs (Langholtz & Steenken, 2017). In 1970, Argentina and Chile conferred amnesty for crimes against humanity. In 1986, Uruguayan military and police personnel were afforded amnesty for acts of repression.

In African nations such as Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa, various amnesties were conferred, and Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) programs were instituted for offenders and former combatants. Amnesty programs were ostensibly employed as neo-liberal peacebuilding mechanisms (Ayuk, 2020). Amnesty originates from the Greek term "Amnestia," signifying the act of forgetting (Ayuk, 2020). Amnesty entails a legislative framework that absolves persons or groups from legally penal activities or nullifies any associated sentences that would otherwise be enforceable. In the context of peacebuilding, amnesty encompasses the three elements of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration.

Nigeria's Niger Delta region is recognised as Africa's largest and the world's third-largest mangrove forest, encompassing a varied wetland ecological zone that transitions from arid interior deltaic plains to the coastline. This includes humid lowland rainforests, freshwater swamp forests, mangrove forests, swamps, saltmarshes, and tidal flats along the estuaries and coastlines (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2006). The region's geological and environmental attributes clearly indicate substantial oil and gas reserves, as the majority of localities possess oil-bearing formations and include oil wells, manifolds, platforms, flow stations, pipelines, and associated infrastructure (Jarikre, 2024; UNDP, 2006). Research has shown that the forest resources and aquatic ecosystems of the ND have significantly declined due to hydrocarbon exploration, extraction, and environmental contamination (Bello and Nwaeke, 2023). Notwithstanding its abundant resources, notably the nation's oil wealth, the region is marked by significant poverty and underdevelopment. The circumstance incited dissatisfaction, anger, desperation, and various conflict dynamics stemming from the agitation of community kids and women.

In 2008, the federal government under President Yar Adua instituted the Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC) with the directive to evaluate current and historical policy alternatives and initiatives related to the Niger Delta, and to generate a detailed report accompanied by recommendations for mitigating insurgency in the region. The Committee offered three broad reform measures focused on governance and the rule of law, socio-economic development, and human development, aimed at achieving sustained peace and progress in the region. The committee's principal suggestion was to confer amnesty onto the Niger Delta militants and to form a Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) commission, known as the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP). On June 24, 2009, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua declared an

amnesty for all militants, instituting a two-month timeframe (from August 6 to October 4, 2009) during which they were mandated to relinquish their weaponry. Following the declaration, the PAP has advanced beyond the disarming and demobilisation phases and is currently in the reintegration stage. Between June 2010 and December 2011, a total of 23,358 former militants were successfully demobilised, with 15,434 persons engaging in the training program offered (Agbibo, 2015).

The PAP as a peace process includes a triadic peacebuilding element comprising disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) of remorseful militants into civil life (Jarikre, 2017). The PAP has functioned as a crucial and strategic initiative to combat the culture of violence and the destruction of critical oil and gas infrastructure in the Niger Delta region. Before the PAP, the oil industry saw a decline in production to around 700,000 barrels per day (bpd) at the height of militant actions in January 2009. Subsequent to the Presidential pronouncement of amnesty for Niger Delta insurgents, there was an extraordinary increase in production output, attaining between 2.4 to 2.6 million barrels per day in December 2012 (Omoweh, 2011; Jarikre, 2017; Omokhoa, 2015).

While there is an expanding body of literature regarding the DDR component of peacebuilding in the Niger Delta conflict, the same cannot be said for the peace and conflict impact assessment of the PAP. Much of the research is constrained to ambiguous and unspecified general conclusions, as this study reveals a significant strategic deficiency not just in the PAP literature but also in peacebuilding initiatives. Moreover, there is a scarcity of studies that extend beyond merely outlining the problems of the program to providing a practical comprehension of empirical research utilising the PCIA framework to assess the peacebuilding effects of the PAP. The existing literature on the PAP indicates a significant lack of research regarding minimalist and maximalist approaches to peacebuilding. For example, Ikelegbe & Umukoro (2016), Okonofua (2016), Agwu, Nwangwu, & Okoye (2022), among others, advocated the theory of exclusion. Inuwa (2017) contends that the program introduced ambiguity regarding its primary objectives, procedures, methodologies, and anticipated outcomes. Jarikre (2017) contended that the PAP, akin to prior governmental interventions in the region, has failed to provide a singular explanatory paradigm for permanent peace. The amnesty scheme may have resulted in two outcomes: an increase in oil output and a more complex armed war.

This study examined the PAP within the context of the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) framework to evaluate its effects on the peace and conflict dynamics in the Niger Delta region. The study progressed by integrating Galtung's (1996) concepts of negative and positive peace with Call and Cousens' (2008) minimalist and maximalist frameworks for peacebuilding. A minimalist interpretation of the PAP emphasises "negative peace," defined as the mere absence of violent conflict in a complex scenario. Conversely, a maximalist approach to peacebuilding aligns with the notion of "positive peace" or "sustainable peace," which focusses on addressing the underlying drivers and root causes of violent conflict. This study is directed by key research questions: how do maximalist and minimalist standards and conceptions influence the negative and positive effects of PAP on the peace and conflict dynamics of the Niger Delta? The paper examines the PAP's role in deconstructing violent approaches to problem-solving within the context of minimalist or maximalist interpretations of peacebuilding (Sandole, 2010).

The study enhances the ongoing discourse regarding amnesty and DDR by elucidating the notions of negative and positive peace, as well as maximalist and minimalist methodologies in peacebuilding. It additionally offers the advantage of retrospection regarding the pre-and post-amnesty phases in the ND. The study advances with the conflict profile of the ND, the contextual discourse of PCIA, the concepts of negative and positive peace, minimalist and maximalist methods to peacebuilding, and the research methodology. Subsequently, it conducts a retrospective analysis of PAP function-oriented peacebuilding in the Niger Delta, examining both maximalist and minimalist perspectives. The research critically examines the institutional capability of the PAP for peacebuilding and its influence on the intricate dynamics of conflict and peacebuilding in the ND. This analysis is organised into five sections. The paper commences with its conceptual foundations, followed by a methodology part. The third portion presents the results, which delineate the key norms (minimalist and maximalist standards), and the fourth section engages in a discussion of the findings. Ultimately, the article culminates in an analysis of our findings and recommendations for subsequent research.

2. Conceptual Discourse of Minimalist and Maximalist Approaches in Peacebuilding

The conceptual ambiguity of peacebuilding has continued to sustain the debate on the scope, scale and the most impactful way to implement peacebuilding.

As Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell & Sieta, (2007), explains there so many diverse constituencies of disparate and often divergent actors with divergent and sometimes conflicting interests to rally around peacebuilding. Scholars and practitioners are increasingly consensual on the broad agenda of peacebuilding with a multi-disciplinary cross-sector technique or method in relation to organizational mandates and strategic interests of peacebuilding actors (Kobayashi, Krause, & Yuan, 2025). Perhaps, this explains and highlights the challenges of liberal conceptualization of peacebuilding as too restrictive (Kobayashi, Krause, & Yuan, 2025; Riak & Bill, 2022; Jarikre, 2021). This conceptual discourse is not intended to (re)conceptualize peacebuilding or critique scholars and practitioners' operationalization of the concept rather as imperative and prelude to understanding how and why peacebuilding works (- or not; in short and long term) and the impact on conflict and peace dynamics. Therefore, at this conceptual level, the study advances on Galtung (1996) negative and positive peace as well as their intersection with Call & Cousens, E. M. (2008) minimalist and maximalist approaches to peacebuilding.

The negative and positive peace concept is popularly ascribed to the works of Johan Galtung. Since his conception, there exists a plethora and extensive scholarly discussion on negative and positive conceptions of peace (Bayerlein, Kamin & Krahmann, 2024; Syropoulos, Puschett, & Leidner, 2021; Davenport, Melander, & Regan, 2018; Shields, 2017; Diehl, 2016). The conceptual framework of negative and positive peace resonates the inadequate and adequate dichotomous characteristics of peace. Drawing on peace literature, negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence and the absence of fear of violence. Shields (2017) shed some light when he opined that negative peace underscores conditions where the underlying conflict is somewhat resolved but tensions can still run high and it fits neatly into our natural tendency to frame security threats in absolute terms (Shields, 2017). He argued in particular that the absence of violence is the predominant conceptualization of peace within the security community (Shields, 2017). Suffice it that negative peace is closely related to stabilization and the forms of relationships that DDR entails the required negative peace before positive peace can be materialized. Although, as Shields (2017) observed, a more organic, diverse, and dynamic sense of positive peace exists alongside the dominant negative version, however, "one can have one without the other" (Galtung, 1964). Most contemporary peace and conflict scholars and practitioners reinforced and reverberated Galtung's definition of positive peace as "the integration of

human society” (1964) when they pointed out that the absence of indirect and structural violence is often what yields positive peace. Hence, positive peace is also associated with many other social characteristics that are considered desirable, including better economic outcomes, measures of well-being, levels of inclusiveness and environmental performance (Simangan, Lee, Sharifi, Candelaria, & Kaneko, 2022; Killelea, 2021; Institute for Economics & Peace Report, 2018; 2020; 2021; 2024). It will suffice that the body of research analyses positive peace as a transformational concept (Killelea, 2021) underlying societal factors that sustain peace and strengthen resilience in complex situations.

The concept of negative and positive peace is closely related to the "minimalist" and "maximalist" approaches in peacebuilding as well as reinforces the relationship between stabilization and societal transformation (Rodríguez-Castellón, 2024). The maximalist and minimalist approaches emerged as a result of the absence of a generally accepted measure for “success of peacebuilding outcomes as different yardsticks yield different results to avoid relapse to violence on the one hand and how to calibrate prevention on the other hand, which is the primary goal of peacebuilding”. Scholars, practitioners and donor organizations have continued to face multidimensional challenges in conducting evaluation and assessment of DDR to validate their impact (Baysal, & Dilek, 2023; Seethaler, 2016). Against this background, Charles T. Call and Elizabeth M. Cousens proposed maximalist, minimalist and moderate standards to set the bar in defining successful peacebuilding (Call & Cousens, 2008). The maximalist approach is based on the UN Security Council (presidential statement of 2001) ambitious peacebuilding measures to redress root causes” of conflict and the underlying factors which increases a society’s vulnerability to violence in order to strengthen resilience and sustain peace. This was reinforced by Rodríguez-Castellón (2024) when he asserted that a maximalist perspective views DDR as a vehicle for broader development and societal transformation. Diametrically, the minimalist approach represents the most readily visible indicator of success for efforts to consolidate peace (Call & Cousens, 2008, 5). In this way, a minimalist approach is limited to or prioritized the establishment of security (Rodríguez-Castellón, 2024). The minimalist approach underscores what is called "negative peace" or the absence of violent conflict in complex situations, on the other hand, maximalist approach in peacebuilding resonates with the concept of "positive peace" or "sustainable peace" which underscores addressing the drivers and root causes of violent

conflict. Our focus here is that of rigorous evidence to validate the impact of PAP, therefore, the maximalist and minimalist standards is an indispensable criterion in order to avoid casting doubt on the outcomes by using a globally acceptable DDR evaluation template

3. Research Methodology

This study included qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, incorporating descriptive surveys and semi-structured interviews. This aimed to investigate the relationship between PAP's DDR and peacebuilding through the application of the PCIA methodology framework. Conducting a PCIA necessitates a systematic and thorough process comprising multiple steps, including data collection, analysis, and reporting (Sarah Lee, 2025). Consequently, the study extensively employed attribution and triangulation techniques, as no single tool is likely adequate for assessing impact and verifying results to elucidate the shift. The PAP stakeholders’ summit included essential participants, including ex-militants, foot soldiers, camp leaders (referred to as Camp Generals), community leaders, and the elders’ council, facilitating interaction, dialogue, and constructive participation. The sessions, initiated by the PAP Administrator, Dr. Denis Oturo, occurred from June 21 to June 23, 2024. The theme was “Fostering, Consolidating, and Collaborating for the Peace, Security, Stability, and Development of the Niger Delta.” It emphasised the necessity of constructive engagement to foster confidence, strengthen peace, security, and stability, and to tackle rising reintegration difficulties. The stakeholders’ summit facilitated the identification of the interests, preferences, influence, and engagement of ex-militants and communities involved in or impacted by the initiatives, programs, or policies of the institutions under examination (Bodenstein, 2024). The survey research design effectively gathered data regarding the lived experiences of beneficiaries, ex-militants, and community members, as well as any changes associated with the PAP intervention. The qualitative data were utilised to characterise the PAP, aiming to assess the impact of the program and projects on the beneficiaries, ex-militants, and affected community.

This study utilised a purposive sampling strategy. The sample consisted of 142 respondents from whom quantitative data were gathered, and although not pre-determined, 15 key informant interviews were conducted with essential stakeholders, including ex-militants, foot soldiers, camp leaders/generals, community leaders, elders, and beneficiaries. Participant selection was predicated on the respondents' comprehension of the PAP DDR issues.

Triangulation is one of the most effective strategies for comprehending and elucidating effects. Therefore, a crucial component of effect evaluation involves the triangulation of other information sources. The predominant qualitative data for this research was obtained from discussions and interactions with relevant stakeholders at the summits, interviews, and the authors' observations. Secondary data were acquired from official documents, books, journal articles, newspapers, official newsletters, and magazines. The study utilised thematic analysis and content analysis.

3.1 Ethical Considerations

The study is cognisant of research ethics, rules, and standards, as intentional efforts were undertaken to comply with a conflict-sensitive methodology that

addresses all cultural and official considerations pertinent to this type of research. Consequently, particular emphasis was placed on variables, official standing, confidentiality, and autonomy. The study is dedicated on employing suitable terminology to prevent misrepresentation and harmful language. Interviewees were permitted to answer questions at their discretion.

4. Results

Tables 1 and 2 represent the results of this study. Table I, presents the results for the first 4 construct variables on minimalist standard (which measure negative peace) while table II presents results for the first six (6) construct variables on maximalist standard (which measure positive peace).

Table 1: PAP minimalist perspective which focuses on addressing insecurity and instability

S/N		A	SA	D	SD	NR	Total
1	The PAP is merely a set of sequenced technical but political programmes and activities to address the resistance and security challenges against oil exploration.	90 63%	26 18%	18 12%	3 2%	5 3%	142
2	The PAP has reduced the level of people and communities to violence.	84 60%	14 10%	30 21%	8 5%	6 4%	142
3	Oil and gas exploration activities have increased in the ND since the proclamation and implementation of the PAP.	130 92%	8 5%	4 3%	- -	- -	142
4	The Weapons and Ammunition Management (WAM) strategy of the PAP DDR processes has effectively reduced the security risk of small arms and light weapons in the Niger Delta.	62 43%	14 10%	54 38%	8 6%	4 3%	142

Note: SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; SD - Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree; NR- No Response

Table 2: PAP maximalist approach (addressing the root causes of the conflict)

S/N	Peace and Conflict Indicators	A	SA	D	SD	NR	Total
1	The PAP created access to livelihoods and decent work for the sustainable development of ex-militants.	46 32.3%	19 13.3%	59 41.5%	18 12.6%	-	142
2	The PAP supports ex-militants for their reintegration back into civilian and community life.	61 42%	17 11%	49 34%	19 13%	-	142
3	The PAP eliminates the main drivers of violence in the Niger Delta by providing alternatives to recruitment into armed groups and building social cohesion.	63 44%	19 13%	48 33%	12 8%	-	142
4	The PAP resources are applied to the benefit of the community in a balanced manner to minimize the stigmatization of ex-militants.	70 49%	8 5%	60 42%	4 3%	-	142
5	The PAP DDR programmes, projects and resources support and build capacity are for communities to become active participants in the reduction of armed violence.	70 49%	4 3%	60 42%	4 3%	4 3%	
6	The PAP provides opportunity for peace through economic empowerment of ex -militants and community people.	67 47%	27 19%	40 28%	6 4%	4 2%	142

Note: SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; SD - Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree; NR- No Response

From the table 1, Item 1 which states that “the PAP is merely a set of sequenced technical but political programmes and activities to address the resistance and security challenges against oil exploration.” has a significant majority (81% combined for SA and A) which viewed the PAP positively, indicating agreement with the characterization of the PAP as a structured response to challenges in oil exploration. On the other hand, a minority (14% combined for D

and SD) disagrees, suggesting that some respondents may feel the PAP lacks effectiveness or coherence in its mission. Conversely, 5 respondents (3%) did not provide an answer to the statement regarding the PAP as a technical set of programs to address resistance and security challenges. This may suggest that some respondents were either unsure about the statement's implications or felt uninformed about the specifics of the PAP. Similarly, item 2 which states that "the PAP

has reduced the level of people and communities to violence" has a substantial portion (69% combined for SA and A) who believes that the PAP has a positive impact on reducing violence. However, the higher percentage of disagreement (26% combined for D and SD) underscores skepticism that may warrant further inquiry into the efficacy of the PAP concerning community safety. 6 respondents (4%) did not respond to the question about whether the PAP has reduced the level of violence in communities. The slightly higher NR percentage here could reflect reluctance to comment on violence reduction due to personal experiences or perceptions of complex local dynamics. Likewise, "Oil and gas exploration activities have increased in the ND since the proclamation and implementation of the PAP." - There is overwhelming agreement (97% combined for SA and A) that oil and gas exploration activities have increased post-PAP implementation. The absence of disagreement suggests consensus on the perception that PAP has influenced operational activities in the region. On the other hand, 3% did not express their opinions. This could indicate a strong familiarity among respondents with these activities, leading to complete participation. "The Weapons and Ammunition Management (WAM) strategy of the PAP DDR processes has effectively reduced the security risk of small arms and light weapons in the Niger Delta." - In contrast to the previous statements, only 53% (combined for SA and A) view the WAM strategy as effective, which suggests a significant divide in opinion. The combined dissenting responses (44% for D and SD) indicate a substantial skepticism regarding the success of the WAM strategy in reducing security risks, signaling a need for evaluation and potential improvement in this area. respondents (3%) did not answer whether the WAM strategy has effectively reduced security risks. this might reflect uncertainty or a lack of specific knowledge about the WAM strategy's effectiveness. Moreover, each statement reveals varying levels of agreement among respondents regarding the PAP's effectiveness and impact across different areas, with general positivity towards the program tempered by notable skepticism in certain aspects, particularly regarding violence reduction and security management measures. A lower No Response (NR) percentage suggests a higher engagement level among respondents, indicating confidence or agreement with the questions posed.

Regarding Table 2, Item 1 states that the PAP created access to livelihoods and decent work for the sustainable development of ex-militants. There is a slight majority of respondents who disagree that the PAP has successfully created access to livelihoods and

decent work, with total disagreement (54.1%) exceeding total agreement (45.6%). This highlights a perception of inadequacy in achieving sustainable development for ex-militants. Likewise, Item 2 which states that the PAP supports ex-militants for their reintegration back into civilian and community life has responses which are relatively balanced but indicate a slightly positive view on support for reintegration, with 52.9% agreeing that the PAP is effective in this area compared to the 47% in disagreement. There is a sense that while some progress may be perceived, a significant portion still questions the efficacy of the program. Also, the statement which states that the PAP eliminates the main drivers of violence in the Niger Delta by providing alternatives to recruitment into armed groups and building social cohesion appears to be a more favorable response towards the PAP's effectiveness in eliminating drivers of violence. A total of 57.4% agree, suggesting that many respondents see value in the initiatives aimed at creating alternatives to violence and fostering social cohesion.

Likewise, Item 4 which states that PAP resources are applied to the benefit of the community in a balanced manner to minimize the stigmatization of ex-militants had a similar response to the previous points, a majority (54.6%) express agreement that the PAP resources are distributed effectively, aiming to reduce community stigma against ex-militants. However, a sizeable minority (45.1%) still disagrees, indicating room for improvement in community perceptions. Item 5 which observes that the PAP DDR programmes, projects and resources support and build capacity for communities to become active participants in the reduction of armed violence has responses that show a closer split between supporters and detractors of the PAP's ability to empower communities through DDR initiatives, with a slight majority of 52.1% indicating agreement, but a significant 46.2% remain skeptical. Furthermore, item 6 which says that the PAP provides opportunity for peace through economic empowerment of ex-militants and community people shows the highest level of agreement with 66% of respondents feeling that the PAP contributes to peace through economic empowerment. However, the disagreement level (32%) is alarmingly high, indicating that although many see the potential for positive impact, there are equally strong feelings of disillusionment regarding actual outcomes. The analysis of the respondents demonstrates a complex relationship with the PAP concerning its effectiveness in various indicators of peace and conflict dynamics in the Niger Delta. While some indicators receive favorable responses, a pattern of skepticism and concern is prevalent among the

rebuttals, especially regarding access to opportunities and the actual economic empowerment of both ex-militants and the community. This suggests a need for further evaluation and adjustment of the PAP policies and practices to better address the expectations and needs of the community.

The survey results are reflections of interesting findings in relation to the complex intersections and the issues that are inextricably linked to negative and positive peace in terms of the character of appropriation and implementation of the PAP. The odds that the Weapons and Ammunition Management strategy has effectively reduced weapons to increased crude oil production are mere outcomes of sequenced technical and political programmes not only to address insecurity but to reduce the level of people and communities to violence in the guise of stability and to re-establish security. Therefore, there are a couple of ex-militants who feel significantly better in the struggle than post-amnesty involvement. Conversely, the PAP is supposedly the link between the deconstruction of insurrection and peacebuilding in the Niger Delta, however, the fundamental ethos of the PAP as it appears is buying peace in the ND. The PAP reintegration through education, vocational skills and other economic empowerment initiatives for ex-militants' sustainable livelihoods and support communities' resilience provide opportunity for peace in order to eliminate drivers of violence and alternatives to recruitment into armed groups and building social cohesion. These are indicators for positive peace to achieve maximalist standards but their chances are further restricted due to experiences of exclusion and marginalization. This aligns with findings in peacebuilding literature as Peña & Dorussen, (2021) asserted that preponderance of marginalization and segregation do not simply "add up" to peace "writ large".

The concerns of the people in the ND is not just for negative peace, which is the focus of government and MNOC, but simultaneously for a positive peace that emerges from seeing government and her agencies, and MNC appearing to be addressing the root causes of armed violence and insurrection. If government continues to buy peace with the PAP without addressing the substantive issues of infrastructural deficit and local content in the petrodollar industry, it may succeed in preserving the negative peace and order evanescently, but it will not provide a substantial ground for peace according to the maximalist approach.

5. Discussion

The primary purpose to examine the PAP after ten (10) years when it was supposed to end in December 2015, is to determine the impact on conflict and peace dynamics along the maximalist and minimalist standards. The role of PAP in promoting peace is as relevant as its role in promoting conflict, and this balance is what seems to be more critical to this study. Our interest, therefore, utilizing the maximalist and minimalist approaches is derived from our conviction that negative and positive peace outcomes are legitimate outcomes of peacebuilding using the PCIA lens. To ignore or criminalize negative outcomes (standards) or pretend that it does not exist underscores a fundamental flaw in the normative understanding of what peace and peacebuilding is. Rather, the negative outcomes compliment the positive outcomes as a precursor to nurture resilience. Perhaps, this explains why the government, in spite of the limited impact and absence of exit strategy (Ebiede, TM, et al. 2020), has continued to sustain the PAP on the assumption that whatever money spent to sustain the PAP is buying peace to avert a relapse of violence.

The peace and conflict impact of the PAP using the PCIA framework to assess the maximalist and minimalist standards devised by Charles T. Call and Elizabeth M. Cousens, the study found that the individuals and communities do not have the resilience to deal with the impact of negative peace they have to face in the region. The interviews highlight significant flaws in the demobilization and reintegration process as ineligible candidates were admitted while some genuine ex-militants who surrendered their weapons were excluded. For instance, a former ex-militant who was excluded claimed that:

"At inception, I received my monthly stipend until the reformation using new biometrics and Bank Verification Number (BVN) by General Charles Ndiomo, the then Administrator and Special Adviser to the President. Some commanders and officials of the PAP as well as political elites brought in their kith and kin as well as loyal community members to replace some of them who were engaged in the insurrection act. There are some of the beneficiaries like me who are angry but have continued to come because we are handicapped after dropping our guns" (Interview, 2024).

This has caused tensions and discontent among the ranks of ex-militants and in a number of communities. Similarly, in another interview with an ex-camp commander otherwise known as 'General' he affirmed that "ex-militants of our barracks have not been paid their stipend because of BVN issue. Some of our foot

soldiers are on my neck because they have not been paid” (Interview, 2024). This finding aligns with Ikelegbe & Mukoro, (2017)’s assertion that the PAP as “currently implemented is floundering on the altar of excessive exclusion and inequitable benefits”. Similarly, the current Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta & Administrator, Presidential Amnesty Programme, Dr Dennis Otuario, acknowledges this flaw while addressing critical stakeholders at the Summit. According to him, “there is a growing number of ex-militants whose monthly stipends and other benefits including training programmes were stopped and denied due to manipulation and Covid-19. However, we will leverage on the programme’s flexibility to accommodate and address such genuine complaints by people and impacted communities” (PAP Summit, 2024).

The catalogue of challenges experienced by ex-militants since 2009 when they surrendered their weapons appears profound. The reintegration process was described by some former ex-militants as a charade without proper process to ensure sustainable livelihood, health care and empowerment with starter pack and financial grants for micro and medium scale enterprises (Interview, 2024). Beside the inequitable benefits, ex-militants and beneficiaries complained about the delay in providing reintegration package especially the N65,000 monthly stipend. According to a beneficiary “though the N65,000 monthly stipend is no longer adequate due to devaluation of the naira (Nigeria’s currency) and the associated inflation and high cost of living” (Interview, 2024). Ostensibly, this has created tension among ex-militants due to their inability to sustain the home front and unrest in most communities. The PAP is dysfunctional and unable to create synergy due to its inability to compliment the needs of ex-militants by addressing broader community security issues. The educational training component of members of impacted community underscores the PAP as too ambitious considering the fact that the economic reintegration component is a crucial part of the DDR procedures. Regrettably, numerous former combatants face challenges in obtaining formal jobs or vocational training. Their chances are further restricted due to cost intensive foreign training and private universities in Nigeria (Peña & Dorussen, 2021).

In spite of the official proclaimed “successes in addressing educational and vocational training of members of impacted communities who are supposedly proxies (children, wards, spouses and relatives) to ex-militants” in most instances, it does not absolutely represent the maximalist perspective of addressing the drivers and root causes of violence. The

literature asserts that DDR is not a long-term objective but a means to helping reassertion and reintegration of ex-militants, therefore, they suggest that DDR should be ex –militant centric (Bayerlein, Kamin & Krahmann, 2024; Simangan, Lee, Sharifi, Candelaria, & Kaneko, 2022; Killelea, 2021; Syropoulos, Puschett & Leidner, 2021; Ebiede, et al. 2020; Ikelegbe & Mukoro, 2017; Specker, 2008). However, the survey and interview data depicts that the capacity building and skill acquisition programmes were not effective as most of the consultants/ facilitators were not competent but were more of profit-oriented business outfits that were desperate for their interest and to rip-off the beneficiaries. In fact, an interviewee described them as “illegal training vendors who went away with money without imparting skills and knowledge because the skill acquisition and capacity building programmes are not effective and equitable to provide support to the ex-militants as they could not provide starter packs in instances where beneficiaries completed the training programmes” (Interview, 2024). Although this study was unable to interrogate any of the consultants/ facilitators, it was reliably informed that some programmes and initiatives were not funded. Perhaps, this explains the constraint of not being able to create small scale business entrepreneurs from the programmes.

The study observed several issues confronting ex-militants and the entire programme as it provided opportunity for ex-militants to vent their frustration while community leaders and other stakeholders shared their thoughts and experiences. For instance, there is an overwhelming consensus amongst respondents and interviewees including community leaders that most of the ex-militants including some camp commanders were not really satisfied with the character of appropriation and quality of reintegration programmes. Perhaps, this is germane to their inability to achieve sustainable livelihoods through the education, vocational training, fish farming and small and medium enterprises. As one ex-militant aptly noted:

“The vocational and skill training programmes are just a trend harmful to ex-militants without starter pack. Paradoxically, it is very clear that it is a conduit pipe that feeds on official criminality, fuels corruption and collusion with the so-called consultants and promotes misplaced priority and burdens ex-militants with expectations they may not be yet equipped to meet. In fact, show me one genuine ex-militant who has a sustainable livelihood from the PAP vocational training? The few who can afford to sustain themselves or are doing well in fish farming and poultry business are mere PAP beneficiaries who had people in the system and were officially empowered

beyond the normal. In fact, I don't want to name anyone but I know someone who is now in the amnesty office who was receiving about six million naira (N6,000,000) as monthly stipend and was able to establish a poultry farm. Yes, this is the only success story in amnesty. Therefore, you cannot use that one to compare other ex-militants with N65,000 monthly stipend. For me, the way vocational training and skill acquisition is going, it erodes the seriousness of PAP to replace our guns with an empty spectacle called vocational training. Tell me which genuine ex-militant leader/ commander or foot soldier wants the vocational training..."(Interview, 2024)

Communities in the Niger Delta are facing serious security threats, and these threats are due to the overwhelming PAP minimalist approach devoid of maximalist standards. Threats identified can be categorised into two groups comprising those whose levels of social resilience may not be able to withstand the threats of resurging insecurity and negative peace due to the strategic deficit in the peacebuilding approach. The first group are those former ex-militants who surrendered their weapons but face incapacitation and major resource constraints due to exclusion from the PAP. The second group are those communities that face major threats from the population of ex-militants due to failing PAP reintegration processes to guarantee sustainable livelihood and economic empowerment through vocational and skill acquisition programmes as well as the extraneous largess such as pipeline surveillance.

The findings also demonstrate the precarious intersection of insecurity, increased illegal bunkering/ oil theft, and conflict. An example is the growing incidence of post amnesty criminal violence in the creek's communities of Okuama- Ewu and Okoloba in Delta State and Igbomatoru in Bayelsa State. It is alleged that suspected gunmen killed 17 Nigerian Army personnel reportedly on peace mission to Okuama- Ewu (Amaize, Omafuaire, & Sunday, 2024). In addition, due to low income, absence of social security and social infrastructure deficit, majority of communities in the post amnesty era are exposed to threats from social underclass and illiterate ex-militants who are unable to develop economically viable skills due to failure of the PAP to integrate them socially and economically. In this way, proponents of security objective argue that DDR should prioritize the needs of ex-militants as they are the real threat to peace as DDR processes are not designed for long term objectives but as a means for stability to secure post conflict environment (Specker, 2008). Nevertheless, Okocha, Attah, Emmanuel, & Nwanze, (2024) argue that the Federal Government of Nigeria has, therefore, met with the aim of restoring

peace and safety as the nation's economy has returned to normal.

The literature also asserts that DDR complimentary reconstruction programme to assist impacted communities and population should be carried out by other agencies (Bhattacharjee & Gadkarim, 2012; Specker, 2008). Evidently, data from the survey and interviews depict that the peacebuilding strategy to mitigate and hopefully eliminate structural violence by government in the ND is not linked to a broader strategy because there appears to be no central coordination. For instance, the strategy of the PAP is not linked to the other strategies intended to consolidate the peace process such as Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), National Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), Ministry of Regional Development (MRD – former ministry of the Niger Delta), South South Development Commission (SSDC) and Petroleum Industry Act (PIA). The agency-to-agency relationship is the unity of measure for peace whereby their interaction and interconnectivity framework eliminates absurdities.

Drawing from the outcomes of the stakeholder's meeting, the study observed several issues confronting ex-militants and the entire programme and how to embed the PAP in the broader peacebuilding agenda. The Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta and Administrator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme used the meetings to reaffirm the government's commitment to the reintegration of ex-militants and impacted communities to ensure peace, security, stability and development of the Niger Delta as the theme reflect. He went further to charge ex-militants camp commanders, ex-militants, beneficiaries and community leaders to mobilize their ranks and communities for peace and stability (Field Interview, 2024). While the stakeholders suggested that the operations of the PAP should be decentralized by establishing state and local government offices or centres in order to enhance the interface with the office when the need arises, other suggestions include the need to strengthen the reintegration component of vocational training, capacity building and empowerment. In addition, they called for synergy between the PAP and other government agencies to provide partnership that could engage the services of ex-militant in the effective surveillance and protection of critical oil and gas assets in order to embedded PAP in the broader peacebuilding agenda in the ND.

6. Conclusion

Since its establishment, the PAP has assumed an indispensable role in reducing attacks on oil and gas installations, and of course, peacebuilding to become more effective considering its capacity to host several ex-militant generals and camp commanders and promote change. Nevertheless, the entire PAP rehabilitation of ex-militants has been reduced to the Nigerian political system where they appropriate our common heritage as a specific ethnic heritage. Although scholars have asserted that the effectiveness of DDR processes lies largely on its adaptability and flexibility to context (Altier, 2021), the PAP experience appears to have rewritten the DDR engagements to push patronage and exclusion above facilitating transition and integration of ex-militants. One begins to wonder what the PAP can do to value addition. The study does not know what the PAP can do outside what it has done and is doing that can come as an added advantage. The PAP has become Nigeria's albatross as a prisoner of its own creation. Yet a detour into the road of recovery may spell instant destruction to the PAP brand of increased oil production. The unseen force called Mend or Camp Commanders and Generals that define the PAP do not seem ready to settle for an end of the programme. Thus, even if in the end the government could muster the political will to do the extraordinary, the body that drives the PAP are unwilling which could force security forces into alignment to look away when things spin out of alignment. For now, that ex -Mend Camp Commanders and one of their own as the PAP administrator controls the strategic advantages, they could cause glitches in crude oil production when it matters most. The multinational oil corporations are completely exposed or vulnerable to their vagaries. This perception is gradually deepening into a national consciousness and consensus. Notwithstanding, if criminality and attack of critical national assets is what the government intends to reduce, it presupposes that government should engage ex-militants through the pipeline surveillance in their various communities. Evidently, the study concludes that the PAP has outlived its usefulness because, as of today, there's no compelling reason why the government should continue to use taxpayers' money to sustain the programme. In this way, government should establish a peacebuilding commission to coordinate the activities of government agencies with specific mandates to address sundry issues of the Niger Delta conflict under one umbrella

The PCIA of the PAP engenders significant gains in the debate on peacebuilding. This study in examining the PAP minimalist and maximalist approach to

peacebuilding, we present an alternative approach to understanding the PAP in deconstructing violent approach in solving problems in the ND. The ND, especially in the post amnesty era, is characterized by complex intersections and the issues are inextricably linked to a myriad of situations which cannot be solved by a single agency, policy or actor. For instance, the NDDC, MNDA, NCDMB (Nigeria Content Development and Monitoring Board -Local Content), and PIA have complimentary roles in addressing the issues of peace in the region. In fact, their establishment was based on addressing specific issues in the Niger Delta conflict. However, the Niger Delta experience has glaringly brought to the fore that each attempt to deal with a pressing issue is a precursor to another, reinforcing the phenomenon of unintended consequences. Notably, the establishment of the NDDC and its failure to effectively address social infrastructure deficit precipitated increased insurrection and the creation of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, then the PAP and the increased criminality and illegal crude oil bunkering, the Petroleum Industry Act, 2023 and, of course the local content to address inclusivity and local participation.

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